



ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DU PERSONNEL DE L'UNESCO
INTERNATIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION OF UNESCO

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Representative of the Director-General,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen Delegates,

I thank you on behalf of the International Staff Association of UNESCO (ISAU) for allowing me this speaking time, which, limited as it is, represents a key moment in the governance of our Organization, of which the Secretariat staff is the most essential resource. As such, few issues are as important as the preparation of the human resources management strategy. From the outset, I must point out that the draft strategy presented to you left us quite perplexed.

We were hoping to see a document with clear objectives, ambitious measures and innovative ideas aimed at revitalizing the Organization and at solving its chronic problems. Instead, we find ourselves with a draft where the declaratory, vague dimension largely outweighs the minimal content, and therefore makes us fear the worst for the future in terms of inertia and inefficiency. I would emphasize that none of the observations and proposals we submitted last July have been taken into account.

We were thus expecting a proposal with specific measures to remedy existing problems, such as the lack of transparency and HRM's non-involvement in recruitment, the lack of career development, and the job insecurity of long-term temporary staff.

We support the increases in resources requested by HRM if the Bureau works more efficiently. The separation of the human resources strategy from work-plan management can only lead to the perpetuation of an opaque arbitrariness, at the cost of staff suffering, inefficient resource allocation, and finally, condemnations at the ILO Administrative Tribunal.

Instead of becoming more involved and taking on more responsibility, HRM is even trying to legitimize the opposite attitude, stating that "human resources management is a collective responsibility, and that for an HR Strategy to be successfully implemented, it must have the buy-in of the whole of the Organization". But if everyone is responsible, no one is responsible!

The first step HRM should take is to be fully involved in the appointment and recruitment process.

Next, it should:

- take concrete steps to effectively build on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic;
- introduce flexible working arrangements to support staff work-life balance;
- develop a wellbeing policy as soon as possible;
- regularize long-term PAs and temporary staff, by prioritizing, in particular, the recruitment of nationals of under- and non-represented countries.

That said, on geographical distribution, we welcome the implementation of some of the working group's recommendations and encourage the Administration to continue its efforts.

In parallel, there is a need to identify appropriate sources of funding in order to launch the paid internship programme as soon as possible, and we encourage Member States to intensify their efforts to that end.

I must come back to the condemnations of UNESCO by the ILOAT. Neither ISAU nor the Member States can share the Administration's satisfaction. The magnitude of the sums at stake when UNESCO is found to be at fault is significant in relation to the Organization's budget. One is entitled to question who made the errors of assessment or judgment that led to the exorbitant amounts owed by UNESCO. The Administration should sanction and disavow the persons responsible instead of incurring significant expenses in amicable settlements or ILOAT convictions.

In order to reduce the number of disputes, the Administration must pay particular attention to its decisions regarding non-renewal of appointments and disciplinary measures. It also needs to review its policies on performance management and reclassification in order to put in place procedures that are more respectful of staff rights and that ensure greater transparency.

Finally, we are convinced that many problems would be avoided if the staff associations were consulted more often and listened to even a little.

ISAU supports the proposed extension of the term of office of the next Ethics Adviser to six years. However, we strongly object to the wording of the text submitted for your decision calling for it to be applied immediately rather than to the term of office of the next Adviser. It would not be acceptable for this text to be interpreted in an unethical way by opening the possibility of extending the term of office of the current incumbent. We cannot allow such a suspicion to taint our Organization.

The last point I would like to address is the renovation and maintenance of the Miollis/Bonvin site buildings. As ISAU shares with the Member States the concern for sound management of financial resources, it seems essential that the renovation and maintenance of these properties not be covered by the regular budget. This would certainly place a heavy burden on the deployment of the programme that you have adopted and whose implementation you have entrusted to us.

I will conclude my speech with this fundamental issue: it is trust that must prevail among UNESCO's stakeholders.

Thank you again for your attention.