



11 October 2023

Mr Chairperson,
Representative of the Director-General,
Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I thank you for this opportunity to address you, and I would like to express ISAU's satisfaction at the return of the United States of America to our Organization. This new situation signifies hope for staff, as, all too often, policies aimed at improving the Organization's efficiency or benefiting staff have been put on hold by the Administration on the pretext of a lack of funding. Whether it be a matter of career development, recruitment, the regularization of long-term Project Appointment and temporary staff as well as other staff in precarious positions, or well-being and the creation of a healthy working environment, we want to believe that human resources discussions will finally be conducted without dilatory excuses.

It is also our hope that, as UNESCO adopts a new human resources management strategy, HRM will be truly committed to its mission and able to stay the course set by you, the Member States. Indeed, ISAU is concerned about the excessive turnover we have all seen in recent years at the head of HRM. The Administration needs to be more judicious in the recruitment for this position, and favour candidates who are likely to be committed to it for a sufficiently long time. Otherwise, the weathervane effect will prevent meaningful policies from being devised and implemented. If no effort is made in this regard, it will be assumed that this post is merely symbolic, and that UNESCO does not really care about human resources.

We are also concerned about the draft of the new strategy submitted to the Executive Board at the current session, without a workplan or timetable. This text was intended to be an improved version of a previous draft and, to put it bluntly, the bureaucratic mountain has brought forth a strategic mouse. Despite the evaluation report by the Division of Internal Oversight Services (IOS), ISAU's recommendations and explicit requests from Member States, the document presented does not introduce any concrete revisions. It is virtually identical to the previous version. There is every reason to believe that human resources strategies at UNESCO are conceived as bureaucratic formalities to be drafted by ChatGPT, with no concern for valuing the personnel, and hence the interests of the Organization.

The IOS report highlighted the lack of a culture of transparency and accountability within our Organization. On this front, there is nothing new. And yet, while HRM is relentless in promoting such a culture, it conspicuously refuses to hold the sectors to account, especially when it comes to recruitment.

The "360-degree" assessment is the most recent example. Playing on words, the Administration is proposing that the "360-degree" assessment be in fact a simple feedback. All this is misleading Member States into adopting what they think is a performance assessment policy, when in fact the proposal is to spend money on a personalized coaching programme that will not have to be taken into account in professional assessments. It is as if we should not be allowed to assess managers' ability to manage. It is all very confusing, and ISAU continues to be amazed at how archaic human resources management continues to be in our Organization.

This categorical refusal to move forward can also be seen in the management of affiliate personnel contracts. The Administration is as aware of the essential role played by these personnel as it is of the uncertainty and lack of job security faced by many of our colleagues. So why choose not to act?

Despite the stated ambitions, the total number of affiliate personnel has remained unchanged for a long time. And the situation is even worse in the field. Is this not a symptom of a notable indifference to the working conditions, well-being and even dignity of staff? One of our recommendations is that HRM becomes more involved in the recruitment and follow-up of these affiliate personnel. It is unacceptable to maintain that the duties performed by people with so many years of service at UNESCO are of a temporary nature.

Finally, with regard to geographical distribution, we also see major problems in terms of transparency. A report has been submitted to you in which the presentation of the data is often biased or even insincere. This is likely to undermine the trust that must reign between the governing bodies and the Secretariat. The Administration must bear in mind that the proper conduct of Member States' debates is intrinsically linked to rigorous reporting.

All these shortcomings are symptoms of an internal culture where transparency and accountability are not priorities. We hope that, on the points I have just mentioned and on so many others, you will encourage the Administration to thoroughly modernize its practices.

Thank you for your attention.