



ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DU PERSONNEL DE L'UNESCO
INTERNATIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION OF UNESCO

15 April 2026

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a responsibility to address you at a time when the renewal of our programme and budget coincides with a particularly grave international situation, marked by growing threats to peace. We will need your wise guidance.

These crises in no way signal a regression of our mandate; on the contrary, they highlight just how urgent and relevant it is. UNESCO remains one of the few places where lasting peace is conceived, prepared and constructed.

ISAU has the primary responsibility to protect those who, on a daily basis, deliver our Organization's mandate. There is no UNESCO without its staff. This simple truth must guide every decision regarding the safety and well-being of staff.

ISAU is not oppositional on principle, it is a demanding and constructive partner that has the Organization's interests at heart and is committed to ensuring its effectiveness, integrity and sustainability.

It is in this spirit that we welcome the report by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), which is far-reaching. This report confirms the findings we have been raising for years and should now serve as a shared roadmap. It highlights major systemic risks to UNESCO's effectiveness, stemming from persistent inertia and a lack of consideration for staff. These obstacles hinder any momentum for change.

It is now imperative to break away from a management approach perceived as contributing to "institutional decline". While the arrival of the new Directorate brings hope, a paradigm shift is necessary.

However, the responses provided so far, particularly by HRM, are not commensurate with the gravity of the situation. Whether it concerns recruitment, performance management, staff well-being or the field network, the lack of a coherent action plan is cause for concern. The UNESCO80 initiative is a step in the right direction, but it cannot be effective without a credible, aligned HR strategy that is implemented without delay.

As it stands, the disconnect between the HR strategy and the UNESCO80 initiative is troubling. An action plan defining clear priorities, concrete measures and a detailed timeline for the HR strategy is essential.

Allow me to emphasize a key point raised in the JIU report: internal justice.

We are seeing a worrying increase in the number of cases where the Appeals Board's recommendations, when in favour of staff, are being rejected. We would like to point out that the non-binding nature of the Appeals Board's recommendations was highlighted by the JIU as a serious



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problem that undermines the protection of staff rights and limits the scope of a body that was designed to serve as the final instance of internal appeal. More seriously still, the conflict of interest involving the Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs, which acts as both 'judge and party', was explicitly pointed out to you by the JIU representative during the meeting of the Special Committee. These structural flaws must be addressed immediately.

Other warning signs should alert us: the high number of complaints that are not investigated; the perception that oversight bodies lack impartiality; the rise in the number of harassment cases; the lack of fairness in career prospects; and the lack of transparency in promotions.

Everything points to the same conclusion: trust has been eroded. This trust must be restored through an effective accountability policy, based on proportionate sanctions, and through a concrete commitment to the well-being and dignity of staff.

I must recall that many of the dysfunctions identified today have been denounced by ISAU for many years. Mr Director-General, you are confronted with a bureaucratic inertia resistant to the change you wish to implement. In this context, we will continue to play our cautionary role. We are your ally in the fight against stagnation.

Finally, we regret that the request made by a Member State at the last General Conference — calling for staff associations to intervene before the debates and to have their oral statement read as information documents at the 224th session of the Executive Board — has not been acted upon. We reiterate this legitimate and reasonable request.

Distinguished delegates,

UNESCO will only meet today's challenges if it remains faithful internally to the principles that it promotes externally. Nothing would be more damaging than to tolerate, within the Organization, practices that run counter to the values it proclaims.

ISAU will continue to work steadfastly and without leniency to ensure that these principles and values are upheld.

Thank you for your attention.