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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

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

ADDENDUM 2

COMMENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION OF UNESCO (ISAU)

SUMMARY

B. Sustainability of the field network

Pursuant to Item 9.2.7 of the UNESCO Human Resources Manual, the International Staff Association of UNESCO (ISAU) submits its comments on management issues (document 220 EX/5.III.B).

1. Concerning the sustainability of the field network (220 EX/5.III.B), while commending the rationale of the new field network's two-tier structure as approved by the Executive Board at its 215th session, the implementation of Phase II of the overall strategy for UNESCO's presence in the world should also be an opportunity to address long-pending issues concerning workforce planning and staff rights.

2. In particular, it is crucial that staff associations are fully involved in the ongoing coordination with stakeholders led by HRM to develop the workforce planning guidance and support the process, which was launched as a priority action within the Human Resources Strategy for 2023-2027. Harnessing staff insights and experience is essential to inform a fairer, more effective, and sustainable workforce planning. This can only be achieved through comprehensive and inclusive consultation with all stakeholders, starting with staff members, to provide a more solid foundation for better career development, learning and talent outreach, succession planning, and mobility. The same applies to the dialogue coordinated by PAX between Headquarters and field offices. To enrich the dialogue with first-hand insights into the challenges and successes experienced in the field, the

process should be as inclusive and representative as possible and not limited to field office Directors. We recommend achieving this through office-wide dialogues allowing for broader staff involvement, the results of which can feed into the higher-level in-house dialogue.

3. Bearing in mind the need to cope with limited resources, the question remains open as to the optimal use of the US \$20 million envelope allocated for the field reform. The document indicates for instance that 60 posts will be created to staff the offices, which raises the issue of the sustainability of the funding of these net creations. We must stress the imperative need to allocate such additional resources with a primary focus on regularizing the status of short-term and precarious assignments. The document of the Administration rightly evokes the need for equity in carrying out the field reform and the issue of temporary personnel is clearly one of equity. What is more, there must be a concern for efficiency: to implement the reform properly – that is to maintain and improve capacity for delivery through change – UNESCO needs to rely on those individuals who possess invaluable in-house expertise and have demonstrated unwavering commitment to UNESCO's mission.

4. Regarding the proposed net creation of 60 posts, ISAU is also concerned with the ratio of programme versus support and liaison positions and believes that the Administration should explain on which basis the proposed ratio was identified or attained. Indeed, with 43% of the proposed posts dedicated to support and liaison functions and only 57% to programme posts, one must ask the question of whether the field reform has been highly efficient or not since it was supposed to generate synergies and scale economies that would allow UNESCO to be more effective in terms of programme delivery at the country level.

5. Another concern of ISAU lies with the fact that the integration of the field offices' action with the rest of the organization is not always clear and seems rather siloed, which raises serious issues with respect to staff mobility between field offices and other entities of UNESCO. For instance, there is no mention of category 1 institutes and decentralized Programme Units (such as the Third World Academy of Science – TWAS), which are integral parts of the Organization. This is in direct contradiction with the ambition of the document to present the Member States with "The overall strategy for UNESCO's presence in the world (2024-2025)".

6. Likewise, the document mentions the sectors, but their role never strikes as being critical or instrumental in the design and implementation of the actions carried out by the field offices. To some extent, the document reads like a report on a section of PAX, not on how UNESCO as a whole deploys its presence in the world. For instance, even as regional offices are to become fully multisectoral, there is no clear delineation of the roles played both by the sectors and BSP to ensure that this key dimension of the reform is properly carried out. Reiterating our concern with the optimal management of staff mobility, we note that the document mentions the issue in relation to the management of human resources, but it is clear that the mobility policy cannot succeed without an integrated approach of all the entities managed by the Secretariat on the ground and without a programmatic integration of their action.