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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 2

COMMENTS BY THE UNESCO STAFF UNION (STU)

SUMMARY

A. Human Resources Management Strategy

Pursuant to Item 9.2.E.7 of the UNESCO Human Resources Manual, the UNESCO Staff Union (STU) submits its comments on the report by the Director-General.

1. The STU acknowledges the efforts of the Administration concerning the **Flexible Working Arrangements**, recognizing the need for a better work life balance for all UNESCO personnel, both in Headquarters and in its field offices. The Administration recognizes how in most organizations in the United Nations System and beyond telework is a reality that can modernize working methods and is respectful of the diversity of lifestyles of staff members.

2. The STU salutes the participation of the Administration in the United Nations-wide health survey to better understand the current health and social security risks faced by United Nations employees. In this regard and following the recent General Assembly of the **Medical Benefits Fund**, the STU continues to express its concern on the ongoing discussions over the long-term funding of the "After-Service Health Insurance" (ASHI), as on ensuring the respect of the basic feature of the



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Fund as a mutually financed and autonomous health-insurance scheme based on principles of solidarity.

3. The STU further acknowledges the revision of the **Service Contract policy** that is due to provide for enhanced conditions of service, improving the well-being of the Service Contract employees. At the same time, the STU regrets the continuous de-facto reduction of permanent staff in UNESCO over recent years and their replacement by short-term consultants or other temporary contract modalities. This has an impact on the strength, morale and motivation of the staff implementing UNESCO's mandate and programmes.

4. In general, the STU acknowledges the improved exchanges with the Administration and the Bureau of Human Resources. Nevertheless, the STU regrets that **the involvement of staff associations is limited to a request for comment with most often no feedback or follow-up provided to it**. STU believes that consultations require a more continuous exchange of views, prerogative to a constructive dialogue between the Administration and the staff.

5. The STU reiterates that the **geographical mobility exercise** concluded in 2022 represented an improvement compared to the 2021 cycle. However, its results were limited, with many colleagues having reached their Standard Duration of Assignment (SDA) who could not move to a new location. It also provided limited opportunities to staff wishing to move on a voluntary basis. We continue to express our concerns about the effectiveness of the mobility policy, which shows very limited results and call for a more programmatic and strategic consideration of the human capital of our Organization.

6. Concerned by an exercise which significantly occupies the Bureau of Human Resources and the Administration for many months and keeps many colleagues in uncertainty as to their future, the STU requests that an evaluation of the 2021-2022 Mobility exercise be carried out before starting the next exercise. We also call for more disaggregated data to be made available (anonymously) so to better assess the results of the exercise. Finally, a voluntary mobility scheme needs to be strengthened in order to provide further career opportunities to those wishing to move.

7. The STU will also remain vigilant to the implementation of **functional mobility** concerning colleagues in the general service (GS) category.

8. The STU welcomes the developments of UNESCO's **Internship Programme** but reasserts the urgency to implement a paid internship scheme, the only effective way to guarantee equity of opportunity for all. In addition, a difference between Headquarters and field offices could be necessary as conditions in Paris are different from other places in terms of qualifications, criteria or geographical balance.

9. Finally, the STU notes that the simplification of key HR processes do not necessarily improve the results. After a decrease in judgments during the two-year COVID-19 period, **the trend of ILOAT sentences resumed at the same level as in previous years**, costing nearly half a million per year to the Organization. The STU further reiterates that the removal of the Joint Disciplinary Committee and of the Reports Board has deprived the staff of a degree of protection from arbitrary and unsubstantiated accusations. Furthermore, the internal justice system may not sufficiently guarantee a fair treatment: for example, while in the Appeals Board, neither the Administration nor the Appellant has the right to external legal representation at the hearing, the Administration is systematically represented by more than one internal legal officer. If, according to the report 215 EX/5.IV.INF, this seems to protect the Organization from complaints before the ILOAT, the STU is concerned with the 74 cases still to be examined by the Appeals Board (as of July 2022).

Human resources management strategy

10. The UNESCO **human resources management strategy** has set the objective to ensuring that UNESCO has the capacity to effectively deliver the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

11. However, after its participation in the preliminary consultations regarding the elaboration of the new 2023-2027 Strategy, STU continues to express its concerns in particular towards career development and the development of “optimal systems” to ensure more efficient processes.

12. Concerning **career development**, the presented strategy seems to be essentially reduced to offering online training modules, induction/orientation sessions, or language courses. Career development is understood as helping staff “to identify opportunities such as mobility and short-term or temporary assignments”. In other words, career development is not the Organization’s business but it is up to each individual to handle. STU believes that in order to retain talents, and in consideration of the high specialization of its staff and the programmatic needs, it is necessary to put in place a real Career Development planning which would enable the Organization to continue to play its leadership role in its fields of competence. The inventory of skills, a long overdue exercise, is certainly an important step towards this direction.

13. In general, this document uses certain HR indicators for which significant improvement can be reported (e.g. % of recruitments of under-represented countries or average number of days for recruitment). STU appreciates that some improvements since January 2022 can be observed for these indicators.

14. STU calls on HRM to further provide an analytical review of the Organization’s human resources. These indicators would be important for staff and Member States and would add important information on how “dynamic” professional careers really are in the Organization. Some data can be found in *Key Data on UNESCO Staff* (January 2022) but a further analysis would be useful, particularly within the framework of the new Strategy and its objective to “Attract and retain talent”.

Human resources budget

15. Referring to worldwide situation and the growing inflation, STU voices the concerns of staff as per the projected budgetary deficit and on the consequences on staffing strategies and policies. If the strategy clearly identifies an expert and diverse workforce as key to ensuring that the Organization can deliver on its mandate, the STU strongly stands for the recognition and preservation of UNESCO’s core staff, already representing only, if not less than, the 50% of the Organization’s workforce.

16. In the same vein, the STU continues to express its highest concerns over the situation at the **UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS, Montreal)** which has seen its staff to be reduced, generally, from 125+ staff in 2017 to less than 40 today, over real or perceived mismatches between current and needed skills. The situation at the UIS must be resolved.