



Thursday 5 November 2015

Dear Mr Secretary-General,

ICSC Compensation Review – work with us to recommend alternative proposals

I have the honour of writing to you on behalf of the organizations constituting the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations (CCISUA). Together, our members represent 60,000 staff across the UN Common System and all staff who are operating in the deep field.

We have serious, justified concerns about the recommendations of the ICSC Compensation Review, which, if implemented, would damage the living standards, working conditions and family lives of thousands of your staff working in the world's most dangerous locations.

Further, in the medium term the changes proposed will degrade the collective skills and experience available to the UN in professional and management grades. This would progressively undermine the effectiveness of the humanitarian aid and emergency assistance programmes that are the UN's proudest achievement.

Significantly, we are in strong agreement with the UN Agency Chiefs who have submitted that the changes would negatively impact the "fitness for purpose" of the pay structure and its ability to meet your ambitions for the staff of more diversity, more women in more diverse positions, greater mobility and support for staff health and well-being, especially mental health.

We are encouraged by the statement made by Carole Wainaina, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, at the Umoja town hall on 14 October, that your concerns about the issues at stake are consistent with the staff's concerns.

Building on these concerns, which are shared at all levels within the UN and its agencies, we ask you, as a matter of urgency, to bring staff representatives and senior management together so that we can jointly review and advise amendment of the ICSC proposals.

This joint work would seek to remove the damaging impacts of the proposals for the UN's HR strategy as described by the agency chiefs.

As a minimum it should ensure that no staff members or their families are worse off in the future than they are today.

When Pope Francis visited New York in September, you asked His Holiness to bless the staff and called us "the heart and soul" of the UN's work. Now you are being asked by the ICSC to accept cuts to the pay and leave arrangements for the very same "heart and soul."

The ICSC proposals would:

- Cut pay and allowances for sections of the professional staff in hardship stations by up to 10 per cent.
- Make it more difficult and expensive for us to take leave to see our families and get medical check-ups.
- Undermine the UN's ambition for a more diverse staff with more women in diverse roles.
- Damage the UN's ability to move staff quickly to danger zones where we are needed to save lives.
- Take most from single parents and parents with a working spouse.
- Reduce the right to leave for parents whose families join them at duty stations.
- Make pay discrimination against single parents, mainly women, worse than it is already. This will widen the pay and allowances gap between single parents and parents who are in couples with one income.
- Delay progress on the pay scale for length of service and performance, so that for the lowest grades rising through the pay scale will take 19 years instead of 10.

As you know, carrying out the UN's mission has led to 319 UN staff and contractors being killed in service, 325 being injured and 164 kidnappings since 2000. The personal risks for staff in danger zones already deter all but the most highly motivated.

We ask: 'Who will work in the frontline in Syria, Afghanistan, in Iraq and South Sudan if they do not feel valued by the UN?'

We ask you to consider the words of one of the UN's most experienced humanitarian aid workers, who has managed programmes in Iraq, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Kenya and now Syria:

"We work in dangerous, challenging conditions. Some colleagues leave because of the conditions and the strain on their families, and I have lost colleagues who were killed in armed attacks and bombings.

"What keeps us working here is knowing that we can save lives, and to do that takes a highly committed, highly motivated staff. One of the most stressful situations is the feeling of not being supported, either by the country officials, or by the UN itself.

"If my staff are not being supported, and conditions mean we cannot make a difference, what do we think will keep them working here?"

We ask you to show the staff of the UN that you support them, and to work with us to defend the UN's "heart and soul."

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ian Richards". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter "I" being particularly large and stylized.

Ian Richards
President, CCISUA