



7 April 2022

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Representative of the Director-General,
Excellencies, distinguished Delegates,

I am addressing you at a key moment in the life of our Organization. We are currently facing a humanitarian and geopolitical crisis that reminds us that our mission - to build the defences of peace in the minds of men and women - is more important than ever. At the same time, the world is trying to recover from a health crisis that has profoundly disrupted the way we live and work. To meet these new challenges, UNESCO needs fresh impetus.

And what better time to do so than now, as UNESCO is preparing to renew its human resources management strategy? This new strategy can help bring about the change that everyone is expecting. As a preliminary point, let us say that the staff must be at its centre of gravity and that, to that end, it must increase the motivation and wellbeing of the women and men who give it substance every day. It should be added that such a strategy cannot be effective unless it has the support of all staff, both at Headquarters and in the field. It is therefore together that we must review our way of working and reflect on a better management of the Organization's human resources. Finally, we want to specify that such a reform cannot succeed if HRM is not provided with the human and financial resources necessary to carry out this mission.

As for the development of a new strategy, let us start by recalling that rationality demands that we take stock of the current one. On such an obvious point, however, the timetable proposed by the Administration is surprising. To present the evaluation of the current strategy, whose failures and weaknesses are already glaring, at the mid-term review of the future strategy, as the Administration plans, defies common sense. We insist that this evaluation be conducted **before** the new strategy is presented at the next session of the General Conference. Only by building on the lessons of the past can the new strategy bring major, bold, and decisive changes.

If we are unable to learn from the global pandemic on the one hand, and previous strategies on the other, we will be tacitly admitting our willingness to remain static while the world is changing. Thus, structural dysfunctions and existing injustices must be corrected. Our ways of thinking and working must evolve.

In this respect, the benefits of telework have been highlighted and recognized. The performance of our colleagues over the last two years is tangible proof of this. It is therefore time to take note of this new reality and implement a policy of flexible working arrangements. This policy should aim to maximize the positive effects of telework and promote work-life balance. Furthermore, at a time when the question of financing building renovations is being raised, would it not be appropriate for the Organization to capitalize on flexible working arrangements and optimize space management?

Still on the subject of telework, I must warn the Administration against its hasty decision-making and its modes of communication which are likely to damage its relations with the staff. Indeed, the recent communication about an abrupt and almost immediate return to the office has increased mistrust and given rise to feelings of frustration, even anger, among a great many colleagues. This approach does not encourage the creation of a healthy work environment conducive to the exchange of ideas, nor

does it encourage the building of an organization with a motivated, dynamic and committed staff. The Administration must show staff the respect they deserve, listen to them and take their concerns into account.

In this regard, ISAU insists that the active promotion of mental health and respect for family life be a priority of the new strategy. Colleagues, especially in field offices, who often feel neglected, regularly express major concerns such as professional instability and the difficult reconciliation of their personal and professional obligations. ISAU has made concrete proposals on the new strategy. I invite you to read our comments on document 214 EX/5.III.C.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to conclude my remarks by drawing your attention to the obstacles our association continues to face in making its voice heard. Our freedom of speech is once again threatened, this time paradoxically by the Ethics Office itself. Despite our insistence, we were not authorized to comment on the Ethics Office's annual report, on the grounds that it is a question of "principle" and "systemic". How can one not be outraged that the staff associations cannot comment on such an important issue as ethics, which, moreover, concerns exclusively and affects most closely the staff of the Organization? Faced with this refusal, our role, which is also that of a whistleblower, is threatened, and the democratic nature of the Organization called into question.

ISAU will nevertheless continue to deploy all its energy to maintain a constructive dialogue with the Administration in the interest of the Organization. We ask that this be reciprocal. It is essential that the Administration listen to and take into account the observations and comments of the associations that represent all the staff of our Organization.

Thank you for your attention.