

ILO STAFF UNION

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Annual Report of the ILO Staff Union Committee
for the year 2021



ILO Staff Union Committee

Annual Report for the year 2021

Introduction

Despite all the storms, we must stay on course.

The Staff Union Committee is pleased to present you with an overview of all its activities for the year 2021.

This year was once again marked by many events over which the Committee had little control. First of all, there was the never-ending perpetration of the pandemic linked to COVID-19, with its peaks of contamination, and the compulsory teleworking of ILO staff, requiring a little more resistance and resilience each time. For a number of our colleagues in certain parts of the world, military, political or economic events have completely disrupted not only their professional lives but have sometimes seriously literally endangered their lives.

It is therefore in this disrupted context that the Committee has tried to stay on course with the regular objectives set at the beginning of the year at its first General Assembly, while devoting much of its time to ad hoc consultations with the Administration in order to safeguard the most pressing interests of our most exposed members, the areas of intervention being of course health, safety and security.

However, as you will discover in the following pages in more detail, the Staff Union Committee, through all of its thematic working groups, has nevertheless pursued a good number of its activities, whether in the field of career development by initiating discussions with the Administration on the revision of job families for all Professional and General Service staff at Headquarters, by preparing its position on a future revision of the policy on telework or the policy on contracts, by defending at all costs the conditions of employment in the UN bodies in the face of a Civil Service Commission that is still as offensive and narrow-minded as ever.

The Committee has fought all these battles, taking great care to ensure that all categories of employment are defended, with particular reference to the situation of an increasing number of colleagues on technical cooperation contracts. Indeed, when one is a "TC", all the problems encountered at the general level are always amplified by situations of contractual insecurity, generating a lot of stress, the feeling of not being part of the community and sometimes paralysing any desire to fight for one's rights. The Committee has continued its efforts in this area by supporting all colleagues who request it, by continuing to draw up an inventory of malfunctions and inequalities of treatment through its working group, by putting pressure on the Administration to simply apply the rules that apply to everyone, by systematically including the TC issue in each negotiation subject (training, merit, health and safety at work, etc.). But let's face it, in order to strengthen everyone's sense of belonging, only the negotiation of the revision of the contracts policy will be able to provide solid guarantees to that effect.

In any case, members can rest assured that the Committee has once again spared no effort to defend their interests in these turbulent times, and that it will pursue the objectives set with determination, particularly in the year of transition that is ahead of us.

Part 1 – Objectives and priority areas of action for 2020 - 2025

Industrial relations:

- ✓ *Ensure sustainable well-functioning social dialogue and collective bargaining through the effective implementation of the Recognition and Procedural Agreement (2000).*

Job security:

- ✓ *Negotiation of a protective, fair and inclusive contract policy to put an end to recurring precariousness and reduce disparity between different types of contracts,*
- ✓ *Working for a fair and standardized joint recruitment process for all staff through improving or creating joint bodies for mobility and redeployment.*

A career development path for all staff:

- ✓ *A fair and transparent performance appraisal system - with equal access to the staff development fund - and connected to adequate training*
- ✓ *A negotiated and adequate job classification process*
- ✓ *A fair recruitment and mobility system that respects staff diversity*
- ✓ *A transparent rewarding mechanism.*

Enhancement of staff security, Occupational safety and Health and both physical and mental health and well-being for all ILO staff around the world:

- ✓ *in the context of multifaceted crises and ensure equal treatment of all staff as well as support crisis response initiatives in fragile contexts*

Full social protection:

- ✓ *Ensure effective, efficient and sustainable health care and pension funds,*
- ✓ *Advocate for and negotiate the creation of unemployment and maternity / paternity / parental insurance schemes.*

A diverse, inclusive, equal and equitable workplace:

- ✓ *Through combating all forms of discrimination, and promoting an ILO free from violence and harassment: Drawing inspiration from recently adopted C.190 and aligning with UN system wide rules and regulations against all forms of violence and harassment at work.*

Protection of the independence of the international civil service:

- ✓ *Defend and support the exclusively international character of the staff (Article 9, paragraphs 4 and 5, of the ILO Constitution), promote its impartiality and defend the integrity and independence of ILOAT.*

An even stronger and better equipped Union:

- ✓ *Maintaining and expanding our membership, enhancing solidarity, strengthening capacities of Union representatives*
- ✓ *Improving internal operations, communication and coherence in its actions.*

Part 2 – Objectives for 2021

I – Industrial relations

Objective: To ensure sustainable and efficient social dialogue and collective bargaining through the effective implementation of the Recognition and Procedural Agreement (2000).

Means of action

- Making sure, in the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC), that every decision or proposal coming from the ILO Administration is based on substantiated information and is subject to consultation or negotiation if necessary.
- Establishing Internal Rules of Procedure for timelines, deadlines, and terms of reference for each negotiation.
- Strengthening the negotiating skills of staff representatives.

Joint Chair of the Joint Negotiating Committee: Catherine Comte-Tiberghien

Joint Secretaries: Yvan Poulin, Maria Prieto

Members: Harvey Addo-Yobo, Carlos Carrión Crespo, Séverine Deboos

Technical Advisers: The Staff Union Legal Adviser and all the members of the Committee, according to the subject on the agenda of the Joint Negotiating Committee

- The pandemic caused by COVID-19 and its impact on ILO workers, still present in 2021, is now a recurring topic of discussion with the Administration. Indeed, all the consequences generated by this virus on the world of work must be the subject of sustained attention on the part of the Staff Union, whether in the context of the return to full or partial office, health, safety and hygiene measures, monitoring of the mental health of staff, etc. In the course of this year, 2021, we have noted a slight drop in the Administration's willingness to systematically involve the Staff Union well in advance in consultations on the directives or IGDS's to be updated in the light of the pandemic situation, as if the normality of the pandemic had caused the Administration to return to its bad habits. Another problem that has arisen in the context of the pandemic and that absolutely must be resolved as soon as possible is the systematic lack of consultation with the COSH, a body that should be the cornerstone of decisions on health and safety at work.
- The Staff Union and the Administration, in the framework of the JNC, have indeed this year established a joint action programme by setting priorities. Unfortunately, what the Staff Union has found is that little progress has been made on issues such as the review of the IGDS on flexible working hours, which the Staff Union had made a major priority given the circumstances, whereas HRD has put a lot of pressure on other issues that the Staff Union felt were less urgent. The Staff Union also questioned the need for a Five-Year Human Resources Strategy less than a year before the hand-over between Directors-General.
- The negotiating capacity of Committee members has been strengthened in practice by including them more regularly in the various thematic negotiations or through working groups, with the old hands leading the new. But there is still a need to strengthen the basic trade union skills of newcomers, both at headquarters and in the field, in order to be fully effective in the future.

II – Job security

A – Recruitment and selection

Objective: To ensure that the recruitment and selection process is both equitable and transparent, so as to strengthen the collective agreement on mobility and recruitment by focusing on career mobility, career development, greater motivation and job satisfaction.

Means of action

- The Staff Union Committee’s review of job vacancies aims at ensuring that **job descriptions are objective** and offer a real possibility of career development.
- The Committee is convinced of the importance for the Organization of a system of recruitment that seeks a broader and more **authentic diversity** of manpower while at the same time respecting Article 100 of the United Nations Charter, the Declaration of Philadelphia and the Staff Regulations.
- The Staff Union is assisted in its work by the presence of two of its representatives on the Recruitment, Assignment and Mobility Committee (**RAMC**). Its efforts are based on strict observance of the recruitment and selection procedure and of the principles of transparency, on following standard procedures and on just and fair treatment. Particular attention is paid to the recruitment of internal candidates so as to offer them an opportunity of career development and of DC+5s so that they can benefit from employment security, as well as to a knowledge of more than one language so as to promote French and Spanish and thereby the interests of the Organization’s truly multicultural nature.
- The Committee also intends to make sure that the staff is properly informed about any issues relating to the agreement on recruitment and selection procedures, especially since the introduction of a new computer programme that must not be allowed to undermine the 2014 agreement or to limit the role played by the staff representatives and independent members in the recruitment process.
- If it is to carry out this crucial work successfully, the Committee must make a point of establishing good relations with the appointed **independent members of the technical panels**. The objective will be to share the working parties’ experience, to offer practical advice and to devise ways for them to fulfil their responsibilities properly, as far as possible in conjunction with the Human Resources Department.
- The Committee will insist, as stipulated in the ILO Staff Regulations, that **equivalent experience is recognized** as such and that the basic tenets of the Organization and of its mandate are preserved.

Titular Member of the Recruitment, Assignment and Mobility Committee (RAMC): Catherine Comte-Tiberghien

Technical Adviser: Manuel Céspedes Ocampo

Substitute: Carlos Carrión-Crespo

Coordinator of the working group on recruitment and selection: Manuel Céspedes Ocampo

Members: Harvey Addo-Yobo, Carlos Carrión-Crespo, Laurence Dubois, Sophie Guerre, Chantal Nahimana, Maria Prieto, Ana Catalina Ramirez, Azza Taalab, Clara Van Panhuys, Christiane Wiskow

Achievements:

In 2021, the Recruitment, Assignment and Mobility Committee (RAMC) met 8 times in connection with General Service (GS) competitions and RAPS sessions. Since January 2021, and at the time of writing, two RAPS sessions have taken place and RAPS 3 was in preparation by HRD.

In the RAMC meetings, the SUC representatives do their best to reach a consensus on the basis of SUC views. When consensus is not possible, a separate recommendation by the SUC is made. The latter is capital when colleagues decide to appeal, as the Joint Advisory Appeals Board (JAAB) will be able to know the Staff Union's position as regards a competition.

Request for the opening of vacancies and review of vacancy announcement

The SUC actively participates in the recruitment process, starting with the review of Job descriptions (JDs) for the RAPS and for GS competitions – Around 40 JDs have been reviewed by the Staff Union so far. The SUC aims at ensuring that vacant positions are real career opportunities for qualified colleagues.

The Staff Union representatives are extremely vigilant in the review of job descriptions (JDs) and at each of the three (3) procedural stages in the filling of vacancies (see also Annex I of the Staff Regulations):

Stage 1: In the RAMC, the SUC representatives review and participate in recommendations on proposals to transfer colleagues without competition – due to humanitarian and medical reasons, legal obligation of the Office, an abolished position, etc.

The SUC continues in its efforts to protect the interests of staff at this stage one of the process.

Stage 2: transfers in the same grade or through mobility.

The SUC takes into account very seriously the apparent frustration noticed because of this second stage, as some colleagues considered it as a brake on career development. Nevertheless, the domino effect of reassignments for mobility have meant the creation of vacant positions meaning a real chance for colleagues to further their career through competition.

Stage 3: Filling vacant positions by competition.

The Staff Union through its representatives in the RAMC continues to defend vigorously the interests of colleagues participating in competitions, when reviewing the files, drawing attention to irregularities in long and short-lists.

Challenges ahead:

The SUC takes very seriously the complaints from colleagues who were unsuccessful applicants for positions filled at the three stages of the recruitment process. Ensuring confidentiality, the SUC has shared staff concerns with HRD and other RAMC members.

The SUC noticed once again the confirmation of the trend of the decrease and downgrade of General Service positions being advertised. The downgrade of P positions is also noted. What about the career development for ILO colleagues?

The SUC has raised, several times, a recurrent issue of English-language bias in many JDs, with a trend to exclude many potential better-qualified candidates for the benefit of English-speaking candidates, which in the SUC's view is unacceptable in a multilingual organization.

The role of the Independent member of the technical panel is key in the third stage of the selection process. The organization of sessions to share experiences and guidance with independent panel members is still pending.

The SUC participates in the review by HRD of the Generic Job Descriptions (GJDs) for General Service staff at headquarters and the Professional category. Our aim is that the GJDs that will allow real career development opportunities for colleagues.

Seven years after the signing of the collective agreement on a procedure for recruitment and selection, it is about time that we clarified and improved the recruitment and mobility procedure so that diversity really does become a hallmark of the Organization.

B – Contracts and employment security

Objective: To safeguard and promote job security and working conditions, particularly during ongoing or forthcoming negotiations with the ILO Administration, irrespective of the contractual status of staff, in order to give effect to the vision of “One ILO.” To take necessary measures to eliminate all forms of precariousness and seek to achieve greater equality and equal treatment between the different categories of staff (RB-DC, P-G, Headquarters-Field).

Priority areas include:

- Defending existing jobs by facing current and future challenges: potential budget restrictions, constant search for increasingly flexible types of contracts, need to be particularly wary of permanent changes and innovations used as an excuse to reduce workforce numbers.
- Successful outcomes of contract negotiations focusing on three main elements:
 - Maintaining social gains that are organization-specific, such as sustainable contracts, incorporation by statutory channels of staff employed on TC projects (beyond a certain seniority) into the regular workforce of the Organization.
 - Integration of non-statutory staff who have been employed for years on consecutive contracts and perform essential tasks for the Organization.
 - Making sure that the ILO Administration strictly applies and brings necessary improvements to existing rules in order to ensure better job security and working conditions for TC staff, particularly with regard to recruitment, career development, performance recognition and access to training.

Means of action

- Ensuring that designated priority areas are included in new contract policy negotiations.
- Closely cooperating with all Staff Union members with different contractual situations, in order to ensure that their views and interests are fully taken into account.
- Supporting the Staff Union’s position on the contracts policy with an appropriate strategy and legal arguments.

Coordinator: Catherine Comte-Tiberghien

Members: Laurence Dubois, Séverine Deboos, Guillaume Filhon, Yuka Okumura, Yvan Poulin and Clara Van Panhuys

The Staff Union has worked throughout the year to defend the existing jobs of colleagues, at the individual and the collective level, according to the rules in force and whatever their type of contract. Situations vary greatly. This year, the Staff Union has been able to successfully support the actions of several colleagues in end-of-contract situations, both at headquarters and in the field. It is clear that when colleagues – particularly those working on technical cooperation projects – manage to come together for joint action instead of fighting in isolation, then solutions are always more likely to succeed.

On a more general level, the issue of the review of the contracts policy was put in the top three priorities of the Staff Union in the Joint Negotiating Committee. However, despite repeated efforts on its part to organize marathon negotiation sessions where necessary, the Staff Union has not received all the information necessary (i.e. identical to that held by the Administration) for such discussions, including the financial visibility necessary, at least in the medium term, for the proposed changes. At the same time, the Staff Union has, in each more detailed discussion on a particular subject (merit, training, etc. ...) required the Administration to extend all applicable statutory provisions to officials under technical cooperation contracts.

III – A career development path for all

Coordinators of the working group on career development: Carlos Carrión Crespo, Maria Prieto

Members: Harvey Addo-Yobo, Manuel Céspedes Ocampo, Guillaume Filhon, Chantal Nahimana, Azza Taalab

A – Personal promotions and reclassification

Objectives:

- To ensure that the personal promotion machinery is transparent and equitable. Push for clarification regarding the eligibility of staff who are being unlawfully excluded from the exercise.
- To ensure that the global reclassification exercise in the field is implemented, and Independent Review Groups are established and are active in all regions for the examination of job-grade review appeals.

Means of action

- Participating in the joint committee on personal promotions, and deploying legal action where appropriate;
- Ensuring that the implementation of the reclassification exercise in the field provides equal and equitable opportunities for all; and
- Assisting the JNC when needed.

As you can see in the defined objectives, the personal promotion covers several areas.

The joint group on personal promotions has finalized the 2020 exercise for G staff and the 2019 exercise for P Staff, which has two stages. The Staff Union will do its utmost to ensure that the group catches up as soon as possible.

The Staff Union has provided support to colleagues who have asked for review of the reclassification exercise in the field.

The harmonization of the Recruitment and Selection process is also an important matter to ensure equity and transparency. The Staff Union and the Administration have agreed on a terms of reference for the review of Job Descriptions (JDs) for staff in headquarters.

The titularization exercise for all staff is up to date.

B – Training policy and performance management

Objectives:

- To ensure that staff concerns are taken into account in ILO training and in the performance management systems of the ILO;
- To ensure that training and performance management policies are implemented in a fair and transparent manner, including through a review of the Reports Board;
- To promote career development through the training policy;

- To promote transparency in merit increments so that it reflects performance evaluation results;
- To ensure that the implementation of the new job descriptions in the field is fair for all staff; and
- To ensure that the proposed review of job descriptions in headquarters is fair for all staff.

Means of action

Training policy

- Implementing the training policy in line with the needs of staff at all levels and categories in an equitable manner, in the context of the JNC;
- Participating in the Joint Training Council so that the Staff Union has a voice in the use of staff development funds, the impact of training expenditure and the assessment of how proposed training programmes satisfy staff members' needs and requests.

Performance management

- Addressing the staff's concerns regarding the implementation of the performance management system and assessing the introduction of how a new cycle has responded to staff needs and concerns;
- Ensuring that the Performance Management Framework (PMF) supports the career progression of staff; and
- Negotiating improvements through the JNC.

Co-chair of the Joint Training Council: Carlos Carrión Crespo

Members of the Joint Training Council: Chantal Nahimana, Maria Prieto, Olga Strietska-Ilina, Azza Taalab

Training policy: After several years of hiatus, the Joint Training Committee (JTC) has met four times in 2021, and has discussed the proposed ILO learning strategy. In this framework, the Staff Union has a voice in the use of Staff Development Funds, the impact of training expenditure and the assessment of how proposed training programmes satisfy staff members' needs and requests. The Staff Union will seize this opportunity to ensure that every training indicated in the appraisal reports is realized and, if not, managers should justify its absence.

Performance Management: The merit increments are now tied to the performance reports and those corresponding to the past three years were published. This has increased transparency in the process, and it is now possible to point out its flaws and suggest improvements. The Staff Union has underlined its aim to preserve the interest of the staff in this exercise to ensure that the Performance Management Framework constitutes a real tool to help colleagues in their career development. The full-time telework and suspension of duty travel has increased the use of the mid-term review process in order to adjust the outputs proposed at the beginning of the year. The situation of our colleagues on Development Cooperation projects is part of this discussion and the Staff Union will keep all staff informed in due course of all and any evolution of the situation on these important matters.

C – Conditions of employment of staff with technical cooperation contracts

Objective: To promote equal treatment of all staff on technical cooperation contracts (TC staff) – including PSI – (“Development Cooperation” according to terminology used by the ILO Administration) and regular budget staff in ongoing or future negotiations with the Administration, in order to give effect to the vision of “One ILO”. Defend the equal rights of staff performing equivalent functions, and promote equal pay before the ILO Administration, in keeping with the spirit of ILO Convention No. 111

condemning all forms of discrimination between workers, in compliance with ILOAT jurisprudence, which considers it to be a fundamental principle of the context of work for civil servants. Promote the views of and ensure a continuous career development path for staff on TC contracts.

These objectives are in line with the conclusions of the 2020 report by the working group on technical cooperation.

Priority areas include:

- Safeguarding existing job security by dealing with issues such as the potential reduction of technical cooperation budgets, developing proposed priority action plans for persons already on a post, paying particular attention to TC staff with seniority, particularly those who have accomplished 10 years of service at the ILO.
- Taking into account staff seniority, particularly with regard to application of the same rights and general guarantees for TC+5s as those granted to regular budget staff, including recruitment, selection, and redeployment processes;
- Guaranteeing that staff, especially TC staff, are treated with respect, focusing on three main elements:
 - The strictest respect for already existing rights and guarantees for technical cooperation contracts, independent of budgetary justifications (budgetary limits should not be used, for example, to justify that staff should pay for their own security arrangements or those of their family or to justify the non-respect of mandatory notice periods in case of renewal or non-renewal).
 - Identification of rights and guarantees that do not yet apply to TC staff. Promotion of identical treatment and application of the same rights to TC staff as regular budget staff, taking into account seniority (in-post promotion, merit, training, severance pay, family support, applications for ILO job openings).
 - Development of proposals to enable better safeguards for contracts in order to ensure career development at the ILO, with the implementation of tools that facilitate recruitment and redeployment of technical cooperation staff in jobs corresponding to their skills.

Means of action

- Ensuring that the priority areas mentioned by the TC group are included in new contract policy negotiations.
- Maintaining close contact with technical cooperation staff to ensure that their insights and interests are fully taken into account in forthcoming negotiations.
- Supporting analysis of case studies identified by the TC working group in the form of appropriate legal arguments, supported by legal advice from the Staff Union.
- Strengthening communication and information on the rights and guarantees of staff, whether they are TC or RB, with a view to increasing awareness of often overlooked challenges and inequalities that colleagues are forced to deal with.

Coordinators: Laurence Dubois, Guillaume Filhon

In accordance with the decision of the First Session of the Annual General Meeting in 2019, the Working Group on Technical Cooperation was established on the basis of a first ad hoc group, which was itself the result of a call for participation, and is composed of Staff Union members from headquarters and the field. The group organized its actions on the basis of the findings of the previously compiled report, which highlighted the differences in employment conditions, including career development and recognition,

between staff under the development cooperation budget and those under the regular budget. These actions were carried out in 4 areas:

- Information and communication actions on employment conditions and staff rights for staff on technical cooperation and regular budget; these actions were to be organized by the Working Group on Technical Cooperation with the support of the Bureau and the Staff Union's Communication Team. In this context, the group first conducted consultations on the basis of the report presented, in order to illustrate the elements gathered therein with concrete testimonies. On the basis of these testimonies, it then set up a questionnaire to determine the frequency of the inequalities observed. This questionnaire is currently being finalized and will be distributed to all staff shortly.
- To address illegal management practices with HRD and, if necessary, to support colleagues who wish to take legal action in accordance with ILO rules and procedures. At the basis of all the Staff Union's demands and responses is now the permanent demand for equality between technical cooperation staff and regular budget staff. This has been the case, for example, in ensuring equal access to support measures under COVID, in providing support to staff on technical cooperation contracts in the Algiers Office, or in preparing the IGDS on telework.
- Call for changes in the Staff Regulations to address unjustified and unfair differences between TC and regular budget staff that may result from the currently applicable rules. This was the case for the discussions on the preparation of the IGDS on maternity or the merit step.
- Submit to the Working Group on the Contracts Policy the report which, together with the reports/notes from the other working groups, will feed into the contracts policy and other negotiations to ensure non-discrimination between categories of staff with equal seniority, in particular after a certain seniority set at 5 years, and respect for "One ILO".

The contracts policy is still awaiting negotiation with the Administration in the framework of the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC). The need to see this negotiation move forward is regularly reiterated by the Staff Union, which also demands access to all relevant information necessary to pursue it. The upcoming negotiations will also require that due attention be paid to the overall context of the working conditions of UN staff.

In the meantime, the Staff Union continues to address, on a case-by-case basis, the situation of colleagues in precarious situations. Recognizing the urgency of this issue, the Staff Union continues to do its utmost to ensure that this issue remains a priority for the Administration.

IV – Enhancement of staff security, occupational safety and health and both physical and mental health and well-being for all ILO staff around the world

Objective: To collaborate with the Office to ensure effective COSH are operationalized in all duty stations and calling for administration accountability through strengthening Staff Union representatives' knowledge, capacity and resilience to defend the rights of staff concerning security, occupational safety and health, as well as mental health and wellbeing at work.

Means of action:

- Supporting the implementation of the occupational safety and health (OSH) policy, directive and procedure (IGDS 48, IGDS 286, IGDS 385¹) through active participation in the Committee on

¹ Available from the COSH website : https://www.ilo.org/dyn/osh/intranet.home?p_lang=en

Safety and Health (COSH) promoting compliance with the actions and requirements of IGDS 385;

- Participating in the COSH working group on stress at work and mental health and contributing to advancing the implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) in 2016;
- Reaching out to Staff Union representatives in the field offices to promote and support the creation and functioning of OSH committees and mechanisms, including, where necessary, the identification and appointment of OSH representatives;
- Reaching out to Staff Union OSH representatives in field offices and at headquarters to support them through information, advocacy activities, technical assistance and training developed by the union or the office;
- Contributing to capacity-building among SU representatives by developing user-friendly guidance for OSH representatives on how to fulfil their OSH duties;
- Supporting SU representatives in their crises response capacity, on matters concerning safety and health in public health crises and consultation of return-to-office policies and security and well-being in fragile contexts;
- Ensuring a staff voice in the building renovation processes (planning and implementation), through Steering Committees or other consultation mechanisms, so that the highest standards on staff safety and health and well-being apply during the renovation of the headquarters' and field buildings, in consultation with Staff Union representatives, union stewards and focal points;
- Supporting climate- and environmentally friendly initiatives within the ILO.
- In collaboration with the Administration, ensuring that staff are kept informed of developments concerning security and occupational safety and health through communications and/or information sessions.

Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (COSH)

Titular members: Christiane Wiskow, Ana Catalina Ramirez

Substitute members: Carlos Carrión-Crespo, Maria Prieto

Working group on occupational safety and health and environmental issues

Coordinator: Christiane Wiskow

Members: Carlos Carrión-Crespo, Maria Prieto, Ana Catalina Ramirez

Technical Advisers: Andrew Christian, Jean-Louis Dominguez (Security), Jürgen Menze, Tzvetomira Radoslavova

Achievements:

2021 continued to be influenced by the COVID-19 related measures and their effects on safety and health of ILO staff. The volatile situation in many countries required ongoing and at times rapid adaptation of measures to the changes of the public health situation in countries. In some offices, measures were shifting between mandatory telework; recommended telework; partial and full Return to Office (RTO) various times back and forth. While we were all challenged by this situation requiring continuously adaptation to new information and regulations, we would like to point out that this has kept momentum on OSH issues within the ILO offices.

The Staff Union has participated in all COSH meetings that exchanged information on the COVID-19 situation as well as RTO preparations and adaptations. Further, we provided continuously comments and inputs to guidance documents prepared by the Administration and made sure that concerns voiced by colleagues across the world were transmitted to the Administration. During the open dialogue with the DG (February 2021), the Staff Union raised the concerns about the need to improve the implementation of a functioning OSH management system within the ILO as well as the OSH capacities in terms of training. As a result, COSH mandated a bi-partite working group to review the IGDS 48, 286 and 385 and another bi-partite working group to explore the options for scaling up OSH training for ILO management and staff.

Both are a work in progress and it will still take some time to complete these complex mandates. The results of the working groups will be discussed by COSH to agree on key recommendations to be put forward to the DG on the action to be taken.

The Staff Union also provided general as well as specific OSH information to staff representatives. We further responded to requests from staff representatives in country offices – both COVID-19 related and concerning general OSH issues – and facilitated communication and information exchange with the ILO OSH Coordinator. Where possible, we organized virtual meetings with colleagues, to listen to their questions, concerns and needs to identify meaningful support measures. In addition, the Staff Union engaged in the joint COSH working group on work-related stress management and mental health that discussed approaches to addressing psycho-social risk factors with a focus on the pandemic context. Furthermore, the Staff Union continued communication with the building renovation project to bring staff concerns to their attention.

Challenges to come

Despite progress made on the OSH training materials, the COVID-19 response absorbed all capacity in terms of time and expertise, so the implementation of the training could not start as planned. Yet, many representatives flagged these training needs as urgent.

The recognition of the importance of internal social dialogue and its effective implementation even during crisis response, i.e. the consultation of staff and their representatives, still needs enhancement in many offices. Further, the involvement of COSH in shaping OSH measures in the context of a COVID-19 response and RTO procedures has to be strengthened in many offices as well, including at HQ.

We would like to reiterate that creating a culture of security, safety and health is a long-term challenge requiring the awareness and action of everyone in their day-to-day work as well as commitment to the active implementation of the ILO OSH policy.

V – Full social protection

Objective: To ensure effective, efficient and sustainable health care and pension funds. To advocate and negotiate for the creation of unemployment and maternity/paternity/ parental insurance schemes.

Means of action

- Ensuring the application of the Regulations and Administrative Rules of the Staff Health Insurance Fund, particularly with regard to information provided to insured staff, timely publication of annual reports, etc.
- Continuing discussions with the ILO Administration to consolidate services and benefits for insured staff working in the field, in remote duty stations and technical cooperation projects.
- Increasing awareness of staff with regard to health care and pension issues in order to strengthen the position of staff representatives on joint bodies. This objective will be attained through regular, close communication between the Staff Union (including the Former Officials' Section) and the insured staff representatives of the SHIF Management Committee and the representatives on the Joint Staff Pension Board.
- Promoting and organizing information sessions, General Assemblies and referendums in order to ensure that any proposed changes to the structure, programme, benefits or premiums are explained clearly and fully to insured staff and participants so that no decisions are taken without extensive consultation.

Coordinator: Catherine Comte-Tiberghien

Members: Guillaume Filhon, Sophie Guerre-Chaillet, Azza Taalab, Sergio Velasco

Technical Advisers: François Kientzler (Former Officials' Section), Cherry Thompson-Senior

Staff Health Insurance Fund (SHIF)

This year the Staff Union was again active and maintained close links with the SHIF. Two of the Staff Union's Committee members are also elected members of the SHIF Management Committee, which allows the Staff Union to be better informed about decisions concerning the health coverage of SHIF participants. "SHIF online", the system allowing policy-holders to make their claims online, has reached a steady state with a positive satisfaction rate, but colleagues in the field are still complaining about the delays in reimbursements. The black spot still remains access to care for all these same colleagues. It seems that the new system put in place concerning the approved establishments in each place of employment has not yet been properly communicated and the Staff Union will have to insist on the Fund ensuring that colleagues, mainly in the field, can fully benefit from this tool and help it to evolve, if health care providers are missing from the list. This series of tangible improvements reinforces the Committee's conviction that this health fund is indeed adequate for the size and specific nature of the Organization, provided of course that the Administration invests in sufficient means, whether in terms of financial or human resources. But the feedback from colleagues in the field, which is much more mixed and sceptical, must be taken into account and brought to the attention of the Fund so that it can continue its efforts to provide information and to make improvements if necessary. In addition, an actuarial study was carried out this past year which will lead to further discussions in which the representatives of the participants in the Fund will do their utmost to make the best decisions to guarantee its sustainability. The members representing the insured have also participated in internal working groups of the Fund to improve its governance and sustainability.

Pension Fund

With regard to the Pension Fund, the participants' representatives were present at the annual meeting, which was held entirely virtually, as required by COVID, and defended, as usual, the interests of ILO staff. One item on the agenda threatened the future of the ILO's representation on the Pension Board, but our representatives did their best to limit the damage. The financial situation of the Pension Fund is good. For more detailed information on the Fund, the Staff Union encourages its members to go directly to its website (<https://www.unjspf.org/fr/the-69th-session-of-the-un-pension-board-concludes-confirming-excellent-performance-of-the-un-pension-fund/>).

VI – A diverse, inclusive, equal and equitable workplace

Fair, equal and equitable conditions of employment for all staff, without discrimination based on, inter alia, age, race, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, sexual orientation, languages, religion, ethnicity, colour, national extraction, social origin, caste marital status, pregnancy, personal and/or family status and responsibilities, disability, HIV status, union membership or political conviction, grade, type of contract, and duty station.

While we all uphold the common UN charter and work towards the promotion of a Decent Work Agenda for all, we all bring with us diverse perspectives, work experiences, life styles and cultures, which should be valued, respected and supported. The Staff Union Committee is committed to working to create a working environment where diversity, equality, equity, inclusion and work-life balance is respected and leveraged to improve organizational performance.

Objective: To contribute to the improvement of the working environment for all ILO officials by combating any form of discrimination, and promoting inclusion, equality and diversity whilst facilitating the pursuit of a healthy work-life balance in an workplace free from violence and harassment.

Means of action

Building upon the success of the previous year and learning from the challenges faced, the Staff Union proposes continuing to work on special mechanisms/initiatives to facilitate inclusion, diversity, equality and work-life balance.

More specifically, the working group will:

- Actively collaborate with the Joint Negotiating Committee Sub-Working groups (on diversity and inclusion, maternity and parental leave, teleworking policy) and ensure that all negotiations are conducted through a gender equal, non-discriminatory and an intersectional lens.
- In consultation with GEDI and HRD, support the implementation of the Disability Inclusion Policy in the ILO, particularly in the areas of employment and non-discrimination.
- Work with the ILO SUC working groups on;
 - recruitment and selection on geographic representation;
 - OSH on mental health and harassment;
 - Development cooperation.
- Collaborate and negotiate with HRD for the development and effective implementation of an updated teleworking policy and other working arrangements to promote work-life balance and an appropriate inclusive work environment, free from violence and harassment.
- Hold consultations with HRD to revise the maternity and paternity leave policy for a more inclusive parental leave policy in line with the objective of promoting gender equality and equity in retention and access to career opportunities.
- Work with HRD on the implementation of the Action Plan for improving the diversity of the ILO Workforce (GB.337/PFA/11).
- Partner with, when possible, GED, FUNDAMENTALS and HRD on International Days, including International Women’s Day, IDAHOT, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, etc.

Coordinator: Clara Van Panhuys

Members: Work-Life Balance: Maria Prieto, Yuka Okumura, Clara Van Panhuys; Diversity: Ludovic Caprini, Chantal Nahimana, Clara Van Panhuys; Disability: Severine Deboos, Yuka Okumura, Azza Taalab

Technical Advisers: Jürgen Menze, Ilka Schoellmann, Gurchaten Sandhu, Lou Tessier

The working group continued to engage in relevant activities whenever possible to reach the objective of improving the working environment for all ILO officials by combating any form of discrimination and promoting inclusion, equality and diversity whilst facilitating the pursuit of a healthy work-life balance in a workplace free from violence and harassment.

UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS)

The UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) “is a comprehensive strategy for ensuring that the United Nations system is fit for purpose in relation to disability inclusion. It provides a foundation for sustainable and transformative progress on disability inclusion through all pillars of the United Nations’ work”. The UNDIS has a component on organizational culture, including employment and capacity development for staff. The ILO SUC received a briefing from GEDI on the relevant indicators in the UNDIS including the one concerning employment and staff development.

International Women’s Day

This year the Staff Union commemorated International Women’s Day through various actions including a video to showcase the women from the Committee and the secretariat of the Staff Union disseminated through social media, as well as an event organized by SUC jointly with GEDI on “Conversations on Women, and leadership: together towards greater gender equality in the ILO.” The event provided a good opportunity to discuss, reflect and celebrate efforts for promoting greater gender equality within the ILO, with a focus on ILO women and leaders at ILO HQ and in the external offices, including project teams.

New Flexible Work Arrangement

The SUC collaborated and negotiated with HRD for the development of a New Flexible Work Arrangement, thus updating the current teleworking policy and other working arrangements in light also of the COVID-19 response measures.

An inclusive parental leave policy

Consultations were held with HRD on the proposal to revise the maternity and paternity leave policy for a more inclusive parental leave policy in line with the objective of promoting gender equality and equity in retention and access to career opportunities.

VII – International affairs and protection of the independence of the international civil service

Objective: To strengthen alliances with key players involved in the improvement of working and employment conditions in the international civil service (international staff union federations, CCISUA, civil society, etc.) and to work in the long-term for the introduction of collective bargaining to the United Nations.

Means of action

- Strengthening ties with major international unions and those with whom the Staff Union is affiliated in order to benefit from their logistics and influence, and create a better framework for labour relations in the context of UN reform.
- Working towards the sharing of knowledge, resources and activities in advocacy campaigns led by the staff federations of the International Civil Service to address the potential threat of contractual reform throughout the whole of the UN common system.
- Continuing activities with already existing FUNSAs. Encouraging ILO staff representatives to participate in or create local FUNSAs in the field in order to better respond to the interests and needs of international organization staff locally.
- Strengthening ties with various inter-agency groups (such as UN-Globe, UN + or the UN Feminist Network) in order to improve the working and employment conditions of certain categories of workers in the United Nations who may be subject to discrimination (based on race, ethnicity, social origin, national extraction, nationality, sex, family status, family responsibilities, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, political opinions, religion, disability, HIV status or trade union membership).

Coordinator: Catherine Comte-Tiberghien

Members: Carlos Carrión-Crespo, Manuel Céspedes Ocampo, Yvan Poulin

This year, the Staff Union Committee decided to strengthen its presence within the federation to which it belongs, CCISUA, by having one of its members elected to its Executive Board. This increased presence allows the ILO Staff Union to have greater visibility of the issues at stake within the UN common system and to participate more actively in the work of the International Civil Service Commission, and to bring its objectives (to establish a real negotiating system within the UN) to the forefront. A lot more meetings and commitment are needed for the Staff Union to make progress in this area. The benefits of such a presence are already being felt, for example, in the working groups to revise wage-setting methodologies or in the substantive discussions on the future of work at the United Nations.

The Staff Union has also been present in defending the rights of colleagues in the field, using all the synergies that exist between it and the local staff unions. It also continued to support the local Federations of UN Staff Unions and Associations (FUNSA) in order to be better equipped for future campaigns to defend conditions of employment and work in the field.

VIII – An even stronger and better equipped Union

A – Communication

Objective: The communications group will ensure that the Staff Union communicates with the staff more effectively and efficiently, on activities, ongoing problems and progress made, in close collaboration with the relevant working groups.

Means of action:

- Keeping the staff regularly informed of developments through the Union’s new totems in HQ, broadcasts, website, social media, etc.
- Redoing/revamping the Staff Union's website in English, French and Spanish, bringing it up to date.
- Improving the wording of Staff Union materials (especially its flyers and membership forms) so as to make it more inclusive.
- Drafting new information notes to make procedures easier to understand for the officials concerned.
- Communicating regularly with the drafting committee of UNION regarding the publication of editorials on ILO policies and procedures.
- Finding new ways to promote Staff Union campaigns and explain what they are about, especially recruitment drives, training activities, etc.

Coordinator: Harvey Addo-Yobo, assisted by Yvan Poulin

The communication team met every week virtually to prepare the weekly headlines and press releases. The members of the team kept in close contact with one another so that the Staff Union and the staff could get in touch very quickly in the event of an emergency. This rapid-response capability has proved crucial and has ensured that staff are informed of developments on time.

The Staff Union communicates mainly by means of headlines and bulletins and broadcasts and the communications team has helped by providing the design and material for posters and publications on welcome screens in HQ, the website, Twitter, Facebook and other social media platforms.

UNION magazine (now *Union Blog*) has been fairly quiet this year, again due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as the editors have been busy with other matters. Besides that, there were not many contributors. That said, contributions from members of the staff who have something to say are still very much welcome, and we can only encourage you to visit our site at <http://unionmag.ilostaffunion.org>.

The website has been revamped and currently we are migrating content into it. A lengthy process, but necessary if the team is to provide fully comprehensive information in three languages, which they are determined to do. Slowly but surely, we are almost there.

The Staff Union plans to keep up the hard work and to do everything it can to improve communication with the staff. To do this, it shall make use of every means at its disposal and of all the expertise of the members of the team.

B – Membership, staff representation and training

Objectives:

- **An even stronger and better equipped Staff Union:** by preserving and increasing the number of members, strengthening solidarity, consolidating the capacities of Staff Union representatives, and by improving internal operations, communication and the consistency of its actions.

Means of action:

- Organizing a 2021 Staff Union recruitment drive and information campaigns.
- Pushing towards Staff Union representation in all departments and all duty stations - as part of the elections for union stewards and local committees.
- Scheduling of regular information and training sessions for all Union representatives.
- Regular information sharing with the union stewards' network via emails, coffees and lunchtime briefings.
- Identifying and providing support to technical cooperation departments or projects subject to ongoing or planned restructuring activities.
- Organizing at least two "café-croissant" information sessions with departments at ILO headquarters during the course of 2021, in the presence of at least one union steward, in order to rally support for the Staff Union.
- Liaising with regional titular members and substitute members to share experiences and provide mutual assistance for better adhesion and Staff Union organization.

Coordinator: Yvan Poulin assisted by Carlos Carrion-Crespo, Catherine Comte-Tiberghien, Clara Van Panhuys

Supporting Union Stewards in their work

Over the past year, the Staff Union Committee has steadfastly supported its network of Union Stewards at headquarters, despite the lockdown, by making increased use of the WhatsApp group and Teams, where Stewards have been kept informed of developments and have been able to share their needs and news. This allowed us to elect new Union Stewards and ensure continuity of our representation, in spite of the obstacles.

In addition, regular meetings by Teams have helped to strengthen the sense of belonging to a network. Everyone benefited from each other's experiences and the spirit of collaboration between Union Stewards took on a new lease of life.

Campaigning and organizing Union membership

By this point in the year, in October, the Staff Union has welcomed 100 new members – 88 in the field offices and 12 at headquarters.

Part 3 – Periodic and regular actions

I – Resolving the problems facing non-headquarters staff

Inspired by the Vision for the global staff union as adopted in September 2020, the Staff Union Committee, through its strong engagement from the regional representatives, and in close contact with country representatives, will voice the concerns and interests of field colleagues with the Administration and ensure that field staff working and employment conditions are safeguarded and improved.

Taking into account the specific context in 2021, the objectives for the Staff Union regarding field staff will cover the following issues:

- the safety and security of all categories of field staff, with the view to both preventing and addressing cases of violence and harassment at work and securing their health and physical safety;
- the fight against differentiation of treatment between international and local staff in safety and evacuation policies, particularly with respect to the rights and benefits of staff in high-risk duty stations;
- the promotion of the creation of OSH Committees in each duty station, and ensuring well-trained representation in OSH committees;
- the harmonization of recruitment and selection procedures in all duty stations, through the establishment of the Recruitment, Assignment and Mobility Committee (RAMC);
- the promotion of career prospects under the mobility policy, bearing in mind the characteristics of each category of posts, especially TC, NO and NC posts;
- the assurance that greater attention is paid to the conditions inherent in staff employment contracts, notably by conducting periodic salary surveys.

Means of action

- Promoting ILO Convention No. 190 in the field offices to avoid violence and harassment and strengthening the grievance handling mechanism for a fair and equitable judgement for the complainants.
- Reviewing safety and evacuation policies to respect equal treatment for the staff in high-risk duty stations.
- Strengthening the role and functions of the COSH in all duty stations through more information-sharing and training, including the ability to recommend a RTO during the pandemic.
- Supporting the application of the Collective Bargaining Agreement signed in 2004 to the field, in respect to the role of the Staff Union in Recruitment and Selection (R&S), in order to ensure the effective involvement of the Staff Union in R&S and enhance the transparency and accountability of the R&S.
- Practically promoting a mobility policy guaranteeing mobility for long-serving staff in a duty station when the staff applied for vacancies and the clear mobility policy shall be stipulated in the Staff Regulations.
- Conveying the field reality to be taken into account in the negotiation on the contracts policy with the Administration.
- Assist members of staff in all duty stations to assert his or her rights vis-à-vis the Administration through dialogue with relevant parties and with the support, when necessary, of the Staff Union's legal adviser.
- Continuing to hold regular monthly discussions with all regional representatives on videoconference, as an effective means of facilitating the sharing of information and experience in the practical implementation of the priorities indicated above (meetings are currently programmed on a quarterly basis).
- Organization of the two regional meetings in Asia and the Pacific and in Europe and the Arab States.

Coordinator: Severine Deboos, assisted by Sophie Guerre-Chaillet

- The ILO Convention No. 190 has been promoted in the field offices to avoid violence and harassment and strengthening the grievance handling mechanism for a fair and equitable judgement for the complainants. This has been done through sensitization and capacity building during the regional meetings in Europe and Arab States and in Asia and the Pacific. Regional titular and relevant representatives have also supported members when relevant and few cases have also been transmitted through the relevant channels.
- While the planned review of safety and evacuation policies to respect equal treatment for the staff in high-risk duty stations will be reconsidered for next year, the Staff Union Committee has been following very closely the actions and support for the offices in Myanmar, Haiti and Afghanistan, ensuring that the safety and security of all colleagues has been taken into account.
- Given the continuation of the mandatory telework and medical situation in the world, the role and functions of the COSH in all duty stations have been strengthened through more information-sharing and training. OSH committees in several offices in Europe and the Arab States were involved in the RTO exercise following the COVID-19 lockdown. Activities were planned and implemented in coordination with the SU. The degree of this cooperation varied from office to office but was satisfactory in general. In Africa, the need to strengthen the OSH committees at all duty stations is being discussed during the monthly meetings with the Regional Director's team (the Deputy Regional Director and the Regional Human Resources Coordinator).
- The alignment of the recruitment and selection procedures through the implementation of the Recruitment, Assignment and Mobility Committee (RAMC) is under discussion with the Administration, particularly for the Africa region and for the Arab States. In the meantime, progress has been made in a number of field offices to promote transparent and fair processes and promoting a mobility policy guaranteeing mobility for long-serving staff in a duty station.
- Great attention has been given to ensure that field reality is being taken into account in all discussions and negotiations. In particular, through the Regional Titulars, feedback and contributions were collected to inform the inputs provided by the Committee on the future Flexible Work Arrangement policy.
- Regular discussions take place on a monthly basis with all regional representatives on videoconference, as an effective means of facilitating the sharing of information and experience in the practical implementation of the priorities indicated above.
- The regional meetings for Europe and the Arab States and Asia and the Pacific were successfully organized in September and in October respectively through videoconference.

II – Use of financial resources

Objective: To ensure maximum transparency in the use of financial resources.

Means of action

- Scrutinizing the control and monitoring process for all financial transactions.
- Continuing to search for efficient solutions for offices requiring bank accounts and putting procedures into place for transferring funds to these accounts.
- Drawing up proposals for reinvesting maturing investment funds, to be submitted to the General Assembly.

Treasurer: Severine Deboos

While all the financial provisions had been made to ensure that the Staff Union can organize the celebration of its Centenary and its Global meeting, according to its statutory requirements, the plans had to be reconsidered given the crisis context due to the COVID-19 epidemics and disruptions of the planned activities.

The level of expenditure for the year 2020 is well below the forecasted budget with savings on all missions, hospitality, costs of communication and meetings.

III – Support for ILO staff in the prevention and resolution of disputes

Objective: Represent and defend the individual and collective interests of staff.

Means of action

- Providing headquarters staff and field staff with information and/or recommendations (on a collective or individual basis) relating to the application and interpretation of the Staff Regulations, collective agreements and IGDS documents, in addition to currently applicable policies and procedures.
- Providing information and/or recommendations on collective rights issues.
- Providing information notes on procedures applicable to officials.
- Representing or accompanying staff members in the context of conflict prevention.
- Organizing information sessions, at headquarters and in the field, relating to legal issues, especially during regional meetings or via Skype.
- Monitoring recommendations made by internal bodies and identifying trends in order to be able to respond to questions from staff.

Members: Chloé Charbonneau-Jobin, Carlos Carrion-Crespo, Catherine Comte-Tiberghien, Guillaume Filhon

Despite the enduring pandemic context, the Staff Union has continued to provide advice and legal assistance throughout this very special year. We observed an increase in individual grievances from the second half of the year onwards. The Staff Union had recorded a clear diminution in the number of formal complaints submitted to HRD and to the Joint Advisory Appeals Board ("JAAB") during the second half of 2020, while noting an increase in the number of cases subject to informal discussions and resolutions with the Administration. The year 2021 thus seems to mark a return to "normality" in terms of the number of formal complaints.

The Staff Union deplores the fact that several conflicts or labour relations issues seem directly related to the contracts policy and in particular the lack of consistent working conditions between officials assigned to technical cooperation projects and those appointed to posts on the regular budget and the situation of precariousness of the former towards the latter. While this situation is not new, with the continued rise in the number of so-called "TC" staff – which now exceeds that of staff on the regular budget (50.2% versus 49.8%) – it is more important than ever to address this issue. The Staff Union believes that this will go a long way to ensuring a healthier and more equitable workplace for all.

Over the past year, most of the consultations resulting in interventions of all kinds by the Staff Union, including assistance with formal grievances, have been on the following topics

- Claims to the Compensation Committee;
- Requests concerning job grading and recourses;
- Questions on terms and conditions of employment for staff on TC contracts including cases of successive precarious contracts;

- Recruitment and selection processes;
- Workplace accommodation measures;
- Salary and benefits after promotion and/or appointment.

Highlights

The Staff Union has noted an increase in consultations regarding requests in event of illnesses or injuries attributable to the performance of official duties and that staff are not sufficiently well informed on the procedure to follow in order to submit a claim for compensation.

On the issue of workplace accommodation, the Staff Union hopes that the changes being made to existing policies as a result of the implementation of the ILO *Policy on the inclusion of persons with disabilities* (IGDS No. 590 of 16 September 2021) will lead to concrete improvements in the working conditions of officials who need to be accommodated and will help prevent grievances in this area. A case related to these issues remains pending before the ILO Administrative Tribunal.

Concerning job grading, the Staff Union is assisting staff members in at least three ongoing grievances before the JAAB, two of which relate to the implementation of the new generic job descriptions in the field offices.

The Staff Union deplores the fact that again this year a decision by the Director-General following an investigation into allegations of harassment has led to a complaint before the ILO Administrative Tribunal. Since the entry into force of the procedure provided for in Article 13.4 of the Staff Regulations, this is at least the third complaint presented before the Tribunal by the Staff Union on behalf of one of its members on the interpretation and application of this provision and the *Collective Agreement on anti-harassment policy and investigation procedure*. The Staff Union reiterates its commitment to make every effort to ensure that the ILO respects the right of its members and staff to work in a healthy, harassment-free environment and takes appropriate action to prevent harassment and to intervene without delay when acts constitutive of harassment are brought to its attention.

In 2021, the ILOAT issued only two rulings on complaints filed by ILO staff members, and the Staff Union did not represent any of the complainants. However, the Staff Union expects decisions in early 2022 on complaints to be considered by the Tribunal at its 133rd Session in which it represents the complainants, and the Staff Unions shall report on them next year.

Finally, after more than a year of the pandemic forcing employees to telework, it is with regret that the Staff Union is obliged to inform its members that discussions with the Administration on the update of the policy on flexible working arrangements (IGDS No. 142 of 1 February 2010) have not yet been concluded. The Staff Union provided comments and observations on an amended policy proposal many months ago (May 2021). We are hopeful that by the end of the year, the ILO will have a new policy that is more responsive to the staff's needs.

II. REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

Africa

Titular member: Remy Bertrand Kama Kama

Substitute member: Leillah Abdallah

1. FOR A STRONGER STAFF UNION

The number of local staff union committees continued to grow, with new committees in Abidjan, Dakar, Kinshasa, Yaoundé and elsewhere. For the most part they have managed to carry on operating on a virtual basis while the COVID-19 pandemic lasts. All of them have made a great effort to contribute to the efficient functioning of the Office in spite of having to resort to telework.

2. DIALOGUE WITH THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR

The titular member, the substitute member and the Regional Director have agreed to hold a formal exchange of views during the last week of every month. The intention here is not just to maintain a dialogue with the Office of the Regional Director but also to have a formal basis on which to defend the rights of our colleagues in such areas of major concern as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), the Return to the Offices (RTO), the performance appraisals that have been contested at the start and end of the cycle and the incidents of psychological harassment at the workplace. Such incidents as have occurred in Abidjan and elsewhere have been formally submitted to the Department of Human Resources as the competent authority. The legal adviser of the Staff Union is of course following up on these incidents and is in permanent contact with the staff members concerned.

3. REVIEW OF LOCAL STAFF JOB DESCRIPTIONS

It is apparent from the exchanges that have been held on the publication of the new job descriptions that the local staff are unhappy with the new tasks assigned to functional posts. For example, in spite of the exchange of views that was held between the parties concerned, the members of the region's IT team are still unanimous in disagreeing with the Regional Director and with HRD/OD about the new job descriptions. On 30 November 2020 the Regional Director stated that he had taken due note of the difference of interpretation between HRD/OD and the representatives of the regional IT teams and he has invited them to take the matter up with the Staff Union, which was the original signatory of the collective agreement.

4. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

It is essential that recruitment and selection procedures be the same in all duty stations, and it was for this that the Recruitment, Assignment and Mobility Committee (RAMC) was originally set up.

As things are today, recruitment and selection is one of the most sensitive issues in the region. There are instances where recruitment has clearly been unfair and biased, and these have been brought to the attention of the Staff Union and of HRD in Geneva.

The fact is that the staff have regularly drawn attention to the lack of transparency and irresponsibility of the recruitment and selection procedures, and yet the Staff Union representatives in the region still have no say in the process.

As things stand, Pretoria and Dar es Salaam are the only regional offices where Union representatives are fully implicated in the discussion panels. In the other 10 offices they are only allowed to attend as observers. The problem has been discussed with the Office of the Regional Director, which is determined that the existing system remain unchanged despite the opposition of the Staff Union representatives. Otherwise, and so long as the situation differs from one duty station to another, it will no longer participate in the recruitment panels.

As for career development the mobility policy must, if it wants to promote the staff's career prospects, focus on the specific nature of each category of posts, especially of TC and NO posts. Broadly speaking, the objective is to ensure that the policy really does provide mobility for staff members who have spent a long time in their current duty station and who apply for vacant posts irrespective of the employment category concerned.

5. STAFF HEALTH AND SECURITY

The staff in the Africa region welcome the contractual provisions that were agreed upon in November 2020 by the SHIF and by an internationally recognized company that can provide access to an extensive network of healthcare suppliers.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, hospitals have been stretched to the limit by the number of patients suffering from the disease, so that for lack of the necessary facilities other hospital services have not been able to maintain their usual level of services.

The ILO staff are adamant that the SHIF should extend its contract for services to a broader range of good hospitals. It is sad to have to record that several members of the staff and/or their dependents have died over this recent period.

The local staff also calls on the ILO to install a secure computer system for exchanging data with the SHIF (as an independent entity) so that it can use the Organization's financial data for its reimbursement payments to local staff. The reimbursements could then be paid directly into the local staff members' accounts, for instance their dollar accounts with the UNFCU.

Regarding staff safety, the duty stations are unanimous in requesting that the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Committees be strengthened, especially as occasions where staff members need protecting arise on an almost daily basis.

6. Independent Review Group (IRG) Africa

The IRG for the Africa region was officially constituted on 22 February 2021 and is now operational. With the support of the Regional Director and in collaboration with the Staff Union, the members of the Group were designated by consensus.

An information session was organized on 22 July 2021 which was attended by all the representatives and members of the Staff Union's local committees in the region. The local committees were asked to publicise the session throughout their respective offices so as to familiarize the staff with the referral procedure.

7. ASSISTANCE AND ADVISORY SERVICES

The Staff Union provided advisory services to a number of staff members who consulted it on their various concerns. One such concern, submitted by staff members in Algiers, was about the decision to terminate their contract upon completion of the TAWDIF project.

If it is to find a lasting solution to unfortunate situations like this, the ILO must continue to improve the skills of project managers; for this it must find more ways to train its staff so as to make them more responsive.

8. DIRECTORS' ANNUAL RETREAT

The titular member participated in the retreat of the Directors of the Africa region that was held on 21 January 2021. The message from the Staff Union to the Regional Director was also transmitted to the Staff Union in Geneva.

Americas

Titular member: Maria Elena Lopez-Torres

Substitute member: Ana Catalina Ramirez

TELEWORKING AND THE COVID-19 SITUATION IN THE REGION

The region is currently teleworking and has been ever since March 2020. In several countries, the wearing of masks, social distancing and quarantining have been made mandatory.

Although the region has been very severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the staff have shown a great sense of professionalism and commitment to pursuing the objectives set by the Organization.

The current working conditions will certainly leave their mark, but we are confident that the Director and the staff will together draw the appropriate conclusions and be better prepared for the future. We shall shortly be returning to our respective Offices, where we will find new challenges awaiting us in terms of working conditions and workload. COVID-19 has added to our tasks and these will require rapid action over and above the tasks already planned.

Over the past months we have often had to work long hours attending virtual meetings, responding to endless surveys and filling in countless forms. The staff has been under constant pressure and this has meant more and more stress.

The fact of the matter is that the pandemic and the coronavirus have created a whole new context that has brought with it a constant sense of uncertainty and changes such as we have never encountered before. This is true of all the countries in the region.

HUMAN RESOURCES

We are indebted to the region's human resources team for their commitment to and concern for the physical and emotional well-being of the entire regional staff. The emotional support programme was recently reinstated and the staff have taken a very active interest in its workshops.

REGRAIDING AND SELECTION OF STAFF

There have been a number of regrading exercises over the period and the results have for the most part been positive. Other regrading exercises are under review and have fallen somewhat behind because of the pandemic.

RETURN TO THE OFFICES

Almost all the offices have drawn up risk analysis reports and standard operating procedures, and these have been submitted to the Regional Office and sent to Eloy Alonso-Maestre for review and approval. All were previously discussed with the Staff Union. The reports have been approved for all the offices, although in some cases no definitive date has been set for returning to the office

STAFF DEVELOPMENT FUNDS

With quarantine being the order of the day, the regional human resources team has been encouraging the staff to take training courses individually or in groups so as to hone their professional skills, including group courses in French and Portuguese. Several staff members are taking the project management course designed by the Turin Centre (how to write better reports, etc.). Requests to take part are handled by the human resources unit of each office in coordination with the Training Committee.

STAFF UNION BANK ACCOUNT IN THE OFFICES

We are holding a new consultation on the Staff Union's bank accounts, which are still in the name of individual Union members, usually the President and Treasurer. In some countries these officials have faced taxation issues with the authorities, not to mention the risk of one or other of the signatories dying and the funds being blocked until probate is complete. This is a perennial problem to which we have so far been unable to find a simple solution.

CAPS/SHIF

There has been a significant improvement in the time taken to process reimbursements, and for this the staff are duly grateful and congratulate the Fund on its efforts. The new SHIF ON LINE system is fairly easy to use and is quite useful, so it is now easier to follow up on requests for reimbursement. The SHIF ON LINE platform is also available to staff members who have retired.

SALARY SURVEYS

A few countries in the region have come under the United Nations salary-fixing mechanism, which means that there are now two separate salary scales. Given the pandemic, one wonders whether the next adjustment is not going to entail a further cut in salaries.

A warm welcome to our colleague Liliana Nieves Páez, who in June took up her duties as the Regional Coordinator for Human Resources In the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

As representatives of the Staff Union of all staff members in the Americas and in the Caribbean, whether recruited locally or internationally, we reaffirm our commitment to doing all we can to make the Staff

Union stronger, the better to protect the staff and, as far as possible, to improve their working conditions and the working environment.

One of the challenges facing us is to improve and strengthen the links between staff representatives in the region and, at the same time, to improve the channels of communication with the Staff Union at headquarters.

Asia and the Pacific

Titular Member: Pong-Sul Ahn

Substitute Member: Yuka Okumura

The SU Regional Election

The Staff Union (SU) Asia-Pacific undertook local elections in Feb-March 2021 to form new SU Committees across the region, which have a mandate of the April 2021 – March 2023 period. The closure of some offices has caused a delay of election process beyond the timeframe at some duty stations but an adoption of online voting systems helped in successfully completing the elections. Training on the roles and responsibilities of newly elected SU reps is essential to maintain the functions of the SU as two thirds of the SU representatives were reshuffled by the elections.

Stronger union

The SUCs in the region have continued to gain new memberships, especially in Bangkok, Dhaka, Phnom Penh, Tokyo, Jakarta and Kabul. The unionization rates in some duty stations are as high as the number of staff eligible for SU membership. The SUC in Colombo gained new members, while unfortunately losing a few active members within a similar timeline. Even in a difficult period of social distancing by the pandemic, some SUs carried on trainings and staff retreats which made union activities dynamic and stay connected among the members. The SUC in BKK as part of the COVID-19 taskforce of ROAP has contributed to organizing a few information sessions on staff's wellbeing against the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Several Staff Unions, including Yangon, arranged yoga classes for the members and also organized information-sharing forums on COVID-19 and safety and hygiene. SUCs in Colombo and Phnom Penh conducted virtual staff retreats while SUC in Hanoi had a physical staff retreat on 2-3 July 2020. The SUC in Jakarta organized virtual-hang-out events and online Independence Day games celebration to replace the offline traditional festivity. The SUC in Colombo hosted a session on collective bargaining. SUC Dhaka in collaboration with the Working Environment Task Team (WETT) organized a session on Mental Health in July 2021. SUC Islamabad opened a virtual café for a year to get connected and to release mental stress during the pandemic. All the SUCs have made efforts in one way another to activate the Staff Union during the teleworking period. Duty stations, such as Vientiane, Dili, UB, Kabul and Kuala Lumpur have no SUC so staff's concerns and issues are not properly addressed. The Regional Titular had a virtual meeting with the staff in KL in May 2021, shared some essential information with the staff in Dili through the SUC in Jakarta, consulted with the staff in UB for their interest in joining the SU, and constantly shared information and contacted the staff in Kabul. The membership of the liaison office in Kabul has increased from four to seven. Without regard to their membership in these duty stations, if anyone brings their issues, the Regional Titular handled those.

Dialogue with the management

The staff and management has had a common concern and interest on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. So most of the duty stations have maintained dialogue between the Staff Union and Management to share safety issues and to discuss RTO. However, some SU reps expressed their concerns that their management has made unilateral decisions affecting staff welfare but without adequately consulting with the SUC. It becomes an issue that the TC project managers are pushing their staff to deliver work, even though the country has been under lockdown and the constituents are also on teleworking. Delivery of work plans still becomes a challenge for all staff. In this challenging time of lockdown, teamwork should be encouraged and team-based delivery a norm for assessing staff performance appraisal. Mutual encouragement and connectivity between the staff and management still remains significant, as nearly all COs are still doing teleworking. On 19 July 2021, the SU representatives (Catherine Comte-Tiberghien,

Severine Deboos, Yuka Okumura and Pong-Sul Ahn) met with Ms Chihoko Asada-Miyakawa, for the first time since her appointment as a Regional Director. The meeting, aiming at introducing the functions and activities of the SUC, discussed issues related to the participation of the SU rep in recruitment and selection, discrimination and harassment, staff vaccination and RTO, and specific issues for Bangkok, Hanoi, Colombo and Dhaka. SUC Dhaka continues the dialogue with management on R&S process and getting hope for staff/HR mapping for the TC projects. The security and wellbeing of staff in Afghanistan and Myanmar were raised at the meeting. The SU reps observed there is a necessity for more dialogue at the regional level to enhance mutual cooperation where both can join force to address challenges the staff face and safeguard the staff and their families, especially during the pandemic period.

Staff Union response to COVID-19

The Asia-Pacific region faces third or four waves of the pandemic with delta variants or other variants. Most of the COs except in Beijing are closed and their staff perform Work from Home. In comparison with the negative impacts of the work from home modality last year, the staff are coping well with the new challenges which emerged from teleworking, which include increased family responsibilities, mental stress, internet connection problems, and new work tasks. Owing to experience-sharing through the frequent SU regional meetings, each SUC has efficiently handled any difficulties or grievances the SU members have had. However, the office teleworking policy is not equally applied or applied complicatedly, especially to those who faced lockdown situation in their duty station during their visit to home country or a home leave. There is the need to rationally apply the teleworking policy in accordance with the RTO status and health guidelines in the duty station. The Office has put the safety of staff as a priority during the pandemic. Vaccination of the staff and their dependents is a key concern of the SU in the region. Most of the ILO staff in the region got the first jab but await the second jab. They are still exposed to the risk of virus because their family members couldn't get a vaccine. The vaccination rollout programmes in most of the Asian-Pacific countries are slow and the vaccination rates are relatively low across the region. The Staff Unions actively participated in COSH during the pandemic. COSH has been overall functioning well, regularly reviewing the COVID situation in respective countries and discussing health measures. The SUs have also monitored the country situation of COVID-19 and members' physical and mental health and concerns. The SU representatives of the COSH are having better knowledge and experience on COSH activities but they need to get a training on their role and responsibilities in COSH and the IGDS and guidelines on COSH.

SHIF services

During the pandemic, hospitals are overcrowded by patients in many countries on the one hand and the quality of healthcare services in several countries in the region is poor on the other. Staff demand that SHIF would extend its service contract with more quality hospitals not only in the capital city but in big cities for the easy access of services by the staff and their families. In the meantime, the staff meet a problem with the local hospitals that have a service contract with SHIF because almost all of them don't know about SHIF and its service contract with them. There is a need to widely advocate the local hospitals on a relationship with SHIF. Staff also demand that SHIF would review reimbursable healthcare items and include vitamins and voluntary pre-test of the COVID as a category of reimbursable items. Reimbursement process has been prolonged and its duration longer during the pandemic.

Recruitment & selection and contract policy

Recruitment and selection is one of the prime important issues in the region because there have been clear cases of unfair and biased recruitment and a large number of the staff are employed by the TC projects whose employment is relatively insecure. So the staff constantly challenge the non-transparent and unaccountable procedures in Recruitment and Selection. The region still does not have CB on the participation of SU rep in the R&S process. Only a few duty stations involve SU reps in interview panels, while the majority of duty stations engage them as observers or do not involve them at all. The recruitment of P-staff of TC projects in the region has been proceeded with total absence of SU reps. According to the CBA signed in March 2014, the AP Staff Union prepares a TOR for the engagement of SU reps in R&S which will be consulted and negotiated with the ROAP Management. In order to motivate the staff and help them earn various technical experiences, a policy of geographical and functional mobility should be actively

implemented. The TC staff should have a longer term contract aligned with the project implementation period, and a career development programme should be integrated in the project.

Career development and SDF

ILO adopted the Centenary Declaration on the Future of Work, which emphasizes the importance of investing humans through upskilling and reskilling of the people. This recommendation is very relevant to the staff development issues of the ILO, so the Office should invest more resources for staff's upskilling and knowledge enhancement. Staff Development Fund could be a good avenue to serve for this purpose. Annual planning and fair distribution of SDF is key to benefit the staff equitably. It would be good if the Office could find any mechanism to award merit increments to TC project staff as well.

UN reform

The UN reform agenda subdues under the table during the pandemic. Nevertheless, the field offices feel that the UN Common System has already applied to the ILO and its staff. After the ILO-ESCAP joint safety investigation on asbestos in the ESCAP building, the ESCAP building, which was pushed for by SU action, the ESCAP building renovation has carried on quietly and steadily. In September 2021, the staff seated at Block B of ESCAP Building have been evacuated for the start of renovation work. The plans to introduce open space office have not been altered, which raises concerns about productivity but also about the safety and health of colleagues, given COVID-19. The debate on the merit and demerit of open space continues and the pandemic situation amplifies more the significance of closed space than the open space.

Local salary survey results

Inflation is getting high at an alarming level in many countries such as Pakistan and Mongolia. Local salary surveys have been conducted in several duty stations. It is getting more and more difficult to have high-paying comparators because they are not interested in joining the survey as some of their information are confidential and they are not getting any benefit from their participation as well. Another alternative to collect salary data other than comparators-method is suggested to be considered in the future. The survey results were negative in several duty stations and the ILO SU like in Hanoi took joint actions with FUNSA, including issuance of statements and meetings with the UNRC. For instance, a Comprehensive Salary Survey in 2020 in Viet Nam announced in May 2021 resulted in a 2.4% increase for GS staff and 14.4% for NO staff. There was a large gap in salary increases between NOs and GSs affecting the attitude and productivity of GS staff and creating an inharmonious working environment. The SU in the region urges ILO Administration to coordinate with OHRM to develop a mechanism to find best prevailing comparators (the Flemming Principle). Also, systemic capacity-building trainings need to be provided to LSSC members to perform their role in the survey process.

Job description review for P-staff

P-staff in the field are keen to the process of revising generic Job Descriptions for professional posts. As agreed with SYNDICAT and already announced by HRD, the process should be transparent and participatory giving the concerned staff sufficient time to provide their inputs. Taking into consideration on several procedures, the staff in the field desire for having a longer timeframe of revision.

Discrimination, harassment and abuse of authority

Discrimination and harassment takes place in different forms in our workplaces. Sexual harassment is commonly observed. Abuse of authority by supervisors who misuse power against the staff is the most serious but invisible issue because the supervisors can say the decision he/ she made was a managerial prerogative. All categories of the staffs are vulnerable to discrimination, harassment, nepotism, and invisible discouragement. After an allegation of harassment and complaints lodged by the staff in Dhaka, together with the management, the SUC organised a training programme on respectable workplace in early December 2020. The Sexual Harassment Taskforce Team in Bangkok organised two half a day sessions each for four groups on anti-sexual harassment in July 2021. It is regretted to report that some SU reps feel insecure in performing their duty as the management lacks the recognition of the SUC as an entity responsible for staff's wellbeing and representing their voice. The Office's zero tolerance policy should be effectively implemented to all cases, in order to create a respectful working environment where every staff feel safe, treated equally and fairly and has a voice. The staff overall opine that they have

positively experienced with teleworking arrangement and work-from-home online time schedule with less work-related conflicts, and mental stress and physical fatigue from commuting and traffic jams .

The SUC Yangon

Soon after the military Coup in Myanmar, the Regional Titular on the half of the SU Bureau sent a solidarity message to the Staff in Yangon. Since then, he remained regular contacts with the SU rep in Yangon to listen to the difficulties the staff have faced and passed those to the SU Geneva. In May 2021, the SU Bureau met the SU members in Yangon virtually to convey solidarity to them. As a proposal from the meeting, a mental health coaching session with the staff and their dependents was organised. On 4 August, the meeting held between the new SUC and the Regional Titular perceived that Covice-19 has infected many staff and their families, increasing workload to other colleagues. The SUC requests the Office to allocate a special fund for the Yangon office to hire two temporary assistant positions. The proposal was submitted to the ROAP. Some colleagues feel job insecurity due to the relationship with the de facto government.

The Staff in Kabul

In August, the SU Chair sent a solidarity message to the staff in Kabul and has coordinated with HRD to provide utmost support to the staff and their families. One of the colleagues said “I am very happy that all International staff are out of Afghanistan and the rest all national staff and dependents are safe but living in fear, anxiety and tension”. The Regional Titular trusted the Office’s handling of Kabul and contacted them to convey a message of solidarity and encouragement along deep concerns of the situation from the SU in Asia-Pacific. ILO-CO-Islamabad is extending support to the ILO colleagues in Kabul, in particular, along with other people. Two members of SU-Islamabad offered their personal residences to the ILO colleagues in Kabul if they manage to reach to Islamabad and face any issue of residence. Other colleagues have shown keen interest in providing requisite support if required. Our dear colleagues in Afghanistan appreciated friendships and solidarity extended by the SU in the region and showed their high spirit and strength, even in a fearing situation.

Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting of Staff Union

The Regional Meeting is scheduled for 11-14 October 2021 for 4 days with the participation of approximately 25 people (2 persons from each SUC – Chair and Secretary/ or alternative).

Europe and Arab States

Titular member: Eva Mihlic

Substitute member: Ludovic Caprini

The report was compiled based on information supplied by offices with SU representatives in the region (Brussels, Moscow, Ankara, Beirut, and Budapest including focal points in Sarajevo and Kiev) for the regional meeting held online, on September 14-16, 2021. Where specific locations are not mentioned, comments may be considered as applicable to the whole region. The report focuses on the following aspects of work in the ILO:

1. Salaries (including salary survey methodology)
2. Performance appraisals /merit increments
3. Training and the use of Staff Development funds
4. Reclassification of posts
5. Staff Health Insurance Fund - SHIF
6. Pension Fund
7. Work environment/ organizational climate
8. Relations between the ILO Staff Union and the Administration
9. Relation with other Staff Associations from the UN System
10. Main issues for which staff contacts the Staff Union

Salaries

Offices in the region are lobbying for the methodology used for local salary surveys to be re-examined and revised by the ICSC. The region reports extreme difficulties in finding comparators (any comparators, let alone *suitable* comparators), declining purchasing power of local staff, unrealistic discrepancies between results obtained for NO and GS staff, and higher inflation rates diminishing the potential positive effect of salary surveys.

UN agencies do not have capacities and resources to select, attract and retain the best employers to participate in the salary surveys. The methodology should be reviewed in full understanding of this reality and by taking into account the limited capacity of the LSSC members in conducting the surveys. In some countries ILO staff members are stretched over too many tasks and committee assignments to cover – including essential ones like the LSSC. In **Belgium**, the results of the local salary survey have been blocked since 2017, the situation remains unresolved to date. In countries with higher inflation rates, even when the salary survey is completed, by the time the results take effect, the potential salary increase loses in value significantly. The steep devaluation of the LBP for example affects negatively salaries and pensions.

In the **Beirut** office salaries are fixed based on the US\$ official exchange rate of 1\$=1,500 LBP while the market rate is 1\$=19,000 LBP and deteriorating. **Ankara** reported problems with cooperation among UN agencies and with the transparency of the process. The process was lead by UNDP as usual, and despite the initial promise of the UNDP Chair of the LSSC, SU Reps of UN agencies in Turkey were not kept in the information loop throughout the interim salary survey. Even the LSSC committee members were not informed of the progress made and supporting documentation on the survey was not made public.

Suggestions for improving the situation include info session/training organized by the SU for disseminating information on the methodology, problems, and representation of UN staff interest with the ICSC, repeating the process more frequently, making the process shorter and more transparent, fixing local staff salaries in USD, and lobbying for adjusting the methodology used.

Performance appraisals – Merit Increments

Performance Appraisals remain mostly a formal exercise, the system in place is not used to its full potential despite limited management attempts to make it more meaningful and to reflect true feedback from all involved parties. Completing the process takes considerable time and effort, but the procedure is exclusively bureaucratic, staff members (GS staff especially) are not motivated in completing the process. The exercise has no impact on career development.

Merit increments are not for all staff in **West European** offices. Officials who are at the top step of their grade and whose ILO EoD date is after 31 December 1994 are not eligible to receive an additional step over the top of their salary scale. In **Beirut** only P staff has received merit increments thus far.

In small offices with very few staff members the danger exists that the process becomes purely subjective, and the negotiation power is always on the supervisor's side.

Positive experience with PAs is reported in several offices. Beirut HR played a very active role following up on Performance Appraisal Framework over the last year, and there is a higher engagement and commitment from staff to fill and report on the BoCs and EoCs. Also, in Beirut the Staff Development Committee used PAs as one of the tools in indicating the developmental needs of staff members. However, this approach was discontinued due to the pandemic.

Training and the use of Staff Development funds

In general, management makes an effort to meet the training needs of staff members, especially with group training benefiting more staff members.

However, priority is given to RB staff, and SD funds are not used to support career advancement for staff who are on short term contracts. This is a concern especially since many staff members in field offices have been with the ILO for less than 3 years, or not staying for more than 1 year due to their DC contracts. Also, DC staff requesting the use of SD funds is in many instances advised to use DC project funds for

participation in a training. DC project budgets rarely include staff development funds, therefore DC staff has a hard time accessing funding for training.

In **Ankara** and in **Budapest** SD funds are used for office retreats and annual meetings. In Budapest this regularly involves a training session where the topic is decided upon by collecting staff votes. A training on how to conduct job interviews was organized upon the initiative of the SU.

In **Beirut** applications are linked to BoCs and supervisors' approvals. Applications for SD funds are processed by the three SD committee members, and the SUC does not have any information on the criteria for approval/dismissal, or the number of beneficiaries.

Lockdown measures opened some online training opportunities. As soon as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted however, staff should continue with live training which is more effective and has stronger impact. In **Lisbon** funds are channelled through individual and group training sessions, also used for boosting teamwork. Very recently the office had a collective training session on well-being and strategies to better cope with telework.

Reclassification of posts

The SU in general has incidental knowledge about reclassification processes.

National Coordinators who are members of the DWT/CO in **Budapest** raised the issue of the reclassification of their posts with the DG in January 2019. The main request to the DG was to reclassify the posts of NCs as their work goes far above and beyond their pay grade. The discussion with the DG was promising. However, the formal request made by all NCs has never been replied to and no decision has been taken.

Staff Health Insurance Fund – SHIF

Colleagues in the region acknowledge the overall improvement of the reimbursement system following the introduction of electronic claims. Offices in **Western Europe** noted general satisfaction with SHIF. **Amman** reported SHIF being responsive to requests made regarding access to hospitalization during the high demand caused by COVID-19.

However, issues flagged in the region include the following:

- Major delays with reimbursements, i.e. 6-7-8 weeks.
- Inconsistency with reimbursements meaning staff who submitted requests that were reimbursed in the past without objections now regularly face rejections.

Suggestions for improvement include:

- Cases of chronic and incurable illnesses should be flagged by SHIF in order to avoid repeated approval processes for permanently needed treatments every calendar year (exhausting and causes huge delays in reimbursement).
- Claims should not be rejected when additional information is needed, but the system should allow the submission of additional documentation by email or by attaching documents to an existing claim.
- Introduce electronic reports on reimbursements and electronic SHIF cards (often the printed card expires before reaching the staff member).
- Both **Moscow** and **Ankara** lobbied for SHIF to sign contracts with local clinics because staff needs to pre-finance medical treatment usually amounting to a substantial portion of their monthly salaries.
- In **Lebanon**, SHIF should provide immediate support to staff needing hospitalization or outpatient care due to the financial crisis affecting hospitals and cash flow in the country.
- Provide clearer instructions on the use of emergency numbers.

Pension Fund

Several retired staff reported deduction of bank charges for the transfer of their pensions – which was not the case before. Staff members have not changed bank accounts, so this is probably due to some change

in the UN banking system (intermediary banks). The issue has been reported to the UNJSPF but no action thus far. In Moscow, the instability of the local currency rate reduces the pension savings of local staff.

Work environment/ organizational climate

In **Moscow** and **Ankara**, colleagues are reporting higher stress levels due to the unpredictability of the situation with the pandemic and limited communication in the office (online meetings are rare). After a full working day, many colleagues continue to work late in the evening due to teleworking.

Work relations are good between colleagues in **Budapest**, stress levels are in general normal and under control. Experience with TW is very good, it is inclusive (for all staff, in all categories) and transparent.

The new SUC in **Beirut** was elected during a period of extreme isolation and frustration in the office due to the COVID pandemic lockdown measures. There was little interest for staff to run for the election, and limited participation. Despite that, the SUC took measures to engage with each field office with a view to build trust and understand country-specific issues. In parallel, the SUC followed up on priority issues that were raised by staff such as delay in salaries (Iraq and Jordan), salary dollarization/ access to fuel/ teleworking beyond COVID/ possible evacuation for locals (Beirut), and the administration was responsive. As a result, staff who withdrew their membership from the SU are engaging positively, and the frequency of staff seeking advice or support from the union is increasing. The number of newly recruited staff continues to increase due to larger projects portfolio across the region. Staff complained about lack of guidance for newcomers and the SUC requested timely information to be provided. Given the crisis nature of the field offices in ROAS, in addition to the impact of COVID-19, mental health was considered a priority area for intervention. At the request of the SUC, the administration agreed to fund a year-long mental health initiative targeting all staff and tailored to each field office. This will be coordinated by the SUC with technical support from the staff welfare officer (expected to start end of September).

Relations between the ILO Staff Union and the Administration

In Moscow SU representatives are represented in all existing committees in the Office, though some of the committees are not functioning to full capacity. There is no Recruitment and Selection Board, however SU members are usually in the recruitment and selection panel.

Budapest has an OSH committee and was involved in the return to office following the COVID-19 lockdown. The RTO exercise was planned and implemented in close coordination with the SU. The vaccination exercise in the region went well. Communication with management is effective, all major decisions are consulted with the SU and its suggestions are taken on board.

While there is a Joint committee on Occupational Safety and Health in **Beirut**, it seems that the Return to Office Committee is overshadowing it. The SUC is member of both committees and is building on the contributions of the former SUC's vision in this regard. Main deliberations of these committee focus on SOPs related to COVID, and in Beirut they focus on difficult conditions of the building due to shortage of fuel affecting ACs. The SUC learned that the administration is considering a change of venue for the Beirut office and requested information and stressed the importance of consulting with staff prior making any decision. Recently, the RD informed the SUC of a potential role as observer in the Recruitment and Selection Board. No concrete action materialized in this regard up to the date of submission of this report. The SUC is coordinating the tutorials to learn about good practices from other regions to play this role.

Relation with other Staff Associations from the UN System

Ankara is attempting to work collaboratively with other UN Agency representatives, in all matters of common concern for UN Staff in Turkey.

An informal joint working group with members from all UN agencies in **Budapest** is involved in the salary survey related issues.

A UN staff association exists in **Lebanon** and the ILO SUC is a member. Meetings are organized on a regular basis. The notion of "One UN" is challenged during these meetings as the crisis situation in the country is calling for *ad hoc* methods to meet basic needs rather than strategic discussions on promoting integration of C190 in the workplace, more sustainable employment for non-regular-budget staff, etc.

Main issues for which staff contacts the Staff Union

The list may be made extensive, and it varies greatly from office to office. RTO, COVID-19, mental health, COVID-19 vaccination, and TW are not surprisingly common across the board, while the list includes but is not limited to

- Salary-related issues including LSS methodology
- Reclassification and promotion including lack of career prospects
- Discrimination issues (RB/DC - National/International)
- SHIF-related issues
- Guidance for new comers
- Access to training
- Precariousness of contracts
- Childcare and managing work-life balance.

Turin

Titular member: Cristina Pierini

Substitute member: Laurence Dubois (focal point)

In 2020-2021, the outbreak of the Corona virus has affected all the discussions between the SU and the Management regarding collective issues. Topics such as the career development of staff, work life balance discussions, use of “non-staff personnel” (through “partita IVA” or other similar mechanisms), interns, etc., were frozen.

The SUC focused on respecting the principle of social dialogue, and to ensure that all decisions, or policy for that matter, which may affect the working conditions of staff were the subject of a prior consultation with the Staff Union Committee. The fact of the COVID-19 crisis could not justify that the practices of social dialogue were disregarded.

The situation was serious as the Centre was financially exposed, as it needed to deliver training services and earn the majority of its revenue. The Centre had to minimize spending and become creative on how to generate new and innovative on-line products that result in new revenues:

- Face-to-face training was converted to distance-learning
- There were some redeployments of staff as the Centre needed to minimize the use of external expertise at that time.
- Freezing all “non-essential” costs.
- Introduce innovative reform of the Centre’s service to ensure its mandate as a global leading provider of training for the world of work. In response to the need for fundamental changes to the traditional training and learning methodologies, the Centre had to take the lead and hold its position as a global leader in providing innovative high quality training. This process would get the endorsement of the Centre’s Board.

The Centre’s financial position concerned also to the Director-General and the ILO SMT. Mr Greg Vines, ILO’s Deputy Director-General for Management and Reform, addressed the staff in August and September. The discussions were about possible scenarios for the future of the Centre, as a first step tended to prepare a paper for the Board meeting in October to seek its guidance on the future delivery and business model and, based on that guidance The ITCILO will further develop proposals for the Board’s consideration in 2021.

As a follow up to the Board in October 2020, in which it was decided to proceed and develop a strategy based on the so-called “scenario 2” (Board paper CC 83/2) A joint ILO – ITCILO Task Force was established to guide this process. The Task Force is co-chaired by the DDG Vines and the Director of the Centre and has a mixed membership of Turin and Geneva colleagues.

The main role of the Task Force is to draft the paper on the future direction of ITCILO and to provide technical support and assistance to the Chairperson of the Board and the Officers of the Board in the consultation process. It would do so in coordination with a Consultative Group composed of the members of the Task Force, the senior management of the Centre, the Programme Managers and the representative of the SUC.

In this regard, several assemblies and information meetings were held with members and have taken place when necessary, especially regarding the impact of the coronavirus crisis on the work plan of the Centre, at the beginning and regarding the reform of Centre, later.

Strategic elements for the future of the ITCILO on HR issues, from the Staff Union point of view

In line with our ILO mandate, rather than a reduction of staff, we are advocating to reinforce the current staff in Turin, also empowering staff with new competences, whose extensive experience in training provides the basis for a MAIN HUB (both physical in infrastructure and human skills in Turin) for further development of the ITCILO worldwide. To continue to have a high level of delivery we must maintain the current number of staff. ITCILO staff strengths are: professionalism, flexibility, high commitment with the ILO mandate.

Staff recommendations on human resources are based on No reduction of personnel, but rather a medium and long term restructuring through a process of:

- NO STAFF REDUCTION: internal re-location following a specific training when needed, and as per the practice instituted during the COVID-19 time
- Early retirement on voluntary basis accompanied by compensation measures for the loss of seniority
- Possible part-time work arrangements for interested staff
- Improve internal mobility through clear procedures
- Mapping of the required skills and competencies and redefinition of job profiles culminating in a “human resources plan” or equivalent document. Reskilling and massive training of active staff by providing training to replace-support programmes or services in need of help. Considering new Staff Training Development courses for current staff to expand their potentialities in providing distance learning courses and any other new service area (ex: advisory services, virtual courses, etc.). Efforts shall be put on:
 - Upskilling and re-skilling the staff for new types of tasks.
 - Moving of human resources as required by the new “human resources plan”.
 - Centralize some activities so to better employ the available skills.
 - Smoothen procedure for collaboration between departments (no TAP).
 - Enhance mobility for the ITCILO officials to apply to ILO positions.

III. OTHER BODIES

Former Officials’ Section

Executive Secretary: François Kientzler

Officers of the Former Officials Section: Cherry Thompson-Senior, Carmen Sottas, Abdoulaye Diallo, Guy Bezou, François Kientzler, John Myers, Jean-François Santarelli, Pierre Sayour and Ivan Elsmark (Honorary Executive Secretary).

During the long months of the pandemic, the Bureau of the Section was functioning in slow motion but still managed to fulfil its responsibilities towards retired colleagues, keeping them informed through its website in particular. The demand for information and communication remained high during the pandemic and we responded to all personal requests.

Meetings of the Bureau of the ILO Former Officials Section

On Wednesday 4 November 2020, the Bureau met via videoconference, with SHIF Executive Secretary Florian Léger in attendance. A second Bureau meeting was held in person on Tuesday 1 June 2021, away from the ILO, on the premises of a housing association in the Pays de Gex. Catherine Comte-Tiberghien, Chair of the Staff Union Committee, was invited. The following points in particular were discussed at these two meetings.

ILO staff: Catherine Comte-Tiberghien shared information on the situation of ILO staff as well as on the continuation of activities despite the current restrictions on access to the ILO.

SHIF: Florian Léger emphasized the specific situation of SHIF staff obliged at the end of 2020 to work from home for a second time. Some claims are being processed remotely but others require handling by post or are deposited in the box on level P2. In the spring of 2020 the possibility was extended to retired staff of submitting their claims via SHIF Online, on a computer or mobile phone. Some 600 retired staff members (out of 2500) are utilising this option. In theory, processing times are shorter.

Pierre Sayour, member of the Bureau of the Former Officials Section and Chair of the SHIF Management Committee, referred to the existence of two working groups – Governance and Benefits – that the Management Committee had set up. In view of the inflation in healthcare costs in many countries, the ceilings on certain flat-rate benefits would need to be raised, according to members of the Bureau.

Relations with the ILO Staff Union and HRD

As mentioned above, we kept in contact with Staff Union representatives, the Chair and the secretariat all through the long months of lockdown. Access to the ILO building was granted to the Section's Executive Secretary in September 2020, but in November the door was slammed shut again and remains so. In June 2021 we wrote to André Bogui, Director of HRD, to raise the issue of our return to the ILO. Our letter with his reply can be found on our website. We have stepped in to forward SHIF claims on behalf of retirees who are sometimes at a loss about how to deal with the complexities. Thanks to information available on the ILO's intranet, we have been able to follow the arrangements concerning staff and access to the building, the progress of activities, meetings of the Governing Body and the International Labour Conference, as well as the situation of the staff, most of them working from home.

Section's website (<http://www.anciens-bit-ilo.org>)

During these long months of restrictions, the members of the Bureau were able to keep in touch with members by email and post as well as, above all, through the Section's website, which is hosted outside the ILO. Here thanks go to Azéddine Séfrioui, our webmaster, for his work, his availability and his responsiveness. The site is regularly updated with information distributed directly by the Section, such as articles paying tribute to deceased colleagues; other information is collected from the ILO's intranet site and from the Staff Union. Our site receives hundreds of visitors a month and during the winter months they even exceeded several thousand, according to data provided by our hosting service. We welcome this and will continue to give priority to this means of communication, while not forgetting those who do not have access to the internet.

Messages to retired staff

In 2020 a Christmas letter from the Bureau of the Section, with a message from Director General Guy Ryder, went out to all ILO retired staff (see our website). In July 2021, the Bureau published the list of Section members and sent them each a hard copy. We are grateful for the support of REPRO staff that made this possible. The publication included a message from François Kientzler, Executive Secretary of the Section, and listed the names of retired colleagues who passed away in 2020 and 2021. This information has been updated and made available on the Section's website under *Message No. 68*.

Updating of files

Another ongoing activity has consisted in regularly updating our files. This has been possible thanks to access to both our email and the files we were able to copy during our brief spell inside the ILO at the end of 2020. Information is sent to us by the HRD secretariat and also directly by Section members. We were able to contact everyone entering retirement and send them information material about our activities, with a view to encouraging them to join the Section. We have responded, either by email or by post, to

individual enquiries concerning notably SHIF and taxation matters. Retirees have thanked us for our continued commitment towards them.

Management of accounts

The Bureau has updated access to its bank accounts as a result of Bert Essenberg moving away and Guy Bezou being appointed Treasurer. Steps were successfully taken with our three banks to activate online access to the accounts. After some expense in terms of both time and effort, this was achieved. Financial savings in management of the accounts have been one result.

Relations with AAFI-AFICS and FAFICS

Over the past months representatives of the Bureau participated via videoconference in meetings of the AAFI-AFICS Committee. This has enabled us to keep in touch with partner retiree associations such as those of the WHO, ITU and UN. In July 2021 we participated in the General Meeting of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) which was held by videoconference. Various presentations allowed us to be informed about pension fund developments (see our website) and fruitful discussions were held on After-Service Health Insurance (ASHI).

Virtual exhibition 2021 by the ILO Art and Decoration Circle

The ILO Art and Decoration Circle has had the backing of the ILO Former Officials Section for many years. Artistic activity creates objects of value and fosters personal development. The Circle has normally held its annual exhibition in the ILO Colonnades with the support of various ILO departments. In view of the pandemic, some members of the Circle expressed their wish to be able to present their work in virtual form. An exhibition involving 15 artists was set up on the Section's website in the spring of 2021 and can still be visited to view the artists' work. The Circle hopes to return to exhibiting in the Colonnades as soon as possible.

International Civil Servants' Mutual Associations (MEC/AMFI)

Staff Union representative: Pierre Moulet

This has been a quite exceptional year for the ICSMA, because it is the first time that one of its General Meetings has had to be postponed. This means that the 2020 and 2021 Meetings will be held concurrently, in November 2021.

In March the Association's entire staff was obliged by the pandemic to switch over to telework, and this has involved a major change in the way its two bodies, the Provident and Insurance Group of International Officials (GPAFI) and the MEC (or Mutuelle), have been operating. In spite of the difficulties posed by the pandemic, however, the GPAFI has continued to serve its members without a break and without causing them any major inconvenience. As far as possible, both the GPAFI and the MEC have managed to adapt to the needs of their members - other than for the transfer of funds where, in the interests of the members themselves, existing safeguards have had to be enhanced to counter the growing risk of online pirating.

Regarding the financial results for 2020, the pandemic caused a substantial drop in the level of MEC loans. This was especially true of ordinary loans, which are largely dependent on household expenditure. With shops closing, it being more difficult to get from one place to another and there being few leisure opportunities, money tended instead to go towards savings rather than purchases. There was, however, an increase in loans for the acquisition of secondary residences, and several members were quite clear about the need they felt to decompress and to get away from city life. Income from ordinary loans in general declined, as did the return on investment, even though their assessment in 2020 compared with 2019 - which of course was an exceptional year - was more or less stable. Since the 2020 financial results were lower than the amount set aside in the extraordinary reserve fund in 2019 (CHF 4,762,641), the Board of Directors has expressed a desire to distribute it and to have the extraordinary reserve fund cover the cost for the year. An interest rate on deposits in Swiss francs of 0.10% plus a bonus of 1.25%, for a total return of 1.35% (0.20% plus a bonus of 0.85%, i.e. 1.05%, in 2019), could then be distributed. Because of the scheduling of the 2021 General Meeting late in the year, the Board of Directors has again opted not to

wait for it to validate the accounts before paying this revenue into members' accounts. The payment will accordingly be made within six months of the closure of the accounts and will if necessary be regularized subsequently after the holding of the two General Meetings.

The GPAFI's activity was stable in 2020 though the financial result itself rose, mainly because of the increase in the number of people signing up for complementary healthcare insurance, the revision of the commissions from insurance companies and a latent gain on exchange rates based on the assessment of the number of people taking out health insurance upon retirement. The Board of Directors would like to maintain a steady working relationship with its partners and for the insurance contracts it enters into to remain at roughly the same level, so that the premiums charged can likewise be stabilized. That of course does not prevent the ICSMA from sounding out the insurance market so as to make sure that the services it is offering are comparable with those offered elsewhere. The ICSMA is also looking into ways of simplifying the processing of medical expenses and it hopes in not too long to come up with a number of improvements. In 2020 the ICSMA introduced an automatic system for sending tax certificates and began the switchover to deposit slips with a QR code. These will be used systematically in 2022, and the payslips currently in use will disappear altogether by 30 September 2022.

Both the MEC and the AMFI are currently holding substantial reserves, which they intend to use in the near future to improve their services to members. The new computer system and the planned combining of their operations for 2023 should generate synergies between the two bodies, reduce costs and permit a more focused and dedicated interaction with their members. Once the necessary investment has been made and so long as the economic system allows, the surplus reserves will be distributed among the members. The call for tender for the new computer system is in the process of being drafted.

ICSMA's external auditors, PricewaterhouseCoopers S.A., have conducted the audits for 2020 and 2021, involving the audit of accounts and the verification of the internal control system. Other than their earlier observations regarding the computer system (will be resolved when the planned changeover takes place), they had nothing new to add.

The Board of Directors would like to draw members' attention to the importance of their reading the communications that are sent to them by the MEC and/or the GPAFI. These are relatively few in number precisely so that they do get not get lost among the mass of emails, of which there are already far too many, but some members have clearly not taken the trouble to consult them. They have thus become embroiled in fund transfer problems or found themselves needlessly paying (non-reimbursable) insurance premiums simply because they have failed to follow the current rules in force. A little bit of forward planning and communication can simplify such formalities and avoid a great deal of inconvenience.
