

Executive Board

Two hundred and twenty-second session

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

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

PART IV

HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES

ADDENDUM

COMMENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION OF UNESCO (ISAU)

SUMMARY

C. Geographical distribution and gender balance of the staff of the Secretariat

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 222 EX/4.IV.C).

1. ISAU takes note of the Administration's report on geographical distribution and gender balance, and submits its comments hereunder.

General comments

2. In 220 EX/Decision 5.IV.B, the Executive Board introduced new and specific provisions aimed at strengthening transparency and Member State monitoring of the geographical distribution and financing of UNESCO staff.¹ The Director-General was also explicitly asked "that a full account of the geographical distribution and funding of the entire UNESCO workforce should include a regular presentation of grade distributions of all fixed-term posts and how posts are funded, namely as to whether they are considered geographical, non-geographical or donor-supported". The report makes

¹ [220 EX/Decision 5.IV.B, para.11.](#)



no explicit reference to this decision. The omission is all the more worrying in that it concerns new elements introduced by the Executive Board, rather than obligations already in force. Nor do the tables presented reflect what was expected from the decision. For example, data relating to workforce financing, available on the HRM website, do not appear in the Administration document.

3. Furthermore, the methodology employed in the report lacks consistency: trends are analysed over varying periods (6 months, 18 months, 10 years), which makes a reliable comparative reading difficult. This methodological variability raises questions about data selection and representativeness.

4. Finally, in Tables 2 and 3 we note an ambiguous statement: “Including appointment decisions already taken but not yet reflected in the June 2025 geographical distribution”. This wording requires clarification. Do the recruitments recorded concern only those made up to June 30, or do they also include decisions made after that date? If appointments taken up to 30 June are recorded, but some of the posts were taken up after that date, it could result in double counting in the next report. Clarification of this approach would be welcome to ensure data reliability.

Part I – Geographical distribution

Overall representation

5. We note that four Member States became represented during the period, but three Member States became non-represented. The net increase in representation is therefore limited, with the Organization stagnating at 81% of Member States represented. This apparent evolution masks a more worrying reality: the fact that progress towards a more balanced representation can be neutralized by even statistically marginal departures of nationals from non- or underrepresented States is a clear indicator of the **systemic fragility** of current implementation. This underlines the fact that advances remain **vulnerable** to individual fluctuations, and that the rebalancing policy has not yet reached a sufficiently robust level to guarantee its sustainability. It is therefore imperative to actively strengthen the recruitment of candidates from these States, so that progress is not compromised by unpredictable internal dynamics. In this respect, it should be recalled that the objective of 85% set for 2022 has still not been reached ([41 C/Resolution 64](#)).

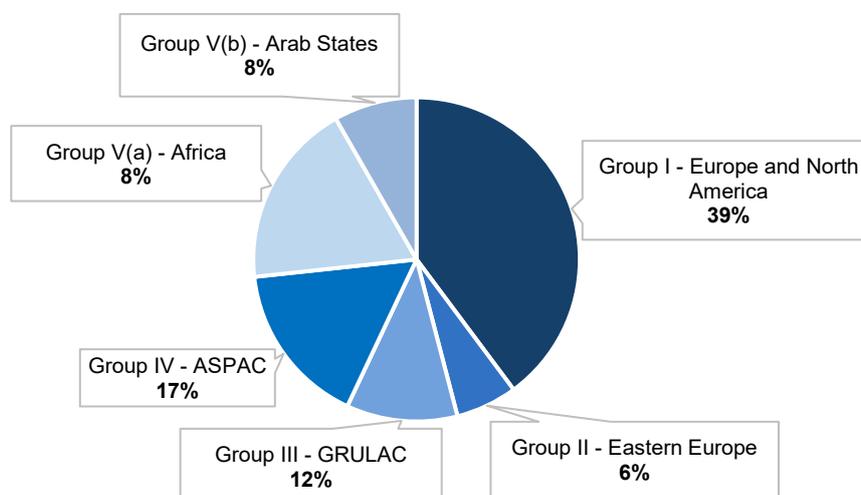
6. With regard to trends by category of representation, some of the wording used in the Administration’s report needs to be clarified or qualified. As it stands, it can be misleading and does not always accurately reflect the trends observed in the data. A more rigorous and balanced presentation would be desirable, to guarantee an objective and transparent reading of the dynamics underway. It should be recalled that the clarity of the information provided to Member States is inextricably linked to the transparency they are entitled to.

7. For example, the document refers to a “continuous upward curve” since January 2022 for normally represented States, even though Chart 3 shows that it has been falling over the past six months. Similarly, the Administration writes in paragraph 9 that “Trends are less pronounced for over-represented Member States”, even though the number of States in this category has increased from 18 to 28 in ten years, i.e. +55%. The biases in these presentations are obvious and compromise the credibility of the report, obscuring the reality of persistent imbalances.

8. In Chart 4 of the Administration’s document, we note that the distribution by regional group of geographical posts remains highly unbalanced, with a persistent over-representation of Group I (Europe and North America), which reaches 35% of the total workforce, and 42% (Table 4 of the Administration’s document) for posts at Director level and above.

9. Here again, if we analyse the total workforce (geographical **and** non-geographical posts), the situation is even worse, as shown in Chart 1 below.

Chart 1: Representation of all G, P/D and above staff by regional group (excluding affiliate personnel) (June 2025)



10. We stress the need for a clear, stable and consistent methodology for all statistics presented. As long as periods and perimeters vary from indicator to indicator, it is impossible for Member States to measure progress objectively. In this respect, while it is useful to include raw data in the annexes, they provide little visibility.

11. To make up for this shortcoming, we have drawn up Tables 1 and 2 below to improve the readability of data on geographical and non-geographical posts. We deplore again the absence of details concerning the distribution **by grade** of non-geographical posts, which nevertheless represent 73% of staff members. In non-geographical posts, the prevalence of Group I is even more marked than in geographical posts (52% as against 35%). In addition, of all non-geographical posts (including NO and GS), Group I accounts for 40%.

Table 1: Breakdown of geographical posts by category and regional group (June 2025)

Geographical posts - Distribution by category and by regional group												Situation as at 30 June 2024		
Situation as at 30 June 2025													June 2024	
Regional group	DDG	ADG	D-2	D1	P-5	P-4	P-3	P-2	P-1	Total	%	Total	%	
Group I - Europe and North America	0	3	7	16	57	67	68	28	1	247	34.89%	242	35.28%	
Group II - Eastern Europe	0	0	0	3	5	12	23	11	0	54	7.63%	56	8.16%	
Group III - GRULAC	0	2	1	4	15	22	25	16	0	85	12.01%	80	11.66%	
Group IV - ASPAC	1	0	1	9	18	49	44	24	0	146	20.62%	137	19.97%	
Group V(a) - Africa	0	1	2	4	19	39	32	24	0	121	17.09%	119	17.35%	
Group V(b) - Arab States	0	1	0	5	4	17	14	14	0	55	7.77%	52	7.58%	
Total	1	7	11	41	118	206	206	117	1	708		686		
Non-Member States														
Israel	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1		1		

Table 2: Breakdown of non-geographical posts by category and regional group (June 2025)

Non-geographical posts - Distribution by category and by regional group										Situation as at 30 June 2024			
Situation as at 30 June 2025													
Regional group	D/P		Total D/P	%	NO	GS		Total GS	%	Total	%	Total	%
	Headquarters	Field				Headquarters	Field						
Group I - Europe and North America	216	112	328	51.65%	0	297	132	429	44.32%	757	40.16%	750	41.60%
Group II - Eastern Europe	18	16	34	5.35%	25	36	14	50	5.17%	109	5.78%	96	5.32%
Group III - GRULAC	42	20	62	9.76%	54	26	74	100	10.33%	216	11.46%	194	10.76%
Group IV - ASPAC	74	34	108	17.01%	51	39	90	129	13.33%	288	15.28%	269	14.92%
Group V(a) - Africa	19	43	62	9.76%	123	54	114	168	17.36%	353	18.73%	341	18.91%
Group V(b) - Arab States	33	8	41	6.46%	29	40	52	92	9.50%	162	8.59%	153	8.49%
Total	402	233	635		282	492	476	968		1885		1803	
Non-Member States													
Israel	0	0			0	1	0	1					

Appointments and promotion

12. In paragraph 12 of the Administration's document, the latter highlights the achievement of "the objective of filling 50% of geographical posts with candidates from non- and underrepresented Member States". We welcome the achievement of this objective, which should also apply to non-geographical posts. Table 3 below, which reflects staff movements for both geographical and non-geographical posts, shows that only 31% of appointments are from non- or underrepresented Member States, well short of the 50% target. Similarly, these Member States account for only 19% of promotions.

Table 3: Breakdown of staff movements by level of representation for geographical and non-geographical posts (P and D)

Level of representation	1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025					
	Type of movement				Total	%
	Appointments (including inter-agency transfers)		Promotions			
Non- and underrepresented	19	31.10%	9	19.10%	28	26%
Over-represented	23	37.70%	19	40.40%	42	39%
Normally represented	19	31.10%	19	40.40%	38	35%
Total	61		47		108	

13. It is important to point out that two out of three directors appointed are from Group I (Table 4 of the Administration), which is particularly worrying and contrary to 220 EX/Decision 5.IV.B, which states that "the geographical distribution at grade D-1 and above should be improved and also requests the Director-General to take concrete steps to improve the situation in a timely and quantified manner".²

14. In Table 3 of the Administration report, which only takes into account geographical posts, we can see that several sectors are still below the 50% target for recruitment from non- and underrepresented Member States: the Division for Communications and Public Engagement (33%), Social and Human Sciences Sector (33%) and Priority Africa and External Relations Sector (40%), and to a lesser extent the Education Sector (46%). While we note the progress since the last report, it would be useful to make public the reasons for such disparities between sectors/offices and the measures planned to remedy them.

² [220 EX/Decision 5.IV.B, para.8.](#)

15. We note with satisfaction the progress made in appointments at P/D and above. Table 4 below shows a drop in the percentage of Group I appointments from 48% to 31% between June 2024 and June 2025. This is encouraging for geographical distribution, although Group I remains in the majority.

Table 4: Appointments to geographical and non-geographical posts (combined)

(based on staff-movement data published by HRM from July 2024 to June 2025)

Appointments (including inter-agency transfers)	From 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025										From July 2023 to June 2024	
	ADG	D-2	D1	P-5	P-4	P-3	P-2	P-1	Total	%	Total	%
Regional group	-	-	-	4	8	4	3	-	19	31%	19	48%
Group II - Eastern Europe	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	2	3%	1	3%
Group III - GRULAC	-	-	1	2	-	4	1	-	8	13%	5	13%
Group IV - ASPAC	-	-	-	2	1	7	7	-	17	28%	5	13%
Group V(a) - Africa	-	-	1	1	2	4	3	-	11	18%	8	20%
Group V(b) - Arab States	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	-	4	7%	2	5%
Total	0	0	2	10	11	20	18	0	61	100%	40	100%

16. The same remark cannot be made in relation to promotions. Table 5 below shows that 38% of promotions are accounted for by Group I, an increase of five points on the preceding period.

Table 5: Appointments with promotion to geographical and non-geographical posts (combined)

(based on staff-movement data published by HRM from July 2024 to June 2025)

Appointments with promotion	From 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025										From July 2023 to June 2024	
	ADG	D-2	D-1	P-5	P-4	P-3	P-2	P-1	Total	%	Total	%
Regional group	1	1	2	4	8	1	1	-	18	38%	13	33%
Group II - Eastern Europe	-	-	-	2	-	4	-	-	6	13%	4	10%
Group III - GRULAC	-	-	1	-	3	2	-	-	6	13%	4	10%
Group IV - ASPAC	-	-	-	1	3	1	-	-	5	11%	8	21%
Group V(a) - Africa	-	-	-	-	7	1	-	-	8	17%	6	15%
Group V(b) - Arab States	-	-	-	-	2	1	1	-	4	8%	4	11%
Total	1	1	3	7	23	10	2	0	47	100%	39	100%

Other specific measures for remedying the geographical imbalance

17. We applaud the efforts linked to the Young Professionals Programme and the Mid-Level Professionals Programme (MLPP), which have proved their effectiveness and produced encouraging results. In this respect, ISAU welcomes the Administration's presentation of the concrete measures implemented. Given the success of the MLPP Programme, it would be legitimate to consider extending it, possibly under a different name, to P-2 and P-5 grades in particular.

18. With regard to the recently published administrative circular ([AC/HR/90](#)) on the internship programme policy, we deplore the abolition of the remote internship and the deferral of the stipend, measures designed to help rebalance geographical distribution, especially as neither staff associations nor Young UNESCO representatives were consulted on the changes to the draft initially submitted. In addition to the financial aspect, it is also essential to preserving – or even restoring – UNESCO's image as an employer that is concerned about the well-being of its staff and that applies the principles and values which it advocates. We therefore ask that the policy be applied in full – to include remuneration for interns – as soon as possible.

Part II – Gender balance

19. We note that women now represent 58% of the total workforce. However, this proportion masks profound inequalities: women are in the vast majority in junior posts (71%), but remain in the minority in management posts (41%). The effort announced by the Administration to recruit more men to junior posts does not address the structural nature of the problem, which lies in the absence of concrete measures for career development. ISAU therefore recommends a more integrated approach, aimed at promoting women's access to higher grades, rather than limiting itself to a mechanical rebalancing at entry-level positions, which can only have perverse effects if no concrete measures are taken to improve career progression not only for women, but for all staff.

20. Once again, we note inconsistent presentation: the report states that "At 43%, the percentage of women at P-5 level has remained constant since June 2024, the highest rate in the last 10 years", while immediately afterwards it states that "The proportion of women Directors reached 41% in June 2025".

21. We note that no women were appointed to a director's post during the period covered by the report, while four men were appointed, three of them through internal promotion. This situation highlights the persistent underrepresentation of women in director posts. It emphasizes the need to strengthen measures to promote women's access to positions of responsibility, in line with the Organization's commitment to gender equality.

22. Finally, we welcome the progress made at sector level, although we must continue to insist that the objective must be achieved not just on average, but at every level of the hierarchy.

Conclusion

23. Examination of the Administration's report reveals a series of isolated advances as well as structural shortcomings in the implementation of the Organization's commitments in terms of geographical distribution and gender balance. While some progress is to be welcomed, particularly in the Young Professionals Programme and targeted recruitment efforts, it remains fragile and unevenly distributed across staff categories and hierarchical levels.

24. The urgent need for the Administration to implement concrete measures to effectively address regional and gender imbalances contrasts with the draft decision in the report (para. 23). For example, while the Member States adopted a firm decision at the 220th session that "the geographical distribution at grade D-1 and above should be improved and also requests the Director-General to take concrete steps to improve the situation in a timely and quantified manner" (emphasis added), the Administration's document states that this distribution "can be improved", and that the Director-General must "continue her efforts to improve the situation" (emphasis added). This example reflects a lack of ambition on the part of the Administration, which could jeopardize the achievement of the objectives set by the Member States.

25. It is therefore essential that future communications from the Administration reflect rigorously and faithfully the decisions of the Executive Board, and a clear commitment to implementation that can be measured and monitored over time.



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222 EX/4.IV.C Add. Corr.

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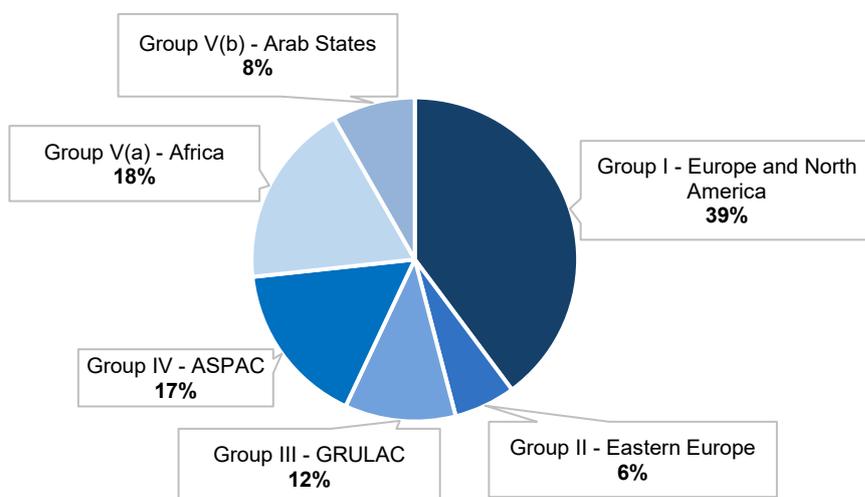
ADDENDUM

CORRIGENDUM

COMMENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION OF UNESCO (ISAU)

C. Geographical distribution and gender balance of the staff of the Secretariat

In paragraph 9, **Chart 1, Representation of all G, P/D and above staff by regional group (excluding affiliate personnel) (June 2025)**, should be replaced by Chart 1 below:



Job: 2500956E

In paragraph 15, **Table 4: Appointments to geographical and non-geographical posts (combined)** (based on staff-movement data published by HRM from July 2024 to June 2025) should be replaced by Table 4 below:

Appointments (including inter-agency transfers)											From July 2023 to June 2024	
From 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025												
Regional group	ADG	D-2	D1	P-5	P-4	P-3	P-2	P-1	Total	%	Total	%
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Group V(b) - Arab States	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	-	4	7%	2	5%
Total	0	0	2	10	11	20	18	0	61	100%	40	100%

In paragraph 16, **Table 5: Appointments with promotion to geographical and non-geographical posts (combined)** (based on staff-movement data published by HRM from July 2024 to June 2025) should be replaced by Table 5 below:

Appointments with promotion											From July 2023 to June 2024	
From 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025												
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Paragraph 18 should read as follows:

18. With regard to the recently published administrative circular ([AC/HR/90](#)) on the internship programme policy, we deplore the abolition of the **remote internship** and the deferral of the stipend, measures designed to help rebalance geographical distribution, especially as neither staff associations nor Young UNESCO representatives were consulted on the changes to the draft initially submitted. In addition to the financial aspect, it is also essential to preserving – or even restoring – UNESCO's image as an employer that is concerned about the well-being of its staff and that applies the principles and values which it advocates. We therefore ask that the policy be applied in full – to include remuneration for interns – as soon as possible.