



25 May 2022

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
FIRST SESSION**

**24 February 2022**

***Record of decisions***

The newly elected President of the Staff Union Committee declared the first session of the Annual General Meeting open and welcomed participants to a virtual session.

**1. Election of a Chairperson of the AGM**

A participant proposed that Ms Indira Bermudez Aguilar, a member of the Staff Union since 2007 and a former Officer of the Committee, be elected Chair of the General Meeting. The proposal was seconded, and she was duly elected without opposition.

**2. Adoption of the agenda (doc. SU/AGM/2022/1/D.1)**

The Chair drew the Meeting's attention to the proposed agenda and asked if there were any additional point that participants wished to discuss.

***The General Meeting adopted the agenda as proposed.***

The Chair gave the floor to the Chairperson of the Staff Union.

The Chairperson of the Staff Union began by expressing his solidarity with all the colleagues and their family members who had been caught up in the war in Ukraine. He reassured the staff that the Administration had taken steps to ensure the safety of local staff based in Ukraine, where they were all so far safe and sound following the evacuation of the international staff. The Committee was following developments in the war closely and would very shortly be meeting the Deputy Director-General responsible for field operations to discuss the situation.

He congratulated the outgoing Chairperson of the Staff Union who was attending the General Meeting for the last time before retiring. He thanked her on behalf of the entire Committee for her unstinting defence of the interests of ILO staff.

Referring to the Staff Union Committee's meeting with the outgoing Director-General, he said that, although the DG could not make any commitment for his successor, he had promised to continue to seek lasting agreements on the issues that were currently under negotiation.

The meeting with the Director-General had covered a broad range of issues, including social dialogue, the different ways the various ILO offices had responded to the pandemic, technical cooperation staff, occupational safety and health, the implications of diversity as a whole and the proposed coordination of the human resources process at the Turin Centre and in the ILO. The Staff Union trusted that the new Administration's collaboration in terms of social dialogue would be as fruitful as it had been during the previous ten years.

Discussions on a number of issues – recruitment and selection at headquarters and in the field, flexible working hours, parental leave, the internship policy and review of job descriptions at headquarters – had for the moment been suspended, but a series of meetings had been set up with the Administration in the hope of reaching agreement before the next session of the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC).

There had been some disagreement over the Pension Fund's investments policy and the Chairperson of the Staff Union invited colleagues to tune in to the virtual meeting on the subject on 28 February 2022.

As to the “Conversations” that the Administration had initiated with the staff and in which the Staff Union had not been actively involved, he explained that they did not conform to the rules for consultations and negotiations between the two parties that were currently in force and could therefore potentially undermine the staff's rights.

### **3. Discussion of the draft Programme and Strategy of the Staff Union for the year 2022 (doc. SU/AGM/2022/1/D.2)**

The Chairperson of the Committee introduced document D.2 and observed that the Staff Union's vision and mission, as well as the strategic objectives that had been discussed at the Global Meeting in September 2020 and adopted at the second session of the 2020 General Meeting, had now been incorporated into document D.2 and were valid up to 2025.

The participants were invited to discuss each of the document's three parts separately.

Participants had no comment to make on Part 1.

Introducing the Staff Union's plan of action for 2022, the Chairperson of the Committee drew attention to the main points for discussion.

With regard to industrial relations, a training course on negotiating techniques had been set up for members of the Staff Union Committee so that a coherent dialogue could be established within the JNC and so that the Staff Union's objectives both for 2022 and for the years ahead could be met.

As to job security, contracts and the selection procedure, more attention needed to be paid to diversity. For the Staff Union, the idea that representation should be tailored to a country's financial contribution was not the answer and, in any case, did not necessarily reflect its composition. The Union therefore intended to insist that the Organization's geographical community be more representative. It was important, too, that the selection process give due consideration to a candidate's work experience, as required by the Staff Regulations, and the Staff Union would make sure that it did so. Negotiations were also under way to institute a fair and equitable recruitment and selection process in the ILO's field offices.

One of the JNC's priorities in examining the issues raised by diversity was to discuss amendments that had been proposed to the collective agreement on a procedure for recruitment and selection.

Regarding job security, it was essential that any labour rights that were particular to the Organization be maintained.

On the subject of career development, and to avoid problems of regrading in the field, the Staff Union had decided to provide legal assistance for staff members who wished to challenge decisions affecting their post. The Staff Union thus hoped to breathe new life into the Joint Training Council which was responsible for reviewing the policy on training and apprenticeships.

The Staff Union had raised the matter of the unequal treatment of staff employed under technical cooperation (TC) contracts, which was against both the principles and the interests of the Organization. It had therefore decided that in 2022 it would focus on TC staff, who actually made up more than half of the ILO's personnel. In doing so it was very much aware of the challenge it faced if it was to live up to expectations, but TC was a fundamental aspect of the ILO's work and its staff had to be treated with all the respect due to them. Of course, the Union is aware that the Administration is constantly obstructing this issue under the pretext of the different source of funding and it therefore being a different category of staff, but the Union rejects this argument.

The Staff Union would therefore be conducting a survey among TC staff so as to gain a better insight into the often-misunderstood problems and inequalities they faced. It would then seek to negotiate a whole new contract policy with the Administration.

The Staff Union was planning to set up committees on safety and health so as to ensure the staff's security and physical and mental health and well-being, especially in the present health crisis. It invited the staff to let it know of any problems they were aware of so that it could pass them on to the Administration for action.

In terms of social protection, the Union is calling for comprehensive coverage, with the safeguarding of pension funds and comprehensive insurance schemes, and the creation of unemployment and maternity/paternity or parental insurance. Unemployment insurance in particular was a long-standing objective that the Union intended to pursue vigorously. Meanwhile, it had a direct channel of communication with representatives of the UNJSPF and with the SHIF secretariat.

A work environment ought to be diverse, inclusive, fair and equitable, and the Union was an active proponent of fair and equitable conditions for every member of staff regardless of type or place of employment. It was therefore collaborating with the Administration on an adaptation of the flexitime system that it hoped to complete before the end of the year. It was also working with the Administration on a plan of action to improve the diversity of the ILO's staff and on an inclusive maternity/paternity and parental leave policy. In the case of handicapped persons, the policy of inclusion would be implemented step by step.

The Staff Union would be participating in an information and awareness campaign – the next event being scheduled on 8 March, International Women's Day – and would be organizing activities on the theme of diversity during the course of the month.

The Union was keeping a close eye on the salary surveys that were being conducted in the field and at headquarters.

The objective was that the Staff Union should be both stronger and better equipped, notably in terms of better communication and closer collaboration among the various working groups. The working group on communication was currently looking for collaborators for the publication of *Union* magazine.

Since the beginning of 2022 the number of new members of the Staff Union had doubled compared to the same period a year before. It was a remarkable increase and one that the Union hoped to be able to maintain. It extended a warm welcome to the new members.

The Union's collaboration with its titular members in the regions meant that it was quickly informed of any developments in the field offices and could take appropriate action when needed.

The Chair thanked the Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee for his introduction to Part 2 of the document and opened the floor for discussion.

One participant, referring to the question of diversity in her department, observed that, with only one exception, every P5 and above, the project director and the heads of the other branches and units had for the past two years all been men. Although the issue had been raised, there had been no response and so she had raised it again in the "Conversations" initiated by the Administration. It was clear from the number of reactions to her "post" that it was a real issue for many of her colleagues. By all appearances, judging from the mobility policy, the downward regrading of certain posts and the increasing number of "calls for expression of interest", there had been no progress on diversity at all in recent years. She hoped that the steps taken by the Staff Union, combined with the change in Director-General and HRD staff, would serve as an incentive to do something about the lack of gender diversity.

The Chairperson of the Staff Union took the floor to respond to this comment, saying that the problem had indeed been raised again and again by external and internal bodies acting in an advisory capacity. The Union had requested that posts at the level of P5 and above, which were filled at the discretion of the Director-General, should be open to a least one "call for expression of interest", but talks had so far got bogged down, on geographical diversity, and the Union's

recommendations had been ignored. The Union believed that recruitment should be conducted anonymously, but that idea had been rejected. It had voiced objections to the policy issued by HRD, but it had been submitted to the Governing Body anyway and the GB had approved it. The "Conversations » showed consistently that the staff raised the very issues that had been identified by the Staff Union and which were part of its negotiations with the Administration. The Union would continue to advocate greater diversity, notably through the ongoing negotiations on recruitment policy.

One participant complained about the lack of commitment of directors of ILO field offices. She cited the arrival of new collaborators (mostly women) and the fact that they were offered no career prospects at all. Her own office was mostly made up of TC staff who deserved recognition for the fact that they were basically doing all the work. Another participant said that there were not enough resources to run the office properly and that tasks were often assigned to interns, while HRD did nothing to remedy the situation. Moreover, the selection of staff as proposed by the Human Resources Department, paid little or no attention to diversity, and pressure would therefore have to be brought to bear for the ILO's recruitment policy to be really inclusive.

As far as recruitment was concerned, the Chairperson of the Staff Union announced that the coordinator of the Resourcing Unit was retiring, and her successor would shortly be named. It was a key post for the Staff Union, and its expectations were high. HRD staff should have proper training if they were to perform their duties at headquarters and in the regions and field offices. From the Union's standpoint it was important that the training cover the especially sensitive area of technical cooperation.

In the interests of equality of treatment, the Staff Union was looking very carefully at the diversity issue and at the steps taken to ensure equal benefits for staff members who, although they had no dependent children, were the care providers for close family members. It was accordingly working on various forms of flexitime that took differing family circumstances into consideration. As far as salaries, etc. were concerned, assistance for the staff was provided not by the ILO itself but by other United Nations institutions, while the Staff Union operated through the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) and through its contacts with the UN Secretary General that were aimed at fostering social dialogue with the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) within its various spheres of competence. The process had already begun, and the Union was preparing a document for submission to the Secretary General.

The coordinator of the working group on technical cooperation took the floor to say that in its dealings with the Staff Union the Organization often argued that, since technical cooperation was financed differently, the rights enjoyed by TC staff were also bound to be different. However, as far as TC contracts were concerned the issue was not one of financing but of law. The way officials were treated could not be dependent on the way their programme was financed. It was the law which was at the heart of the Staff Union's stand on a set of principles that were non-negotiable, just as they were in other areas such as non-discrimination and equal treatment. So it was on strictly juridical grounds, irrespective of any economic considerations, that the working group recommended that the Union's stance in the forthcoming negotiations on the contracts policy be founded on principles that were embodied in the ILO's own Conventions. The Chairperson of the Staff Union reminded the Meeting that the working group had been set up some years earlier by

the General Assembly itself, in a genuine display of democracy. The Staff Regulations were designed so that they could be amended, and the staff employed under TC contracts were fully entitled to their rights. It was the Staff Union's duty to do everything it could to ensure that those acquired rights were respected.

Part 2 of the document was adopted by the Meeting.

Part 3 of the document dealt with periodic and regular actions.

Because of the ongoing pandemic and the various arrangements that had been made in different parts of the world to allow for teleworking and for staff to return to their offices, the ILO's action has found itself splintered in accordance with national circumstances. The Staff Union had been actively engaged in making sure that every category of personnel enjoyed the same degree of security. At headquarters, the Committee on Safety and Health (COSH) – a joint committee that kept the Director-General informed of all issues linked to the health crisis – had been particularly busy. The Staff Union was in favour of strengthening the COSH at every duty station.

The Staff Union would be holding two regional meetings in 2022, in Africa and in the Americas. Both would be preceded by elections for staff representatives.

As to financial matters, the Union was planning that every Office would eventually have its own bank account, though not having juridical status in the field could complicate matters.

Although the Staff Union had been consulted on a new manual for settling disputes, it had not been invited to negotiate the text.

Part 3 of the document was adopted without comment.

***The Programme and Strategy of the Staff Union for the year 2022 was adopted by consensus.***

**4. Adoption of the budget for the financial exercise 2022 (doc. SU/AGM/2022/1/D.3)**

The Treasurer presented the detailed budget for the financial year 2022. As estimated expenditure was the same as estimated revenue, the Staff Union's budget should be balanced.

No further questions were raised by the participants.

***The budget for the financial year 2022 was adopted by consensus.***

**The session closed at 3 p.m.**