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**222 EX/4.IV.D Add.**

**Executive Board**

**Two hundred and twenty-second session**

PARIS, 26 September 2025

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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**

**D. Report by the Director-General on the activities of the Appeals Board**

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.D).

1. ISAU welcomes the publication of the first annual report of the Appeals Board, pursuant to [220 EX/Decision 18](#) of the Executive Board and Recommendation 5 of the Report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) ([JIU/REP/2023/2](#)) on the internal pre-tribunal-stage appeal mechanisms available to staff of the United Nations system organizations. This report represents an important step towards better institutionalization of UNESCO's internal justice system.

2. However, we express our deep concern at the **substantial changes** made by the Directorate to the initial version of the report, forwarded as an advance copy to the staff associations by the Secretariat of the Appeals Board. These alterations, which are more than mere editorial adjustments, have the effect of **reducing the analytical scope of the report, weakening the transparency of**



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the Appeals Board's operations, **minimizing the value of its work**, and **limiting the ability of Member States to fully exercise their oversight role**.

### Part I – Nature and consequences of changes to the report of the Appeals Board

3. The table below provides an overview of the nature and scope of the changes made to the Appeals Board report.

Deleted or modified items	Content	Implications for Member States' debates and harmonized procedures
Detailed annex with 37 cases processed in 2024 (CAP 506 to CAP 540)	Case summaries, recommendations, reasons for rejection or acceptance.	Prevents identification of systemic trends (e.g. Security and Safety Section (ADM/SEC), limits States' ability to formulate targeted recommendations.
The Appeals Board's general recommendations	Transparency, access to case law, review of regulatory framework.	Weakens the role of the Appeals Board as a proposing body, reduces the impact of reforms expected by Member States.
Graphics	Evolution of the number of cases handled, breakdown by unit, grade, gender, language, alignment of the Directorate with the recommendations of the Appeals Board.	Reduces report readability, limits comparative analysis.
Explicit mention of malfunctions in certain units	ADM/SEC: 35% of cases in 2024.	Deletes data essential for monitoring internal practices and preventing abuse.
Analysis of Appeals Board human resources	Chronic understaffing, call for structural reinforcement.	Minimizes issues of institutional viability, prevents Member States from supporting corrective measures in line with JIU standards.

4. This approach raises several major problems:

- (i) **Undermining the independence of the Appeals Board**  
Any modification of the report initially drafted by the Appeals Board, and not validated by it, constitutes interference contrary to the principles of good governance.
- (ii) **Impeding informed debate by Member States**  
Member States have asked for disaggregated and accurate data. Their removal prevents a rigorous assessment of how the appeals system is working.
- (iii) **Risk of weakening the internal justice system**  
By weakening the recommendations of the Appeals Board, the Directorate is compromising the credibility and work of this independent body.

**(iv) Erosion of the accountability of the Administration**

The removal of concrete cases and recommendations made by the Appeals Board makes it impossible to measure the real impact of the Director-General's decisions, particularly in cases of non-alignment.

5. By means of a decision taken at its 220th session, the Executive Board "Request[ed] the Director-General in line with Recommendation 5 of document [JIU/REP/2023/2](#) to report to it annually, starting in 2025, on the functioning of UNESCO's formal internal appeal mechanisms, including the specialized recourse mechanisms, with details on the number, subject matter and outcome of appeals, including cases deemed irreceivable, information on the demographics of applicants and information on whether the appealed decisions were upheld or revised, disaggregated by type of procedure, as applicable;"<sup>1</sup> This decision gives the Director-General responsibility for submitting the report, but in no way calls into question the principle of independence of the Appeals Board. The latter must therefore retain the right to prepare its own report, without interference. This principle is essential to ensure the credibility of the internal justice system and the confidence of stakeholders.

6. It is legitimate for the Directorate to wish to make observations or comments on the report. On the other hand, it should not intervene in its drafting or modify its content before transmission to the Member States. Such a practice compromises the transparency and independence of the Appeals Board, and risks pre-empting intergovernmental debate by directing information from a one-sided perspective.

7. The information contained in the report is of a factual and procedural nature. It must come from the Appeals Board, which is the only body capable of collecting, analysing and presenting it. Any alteration or deletion of this data by an outside entity, even the Directorate, constitutes a breach of the integrity of the reporting process.

8. To dispel any doubts or suspicions of interference, it would be advisable for the Directorate to clarify the procedures that led to the publication of an amended version of the report. Like the annual reports of other independent bodies such as the Ethics Office and the Division of Internal Oversight Services (IOS), whose editorial independence is presumed, the Appeals Board's report must enjoy the same level of institutional protection.

9. It is therefore essential that this report be transmitted in its original, unaltered version, in order to preserve the transparency and functioning of the internal justice system.

**Part II – Specific comments on the initial Appeals Board document**

10. ISAU hereby submits its observations on the **initial** report as forwarded to the staff associations as an advance copy. This analytical commentary does not reproduce the content of the original report, nor does it contain any confidential information.

11. ISAU congratulates the Appeals Board on the presentation of this first annual report, and the neutrality with which the information is presented therein. This approach helps reinforce stakeholders' confidence in the impartiality of the Appeals Board. This exercise in transparency is not only useful, but necessary for the defence of staff rights and the credibility of UNESCO's internal justice system. The report provides a solid basis for informed institutional dialogue on issues of internal justice, transparency and governance.

12. We welcome the comprehensiveness of the report, and in particular its annex, which makes a valuable contribution to the transparency of the internal justice system. It responds directly to the requests made by ISAU in its previous comments, in particular on the occasion of the examination of the Director-General's report on judgments issued by the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal (ILOAT).

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<sup>1</sup> [220 EX/Decision 18.7](#)

13. The inclusion of detailed data – such as the number of appeals submitted, reasons for rejection and recommendations that are favourable or unfavourable to staff – represents a significant step forward. These long-awaited elements finally enable rigorous monitoring of the effectiveness of appeal mechanisms, and strengthen the ability of stakeholders to assess their operation objectively. We are pleased to note significant improvements over the past two years, both in the number of cases handled, and in the quality and relevance of the Appeals Board's recommendations.

14. ISAU fully supports the Appeals Board's request to strengthen its human resources. Staffing is an essential investment to consolidate progress and enable the Appeals Board to respond effectively and sustainably to the Organization's expectations.

15. This need for resources is all the more necessary as significant improvements must be made in terms of compliance – with procedural deadlines over the reporting period:

- The average interval of 474 days between the Administration's response and the holding of hearings, i.e. over 15 months, far exceeds the statutory six-month period provided for in the texts. This situation gives cause for concern in terms of the right of access to an effective remedy. Corrective measures should be considered to reduce these delays and ensure that the principles of speed and fairness are respected in the handling of appeals.
- In addition, nine cases exceeded the statutory 60-day deadline for transmitting the Appeals Board's report to the Directorate, in some cases being more than one month late. While these delays can be explained in part by the limited availability of the Chairperson and Board members, it would be advisable to anticipate these constraints through organizational adjustments. In particular, ISAU encourages better planning of schedules and a wider pool of available members, to ensure strict compliance with the Statutes and preserve the quality of the deliberative process.

16. We welcome the initiative to build up a body of case law by archiving the decisions of the Appeals Board. However, the publication of simple summaries would not be enough to meet the requirements of transparency and predictability. To improve access to legal information, all the Board's recommendations should be made available in anonymized form via a dedicated, regularly updated online platform. Such a system would contribute to a better understanding of staff rights, while encouraging more realistic management of their expectations of the internal justice system. It would also strengthen the Administration's accountability and consistency of practice.

17. Furthermore, ISAU notes a notable discrepancy in the Director-General's rate of alignment with the Appeals Board's recommendations: 60% for staff-friendly recommendations, compared with 94% alignment overall. This imbalance can undermine staff confidence in the internal justice system and increase recourse to ILOAT, with all the financial and institutional implications this entails. It is essential that the recommendations of the Appeals Board, as an independent body, are fully taken into account in the Administration's decision-making process.

18. We also note the disproportionate concentration of appeals from the Security and Safety Section (ADM/SEC), accounting for over a third of cases. This abnormally high rate suggests persistent structural malfunctions that need to be investigated and corrected by the Administration. Other units (Division of Operations (ADM/OPS), Natural Sciences Sector (SC), Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs (LA)) also appear on a recurring basis and warrant special attention. These observations are in line with the testimonials received by ISAU from colleagues.

19. In order to enable Member States to assess the robustness of the internal justice system, a **clear and systematic link** needs to be established between Appeals Board decisions and ILOAT judgments.

20. The establishment of a structured, transparent and systematic mechanism would make it possible to:

- (i) **Trace cases** which, after being examined by the Appeals Board, were brought before ILOAT.
- (ii) **Compare** Appeals Board recommendations with Directorate decisions and ILOAT rulings on the same cases.
- (iii) **Document discrepancies** between Appeals Board positions and final ILOAT decisions.

21. This formal link could take the form of:

- a **dedicated table** in the Director-General's report on ILOAT judgments concerning UNESCO;
- a **comparative analysis** of the Board's recommendations and ILOAT decisions, to identify areas of convergence and divergence;
- a **monitoring indicator** on the rate of alignment between the two bodies;
- or an **anonymized database for tracking individual appeals**, accessible to all staff members and Member States, thus facilitating the tracking of appeals between their initial handling by the Appeals Board and the eventual judgment handed down by ILOAT.

22. The introduction of such a mechanism would help strengthen the Administration's accountability, while enhancing the role of the Appeals Board as a reference body. It would also make it possible to reduce recourse to external procedures that are often costly and complex, while promoting greater predictability of decisions, to the benefit of the staff and therefore the Organization as a whole.

## Conclusion

23. ISAU would like Member States to have access to all the information they need to carry out their supervisory duties, and for the Appeals Board's contributions to be fully taken into account in the Organization's decision-making processes.

24. In view of the above, it would be desirable for the Executive Board to specify in its decision that the Appeals Board itself must submit its annual report, and to ask the Directorate:

- to publish the Appeal Board's 2024 report in its entirety, unaltered by the Directorate;
- to ensure access to Appeals Board data and case law via a dedicated platform;
- to analyse the link between cases handled by the Appeals Board and those brought before ILOAT.



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**HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES**

**SUMMARY**

**D. Report by the Director-General on the activities of the Appeals Board**

This inaugural annual Report, submitted by the Director-General, presents key developments and performance indicators for the 2024 reporting year related to UNESCO's formal internal appeal mechanisms, with a particular focus on the operations of the Appeals Board. Prepared in accordance with Executive Board 220 EX/Decision 18 and Recommendation 5 of the Joint Inspection Unit's report (JIU/REP/2023/2), the report outlines progress in advancing internal justice through procedural improvements, strengthened case management, and enhanced operational efficiency.

The Executive Board is invited to take note of this report. Noteworthy achievements include a substantial reduction in the case backlog, a near fourfold increase in output, and a commitment by the Appeals Board to improving compliance with statutory hearing deadlines in 2026, subject to the availability of adequate resources.

Decision required: paragraph 37.



Job: 2500008E

**REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL  
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE APPEALS BOARD**

**2024**

## I. MISSION STATEMENT OF THE APPEALS BOARD

1. The Appeals Board of UNESCO is an independent and impartial body established to provide staff members with a formal mechanism to contest administrative decisions and disciplinary measures that may affect their terms of employment. Since its establishment by the Executive Board in 1948, the Appeals Board has played a central role in ensuring the fair and rigorous application of internal justice within the Organization.
2. The Board's mandate is to advise the Director-General, who retains final decision-making authority, on whether the contested decisions are consistent with the applicable Staff Regulations, Staff Rules, and other elements of the Organization's internal legal framework.
3. Each appeal is reviewed by a five-member panel composed of a Chairperson appointed by the Executive Board, two members appointed by the Director-General, and two members selected from a panel elected by staff members. This structure ensures balanced representation and reinforces the independence of the Appeals Board. The Chairperson and Alternate Chairperson are external to the Organization and maintain no reporting relationship with the Administration.
4. The Appeals Board operates under a clearly defined legal framework set out in the Statutes of the Appeals Board (Statutes). It is supported by a dedicated Secretariat and conducts its work in accordance with the principles of due process, impartiality, and good administration. Its procedures are designed to ensure that staff members are heard fairly and that recommendations are made with diligence and integrity.
5. In recent years, the Appeals Board has undertaken significant efforts to modernize its operations, reduce case backlogs, and strengthen its institutional memory through the digital archiving of its reports. It has also expanded its outreach to staff members and stakeholders and remains committed to enhancing its training and knowledge-sharing initiatives.
6. Through its work, the Appeals Board contributes to the rule of law within UNESCO and supports the development of a respectful and accountable working environment for all staff members.

## II. CORE VALUES OF THE APPEALS BOARD

7. The Pledge of Ethical Conduct formally affirms the ethical and procedural commitments that guide the work of the Appeals Board. It serves as the foundation for the following core principles, which reflect the standards of conduct expected of international civil servants and the formal nature of the Appeals Board's proceedings. These values are essential to maintaining the integrity, credibility, and fairness of UNESCO's internal justice system.
  - (a) **Independence** defines the Appeals Board's role within UNESCO's internal justice system. The Board operates autonomously and free from any external influence, ensuring that its assessments and recommendations are based solely on the merits of each case and the applicable legal framework.
  - (b) **Impartiality** is fundamental to the Board's credibility. In all its proceedings, the Appeals Board maintains strict neutrality, ensuring that no party is favoured and that every appeal is reviewed fairly and without prejudice.
  - (c) **Integrity** underpins the conduct of the Board. Its work is carried out with honesty, professionalism, and fidelity to the internal laws of the Organization. The Board upholds the highest standards of conduct in all aspects of its mandate.
  - (d) **Confidentiality** is rigorously maintained throughout the appeals process. The Board ensures that all case-related information, including personal data and internal

communications, is handled with discretion and in accordance with applicable data protection rules.

- (e) **Propriety** governs the behaviour of the Board in its institutional and procedural conduct. The Appeals Board avoids any action or appearance that could compromise the fairness or perceived neutrality of its work.
- (f) **Fairness** is a guiding principle in the conduct of proceedings. The Board ensures that all parties are given the opportunity to be heard and that its recommendations are reasoned, balanced, and grounded in the applicable legal and procedural standards.
- (g) **Diligence** characterizes the Board's approach to its responsibilities. The Appeals Board is committed to the timely and thorough examination of each case, ensuring that its work is carried out with care, efficiency, and attention to detail.

### III. HUMAN RESOURCES OF THE APPEALS BOARD

8. As of mid-2024, the unit comprises one established post at the P-3 level, supported by a temporary staff member at the P-2 level. This team is responsible for the full range of functions necessary for the Board's operations, including case management, legal research, procedural coordination, and administrative support.

9. Benchmarking data from across the United Nations system underscores the challenges associated with this level of resourcing. According to the 2023 report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), internal appeal mechanisms are typically supported by one full-time staff member at the P-4 level per 2,000 staff members, with an average annual caseload of 23.5 cases.

10. However, the Appeals Board continues to serve the entire Organization, managing a high volume of appeals with efficiency and adherence to procedural standards.

### IV. APPEALS BOARD CASELOAD

11. At the start of 2024, the Appeals Board carried over a backlog of 60 cases. With 18 Notices of Appeal filed during the year, the total caseload reached 78 active matters. This represents a significant reduction from the previous year, which began with a backlog of 84 cases and a total docket of 102. The downward trend reflects the Board's continued efforts to enhance efficiency and streamline case management.

12. Of the 78 active cases, the Board disposed of 37, representing approximately 47% of the total caseload. Hearings were held in 23 of these, while the remaining 14 were adjudicated on the basis of written submissions—either at the request of the parties or were summarily dismissed as irreceivable. One case was also struck from the register due to want of prosecution. In addition to the cases formally examined, 11 appeals were closed through other means: five were resolved amicably between the parties, four were abandoned by the appellants, and two were voluntarily withdrawn.

### V. YEARLY TRENDS IN APPEALS BOARD ACTIVITY

13. In 2024, the Appeals Board achieved a significant increase in its output, issuing a record 35 reports and disposing of 37 cases. This continued the upward trajectory established in 2023, during which the Board issued 27 reports and disposed of 32 cases. These figures represent a substantial departure from the historical average of approximately 10 cases disposed annually between 2016 and 2022, underscoring the impact of recent reforms and operational enhancements.

14. The disposal of 37 cases in 2024 reflects not only the scale of the Board’s workload but also the operational gains achieved through targeted structural and procedural enhancements.

15. The surge in productivity is particularly striking when viewed in relation to financial data. From 2016 to 2022, the Board’s annual expenditures averaged nearly \$50,000, peaking at \$76,492.06 in 2021, while the average number of cases disposed annually remained around 10. In contrast, expenditures in 2023 and 2024 dropped to approximately \$33,000 – nearly one-third less – while the number of cases disposed rose to 32 and 37, respectively. This represents an output that has almost quadrupled, achieved at significantly lower cost.

## **VI. APPEAL OUTCOMES AND SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES IN 2024**

16. In terms of appeal outcomes, the Board recommended dismissal in 20 cases (54.1%), granting appeals in whole or in part in five cases (13.5%), found 11 cases (29.7%) to be irreceivable, and removed one case (2.7%) from the register for want of prosecution.

17. The 37 cases reviewed in 2024 encompassed a wide range of employment-related matters. The most frequently represented category was classified as “Other” (8 cases), which mostly included challenges to general policies. This was followed by redeployment or transfer (7), entitlements (6), performance evaluations (3), non-selection for posts (3), and disciplinary measures (3). Additional grounds included closure of complaints (2), reclassification (2), non-renewal of contracts (2), and appointment (1).

18. This distribution underscores the diversity and complexity of disputes considered by the Board and highlights recurring areas of concern, particularly in relation to staff mobility, benefits, and performance management.

## **VII. RECEIVABILITY**

19. Of the 37 cases examined in 2024, 11 were deemed irreceivable, primarily due to jurisdictional limitations under the Board’s legal framework. In five cases, appellants challenged general organizational policies rather than specific administrative decisions affecting them individually—matters that fall outside the Board’s jurisdiction *ratione materiae*.

20. Two cases were dismissed because they concerned proposals for settlement, which do not constitute final administrative decisions subject to appeal. Two additional cases were found to be moot, and two more were dismissed due to the appellants’ failure to follow the required procedural steps, including the exhaustion of internal remedies prior to filing.

## **VIII. THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL’S FINAL DECISION**

21. Pursuant to paragraph 24 of the Statutes, the Director-General is required to issue a final decision on an appeal within 90 days of receiving the Appeals Board’s report. This decision is made following a thorough review of the Board’s findings of fact, conclusions of law, and recommendations.

22. Of the 37 cases examined in 2024, the Director-General aligned herself with the Board’s recommendation in 32 cases, either by dismissing or granting the appeal as advised. In one additional case, where the Board recommended granting the appeal, the parties entered into negotiations, resulting in a mutually agreed settlement.

23. In two cases, no decision was issued by the Director-General, as the matters were no longer active: one was removed from the register for want of prosecution, and the other was brought to the ILOAT without the required waiver, rendering it procedurally closed.

24. The Director-General departed from the Board's recommendation in only two instances, resulting in a rate of 94.3% alignment (33 out of 35 applicable cases). Notably, in the five cases where the Board recommended that the appeal be granted, the Director-General either accepted the recommendation or entered into a settlement agreement in three cases, reflecting a 60% alignment with recommendations favourable to staff members.

25. These figures reflect a high level of institutional adherence to the Appeals Board's findings and reinforce the Board's role as a trusted, impartial, and authoritative body within UNESCO's internal justice system.

## **IX. ADDITIONAL DATA**

26. Of the 37 cases considered last year, 17 were filed by staff members in Professional and Higher categories while 20 were filed by General Service staff. General Service staff at the G-3 level accounted for the largest share of appeals, representing over 43% of all cases.

27. Professional staff at the P-4 level filed the second-highest number of appeals (18.9%), followed by D-1 level staff (16.2%), indicating that appeals span across senior levels as well.

28. Of the 37 appeals considered in 2024, 11 were filed by female staff members (30%) and 26 by male staff members (70%). In terms of duty station, 28 appeals (76%) were submitted by staff members based at Headquarters, while nine appeals (24%) originated from field offices.

29. With respect to the language of proceedings, 35 cases (95%) were conducted in French, and only two cases (5%) in English.

## **X. TIMELINESS OF HEARINGS**

30. In accordance with paragraph 18 of the Statutes, the Secretary is required to convene the Board to hear an appeal as expeditiously as possible, and in any event no later than six months following receipt of the Administration's Reply. In practice, however, adherence to this statutory timeline has proven difficult, primarily due to a substantial backlog of cases inherited from prior years. Notably, several cases adjudicated in 2024 originated as far back as 2016, underscoring a prolonged period of stagnation and administrative inefficiency preceding the Board's reform initiatives launched in 2023.

31. In 2024, the average interval between the receipt of the Administration's Reply and the scheduling of a hearing was 474 calendar days—approximately 15.6 months—significantly exceeding the six-month statutory limit. Regrettably, none of the 37 cases disposed in 2024 were scheduled within the prescribed timeframe, unless the 14 cases concluded without a hearing are included in the calculation.

32. With the backlog now reduced to only nine cases, the Board is optimistic that it will begin to comply with the six-month requirement in a substantive manner in 2026. It has set a target of achieving compliance in at least 50% of cases reviewed that year. This objective reflects the Board's sustained commitment to procedural efficiency while upholding the quality and integrity of its deliberative processes.

## **XI. TIMELINESS OF REPORT ISSUANCE**

33. In accordance with paragraph 23 of the Statutes, the Secretary is required to transmit the Board's report to the Director-General, with a copy to the appellant, within 60 calendar days following the conclusion of the Board's session. The Director-General must then issue a final decision on the appeal within 90 calendar days of receiving the report.

34. In 2024, the Appeals Board issued its reports within an average of 57 calendar days, demonstrating general adherence to the statutory timeframe.

35. Of the 37 cases reviewed, 28 reports were issued in a timely manner. These included 14 cases that proceeded to a hearing and 14 others adjudicated on the basis of written submissions—either at the request of the parties or due to summary dismissal on grounds of irreceivability. As the latter cases did not proceed to a hearing, the 60-day deadline was not formally applicable. The remaining 9 reports were issued beyond the statutory deadline, with the longest delay being 31 days.

36. Delays in meeting the 60-day requirement were primarily due to the limited availability of Chairpersons or Board members. Nevertheless, the Board remains committed to issuing timely reports and continues to strive for full compliance with statutory deadlines, without compromising the quality, accuracy, or fairness of its legal analysis and recommendations.

### **Proposed draft decision**

37. In light of the above, the Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 220EX/Decision 18;
2. Having examined document 222 EX/4.IV.D,
3. Takes note of the content thereof;
4. Invites the Director-General to report to it at its 225th session on the functioning of UNESCO's formal internal appeal mechanisms, including the specialized recourse mechanisms.

## ANNEX

### MESSAGE FROM THE APPEALS BOARD

In accordance with Decision 220 EX/18 and following Recommendation 5 of the Joint Inspection Unit's report (JIU/REP/2023/2), we are pleased to present the first Annual Report of the UNESCO Appeals Board for the consideration of the Executive Board. This inaugural report marks a significant milestone in the institutionalization of the Board's work and reaffirms our shared commitment to transparency, accountability, and the fair and impartial administration of internal justice within the Organization.

#### *Institutional Transformation and Strategic Progress*

The year 2024 marked the consolidation of a far-reaching transformation initiated in 2023. At the beginning of that year, the Board faced a backlog of 84 cases and a total caseload of 102 – highlighting systemic inefficiencies and the urgent need for reform. The appointments of the current Chairperson and Alternate Chairperson by the Executive Board in 2022, followed by the appointment of the Secretary in 2023, brought renewed leadership and strategic direction to the Board.

Under this leadership, the Secretariat underwent a comprehensive reorganization. Key reforms included the implementation of a digitized case management system, streamlined internal workflows, and a more strategic application of the Board's legal framework. Simultaneously, we launched a digital archiving initiative to catalog over 500 historical reports dating back to 1948—an effort that strengthens institutional memory, supports legal research, and promotes knowledge-sharing.

To ensure quality and consistency in our operations, we also introduced formal training programmes in 2023. Since then, 43 Board Members have completed mandatory training prior to participating in hearings. These sessions focus on the jurisprudence of the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization (ILOAT), which is frequently applied in case review. In addition, the introduction of a Pledge of Ethical Conduct has further reinforced the professional and ethical responsibilities of Board Members.

#### *Caseload Management and Performance Metrics*

At the start of 2024, the Board was managing a substantial workload: 60 active cases carried over from the previous year, along with 18 new Notices of Appeal, bringing the total caseload to 78. By January 2025, that number had been reduced to just 30 active cases – representing a 62% reduction in total caseload and a 50% decrease in backlog.

This momentum continued into 2025. As of July, the backlog had dropped to just 9 cases, while the total number of active cases – including new appeals filed this year—stood at 20. This marks an 80% reduction in active caseload and an 89% drop in backlog since early 2023, underscoring sustained and effective caseload management. Of the 20 active cases, only 13 are ready to be scheduled for hearing, with more than half of those expected to be heard before the end of the year.

The increase in productivity is even more striking when viewed in historical context. From 2016 to 2022, the Board averaged only 10 reports and 10 case examinations per year. A marked increase began in 2023, when the Board issued 27 reports and disposed of 32 cases. This upward trend continued in 2024, with 35 reports issued and 37 cases disposed – nearly quadrupling the historical average. Further analysis is provided in Section V.<sup>1</sup>

This progress is all the more remarkable given the financial context. From 2016 to 2022, annual expenditures averaged nearly \$50,000, peaking at \$76,492 in 2021, while output remained modest.

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<sup>1</sup> The number of cases disposed of may exceed the number of reports issued, as multiple cases involving the same appellant can often be grouped and addressed jointly in a single report when they raise similar factual or legal issues.

In contrast, 2023 and 2024 saw a sharp drop in costs – down to approximately \$33,000 – accompanied by a dramatic rise in output. This shift reflects a clear return on investment and a more efficient use of resources. A detailed breakdown is provided in Section V.<sup>2</sup>

This transformation signals a major enhancement in operational efficiency. Whether driven by strategic reforms, process optimization, or more effective resource allocation, the Board has demonstrated the ability to achieve significantly more with fewer resources.

Despite these gains, challenges remain. The Board has not yet consistently met the statutory requirement to convene hearings within six months of receiving the Administration's Reply, largely due to the legacy of older cases. However, with the backlog now significantly reduced and assuming current resource levels are maintained, the Board is well positioned to substantially improve compliance with this timeframe in 2026.

### *Appeal Trends and Outcomes*

In 2024, the Board reviewed 37 appeals involving a broad spectrum of employment-related matters, including staff mobility, entitlements, performance evaluations, disciplinary measures, and selection processes. The diversity of cases reflects the evolving complexity of administrative decision-making and its impact on staff.

Of the 37 appeals, 20 were recommended for dismissal, 5 for granting in whole or in part, 11 were deemed irreceivable, and 1 was removed from the register for want of prosecution. Most hearings were conducted in French under the Chairperson's leadership, with two held in English by the Alternate Chairperson, whose growing role this year has enhanced the Board's bilingual accessibility. A detailed breakdown of outcomes and case types is provided in Section VI.

### *Governance, Stakeholder Engagement, and Ethics*

The Appeals Board operates under a clearly defined legal mandate and a strong ethical framework, grounded in the principles of independence, impartiality, integrity, and fairness. Each appeal is reviewed by a five-member panel that ensures balanced geographical representation. The Board's procedures are designed to uphold due process and ensure that all parties are treated with respect and heard without prejudice.

In 2024 and 2025, the Board strengthened its engagement with internal stakeholders, including representatives of the Staff Associations and the Office of Legal Affairs. These efforts, undertaken in the context of discussions on statutory revisions to implement the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) recommendations, aim to foster greater transparency, build trust, and promote inclusivity within the internal justice system.

### *Resource Constraints and Institutional Sustainability*

Despite the progress achieved, the Board's ability to sustain its performance is increasingly constrained by limited resources. Until mid-2024, the Secretariat consisted of only one established P-3 post, later supported by a temporary P-2 Associate Legal Officer. This assignment is expected to conclude at the end of 2025.

The current staffing structure places considerable pressure on the Board's operational capacity and risks undermining the sustainability of its progress. Benchmarking data and further analysis are provided in Section III.

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<sup>2</sup> Expenses primarily covered Chairperson honoraria, travel, and subsistence allowances, which remained stable throughout the reporting period. Occasional peaks in expenditure were linked to extensive translation and interpretation services, which have been significantly reduced since 2023 through more effective alignment of cases with the linguistic competencies of Board members.

To maintain quality and resilience, we respectfully request the Executive Board's support in strengthening the Board's staffing structure. This includes reclassifying the existing post and establishing a comprehensive staffing plan. These enhancements are essential to fulfilling the Board's mandate, particularly in light of the growing complexity of its work and the anticipated expansion of responsibilities.

*Conclusion*

As a key component of UNESCO's internal justice system, the Appeals Board plays a vital role in upholding the rule of law, safeguarding staff rights, and reinforcing organizational accountability. Its work contributes directly to a respectful and fair working environment and supports the broader goals of good governance and institutional integrity.

The progress achieved over the past two years demonstrates the tangible benefits of strategic leadership, innovation, and institutional support. The Appeals Board remains firmly committed to its mandate and to continuous improvement. With sustained investment and engagement, the Board is well-positioned to build on this momentum and further strengthen the Organization's internal justice system.

**Akuété Santos**  
*Chairperson*

**Ruhiyya Isayeva**  
*Alternate Chairperson*