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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 2

COMMENTS BY THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION OF UNESCO (ISAU)

**A. Implementation of the Human Resources Management
Strategy for 2017-2022**

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 209 EX/5.III.A).

1. This document contains ISAU's observations and recommendations on the implementation of UNESCO's Human Resources Management Strategy for 2017-2021. We hope that our conclusions will be considered in the spirit of constructive and open dialogue that presided over their preparation and is at the heart of the mandate of our Association.

Recruitment

2. While the introduction of a tool such as Success Factors makes it possible to harmonize recruitment processes or shorten the time taken for recruitment, it does not, however, lead to the increased transparency which ISAU expects and constantly calls for, and which must be achieved through the genuine involvement of the Bureau of Human Resources Management (ADM/HRM) in such processes. In practice, the role of ADM/HRM continues to be limited to simply supporting the sectors in the recruitment process rather than truly managing the recruitment and careers of staff. It should be recalled that, while the sectors are indeed competent to determine the specialities they require, it is not their responsibility to manage the Organization's human resources.



Job: 202001805

3. As it stands, in most cases, ADM/HRM simply endorses choices made at the sector level, which makes it difficult to implement the Organization's global priorities, in particular with regard to geographical distribution and gender equality. This situation also leads to a greater tendency for the sectors to favour external recruitment over the development of staff members. It should be pointed out here that there is a disconnection, for example, between the reality of this recruitment, which favours external candidates, and the policy of using generic job descriptions, which should make the profiles available within the Organization clearer and thus lead to better career management.

4. Moreover, the disconnection between the policies adopted by ADM/HRM and the reality of recruitment practices is also evident. As we have already highlighted on other occasions, there is no correlation between the individual evaluations of staff members and their advancement, nor is there any connection between the training policy and advancement, which formally consists of the internal recruitment of staff.

5. We cannot hope to encourage staff to sacrifice time and energy on training with a view to improving the efficiency of the Organization if such training does not in itself open up any form of advancement, which is subject to the sectors' assessment alone, without any real guidance from ADM/HRM. To conclude on this shortcoming of ADM/HRM concerning recruitment, ISAU continues to be astonished that the recruitment of non-geographical posts such as PAs, who are nevertheless staff members, is not subject to the Appointment Review Board (ARB), and therefore escapes any real supervision by ADM/HRM.

Outreach

6. While the efforts of ADM/HRM are welcome in the area of outreach to candidates to broaden the pool of suitable candidates, the evaluation of these efforts and their return on investment raise questions. Document 209 EX/5.III.A links the outreach activities carried out by ADM/HRM to the increase in the overall number of applicants but does not indicate how this result was measured. These outreach activities seem to comprise essentially the provision of generic information to potential candidates, without any link to specific posts, which would imply the active collaboration of the sectors or coordination of recruitment by ADM/HRM, which amount to the same thing.

7. Moreover, the presupposition of these efforts seems to be that the recruitment problems are due to an insufficient number of applications, which has not been demonstrated, revealing the problems of transparency, for example, which have been constantly highlighted by ISAU. The difficulty highlighted is so obvious that ADM/HRM, effectively, only has internal control over the recruitment of candidates for the Young Professionals Programme, the identification of whom is the prerogative of the National Commissions. As shown in document 209 EX/5.III.A, the outreach of ADM/HRM consists of collaborating with the National Commissions on logistical points that do not in any way solve the supposed problem of the pool of potential candidates, since that issue is a matter for the National Commissions and thus for the Member States.

8. In addition, ADM/HRM maintains that its outreach activities have a positive impact on gender equality in recruitment. However, it can hardly be expected that the increase in female candidates will solve the gender equality problems in the Secretariat, which are mainly related to inequality in policy-making and decision-making posts. The high level of experience of such posts does not correspond to the level of experience of the female candidates that ADM/HRM is aiming to reach, as those candidates are students.

Mobility

9. With regard to the mobility policy, ISAU wishes to commend the work of the Internal Oversight Service (IOS), whose conclusions and recommendations, which we uphold, are in line with the observations made by our Association, particularly on the shortcomings of a policy suffering from a lack of transparency and communication. Committed to the principle of mobility, ISAU reiterates its

position that geographical mobility cannot be decoupled from functional mobility; this dual mobility should be taken into account in the reform of the field offices.

10. On this point, it should be stressed that, in our view, while recruitment should be a matter of priority for ADM/HRM rather than for the sectors, mobility should be a matter of priority for the sectors, which are in a better position to assess their needs at Headquarters and in the field and to organize, on the basis of that assessment, a large part of the geographical and functional mobility of the staff under their responsibility. Furthermore, we believe that such a provision would be more likely to allow for more predictable, and therefore more effective, career management.

Training and development

11. ISAU is pleased that a budget of \$671,300 has been allocated to training and development and will pay particular attention to how it is used. While we believe that the involvement of the sectors is necessary for the implementation of this policy, we continue to deplore the total lack of connection between this policy and staff advancement.

Create an enabling and engaging work environment

12. ISAU takes note of the review of performance management but stresses that rationalization alone is not synonymous with fairness and justice. We continue to deplore, however, the lack of connection between performance evaluation and career management. The progress announced does not seem to us to be capable of reducing the feeling of arbitrariness that many colleagues express to the staff associations. In the light of this, we reiterate our request for a 360° assessment, which should include an evaluation of the ability of supervisors to value their staff and to establish a dynamic and supportive work environment.

13. ISAU considers it urgent to introduce an effective staff well-being framework, while stressing that it must not be limited to flexible working or occupational health. Spaces dedicated to well-being, which we have been calling for for years, should be established on the Fontenoy site, where all the staff work. We also insist on the fact that there can be no progress in this matter without a sincere consultation with the staff associations, which are competent to deal with these matters.

14. In view of the current situation, ISAU hopes that the Organization will be able to analyse in depth the experience of teleworking resulting from the measures taken relating to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and its subsequent lifting. While it is undeniable that the pandemic has imposed major constraints, and has perhaps reduced the Organization's capacity to deliver its expected results, it is nevertheless true that the staff has shown great adaptability in pursuit of professional efficiency. This is an opportunity to change the business culture of the Organization towards increased efficiency in terms of objectives, as well as savings and office space management.

Geographical distribution and gender parity

15. Our comments on geographical distribution and gender parity have been submitted separately in document 209 EX 5.III.B Add.



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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

SUMMARY

A. Implementation of the Human Resources Management Strategy 2017-2022

This document provides an update on activities on the two overarching objectives of the Human Resources Management Strategy: the strengthening of staff capabilities for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and the creation of an enabling and engaging work environment.

Decision required: paragraph 21.



Job: 202000279

A. Implementation of the Human Resources Management Strategy 2017-2022 (Follow-up to 207 EX/Dec.5.IV.B and 40 C/Res.78)

Background

1. This document is submitted pursuant to 207 EX/Decision 5.IV, which requested the Director-General to report on the implementation of the Human Resources Management Strategy for 2017-2022, approved by the General Conference in November 2017. This report updates the Executive Board on the progress made since its last report [[207 EX/5.IV.B and Corr. and Addenda](#)], submitted to the General Conference at its 40th session.

2. The Human Resources Management Strategy [[HR Strategy](#)] focuses on two overarching objectives: the strengthening of staff capabilities for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and the creation of an enabling and engaging work environment. Under these two objectives, 12 initiatives are planned to be carried out over a six-year period, as set out in the Implementation Plan.

Strengthening Staff Capabilities for the SDGs

3. A robust talent management framework is key to strengthening staff capabilities to implement the UNESCO mandate. To this end, the Organization continues to implement activities in workforce planning, recruitment, outreach, mobility, learning and development, and performance management.

4. **Recruitment:** SuccessFactors, a new human resources system for talent acquisition, was launched in early November 2019. This new system includes improved features such as access to all stakeholders involved in the recruitment process and includes automated notification to Permanent Delegations. It also provides a single system for all UNESCO recruitment including fixed-term and temporary staff, at Headquarters and in the field, thereby ensuring harmonization of the hiring process. This will also shorten the timeline for recruitment, and facilitate accurate monitoring and reporting mechanism, including on geographical representation.

5. **Outreach:** Two additional Young Professionals are expected to join UNESCO in spring 2020, in addition to the 12 Young Professionals appointed in 2019. As a result, the two respective countries (Georgia and Uruguay) will change from under-represented to normally represented. HRM will launch a new campaign for the Young Professionals Programme later in 2020, as soon as a sufficient number of P-1/P-2 geographical posts are identified. In preparation for this exercise, HRM will work closely with National Commissions before launching the call for applications, in order to provide enhanced information on the selection process (including video-interviewing and competency-based interviews), as well as on the candidate requirements. In addition, a larger use of social media, to attract the widest possible pool of suitable and qualified applicants will be encouraged.

6. Since the last report, HRM undertook an outreach mission to Qatar and conducted online webinars and career fairs for the Latin American and Africa region in collaboration with the Programme Sectors (including for Women in Science, and for Persons with Disabilities). UNESCO also led a United Nations job fair in China in October 2019, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the China Scholarship Council (CSC), with 25 participating United Nations agencies and IGOs, attracting over 3,100 students from 98 universities. These efforts have contributed to an increase in the overall number of female applicants since the first quarter of 2019. Based on the evaluation of applicant data over the last four years, HRM is developing a tailored approach to attract qualified candidates from non- and under-represented Member States.

7. **Mobility:** Mobility is a key element in talent management and in developing a resilient, professional workforce. A mobile workforce is an agile, versatile and broadly skilled workforce. Further to the Executive Board decision at its 207th session, IOS undertook an evaluation of the first managed mobility exercise, its processes and outcomes and its effects on the availability of high-level expertise and career development prospects. The outcome of this evaluation will be presented at this session of the Board in document [209 EX/5.III.A.INF](#).

8. **Learning and Development:** The work undertaken under the *Invest for Efficient Delivery* initiative has resulted in the design and delivery of online learning programmes, which will form the foundation for the development of further elements of the Learning and Development Action Plan. [[Action Plan](#)]. A budget of US \$671,300 has also been earmarked for Learning and Development following the approval of the General Conference at its 40th session of the \$534.6M integrated budget. In this regard, HRM will work with Sectors, Divisions and Directors/Heads of Field Offices to build staff capacity. Learning modalities will include online, peer-led workshops, both external and internally provided. Work with the Sectors will involve the design of how learning programme impact will be assessed.

9. The Senior Leadership Development Programme was prioritized for delivery in 2019. To date, a majority of senior managers (including Heads of Field Office at P-5 level) undertook a comprehensive training programme to build their change management and leadership skills. Participants practiced core managerial behaviours, including conflict management, feedback and coaching. Preliminary evaluation shows that managers increased confidence in applying modern change management principles and techniques. The programme is expected to conclude with a final session in early 2020.

10. **Generic Job Descriptions:** The General Conference, at its 40th session, requested the Director-General to report to this Executive Board on the impact of the generic job descriptions on the knowledge specialization and expertise of staff. Generic job descriptions are pre-classified job descriptions that cover a group of related jobs with similar major work characteristics in terms of the nature of the duties and responsibilities and organizational setting. They reflect the duties and responsibilities typically exercised by staff within a specific job group and at a specific level. They facilitate the managers' task when a job description has to be established, thereby accelerating the administrative process. In practice, supervisors use generic job descriptions, as a template document, upon which modifications may be added. The increasing use of generics is a common practice across specialized agencies.

11. There are presently some 44 generic job descriptions available in the Organization, of which 16 cover functions at different levels in the International Professional category (ED and SHS) and in the National Professional category (ED and CLT) in Programme Sectors.

12. While generic job descriptions describe activities which are common to a group of similar posts, at the time of recruitment, it is the vacancy notice (as opposed to the job description) which serves to describe, for each post, the specific characteristics in terms of specialization and expertise, and the requirements in terms of experience, skills and competencies that are specific to the post. Generic job descriptions therefore do not limit the specification of the programme areas and expertise required for the post. Furthermore, vacancy notices only mark the start of a comprehensive selection process, which includes tests, interviews, reference checks and other means of ascertaining the knowledge, specialization and degree of expertise of the candidates.

13. **Classification:** An updated Classification Policy was issued in 2020, in order to streamline the job classification process, and embed it into Programme and Budget management. The policy links the classification of encumbered posts with performance management, and helps ensure that job descriptions remain valid in the context of the setting of objectives.

14. **Human Resources Partnerships:** In addition to governmental and academic partners, HRM is strengthening the cooperation with the private sector, to increase the visibility of UNESCO and allow mutual skills development and exchange of expertise. As at December 2019, 25 JPOs were working in the Organization (22 posted at Headquarters and three in the field) financed by 10 donors. An additional 15 JPOs are expected to be recruited in 2020. A total of 49 experts from 21 countries – throughout the regions – were seconded or loaned to UNESCO, mainly to support Programme Sectors, at Headquarters and in the field. Over the same period, 109 trainees (45 at Headquarters and 64 in field offices) were sponsored by some 12 governmental, academic institutions and private sector. They have been assigned to UNESCO's programmes, the majority of them for periods of at

least 12 months. HRM envisages the establishment of a formal partnership with the African Union on a Youth Volunteer Programme. During the same period, 23 United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) were deployed in UNESCO. HRM envisages new JPO and other HR partnerships agreements with Member States and entities in particular from Groups II, III, IV and Va and b. Priorities will be established in accordance with the interest expressed.

Create an Enabling and Engaging Work Environment

15. A revised **performance management** system, developed in 2019, was launched in 2020. The changes introduced, including a shortened (annual) assessment cycle and streamlined processes, will contribute to a stronger performance culture. An improved IT platform should likewise make the process more user-friendly.

16. Also in 2019, the **Internal Justice System** process was reviewed. Revised **Statutes of the Appeals Board** were approved by the General Conference at its 40th session, and will be introduced early 2020. The main improvements include the possibility of holding remote sessions and the adjustment of time-frames, including a maximum time-frame for hearings by the Appeal Board; the procedure before the Appeals Board has been transferred to the Office of Legal Affairs, allowing an enhanced synergy in the case management.

17. As the Organization is asked to achieve maximum effect within the limited resources available, staff wellbeing should be given a high priority. A **Staff Well-Being Framework**, which will include expanded flexible work arrangements and occupational health strategy, will be developed to promote ways to help staff balance the demands of work with life outside the office but also respond to the challenge in finding new and better ways of managing people, time, and workloads. The project was initiated in late 2019, with planned completion in 2020.

Monitoring and Reporting

18. HRM has established the HR Dashboard, for ADG/Directors of Bureaux to monitor key human resources indicators, including workforce composition, geographical distribution and gender parity, vacancy rate, retirements, absenteeism, completion of performance reports. HRM also makes available key human resources data [[Key Data on UNESCO Staff and Posts](#)] for Member States on UNESCO.int. Following the General Conference request at its 40th session, HRM has also made available to Member States, on UNESCO.int, a list of staff members, displayed by organizational entity in each Sector/Bureau.

Action Plans on Geographical Distribution and Gender Parity [[206 EX/5.III.A](#)]

19. Detailed information on geographical distribution and gender parity can be found in the separate report submitted by the Secretariat on these topics under document [209 EX/5.III.B](#).

The Global Staff Survey and Strategic Transformation

20. The 2018 Global Staff Survey produced very interesting findings for the Organization. HRM has developed a follow-up action plan to ensure that the survey results, particularly the priority issues, are followed through. A network of focal points promotes exchanges on the various actions initiated as a follow up to the survey. Preparations for the next Global Staff Survey are under way for launching in 2020.

Proposed draft decision

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

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 207 EX/Decision 5.IV.B,
2. Having examined documents 209 EX/5.III.A and [209 EX/5.III.A.INF](#),
3. Takes note of the progress achieved in the implementation of the Human Resources Management Strategy for 2017-2022;
4. Requests the Director-General to present a full report on the implementation of the Human Resources Management Strategy for 2017-2022 to it at its 211th session.