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**FOLLOW-UP TO DECISIONS AND RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED
BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND THE GENERAL CONFERENCE
AT THEIR PREVIOUS SESSIONS**

PART III

HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES

ADDENDUM

SUMMARY

**B. Annual report (2022) by the International Civil Service
Commission (ICSC): Report by the Director-General**

Pursuant to Item 9.2.7 of the UNESCO Human Resources Manual, the International Staff Association of UNESCO (ISAU) submits its comments on human resources issues (document 216 EX/5.III.B).

1. In its capacity as Vice-President of the United Nations International Civil Servants Federation (UNISERV), the International Staff Association of UNESCO (ISAU) actively participates in the work of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC). On this basis, we invite the Administration to heed the recommendations and decisions of the ICSC, as well as those of the General Assembly of the United Nations associated therewith. The harmonization of the conditions of service of the staff members throughout the United Nations helps to ensure transparency and fairness and facilitates, inter alia, inter-agency mobility, which, as the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) has stated, also helps to: improve the functioning of the United Nations system; increase efficiency in the acquisition, development and management of know-how; and provide opportunities for civil servants to continue their professional development.



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2. Document 216 EX/5.III.B in particular deals with parental leave policy, which, it should be noted, brings together such vital issues as staff welfare, gender equality and the Organization's continuity of operations, the poor management of which can lead to additional work for the teams in place. This in itself would be an undermining of staff welfare and a serious source of inefficiency in the conduct of the missions entrusted to the Secretariat by the Member States. Neglecting any one of these matters would be detrimental to UNESCO, hence the need to accept the cost of this policy, the effectiveness of which partly determines the integrity and effectiveness of any organization. With respect to this issue of integrity and effectiveness, we would like to highlight the fact that the recent evaluation conducted by the Division of Internal Oversight Services (IOS) with regard to the UNESCO Human Resources Management Strategy for 2017-2022 emphasized the need for the Organization to intensify its efforts to meet the staff's reasonable welfare-related expectations. Human resources policies must absolutely ensure that the mental, physical and psychological health of staff is protected from harm. We will therefore be very carefully examining the draft revised parental leave policy. We will fulfil our advisory role to make sure that this policy fully integrates respect for well-being, gender equality and operational effectiveness.

3. In this connection, we would like to draw Member States' attention to an anomaly in the process followed by the Administration when consulting the staff associations. On several occasions, we found significant changes which had been introduced to the text at some point between the submission of the draft policy to ISAU for comment and the publication of the final policy. Although obviously the Administration is not obligated to follow our recommendations, it is nonetheless unusual that significant provisions of the policies examined are being changed **after** the staff associations have been consulted. This kind of practice undermines the credibility of the Administration because it exposes it to the accusation that these consultations are a mere exercise in formality. We have notified the Administration of our concerns regarding the matter, and we reiterate our strong wish to see a spirit of collegiality and a concern for rationality prevail throughout this consultation process.

4. We would like to make three preliminary observations on the parental leave policy under consideration. First of all, we welcome the goal of ensuring equal benefits in this area in order to rebalance gender roles. We believe, moreover, that this rebalancing will also make it possible to reduce, to a certain extent, gender-based discrimination at the time of recruitment.

5. Secondly, according to the document, the costs of replacing staff members during their parental leave would concern staff on **fixed-term appointments**. What about holders of project-appointment (PA) contracts, who are, after all, staff members? We ask that their situation be clarified with respect to the revised parental leave policy.

6. Finally, it has to be admitted that full funding for the replacement of staff members on parental leave, following the reform of the policy in question, is likely to cause difficulties for the Administration. For this reason, instead of concluding in advance that there is a complete or partial inability to see these changes through, we suggest considering provisional means of overcoming such difficulties, such as, for example, allowing eligible staff members to stagger their parental leave, if they so wish, over a longer period as of the birth or adoption of their child.