



Staff Union
of the International Labour Organization
Syndicat du personnel
de l'Organisation internationale du Travail
Sindicato del personal
de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo

9 April 2018

Statement by the Chairperson of the Staff Union to the Programme, Financial and Administrative Section of the Governing Body

(332nd session – 13 March 2018)

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General
Ladies and gentlemen, members of the Governing Body,
Dear colleagues,

It is an honour to address you today as the elected Chairperson of the ILO Staff Union, which represents approximately 70 per cent of staff. This is a great opportunity for me to share with you some remarks on employment relations, the morale of staff and their position on items featured on the Governing Body's agenda.

As you can see, we are now at a critical juncture. ILO staff are present in large numbers and are joined by staff representatives from other Geneva-based organizations of the common system. On their screens, we are also joined by our colleagues in the field who we are proud to represent today.

The images which you can see on your screens are of the first global day of action organized by staff from across the entire United Nations and its specialized agencies, which took place on 27 February 2018 worldwide. This day of action demonstrated to the Secretary-General as well as to the whole world that confidence could no longer be entrusted in the body responsible for determining our terms of employment, namely the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), the founding principles of which are independence, transparency and responsibility. This Commission is meant to work on the basis of reliable and recognized methods which are in the interests of the international United Nations civil service, adapted to the system and in accordance with the values that it represents.

From Abuja to Santiago, Addis Ababa to Bangkok, New York, Vienna or Geneva to the most remote corners of the earth where UN cooperation and development projects are implemented, all categories of staff, whether G-grade employees, P-grade employees or precarious workers, repeatedly referred to

in unacceptable ways by the United Nations as “non-staff” and which comprise the underground army of consultants with no status and lacking decent work conditions, stood up together that day and said: enough! Extraordinary general assemblies, demonstrations and work stoppages took place on a day that will go down in the history of the United Nations. But this is just the beginning! I already mentioned in my statement last November that this mounting anger, contrary to the enduring stereotype perpetuated by certain malicious rumours, is not a tantrum of spoiled civil servants residing and working at headquarters, but a symptom of a more deep-seated malaise. And, as usual, if we do not address the cause of a disease, the chances of a cure diminish daily, as is the case, for instance, with the United Nations system. I would like to give you a specific example: that of our colleagues in Bangkok who you can see in large numbers in these photographs. They are G-grade and national officials recruited locally and who are now having a third salary scale imposed on them after a periodic survey was conducted by the ICSC. ILO salaries in Bangkok therefore do not offer equal pay for equal work, flouting all international labour Conventions.

Prior to the day of action, on 22 February the three federations representing all the staff unions and associations from across the UN, sent a letter to the UN Secretary-General as well as to all the directors of the specialized agencies explaining the reasons for their anger and expressing their demands.

The demands are as follows:

- end all cooperation with the ICSC putting all decisions on hold, particularly those that are contested by staff from all duty stations;
- withhold all financial contributions to the ICSC until a comprehensive reform is actually launched.

Since a response to the letter is yet to be received, a number of resolutions have been adopted in various staff general assemblies to ensure that all means available to the staff unions and associations, whether social or legal, are harnessed to ensure that demands are satisfied. At the *Palais des Nations*, our UN colleagues will decide next Thursday whether to go on strike.

And it would not be the first time. Thirty years ago, in 1988, after a whole year of strikes within the whole United Nations system and after the boycott of the federations, a General Assembly resolution already instructed the ICSC to respect the Noblemaire and Flemming principles and to carry out its tasks according to its mandate.

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the Governing Body, what you should know about the decisions that you are going to have to take during this session of the Governing Body, is that within this Commission, there is no rigour, no transparency, no social dialogue and a recurrent lack of good faith. I will refer to this again later in my statement. It is extremely damaging to the reputation of the United Nations.

In fact, the many complaints made in 2017 about the new unified salary scale and the reduction in Professional staff allowances and benefits (“the compensation package”) are already laying waste. The United Nations Dispute Tribunal has ruled in favour of the complaints made in December 2017, noting, over more than two pages, the “lack of independence of the ICSC”. It also directly implicated the United Nations Secretary-General for not having adequately warned the General Assembly (the United Nations Governing Body, as it were) concerning a possible violation of contractual rights and acquired rights of staff in light of the recommendations made by the ICSC.

And, of course, the Secretary-General has appealed against rulings issued in favour of staff members!

However, further to those rulings, it has also been brought to the attention of staff representatives that the Secretary-General has given strict instructions to the Chairman of the ICSC to present proposals to the United Nations General Assembly as soon as possible so that it can review the negative financial impacts of the compensation package on staff.

I am taking the time to inform you of these events in detail, ladies and gentlemen, members of the Governing Body, so that the same fiasco does not occur at the ILO. And they are of course related to the document before you, document GB.332/PFA/11, which reviews the decisions taken by the ICSC at its 85th Session on the post-adjustment index for Geneva.

This document details the latest abuses of power perpetrated by the ICSC since last November, when the Governing Body wisely decided to defer its decision to the current session owing to a lack of convincing and substantive information.

I assure you that the ILO staff representatives have read this document, prepared by the administration, very carefully and on a number of occasions.

They can attest and corroborate all of the events outlined in this document.

- Firstly, since July 2017, the ICSC has taken several decisions unilaterally and in contravention of agreements reached with administrations or staff federations.
- Secondly, it intimated with an assurance, which was actually a bluff, that the salary reduction would be lower and that it would be subject to a methodological examination, carried out with the administrations and staff.

Instead, at the beginning of February 2018, ILO officials in the Professional and higher categories learned that the initial reduction remained unchanged at around 8 per cent and, in accordance with the application of the buffer of 3 per cent, which was arbitrarily reintroduced in July 2017, their salaries could decrease by 5.1 per cent from June onwards.

Two weeks ago, the session of the Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions (ACPAQ) was held in New York. The consultant's final report confirms the larger part of the analysis carried out in May 2017 by the previous statisticians and more broadly raises the issue of coherence between the methodology and outcomes.

Nevertheless, the ICSC still does not recognize these errors and does not intend to revisit the survey carried out in September 2016, which has since been proven by two different sources to be biased from start to finish.

The ACPAQ now proposes to refer this issue once again to the 86th Session of the ICSC, which will start in New York next week on 19 March and finish on 29 March, and which intends to draw up a workplan and schedule to examine such methodologies for the future.

The staff representatives consider that this proposal does not fully respond to staff demands and will not solve the crux of the problem.

Promises bind only those who believe them, and it should be noted that the ICSC does not honour its word. When there is no collective bargaining mechanism through which all the parties present commit themselves and enter into an agreement, it has to be expected that poor practices will be repeated ad infinitum.

The ICSC must first be reformed and its decisions frozen.

As I have already said, this is not the first time that this request has been made, but the necessary measures must be taken urgently before chaos reigns supreme. Or are we to understand that, from now on, only those General Assembly resolutions that favour the richest and most powerful member States will be implemented?

So, ladies and gentlemen, members of the Governing Body, will the decision be taken to apply a decrease in salaries at the ILO that would entail a loss in salary equivalent to almost one month and has been proven on two occasions to be based on a flawed survey?

Can the Governing Body of the ILO, now aware of the truth and the risks involved, take a decision that defies common sense and rigour, only to hear in the next two years at the ILO Administrative Tribunal that the decision taken on 21 March 2018 was in full knowledge of the facts and the Organization will be fully liable to pay millions in compensation to staff at the expense of its activities and programmes?

Can the Governing Body, on behalf of a common system which is sick and in need of reform, full of shortcomings and riddled with irregularities, break with the last 100 years upon which the International Labour Organization is built?

Could the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization invoke its specific function and integrity during the coming discussions on the United Nations reform, which will take place in this very room next week on 19 March, and yet fail to consider that specific function when it comes to the conditions of employment of its own staff? Can it fail to demand a reform of internal bodies such as the ICSC while relying on international labour standards to guarantee its specific function?

It is all a question of consistency and dignity.

If the worst were to happen, I fear that the ILO could no longer be considered to be the global guardian of social justice, decent work and fundamental rights at work.

This cannot and must not happen, and we are counting on you ladies and gentlemen, members of the Governing Body.

Staff of the ILO and the other United Nations organizations will not accept this Commission being used as a Trojan horse by the richest member States to conduct a policy of austerity. They will no longer accept decisions on their conditions of work being left in the hands of a Committee which is completely disconnected from the realities on the ground and its secretariat, stubbornly attached to its own mistakes. A Committee whose members no longer have any sense of honouring their word or rigour and who work without transparency or independence. This brings shame on the fundamental values and principles of all the organizations of the United Nations system, for which this staff is proud to work. It is particularly shameful in light of the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, which all our

colleagues here today were obliged to sign when they were recruited. Shouldn't the rules be the same throughout the United Nations system?

This time confidence has well and truly been broken.

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the Governing Body, the staff declare:

No confidence in the ICSC, *plus aucune confiance dans la CFPI, no confidencia en la CAPI.*
