

ILO STAFF UNION

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING SECOND SESSION

5 OCTOBER 2023

Annual Report of the ILO Staff Union Committee
for the year 2023



ILO Staff Union Committee Annual Report for the year 2023

Introduction

A strong union supported by a strong membership and committed representatives.

The Staff Union Committee is pleased to present to you an overview of all its activities for the year 2023.

It has been, yet again, an eventful year, giving us the opportunity to eventually finalize some on-going negotiations while tackling new priorities and advancing on long-awaited reforms.

We have welcomed our new DG and his new management team, promoting “inside” the values in terms of industrial relations, collective bargaining and social dialogue that we preach outside the ILO. We have worked relentlessly to ensure that dialogue is key in change management. We have successfully defended the rights of staff, ensured that the Office is providing the required level of duty of care to staff in conditions of employment – including protecting salaries – and, in all situations, including in the still too numerous crisis situations, finalized the agreement on flexible work arrangements and the provisions for the revision of our parental leave, among many other tasks.

Key priorities regarding the contract policy and mobility have been put back actively on the agenda of negotiations, and the Union will need support from all its members to ensure that the results of these negotiations lead to real and long term improvements for the majority without putting into question acquired rights.

We need a Union strong with its values of solidarity, representativity and capacitated to defend all staff and speak your voice. We need a caring Union that support colleagues in times of difficulties and celebrate success together. A number of activities of the Union this year have been also implemented to ensure that you know we are here for you and that you feel proud of your Union.

Courage, determination, kindness. These were our ask to our Governing Body in February. This is what your Union has been acting upon this year. We hope the report of our activities presented here will be at your satisfaction and we look forward your questions, your comments and your support.

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 2023

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 to ensure that they are undertaken with a common-interest approach.
- Finalizing ongoing negotiations (flexible working arrangements, parental leave, review of the job descriptions), monitoring ongoing policies and ensuring their validity, opening negotiations on mobility and the contract policy.
- Strengthening the negotiating skills of staff representatives.

Joint Chair of the Joint Negotiating Committee: Séverine Deboos

Joint Secretaries: Sophie Guerre Chaillet, Clara Van Panhuys

Members: Harvey Addo-Yobo, Carlos Carrión-Crespo, Bertrand Kama Kama, Yvan Poulin

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 Staff Union and the Administration, in the framework of the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC), are working on implementing the joint action programme with agreed priorities.
- The following priorities were agreed for 2023: (1) flexible working arrangements (FWA); (2) parental leave; (3) contracts policy; (4) mobility. Other areas of consultation identified included occupational safety and health (OSH), anti-harassment and a respectful workplace, official holidays, the Compensation Committee, disciplinary measures, disability, the Reports Board, the review of the generic job descriptions for Professional job families, personal promotion and a learning strategy.
- With the new Administration, negotiations have resumed on flexible working arrangements with a constructive approach and concluded with a new policy and accompanying procedure being implemented from 1 July 2023. The negotiations leading to the adoption of the new policy and the monitoring of the implementation in the first months have been very resource intensive for the Staff Union, and it has been necessary to provide training and advice to our representatives throughout ILO offices so that they can support staff. Upon a request from the Administration, the Staff Union has agreed to consider on an express basis a change in the Staff Regulation on parental leave to be implemented with a retroactive date of July 2022. The negotiations on the revised collective agreement have, however, taken a slow pace, creating concerns on the Staff Union side, as the implementation of the new measures have shown some challenges and some difficulties for staff. The Staff Union is pushing for the new collective agreement to be finalized as soon as possible, and as a prerequisite for entering into new negotiations. The JNC has agreed on focusing on the contracts policy and mobility as the two major priorities for negotiations, once the FWA and parental leave negotiations are finalized. The parties have agreed to address the proposed changes using an interest-based approach, following as well best practice of collective bargaining. Both parties have embarked

into a facilitated preparation process for negotiation, which would then be the focus of a retreat planned for early October 2023. The Staff Union hired a facilitator to assist in the internal preparation, including training on negotiation. The results of the TC survey and of the mobility survey and consultations have been key to inform the aspirational principles formulated for these negotiations.

- The Staff Union had to take actions on the announcement by the Administration in January 2023 on the implementation of the post adjustment according to the new ICSC methodology, marking an end to the freeze following the ILOAT decision from 2017. The Staff Union, supported by the AGM resolution from February 2023, succeeded in postponing by a couple of months the implementation of the new post adjustment, and negotiated a phased introduction of the reduced post adjustment for duty stations where the index was above 3 points of decrease.
- The review of the generic job descriptions has advanced at a brisk pace, with consultations with staff who were jointly recommended. A collective agreement was signed in May 2023 as a framework agreement for the review of the Professional category of job descriptions, including already two job families. The review of the further job descriptions will continue, with the General Service positions in HQ being identified as a priority. Support is also provided to colleagues from the revised JD category in the review of their job description.
- The Staff Union has provided comments and negotiated a new IGDS on a revision of the official holidays for Geneva, and on revision of Chapter XII of the Staff Regulations on disciplinary measures. Ongoing consultations are also taking place on the revision of provisions on disability and anti-harassment.
- Topics of concern raised repeatedly throughout the year have been restructuring and organizational changes in the aftermath of the arrival of the new DG, the lack of transparency and an adequate OSH management system (see the relevant chapter), diversity promotion, and recruitment and selection.
- The Staff Union Committee has kept strengthening its negotiating capacity by including Committee members more regularly in the various thematic negotiations or through working groups, with the old hands leading the new, and organizing capacity-building activities for Committee members, local representatives and union stewards.

II – Job security

A – Recruitment and selection

Objective: Advocate for a recruitment and selection process that 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**, in accordance with the existing and current Negotiated GJDs and offer a real possibility of career development of already employed ILO officials.
- Within the career development framework, the SUC will work on a proposal for the improvement of the current mobility policy/practice. For this, we will explore the possibility of getting technical advisory on the matter, as well as a staff survey on mobility.
- The Committee is convinced of the importance for the Organization of a system of recruitment that seeks a broader and more **authentic diversity** of staff while at the same time respecting Article 100 of the United Nations Charter, the Declaration of Philadelphia

and the Staff Regulations. It is on this basis that the Committee is participating, jointly with HRD, in the review and update of the current generic job descriptions for the Professional and GS job families at Headquarters.

- 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 procedures 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.
- 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 Development.
- Besides the normal involvement of ILO staff representatives, the staff union will bring to the attention of the Administration any recruitment or selection issues affecting officials, more particularly concerning short-term contracts. The Staff Union is reviewing recruitment and selection procedures in the field in order to negotiate a coherent and fair agreement.

Titular Member of the Recruitment, Assignment and Mobility Committee (RAMC): Carlos Carrión-Crespo

Technical Adviser: Manuel Céspedes Ocampo

Substitute: Sophie Guerre Chaillet

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

Members: Harvey Addo-Yobo, Christine Bader, Carlos Carrión-Crespo, Andrew Christian, Séverine Deboos, Sophie Guerre Chaillet, Carlos de Magalhaes Tome, Yuka Okumura

Achievements:

- 2023 has been an eventful year. Last May, the SUC and the Administration signed the collective agreement on the introduction of the new generic job descriptions (GJDs) for regular budget positions in the Professional category worldwide and the General Service category at headquarters. While the review of the GJDs concerns regular budget core positions, the Office ensured that, **regardless of the source of funding**, the grading of all positions is coherent and consistent throughout the Organization and is appropriate to the level of duties assigned.

This agreement sets out the process for the review and introduction of the new GJDs, and the process for adapting them to meet the needs of individual positions. The review of the job descriptions is by job family and will be annexed to the collective agreement, as they are approved. The new GJDs for the following two job families have been completed so far: Technical Specialists and Evaluation Specialists. The review of the new generic job descriptions for the GS job families of Secretaries and Administrative Assistants at headquarters (HQ) is in process.

- The SUC is participating in the ongoing negotiations with the Administration, on mobility, with the aim for improvement of the current mobility policy/practice. To better defend the interests of colleagues, and within the career development framework, we have launched a staff survey on mobility. To do so, we have had the assistance of technical advisers on the matter, and we are

pleased to welcome the participation of over 1,300 colleagues in the survey. The SUC is currently in the analysis process of the data which will be further discussed within focus groups.

- The SUC jointly with HRD has appointed new **independent panel members (IPM) of the technical panels**. We have also participated in the joint training provided to the first group of the new IPM, offering practical advice and to devise ways for them to fulfil their responsibilities.
- In 2023, the SUC continued to play an important role in the Recruitment, Assignment and Mobility Committee (RAMC). The RAMC met eight times in connection with General Service (GS) competitions and RAPS sessions. Since January 2023, and at the time of writing, four RAPS sessions have taken place. 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.
- The SUC actively participates in the recruitment process, starting with the review of Job descriptions (JDs) for the RAPS and for GS competitions – Over 60 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), as well as at each of the three (3) procedural stages in the filling of vacancies (see also Annex I of the Staff Regulations): Direct selection for humanitarian/legal obligations (Stage 1), transfers through geographical/functional mobility (stage 2) and competition (stage 3).

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 and Professional positions being advertised. The career development for ILO colleagues remains a challenge.

The SUC continues to fight the 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 SUC participates in the review by HRD of the generic job descriptions (GJDs) for General Service staff at headquarters and the Professional category. Within the new collective agreement framework, our aim remains real career development opportunities for colleagues.

Within the current negotiations with the Administration on a Contracts Policy and Mobility, and after nine years of the signing of the collective agreement on a procedure for recruitment and selection, it is about time that we clarify and improve the recruitment and mobility procedure so that career development and diversity really do become a hallmark of the Organization.

The Staff Union's advice when participating in the review of recruitment and selection procedures in the field is key in order to negotiate coherent and fair agreements.

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:

1. Defending existing jobs and working conditions in the context of current and future challenges: management change, potential budget restrictions, constant search for increasingly flexible types of contracts, continuous changes and innovations used as an excuse to reduce workforce numbers, with considering in particular:

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 funded by TC projects (beyond 5 years of seniority and recognizing the contributions of staff to the delivery of the organizational mandate) into the regular workforce of the Organization.
- Integration of non-statutory staff who have been employed for years on consecutive contracts and who bring key competencies to 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 precarious staff, including staff funded by TC, particularly with regard to recruitment, career development, performance recognition and access to training.

2. Aligned with the objectives of the working group on TC and taking into account the upcoming discussions on mobility demanded by the Administration, continue the contract policy negotiations based on the following main elements:
 - Equality of opportunity and treatment for all staff notwithstanding the source of funds.
 - Job security for all.

Means of action

- Communicate jointly with the TC Working group on the results of all ILO staff global surveys on different contractual situations.
- Inform the Staff Union position and strategy for the negotiation on the contract policy and participate directly in the negotiation team for a new contract policy.
- 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 contract policy with an appropriate strategy and legal arguments.

Coordinator: Séverine Deboos

Members: Laurence Dubois, Guillaume Filhon, Carlos de Magalhaes Tome, Ambra Migliore, Yuka Okumura, 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 or/and source of funding of the contracts. The Staff Union has supported the actions of colleagues in end-of-contract situations, both at headquarters and in the field, including for colleagues that were in precarious conditions in duty stations in crisis.

The actions undertaken by the Staff Union under this objective are being aligned and implemented jointly with the actions under the technical cooperation working group. With the commitment from the Director-General when taking his function to address the challenges for staff on “TC contracts” and resuming a long-awaited negotiation on contracts, the Staff Union has been engaged, throughout 2023 in preparing the JNC negotiation on alignment of working conditions for “TC” and “RB” staff.

The results of the survey launched in 2022 have been analysed, published and presented through various fora – see the relevant resources [here](#) .

The Staff Union has developed its aspirational principles as a basis for an interest-based negotiation with the Administration as follows:

The Staff Union

- Supports the vision that the ILO should set the example for employment conditions globally, equal treatment being the core element in them. The Organization itself must “walk the talk” and be a beacon for better work relations now and in the future.
- Supports the vision that aligning conditions of work must enhance and strengthen the position of the ILO as a reliable and fair employer. This will allow the ILO to retain and attract highly qualified staff by offering promising career development paths for all.
- Aspires to renew the vision of contracts of the ILO, to take into consideration the evolution of staff demographics, including that a majority of staff work to deliver technical cooperation activities financed by non regular budget allocations worldwide.
- Is convinced that the source of funding for a contract should not entail differences in the employment relationship between staff and the ILO.
- Affirms that all staff deliver on the ILO mandate and their contribution should be considered equally, and not being differentiated because of a difference in source of funding.
- Considers that the scope of the unequal treatment of TC staff is unsustainable, unacceptable under the fundamental principles and rights at work, creating precarity, demoralizing, and harmful to the ILO. It is further a threat to solidarity and sound collaboration and create a divide between colleagues and constitutes a managerial threat potentially leading to case law against the ILO as employer.
- Will support an agreement which should not lead to compromising acquired rights for colleagues and should aim at improvements as a whole, protecting the values and principles of international servants – levelling up, not levelling down.
- Considers that employment security should accompany properly-conceived appointments without limit of time and taking into account length of service is key to ensure loyalty and independence of staff.

The Staff Union engaged actively in the negotiation process, developing jointly with the Administration, the terms of reference for the negotiation, agreeing on milestones and preparing for a joint retreat to take place early October, the outcome of which will be reported during the Annual General Meeting.

III – A career development path for all

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.

Coordinator of the working group on career development: Carlos Carrión-Crespo

Members: Leillah Abdallah, Harvey Addo-Yobo

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

The joint group on personal promotions has finalized the 2022 exercise for all staff.

The Staff Union has provided support to colleagues who have asked for review of the reclassification exercise, both in headquarters and in the field. The ROAF reclassification requests have posed particular challenges, with extreme delays.

The harmonization of the recruitment and selection process is also an important matter to ensure equity and transparency, and has been placed in the list of top priorities in the JNC. The Staff Union and the Administration have agreed on the review of job descriptions (JDs) for technical and evaluation officials in headquarters, and are currently reviewing the JDs for G staff in headquarters. Other job families will be reviewed afterwards. The new JDs will replace the old dual-description system, and will allow staff to discuss with their managers on the specific areas for specialization. Additional tasks will need to be discussed between the Administration and the Staff union, to avoid unilateral impositions on the part of managers.

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

- Framing the priorities to be implemented by the training policy in line with the needs of staff at all levels and categories in an equitable manner, to support mobility and career development, in the framework of the JNC;
- Develop proposals for the reactivation of 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, especially in a mobility context.

Performance management

- Addressing the staff's concerns regarding the implementation of the performance management system (PMF);
- Ensuring that the PMF supports the career progression of staff.

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

Member of the Joint Training Council: Séverine Deboos

Training policy: After several years of hiatus, the Joint Training Council (JTC) discussed in 2021 the proposed ILO learning strategy. However, the Administration has not resubmitted it for discussions while the skills-mapping exercise takes place. In the JTC, the Staff Union should have 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. The Staff Union hopes the learning strategy will be implemented early in the tenure of the new DG.

Performance Management: The merit increments are now tied to the performance reports and those corresponding to the past four 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 situation of our colleagues on Development Cooperation projects is part of this discussion, as well as in the JNC retreat taking place before the AGM, in the first week of October. 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

- Refine the results of the survey, which was successfully conducted among colleagues, to increase understanding of the challenges and inequalities experienced or perceived, and to ensure its dissemination so that it can be a reference and an asset for the ongoing negotiations with the Administration.
- Establish an analytical approach based on the systematic application of the principles of equal treatment and non-discrimination in equivalent situations, particularly after five years of seniority.
- Maintain close collaboration with staff on technical cooperation contracts, notably through meetings of the TC group organized every two months, and whenever necessary during negotiations on the contract policy.

- Strengthen communication and information to staff on their rights and guarantees, in order to raise awareness of the often-unknown challenges and inequalities faced by colleagues, in particular through the finalization and wide distribution of leaflets presenting the Staff Union's action for TC staff.
- Strengthen information and the defence of staff rights through the systematic support of the Staff Union's legal counsel on request.

Coordinators: Laurence Dubois, Guillaume Filhon

Members: Séverine Deboos, Clara Van Panhuys

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 four 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 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 survey to determine the frequency of the inequalities observed. The idea was to collect anonymously many testimonies and opinions on the situations encountered, both in the field and at headquarters. More than 1,700 colleagues have responded to this survey, and the data collected is a mine of information for the Staff Union, and a source of legitimacy for the arguments it will be called upon to produce. A report, analysing the responses to the survey, was produced and a meeting presenting the results of the survey and its recommendations was organized for HQ and field staff. A flyer with the results was also produced and the report was shared with the Administration as a support to the forthcoming negotiations. It should be stated that the survey demonstrated a great convergence of all ILO staff – whatever their contract is – on five main topics: contract and security of employment, career opportunities; career development path, equality of opportunity and treatment and flexible working arrangements.
- 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 parental leave, teleworking and flexible hours policy 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 negotiations with the Administration are now relaunched in the framework of the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) and a retreat is planned by end of 2023. Initial contacts have finally taken place in the framework of “without prejudice” (non-binding) preparatory meetings between a delegation of the Staff Union, led by its Chairperson and in which the two coordinators of the group are represented, and HR/POL. During these first exchanges, encouraging convergences of views emerged on the legal analysis carried by the two parties, in the context of the preparation of the arrival of the new Director-General, who also committed himself during his campaign to iron out the existing differences in treatment between officials with equivalent job profiles and seniority, whatever the modalities of their financing.

To support the upcoming negotiations, a few volunteers from the working group have been working with great energy to produce a table based on the survey recommendations, the five main topics identified by answering staff, to identify the difference between Fixed-Term RB and TC staff and to propose solutions to avoid any discrimination among staff after a certain length of service.

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: With a safe and healthy working environment now being a fundamental principle and right at work, the ILO must ensure that within the Organization the OSH management system is fully operational. The ILO must walk the walk rather than just talk the talk.

Thus, the SU will continue to collaborate with the Office to ensure an effective OSH management system is operationalized in Geneva and in **all** duty stations, with OSH committees being part of this management system. As well as 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, both physical and mental and well-being at work.

Means of action:

- Supporting the implementation of the current occupational safety and health (OSH) policy, directive and procedure (IGDS 48, IGDS 286, IGDS 385¹) through active participation in the HQ Committee on Safety and Health (COSH) promoting compliance with the actions and requirements of IGDS 385;
- In regard to the above, the SU members of the COSH will request that data on occupational accidents and (suspected) occupational diseases be regularly reported to the COSH as per the current IGDS 385, thereby enabling data to be available on issues affecting staff members and prioritization of control measures to reduce the risk;
- Participating in the COSH working groups, including on stress at work and mental health; on the review of the OSH IGDS documents and following up on the HQ COSH recommendation submitted to the DG on 14 July 2022; and on OSH training;
- 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;

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

- 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 occupational 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 occupational 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: Ana Catalina Ramirez, Andrew Christian

Substitute member: Sophie Guerre Chaillet

Working group on occupational safety and health and environmental issues

Coordinator: Ana Catalina Ramirez

Members: Andrew Christian, Sophie Guerre Chaillet

Technical Adviser: Vacant

Achievements:

2023 was marked by a full Return to Office (RTO) in all Offices and a lifting of restrictive measures.

The Staff Union has participated in all consultations related to any adaptations or lifting of the previous COVID-19 related measures by providing comments on broadcast and guidance documents prepared by the Administration and made sure that concerns voiced by colleagues across the world were transmitted to the Administration.

The Staff Union actively participated in COSH meetings maintaining and continuing to play an active role in raising to the Administration any concern or perceived constraint that impedes the functioning of this bipartite body and of the internal OSH management system. In this regard, the Staff Union has called for a response from the Administration on the proposed revisions of IGDS's 48, 286 and 385 on occupational safety and health at the Office, as well as the accompanying recommendations on how to improve the internal OSH management system, which were endorsed by the COSH and submitted by the COSH Chairperson to the DG mid-July 2022. The COSH still awaits a documented response from the DG on these proposals and the way forward.

As part of the representation at the COSH, the Staff Union also engaged in the discussions held by the Mental Health and Well-being working group to provide comments on a draft Action Plan on Mental Health and Well-being at Work proposed by the Administration. The draft document with the observations provided by the Staff Union is currently under review by the Senior Management team.

In terms of communication and advice to affiliates, we continued to respond to requests from staff representatives in country offices concerning OSH issues and facilitated communication and information exchange with the ILO OSH Coordinator and the ILO Medical Service.

Where possible, we organized virtual meetings with colleagues and staff representatives, to listen to their questions, concerns and needs to identify meaningful support measures. Furthermore, at HQ, the Staff Union continued communicating with the building renovation project to bring staff concerns to their attention.

Challenges to come

Despite progress made on OSH matters during the pandemic crisis, such as the recognition of the importance of internal social dialogue for OSH and its effective implementation, there is an urgent need for keeping the momentum and for ensuring an improvement of the internal OSH management system. Aspects such as ensuring the continuous functioning of OSH committees at all ILO offices; access to OSH training at all levels; and availability of OSH-related data are priorities that the Staff Union will continue raising and advocating for.

Furthermore, after the COVID-19 pandemic and in the context of the full RTO, there is a perceived increase in the numbers of queries received by the Staff Union on stress at work and other mental health related issues. The Staff Union will continue advocating for and supporting actions to address psychosocial risks factors as part of a comprehensive OSH management system.

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 from the Administration 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 the information provided to insured staff, timely publication of annual reports, etc.
- Participate in the discussions on how to avoid unnecessary administrative expenses.
- Remind each member of the need to be well informed about the management of the funds entrusted by him/her to the health and pension protection bodies. The latest exchanges concerning the management of the retirement savings of ILO staff at the UN Staff Pension Fund are a step in this direction.
- 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 and engagement 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. In this respect, the legitimacy of the questions asked by the staff representatives must be underlined.

- 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 other participants so that no decisions are taken without extensive consultation.

Coordinators: Guillaume Filhon, Ian Orton

Member: Sophie Guerre Chaillet

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

Staff Health Insurance Fund (SHIF)

Once again this year, the Union was active and maintained close links with SHIF and the representatives of policyholders who have historically been close to the Union. "SHIF online", the system enabling policyholders to make their claims online, has reached cruising speed with a positive satisfaction rate, but colleagues in the field are still complaining about the slowness of reimbursements. The main problem is still access to care for all our colleagues. An actuarial study was carried out last year, which led to further discussions in which the representatives of the participants in the Fund did their utmost to take the best decisions to guarantee its future. The members representing the insured also took part in internal working groups to improve the Fund's governance and viability.

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-19, 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/newsroom/the-69th-session-of-the-un-pension-board-concludes-confirming-excellent-performance-of-the-un-pension-fund/>.

In spring 2022, following an information broadcast from the CCISUA (our federation), the Staff Union also raised important questions and concerns to members when the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF) Office of Investment Management (OIM) was considering outsourcing a portion of the Fund and there were concerns that such action would compromise the security of the pension fund with more exposure to volatile risk portfolios. After seeking clarification as to whether this was the right course of action the OIM [agreed to postpone this action for 3 months](#) and committed to holding further clarifying information sessions. To date, no further outsourcing action has been taken.

VI – A diverse, inclusive, equal and equitable workplace²

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 a workplace free from violence and harassment.

While we all uphold the common UN charter and work towards the promotion of social justice for all, we all bring with us diverse perspectives, work experiences, lifestyles and cultures, which should be valued, respected and supported. However, there is significant room for improvement that can be made in the quality of the working environment for all staff. Thus, by the end of 2023, the Staff Union Committee commits to promoting diversity inclusion at the ILO through:

- The promotion of better gender and geographical balance at the ILO, and representation internally in the Staff Union committee at HQ and field;
- A flexible working arrangement policy that is conducive to guaranteeing a work-life balance for all ILO colleagues;
- A revised parental leave policy for the ILO that is an inclusive entitlement;
- Advocacy for more inclusive ILO and UN System policies (e.g. parental leave, contract, disability) and working environment in coordination with UN-GLOBE (global);
- Coordination with existing groups and networks of staff with disabilities or staff with family members with disabilities.

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 parental leave and flexible working arrangement policies) and ensure that all negotiations are conducted through a gender equal, non-discriminatory and intersectional lens. Support the dissemination of the new and revised ILO internal policies and collective agreement(s) and monitor their implementation
- 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, and Technical Cooperation.
- In collaboration with the UNGLOBE Coordinators at the ILO, support: a) sensitization and awareness-raising for better inclusion of LGBTIQ+ colleagues (and colleagues outside of the ILO), b) events and networking activities for members and interested colleagues and to queries from LGBTIQ+ colleagues on related topics and issues raised.

In partnership when relevant with GEDI, FUNDAMENTALS and HRD organize awareness-raising; information sessions; activities on International Days to exchange views/concerns and share information, knowledge and good practice and exchange with ILO Staff and union members.

² 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.

Coordinator: Andrew Christian

Members: Work-Life Balance: Séverine Deboos, Andrew Christian; Diversity and inclusion: Clara Van Panhuys (Gender focal point for SU) Yuka Okumura, Andrew Christian; Disability: Séverine Deboos, Yuka Okumura, Azza Taalab (retired Spring 2023), Andrew Christian; Parental leave: Clara Van Panhuys, Yvan Poulin, Fabio Thoma (left May 2023) Andrew Christian.

Technical Advisers: Ilka Schoellmann (left Aug 2023), Lou Tessier, Lucie Servoz, Maria Prieto, Fabio Thoma (left May 2023), Aria Tung (from September 2023).

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.

Disability inclusion

The Staff Union continues to engage with the Employee Resource Group (ERG) on Disability on relevant matters and highlighted the need for the Administration to raise awareness of the eligibility to the double child allowance payable to General Service category staff in the field with a child who has been determined by the Office, on the basis of medical evidence, to be physically or mentally disabled either permanently or for a period expected to be of long duration. The Administration sent a broadcast on 14 June 2023 providing relevant information. The Staff Union also supports the ILO Disability Champions Network, and has and will be participating in its meetings on a regular basis.

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. In March 2023, coordinated by GEDI, the Office prepared its contribution to the UNDIS (progress) report by reporting and rating its own achievements and progress in disability inclusion made in the course of 2022. The SUC again gave its observations and suggestions on the Office’s draft reports and requested to be consulted also when the office identifies and implements the future expected results.

The SU was also consulted during the Independent evaluation of the ILO Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy and will be working with the Administration and other stakeholders with regards to the IGDS entitled “Policy on the employment of persons with disabilities and reasonable accommodation” currently being drafted.

Promoting diversity inclusion and gender equality

All Staff Union actions take into account diversity inclusion and gender equality, including in all consultations and negotiations with HRD and management. The Staff Union supports the ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality (2022-25) and reiterated the importance to ensure gender equality among ILO staff, in particular for P5 staff and above where equality is far from being achieved.

This year the Staff Union commemorated International Women’s Day by inviting staff to “embrace equity” and join us for a coffee and ask questions, provide ideas and inspiration as to what could be done. The *Union blog* has responded to issues raised and we trust these responses were useful.

The Staff Union initiated the identification and call for submissions process in collaboration with HRD, and organized two information sessions in November 2022 regarding UN GLOBE. As a result, the board of UN-GLOBE in New York appointed three new ILO UN-GLOBE Coordinators in March 2023. An e-mail account was created, a network was established including field and HQ colleagues and postcards were developed and printed to enhance visibility on UN-GLOBE in the ILO. The Staff Union this year further

communicated their support through an article in the Staff Union blog and various broadcasts including during the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) for LGBTI colleagues and continued its collaboration with and support for UN GLOBE through various broadcasts, advocacy actions and logistical aspects. The UN-GLOBE network was consulted on the various ongoing negotiations, including in particular on mobility.

New ILO policy on flexible working arrangements

The SU was active not only in negotiating the new policy and procedures related to flexible working arrangements but were also actively being consulted about, and provided comments on, the information found here [Flexible working arrangements](#), as well as accompanying the Administration during the webinars presenting the new policy and procedure, was also present at the recent information sessions. The SU trusts all staff are able to avail themselves of the FWA modalities available and remains available to offer advice on the policy.

Changes to parental leave policy

The SU was actively involved in negotiations that resulted in amending Article 8.7 of the Staff Regulations regarding parental leave as well as Office procedure IGDS No. 629 on parental leave.

The SU and the Administration have been enthusiastically negotiating the Collective Agreement on Maternity Protection and Parental Leave and the SU is pleased this is now nearly finalized. The changes to the Staff Regulations and the revised Collective Agreement ensure a substantial increase in parental leave entitlements for the birthing and non-birthing parent, promoting joint parenting. The SU and the Administration have also been discussing the parental leave replacement modalities to ensure clarity, transparency and consistency with regards to this matter with reference to funding and contracts.

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.
- Participate in events organised by the various trade union federations (PSI, CGAS, etc.) in order to represent the interests of the ILO Staff Union.
- Strengthen internal communication to inform the Staff Union's members about the objectives and positions taken by the various trade union federations as well as about the obstacles encountered.

Coordinators: Sophie Guerre Chaillet/Carlos Carrión-Crespo

Members: Manuel Céspedes Ocampo, Yvan Poulin

This year, the Staff Union Committee continued to strengthen its presence within the federation to which it belongs, the CCISUA, with a member of its Committee elected to the Board as Vice-President for Communication.

This increased presence means that the ILO's Staff Union has greater visibility of the issues at stake within the United Nations common system and can participate more actively in the work of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), bringing its objectives (to establish a genuine negotiating system within the United Nations) to the forefront.

A lot of extra meetings and commitment are needed for the Union to make progress in this area. The benefits of such a presence continue to be felt, particularly in the working groups set up to revise wage-setting methodologies and in the fundamental discussions on the future of work at the United Nations.

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:

- Keep the staff regularly informed of developments through the Staff Union's totems in HQ, broadcasts, website, social media, etc.
- Keep the Staff Union's website up to date in English, French and Spanish.
- Improve the wording of Staff Union materials (especially its flyers and membership forms) so as to make it more inclusive.
- Liaise with each working group in the Staff Union's areas of action to help promote what they do in the respective groups, so that staff are aware.
- Find new ways to promote Staff Union campaigns and explain what they are about, especially recruitment drives, training activities, etc.

The communications team will meet weekly to prepare the week's headlines ("Manchette") and press releases. All members will be in close contact in the event of an emergency to ensure responsive communication between the Staff Union and staff.

Newsletters, broadcasts, headlines, providing material and design for texts and publications on social networks, particularly Twitter, Facebook and other applicable social media platforms will be our main means of communication. The communications team invites ideas from contributors at headquarters and in the field for the publication this year of the *UNION*. Please visit us at: <http://unionmag.ilostaffunion.org>.

The communications team will continue to help the Staff Union build on the momentum it has generated so far and will do its utmost to improve communication with the staff using all the means at its disposal and the knowledge of the team members.

Coordinator: Harvey Addo-Yobo, assisted by Ludovic Caprini, Séverine Deboos, Yvan Poulin and Céline Moiret

The communications team met virtually every week to prepare the weekly headlines, broadcasts and information that were needed for dissemination. The team also added monthly bulletins to inform staff on what the Committee had done within a month. 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, Facebook and other social media platforms.

The new *Union Blog* which has now replaced the UNION magazine has been very successful with very interesting articles, hence more readers this year. 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 <https://ilostaffunion.org/en/union-magazine>.

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:

- Contacting newly recruited colleagues to encourage them to join the Staff Union.
- 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 monthly information and biannual training sessions for all Union representatives.
- Mobilizing at Union events such as General Assemblies, May Days, and the monthly lunch and coffee exchanges.
- Engaging and mobilizing members to implement specific projects.
- Organizing at least two “café-croissant” information sessions with departments at ILO headquarters during the course of 2023, 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.
- Engaging and mobilizing the Interns’ Section to best represent the interests of the interns (through training and information sharing).

Coordinator: Yvan Poulin, assisted by Ludovic Caprini and Séverine Deboos

Supporting Union Stewards in their work

Throughout the past year, the Staff Union Committee has resolutely supported its network of Union Stewards at headquarters, making greater use of the Signal group and MS Teams, where Stewards have been kept informed of developments and have been able to share their needs and news.

Monthly meetings were organized to ensure that communication was as effective as possible and that the voices of all our members were heard in the best possible way. A real synergy has developed between the Committee and the Union Stewards, which has made it possible to take everyone's concerns and interests into account more quickly and effectively.

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

At this stage of the year, in October, the Staff Union welcomed 222 new members – 179 in the field offices and 43 at headquarters.

Part 3 – Periodic and regular actions

1 – Tackling the problems of staff posted in the field

The Staff Union Committee, through the strong mobilization of its regional representatives and in close contact with the national representatives, acts as a spokesperson to the Administration for the concerns and interests of colleagues in the field and ensures that the working and employment conditions of field staff are safeguarded and improved.

The objectives of the Staff Union in relation to field staff will include the following issues:

- the safety and security of all categories of field staff, by preventing and dealing with violence and harassment at work, while ensuring their health and physical safety
- Addressing the differences in treatment between international and local staff in terms of security and evacuation policies, in particular with regard to the rights and entitlements of staff operating in high-risk duty stations;
- in the area of social protection, allow better access to information, ensure transparency and consultation for fairer treatment;
- Promoting the establishment of OSH Committees in each duty station, ensuring that there is well-trained representation on these committees;
- Harmonizing recruitment and selection procedures across all duty stations;
- Harmonizing the Independent Review Group (IRG) at the global level;
- Promoting career opportunities under the mobility policy, taking into account the characteristics of each category of post, in particular TC, NO, NC and G posts;
- Ensuring greater attention to the intrinsic conditions of staff employment contracts, in particular by conducting periodic surveys on employment conditions.

Means of action

- Promote ILO Convention No. 190 in the field offices to avoid violence and harassment and strengthen the complaints mechanism to ensure a fair and equitable outcome for complainants.
- Review the security and evacuation policies to ensure equal treatment of staff operating in high-risk duty stations.
- Strengthen the role and functions of the COSH in all duty stations through information sharing, more regular meetings and increased training.
- Support the application in the field offices of the Collective Bargaining Agreement signed in 2014 regarding the role of the Staff Union in Recruitment and Selection, in order to ensure the effective involvement of the Staff Union, at the global level, in the entire R&S process and to improve its transparency and accountability.
- Promote, in practice, a mobility policy that guarantees mobility for staff members who have been working in one duty station for a long time when applying for vacancies. The explicit mobility policy should also be incorporated into the Staff Regulations.
- Demand that the reality on the ground be taken into account when negotiating the contract policy with the Administration.
- Assist staff members in all duty stations to assert their rights vis-à-vis the Administration through dialogue with the parties concerned and with the support, where appropriate, of the Staff Union's Legal Adviser.
- Continue to hold regular monthly discussions with all the regional representatives via videoconference as an effective means of facilitating the sharing of information and experiences on the practical implementation of the above priorities (quarterly meetings are currently scheduled).
- Organize two regional meetings in Asia and the Pacific and Europe and the Arab States.

Coordinator: Sophie Guerre Chaillet, assisted by Leillah Abdallah, Ludovic Caprini, Laurence Dubois, Yuka Okumura, Ana Catalina Ramirez

- ILO Convention No. 190 is continually being promoted in the field offices to avoid violence and harassment and strengthening the grievance-handling mechanism for a fair and equitable judgement for complainants. This has been done through sensitization and capacity building during the regional meetings in Asia and the Pacific and in Europe and the Arab States. Regional titular and relevant representatives have also supported members when relevant and few cases have also been transmitted through the relevant channels.
- The planned review of safety and evacuation policies to respect equal treatment for the staff in high-risk duty stations has not been yet considered, unfortunately, due to other priorities. The Staff Union Committee has been following very closely the actions and support for the offices in difficult situation and ensures that the safety and security of all colleagues has been taken into account.
- 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. 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 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 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 Asia and the Pacific and Europe and the Arab States were successfully organized in September in person, but with online sessions with the rest of the Committee.

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.

Treasurer: Yvan Poulin

With the return to office, the level of expenditure has returned to a level similar to the years preceding the COVID crisis. With the number of members also having increased significantly in 2022, the level of contributions has remained at a high level to date, allowing us to look to the future with confidence.

No effective and inexpensive solution has been found for field offices that are unable to open an “Association” type account (for reasons of national legislation). Alternative means have been put in place in some offices to enable them to use their funds with a degree of flexibility.

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 and its formal or informal settlement.
- Organizing information sessions, at headquarters and in the field, relating to legal issues, especially during regional meetings or via Teams, including on the respective roles of the staff representatives in managing conflicts.
- Monitoring recommendations made by internal bodies and identifying trends in order to be able to respond to questions from staff.

Members: Clara Van Panhuys, Carlos Carrion-Crespo and Guillaume Filhon; assisted by the Legal Advisor

Concerning individual cases, since the appointment of the new legal adviser last May, the Staff Union has recorded several formal complaints of harassment submitted to HRD. We had observed a considerable delay in the process of job grading and a delay in misconduct investigations by the IAO, which creates anxiety and stress among staff.

Regarding collective interests, we have been consulted by the Administration on different fronts. There has been a reform in the disciplinary measures of Chapter XII of the Staff Regulations. Our position has been to insist on a proportionate and progressive approach, a more corrective approach to conduct than a punitive one. We argued for the erasure of a sanction in the personal file of staff after a short period. We also insisted on the differentiation of disciplinary measures and social protection by maintaining, in case of sanction, the family allowances and contributions to SHIF for the staff member and their family members.

We were consulted on a draft for an IGDS on the disability policy and reasonable accommodation and an IGDS on sexual misconduct. We are revising a synthesis of the existing texts on harassment for a new IGDS. We are preparing proposals for the renegotiation of the contract policy and mobility in October.

Over the past months, 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:

- harassment;
- discrimination;

- duty of care and abuse of power;
- independence as international civil servants for technical staff;
- questions on terms and conditions of employment for staff on TC contracts including cases of successive precarious contracts;
- recruitment and selection processes;
- appraisals and productivity;
- requests concerning job grading and recourses;
- rest and recuperation policy;
- care responsibilities and maternity-related issues;
- new teleworking policy;
- IAO investigations and misconduct.

II. REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

Africa

Titular member: Remy Bertrand Kama Kama

Substitute member: Leillah Abdallah

The main concerns of the Africa region, as raised in the report of the 8th regional meeting in September 2022 and addressed to the Director-General, remain unresolved to this day. No progress has been observed thus far. These concerns include the establishment of an online system for submitting and tracking reclassification requests within predetermined timelines, as well as issues related to the reimbursement of medical expenses, whether on the UNFCU account or other salary accounts used by staff.

This situation has resulted in a status quo within the ILO Administration, which can lead to various interpretations, including the perception of deteriorating working conditions for active personnel in Africa. With the 9th regional meeting for Africa scheduled for 2024, many questions arise during discussions with union representatives.

The central question is whether it is appropriate to organize a new meeting to restate and resubmit these same concerns to the ILO Administration. This situation may be perceived as a form of non-consideration, and, if it persists, it could prompt the Africa region to adopt a more defensive stance and take action to address this perception of the situation.

First Union Day for Africa

The first Union Day in Africa, held on Wednesday, 17 May 2023, via Zoom for 2 hours, was an exceptional success, exceeding all expectations. This historic event brought together more than 200 colleagues, making it the largest union event ever organized in Africa, demonstrating regional determination and solidarity.

The active participation of the ILO Director-General, the Regional Director for Africa, and the President of the ILO Staff Union lent legitimacy to the event, acknowledging the institutional recognition of the concerns of colleagues in Africa.

During these two hours, an open dialogue allowed colleagues to ask questions and receive specific answers on crucial topics such as salaries, restructuring, and mobility. Members of the Geneva Staff Union Committee played a key role in proposing practical solutions and dispelling concerns.

This Union Day will remain a memorable success, strengthening the voice of ILO personnel in Africa and highlighting the importance of union issues and staff rights. It underscores the impact of perseverance and the belief in the possibility of creating meaningful change.

Our Union supports colleagues in Africa during conflicts

In the current context, marked by armed conflicts in Sudan, Mali, and other countries in the region, our Union reaffirms its unwavering support for colleagues affected by these delicate situations. We remain firmly committed to providing them with all the necessary assistance to help them through this challenging period while promoting our fundamental values of solidarity and respect for human rights.

We express sincere wishes for a speedy resolution of these situations and the restoration of peace for the well-being of all. As a Union, we will continue to closely monitor the overall development of these armed conflicts while providing constant support to colleagues and their families affected by these conflicts.

Renewal of IRG members in Africa until the end of 2023

The Regional Director, in consultation with the Staff Union for Africa and the Directors of country offices, has decided to renew the appointment of members of the Regional Job Classification Review Group (IRG) until December 31, 2023. The IRG's regional mandate is to carefully review and make a reasoned recommendation to the Director-General regarding the appropriate grade of a local position subject to an administrative classification decision, which has been referred to the regional IRG for appeal.

Furthermore, we continue to insist that the IRG's mandate be expanded to cover all reclassification appeals for G and NO grades.

Action against global inflation and its impact on Africa

Following the COVID-19 crisis and, as a consequence of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, there is persistent inflation affecting the global economy. This inflation leads to the depreciation of African currencies and a decrease in the purchasing power of staff. Colleagues in the offices of Abuja, Antananarivo, Addis Ababa, Cairo, and Dar-es-Salaam are particularly concerned about this situation. It is urgent to initiate a dialogue to explore available options and any other measures the ILO could consider to support the African region. This request comes from colleagues in the region who are currently facing difficulties and numerous daily challenges.

Breaking the silence: The demands of technical cooperation personnel in Africa

For many years, our technical cooperation colleagues have faced constant challenges and persistent obstacles in their careers. Difficult working conditions and discrimination have left deep scars.

For technical cooperation personnel, our demands are clear and legitimate, especially in the Africa region:

- We demand individual promotions, permanent appointments, recognition of merit-based promotions, and other benefits to reward our hard work.
- We ask for secure contracts and job security, so we can perform our duties without constant fear.
- We insist on aligning benefits and salaries between RB (Regular Budget) and TC staff, for those of us with equivalent status and seniority.
- We urge the Administration to take immediate steps to eliminate all forms of precariousness and actively work towards greater equity in treatment among different categories of staff, whether we work at headquarters or in the field.

Americas

Titular member: Maria Elena Lopez-Torres

Substitute member: Ana Catalina Ramírez

Work climate

The working environment in several offices in the region has not been up to standard, due to the absence of a clear human resources policy. Conflicts have arisen between colleagues, without any timely intervention by colleagues in charge of management.

There have been interventions by some management colleagues that did not lead to solutions, but on the contrary generated further complications that even affected the staff (ILO SJO case).

The union committees and the regional titular member have supported the staff in the offices where problems have arisen.

Human resources

In March 2023, a new revision of the document on the “Selection Procedure for Local Staff in Latin America and the Caribbean” was finally completed; after a series of meetings between the regional delegation and the Regional HR colleagues, an agreement was finally reached on the proposals presented. This document was submitted to the Regional Directorate for final approval.

It should be noted that the previous review was carried out in August 2010.

Reclassification and staff selection

During this period several reclassification processes have been carried out with positive results for some colleagues.

Staff Union bank accounts in offices

We reiterate the query about the Union's bank accounts, whose ownership is still in the name of some members, usually the President and Treasurer, which entails tax issues with the authorities in some countries for these officials and problems of immobilization of funds, for example in the case of death of one of the holders until the succession process is completed.

One of our offices in the region (ILO Buenos Aires) submitted a letter requesting the closure of the bank account and the transfer of the contributions to an account in Geneva. This is an ongoing issue and we still do not have a clear solution.

SHIF

We have seen a marked improvement in the processing time of reimbursements. Staff are more satisfied with this and we commend the efforts made. However, in order to safeguard reimbursement, we request the need for an option for reimbursement to be made to the UNFCU account, considering the irregular inflationary situation in some countries in the region, when inputs and treatments are priced on a dollarized basis.

Wage surveys

We express deep concern about the slow pace of wage surveys in some countries in the region and we are concerned that the CIASLS (inter-agency wage committees) are not acting more actively, as in several countries there have been no wage increases for some time.

New appointments in the Latin America region

The Regional Delegation warmly welcomes our colleague Sandra Rico who took up her duties as Regional Human Resources Coordinator at the ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. We wish her every success in her new position.

We are concerned about the delay in appointments, for example, the lack of a Regional Director for more than two years is generating unease and uncertainty about the ILO's actions in the region.

As representatives of the Staff Union of all local and internationally recruited officials in Latin America and the Caribbean, we reaffirm our commitment to work for a stronger Union, protecting and seeking to improve working conditions and the working environment.

Asia and the Pacific

Titular Member: Gwendolyn Fabros

Substitute Member: Yuka Okumura

The report is anchored on the Staff Union Committee Objectives and Priority Areas of Action identified for 2020-2025; the recent report of the 9th Regional Staff Union Meeting for Asia and the Pacific; and Staff Union activities conducted in 2023.

Elections in the Region

Local Elections in fourteen (14) Country Offices to constitute the new Staff Union Committees across the region were held in March 2023. The mandate will run from April 2023 to March 2025.

The 9th Staff Union Regional Meeting for Asia and the Pacific

(5-7 October 2023, Bangkok, Thailand)

The meeting was successfully participated by the fourteen (14) Staff Union Representatives in the Asia and Pacific Region and spearheaded by the Staff Union President, Regional Titular and the Deputy Regional Titular for the Asia and Pacific region. The following priorities were identified for 2023/2025.

1. **Recruitment and Selection Procedures** across fourteen (14) Country Offices and Project Management Office in Asia and the Pacific Region should at least meet the minimum standard of agreed participation of the Staff Union according to the existing collective bargaining agreement (CBA) for recruitment and selection;
2. **Safe and respectful working environment** that is free of all forms of harassment;
3. **Career Development Path** that is clear and effective for all staff in the region (GS, NO and P) as well as an improved and inclusive promotions policy in the Organization;
4. **Inclusive contract policy** to put an end to recurring precariousness and reduce disparity between staff in different types of contract;
5. **SHIF improvements** requested on (i) outpatient medical care services where there should be a mechanism for members not to shoulder upfront payment and to have a guarantee of access to the needed outpatient medical care and (2) ensure that there is partnership organized in advanced with hospitals across all country offices in the region in anticipation that SHIF can smoothly assist all staff in emergency cases.

The regional meeting also led to the opportunity to organize special bilateral meetings with the Regional Director and her Senior Managers for select country offices in the region (Colombo, Bangladesh and Myanmar) and a formal 1st Joint Management and Staff Union Meeting at the Regional Level.

(Note: Please refer to the Report: Recommendations and Conclusions of the 9th Staff Union Regional Meeting for Asia and the Pacific; forthcoming)

Social Dialogue in the Asia and the Pacific Region

The Staff Union is leaning towards fostering a culture of formal and structured social dialogue in the region specifically between the Staff Union and the Senior Management. While it is recognizable that, during the pandemic period, the dialogue mechanism between the SU and Management across the region had helped discuss staff concerns and staff views, the need to adapt to online meetings created greater limitations and much encouragement to descend to more informal and unstructured dialogue mechanisms.

The 9th Regional Meeting for the Asia and Pacific Region paved a way to return to face-to-face meetings. A formal and structured 1st Joint Management/Staff Union Meeting for 2023-2024 at the regional level that is well participated by the Regional Director and the Regional HRD represented the management side; while the SU President, the Regional Titular and the Deputy Regional Titular represented the Staff Union side, was held in the ILO Regional Office in Bangkok. The said meetings will be properly documented including the agreements and continuing points for discussion. The aim is also to cumulatively build on the agenda for the succeeding meetings and set effective follow-ups of points agreed for action. It has also paved a way to regularize the schedule of the joint negotiation meetings with the Management.

The Staff Union representation in the region and the SUC at the global level are both committed to bring the Staff Union support closer to each country office in the region.

A number of SU-Independently organized missions and Joint HRD and Staff Union missions and meetings were conducted for several countries in the region in 2023 to address challenges as well as promote advocacies of common interests for both parties. There are particular countries that are closely monitored and/or jointly monitored by the Staff Union and the Management in order to foster better social dialogue and in order to provide needed support efficiently by both parties.

The Staff Union Regional Representation is also preparing towards improving its communication strategies and advocacies in order to ensure effective sharing of information across all members and non-members in the region.

Empowering the Staff Union Representatives and SU Local Committees in the Region

The Staff Union in the Asia and Pacific region with support from SUC Global have been continuously fulfilling its commitment to all country offices in the Asia and Pacific region to provide necessary trainings and capacity-building activities in order to ensure that all Staff Union Representatives and Local Committees perform their roles at its optimum in order for them to support effectively and efficiently all members in the region. Trainings have been provided in the areas of:

- Information Sharing on Flexi Work Arrangements held in June 2023 jointly provided by HRD Geneva and the SU President.
- Recruitment and Selection Panel Interview Basic and Techniques held in August 2023 provided by Regional HRD.
- Roles and Responsibilities of the Staff Union Committee provided by the SU President during the 9th Regional Staff Union Meeting.
- Session on a safe and respectful working environment free from violence and harassment provided by the ILO Senior Specialist on Gender, Equality and Non-Discrimination.
- Role and Function of Staff Union Legal Adviser by SU Legal Adviser.
- Effective Negotiation Skills provided by Simon Ferrer, a distinguished Trade Union Leader and Trainer at SUC Global.

Recruitment and Selection

The SUC Bangkok is considered as a model towards recognizable participation of the Staff Union in various stages of the recruitment and selection process at the Country and Regional Office in Bangkok. The SUC Bangkok model was presented during the 9th SU Regional Meeting for Asia and the Pacific as a “case model” that can serve as reference during collective bargaining and negotiation activities of each country office. Till this reporting date, there are country offices where participation of the Staff Union remains to be as “Observer” or is *negligent*.

It is important to note that amongst all the country offices in the region, only CO-Dhaka’s management, to date, does not agree or allow the participation of the Staff Union in all stages of the Recruitment and Selection process even to its minimum level of participation.

Local Salary Survey (LSS)

There were several countries in the region that faced extreme economic challenges like Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Yangon. The SUC Global through its Treasurer and the Syndicat Secretariat played a recognizable role in the timely sharing of information on LSS results across all countries in Asia and the Pacific. It paved a way for SU Representatives and local committees to discuss what are emerging best practices as well as challenges faced by each country. It is also notable that in one of the offices in the countries in the region, specifically CO-Colombo, there is no clear and official Staff Union representation and participation in the Local Salary Survey Committee (LSSC).

Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA) Policy

The Staff Union representation in the region is thankful to the diligent work of the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) at the global level for their utmost effort in developing and finalizing the IGDS on FWA which is the basis of the current implementation of the policy across the country offices in the region and globally. The policy promotes better social dialogue between Management and the Staff to ensure effective implementation on both sides of the staff and the need of the Organization. The Staff Union played a pivotal role together with the Management at the planning and implementation stage, as well as its continuous monitoring and fostering of dialogue needed to address key challenges faced by both sides.

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 regions of Europe and the Arab States (Ankara, Beirut, Brussels, Budapest and Moscow).

Where specific locations are not mentioned, comments may be considered applicable to both regions. The report focuses on the following aspects of work in the ILO:

staff security; job security; salaries; application of the new Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) policy; SHIF and pension payments with particular focus on retirees in Russia; and Work environment/organizational climate

Staff security

Due to the invasion of Ukraine by Russian military forces, colleagues stationed in Kyiv evacuated the city in February 2022. All international staff left Ukraine, while locally recruited colleagues left for the countryside less affected by the armed conflict. The UN cleared Kyiv for a staged return starting March 2023 and ILO SECURITY continued to provide invaluable assistance during the process. The security of

ILO colleagues in Kyiv remains paramount, hence a security assistant was hired as part of the team, an armed vehicle, several power supply units, and satellite internet access were also purchased. The mobilization of male colleagues remains a major concern, UN agencies continue negotiations with Ukrainian authorities for exempting all UN-employed men from military service.

The war also impacts colleagues stationed in Moscow. International staff was offered the option to relocate to Budapest for an initial period of one year, so far four staff members are moving to Hungary. The splitting of the team creates anxiety among the Moscow staff and questions the future of the whole office. Male colleagues remain potential targets of the mobilization efforts.

Due to economic hardship and to the continuous refugee crisis hosted in various parts of the country, the security situation in Lebanon has not improved. The country has been ruled by a caretaker government and has been without a president for almost a year – the situation impacts law and order. The ILO office located next to the Central Bank is often affected by demonstrations; however, no security incident has been reported by ILO staff and the internal security coordination has been strengthened in the last year.

The security situation in Yemen is also tense, affecting national staff especially women in terms of mobility and travel in and outside the country. As this is a project office and not a formal ILO country office, the situation is being monitored and coordinated closely with other UN agencies.

The security situation in the Occupied Territory continues to be unstable and at times colleagues are unable to reach the office or meetings. However, there is clear commitment from management of not putting staff at risk and providing the flexibility needed under the circumstances.

Colleagues in Baghdad operate from a shielded green zone with high security measures in place. While this is important to maintain the security of staff, it puts a strain on coordinating movement in Iraq and creates a particular dynamic between staff and their supervisors.

Following the devastating earthquake affecting Türkiye, Syria, and the surrounding region, all ILO staff has been reported safe. However, colleagues have lost close family members and relatives, and the SU transferred funds to support them by organizing an ILO-wide collection.

Job security

Financing arrangements with donors in Ukraine have been renegotiated and some running projects have been topped up to ensure the extension of as many contracts as possible. Ukraine is to become an ILO Country Office with staff to be hired.

International sanctions against the Russian Federation severely affected ILO activities in the country. Projects being implemented in Russia and staff contracts on those projects have been already terminated. With the war continuing, with the splitting of the Moscow team, with no motions on the part of the Administration to appoint a new office director, the future of colleagues (especially of those on TC contracts) in Moscow is even more uncertain even though they service other countries in the region.

Around 80 per cent of staff in ROAS are on TC contracts, and from the 12 countries covered, only 3 have country offices. This creates high dependency on project funding and provides little job security. An attempt to cost-share salaries to enhance efficiency and job security was tried but failed in Iraq. However, the SUC in ROAS is trying to promote the principle by building on the lessons learned of why that attempt has failed. More transparency in the recruitment and selection process (R&S) and ensuring continuity for well-performing TC project staff could eliminate some of the deficiencies and conflicts reported to the SU by colleagues covered by the Beirut office. The SU has gained the right to

nominate an observer in interview panels and hopes to strengthen and institutionalize the observer role even further.

87 per cent of colleagues are on TC contracts in Türkiye. Complemented by high inflation, economic fluctuation, and increased turnover in many sectors, this setup gives rise to concerns about job security to national staff. The general election re-established the party governing the country in the past 20 years; this has caused political and even daily and practical problems for the staff since May 2023.

Salaries

The war in Ukraine coupled with the still high inflation rates has an adverse effect on the whole of the region. Post adjustments for international staff are wildly fluctuating while colleagues receiving salaries in local currencies are facing diminishing purchasing power, devaluing currencies, and inflation which is in general lower than in the previous year, but still in the double digits in many countries. Interim salary surveys and indexations resulted in slight increases in salaries of locally recruited staff, but none of these measures matched the rate at which inflation and devaluation threaten the livelihood of UN personnel. The region reports declining purchasing power of local staff, continuing high inflation rates, and huge discrepancies between post adjustments for international staff and salary adjustments for NO and GS staff causing tensions among colleagues.

In addition to the problems listed above, many employers left the Russian Federation, therefore an interim salary survey would be next to impossible now. To compensate for the adverse economic tendencies, indexation was applied to salaries of national staff. However, indexation relies on official economic data, the reliability of which may be questioned due to government interference and measures serving the war effort. The complexity of the situation puts extreme stress on members of the Local Salary Survey Committee (LSSC): the amount of work involved is increasing and colleagues feel they are ill-equipped to handle complex processes having tremendous impact.

In Beirut, an increase of 3.8 per cent for GS and 0.6 per cent for NO categories was introduced following an interim salary survey. The chaos of the multi-exchange rates and taxation in Lebanon allow for different interpretation of economic trends, but these rates certainly do not compensate for the financial damage caused to staff by the continuing high inflation rate. Despite the whole economy being effectively dollarized, the inflation of food and beverages exceeded 350 per cent in LBP.

In Erbil, staff enjoy fewer financial benefits than colleagues in other regions of Iraq although the cost of living is relatively higher. No LSSC exists in Erbil which could address these issues through a UN-wide engagement.

Due to persistent double-digit inflation (above 85 per cent in Q4 of 2022) and the fluctuating exchange rate, several emergency measures were implemented in Ankara including administering non-pensionable bonuses for local staff in 2022. The ILO actively engages in activities of the LSSC and colleagues from all UN agencies stationed in Türkiye are working on developing a strong common platform to protect the livelihood of national staff.

The interim salary survey conducted in July 2023 resulted in an increase of 4.3% in net salaries for the GS category and 4.8% for the NO category in Türkiye. The pay difference between national and international staff is significant and the situation seems to be deteriorating for local staff. The salary scale has been dollarized as a result of the last comprehensive salary survey. However, the economic strategy of the Government is based on currency suppression and staff is not compensated based on the actual inflation rate.

Budapest will be one of the first duty stations to conduct a comprehensive salary survey as per the newly adopted pilot methodology of the ICSC – the process will be closely monitored, and results evaluated.

In Brussels, the post adjustment for international staff has been lowered by 3.3 points. The ICSC has completed the data processing and analysis of the place-to-place survey conducted in Brussels during February 2023. As a result of the survey, with the implementation of the Gap Closure Measures, the post adjustment multiplier changed from 52.3 (based on 0.5% rule) to 49.0. A Personal Transition Allowance of 3.3 is applicable to staff on post before 1 August 2023.

In Rome, although the CPI has drastically risen, the interim adjustment was only 0.8% between April 2022 and April 2023.

In West European duty stations staff still struggle with the absence of available NO positions and lack of career advancement opportunities – this situation should be remedied by negotiating a clear position/strategy on the matter.

Post-COVID teleworking

The new policy on Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA) went into effect on 1 July 2023. Across the board, problems have been reported on administering the 50% office presence, as well as with setting the core hours and interpreting certain sections of the policy from the Beirut office; the local SUC has been working with colleagues and HR on clearing the issues. For ROAS, the SUC agreed with HR to review the policy 6 months following its implementation.

SHIF

The reimbursement of submitted claims has been reported as unacceptably slow in both regions. Processing times of over two months are not only causing a significant financial burden to colleagues, but the value of tardy reimbursements is further reduced by high inflation rates and fluctuating exchange rates. Pilot programmes announced by SHIF (contracts with outpatient providers and additional SHIF staff) are awaited with great expectations. Another challenge is the reimbursement of claims in multiple transfers, which leads to high transaction costs – especially in Beirut and Iraq. In Erbil, bank charges sometimes exceed the value of the invoice as there are fixed bank charges particular to the banking sector in this area.

Pension payments with particular focus on retirees in Russia

After the introduction of sanctions against the Russian Federation, pension benefit payments to UN retirees residing in Russia were suspended and delayed. Interim solutions have been found for processing payments, but with further banks leaving the country and exorbitant fees imposed on pensions paid in USD and EUR, the situation remains volatile. The UNJSPF has been exploring alternative payment channels for processing payments in Russian Rubles and immediate solutions are needed to safeguard the livelihood of UN retirees.

Work environment/ organizational climate

The Beirut SUC conducted a visit to the Erbil office in March 2023 with the goal of enhancing dialogue and improving the well-being of staff. A similar follow-up mission is being planned for Baghdad and Amman as a priority. Issues reported by staff included isolation from other ILO offices, the need to improve R&S, streamlining administrative processes such as TT claim settlements, enhancing the flow of information including orientation for newcomers, constructive discussions of performance, and eradicating fear of retaliation in case of whistleblowing. The Beirut SUC committed to i) choosing a SU focal person in Erbil, ii) monitoring issues raised above, iii) organizing quarterly virtual meetings and iv) organizing solidarity social events connecting Erbil staff to ROAS. Management of ROAS are attempting to relocate the office in Beirut and the SUC is being consulted in the process.

Ever since the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian military and the uncertainty surrounding the future of the Moscow office, colleagues stationed in Russia are facing increased levels of stress and anxiety. Division of the team, expiration of TC contracts, absence of a new director, differentiated treatment of international and national colleagues contribute to the deteriorating mental health of staff in Moscow.

The focus on mobility announced by the DG was acknowledged in the region, but concrete steps, measures or examples did not follow the announcement; there are no visible changes, only open-ended questions concerning the application of the approach remain.

Directors retiring or being transferred from the Moscow, Ankara, and Budapest offices coupled with the appointment of a new Regional Director of Europe do not lessen the power vacuum experienced following the arrival of the new DG. Internal investigations and requests for mediation have plagued several offices in the region.

Following the termination of mandatory telework and returning to Kyiv, colleagues in Ukraine continue to show extraordinary resilience and adaptability. However, additional support was requested for i) organizing a retreat focusing on team building and delivering under stress, ii) allocating additional leave days due to heavy night-time bombing, and iii) updating policies applied to rest and recuperation periods. The request for additional leave is being reviewed by EUROPE and HRD. The Budapest DWT/CO and the Staff Union agreed to jointly support a team retreat for all Ukraine staff.

Due to staffing and internal changes, the Ankara office has been going through some turbulent times, but the newly elected SUC is eager to tackle the arising issues.

Turin

Titular member: Cristina Pierini

Substitute member: Yousra Hamed

During the latest Board meeting in October 2022, the SU representative recalled the three pillars of the Turin Centre:

- its motivated staff;
- its digital competence/training and a long experience in training methodology/capacity development;
- the residential facilities available on campus.

Our main concern here is in regard to the toll that digital training is having on staff workload and to the implications of a learning model that is increasingly based on blended activities. The distribution of work must be efficient, equitable and, ultimately, sustainable. Unfortunately, when it comes to certain decisions made on the grounds of efficiency and cost savings, which have consequences on staff workload, the Staff Union is afforded limited opportunities for input before the implementation stage, with many decisions presented as a fait accompli.

We agree with the concept of sustainability, but we consider that financial growth for the sake of financial growth is a misplaced principle in a UN organization such as ours.

More importantly, we would like to see a far greater share of the annual surplus reinvested into the staff and the campus. This has been a repeated request made by the Staff Union to the Board at past meetings.

As to the residential facilities of the campus, the Staff Union Committee fully supports the proposal presented by the former Director of the Centre at the 2021 Board meeting to “maintain full responsibility over the whole campus in its current size”. Although this proposal was endorsed by the Board, the possibility of giving up part of the facilities has not been abandoned.

In our view, several significant issues are affecting staff motivation, such as:

- a) the absence of genuine career development opportunities, both for General Service staff and Professional staff;
- b) the prevalence of precarious contracts, which appear to disproportionately affect women more than men in both categories;
- c) the so-called agility: agility is counterproductive when it overloads or redeploys staff without prior and meaningful consultation. At the same time, voluntary mobility has been hindered on the pretext of legality; and
- d) the trend toward inadequate protection for fragile or vulnerable staff. There have been several instances where the fundamental ethical principles of the United Nations and the ILO have not been upheld, and despite the SUC raising these cases to a higher level, solutions reflecting the values promoted by the UN have not been found.

As representatives of ITCILO staff, we are deeply committed to defending and acknowledging the significant contribution of the Centre's staff. They have consistently demonstrated their abilities, commitment, and professionalism in delivering an extensive service portfolio under challenging circumstances.

III. OTHER BODIES

Former Officials' Section

Executive Secretary: François Kientzler

The end of the COVID pandemic in the summer of 2022 resulted in the return of the members of the Board of the Former Officials Section to ILO premises. This facilitated the resumption of contacts with active staff and, above all, with the Staff Union's Committee, Chairperson and secretariat.

Continuing the activities of the members of the Board

The Former Officials Section was absent from the ILO for two and a half years due because of COVID. Since its return in September 2022, it has met regularly once a month. The Board has been expanded to include young retirees, but there are still vacancies; we can have up to ten members. Elections to the Board are scheduled before the end of 2023. The process is underway.

Impact of COVID on secretarial work

We had our own way of working before the pandemic, and we were surprised to find that while we were away from the ILO, new applications and practices had been put in place. When we returned to the office, nothing worked, neither computers nor printers. We had to call in the IT technicians and the Staff Union secretaries to bring us up to date. We now have two laptops like other members of staff, so we can work from home.

Our means of communication and information

Fortunately, in 2016 we chose to host our website outside the ILO. This decision enabled us to keep control of it and our webmaster to feed it at our request; the website receives hundreds of visitors every month. We continue to publish our "Message" magazine, which is especially welcome among those who don't use the Internet. We respond to individual requests and maintain our contacts with the Staff Union, HRD, the Staff Health Insurance Fund and other Common System retiree organizations, notably AAFI-AFICS, where three of our colleagues represent us on the Committee.

SHIF Centenary and Retirees' Reception: 8 December 2022

The Centenary of the SHIF was well attended by retirees. On the same day, retirees from the Geneva area were invited by the ILO Administration to the autumn reception. It was an eagerly awaited event: the last reception had been held in December 2019. Over 200 people registered for this friendly cocktail party, which also welcomed participants from the SHIF Centenary AGM that had just been held.

Meeting of the Section Bureau with Mr. Gilbert F. Hounbo, Director-General of the ILO on 8 April 2023

This was an opportunity for the Board of the Former Officials' Section to meet the new DG, to explain the objectives and raison d'être of the Section, and to listen to his objectives for the ILO. He expressed his concern at seeing economic progress take precedence over social progress, and is showing his determination to work to ensure that social issues, like climate change, are at the heart of the global debate.

Information meeting on 25 May 2023

This meeting, organized by the Board of the Section, was held in person and by video-conference. The first part focused on **the digital certificate of pension entitlement**. In order to simplify and speed up the Certificate of Entitlement (CE) process, an alternative to the CE form has been created: the Digital Certificate of Entitlement (DCE). The paper form can still be used, and the document sent electronically.

The second part of the meeting focused on **developments at the SHIF**. A dedicated Call Center now handles telephone calls. A satisfaction survey was carried out among policyholders. While 62% of active policyholders are satisfied with the SHIF, this rate rises to over 85% among retirees.

Our immediate concerns

One of our concerns is the lack of access to the external offices in the field, for our retirees living in the regions. If this is possible in Geneva, it must also be possible everywhere else. We have just learned that the ILO has embarked on a policy of restricting access to the building for retirees from other organizations. We are surprised by such a decision, and intend to take action with the representatives of retirees from other organizations to return to the situation of the past. What's more, ILO retirees have access to the other organizations, so it's only normal that reciprocity should remain. After all, isn't the ILO everyone's home, and particularly that of workers, whether active or retired?

International Civil Servants' Mutual Associations (MEC/AMFI)

Staff Union representative: Sylvain Delaprisson

The year 2022 saw the return of the distribution of a remuneration on the CHF deposit account.

It was decided to distribute the same remuneration as in 2021, i.e. 1.35%, split between an interest rate of 0.50% and an exceptional bonus of 0.85%, with the deficit taken from the extraordinary reserve.

The deficit for the year is mainly due to bond management mandates, which must be recognized at their December 31st value, which is CHF 5.1 million lower than their original value. Bearing in mind that this value is temporary and unrealized, as it will be recouped when the bonds mature, the members of the Board of Directors considered that the health and sustainability of the Mutual was in no way in question, and that such a distribution could be envisaged.

Despite this negative result for 2022, the Mutual's reserves at the end of 2022 still stood at CHF 77.5 million.

The year 2022 was also marked by a significant upturn in loan demand. Business was brisk in both ordinary loans (+30.53%) and home loans (+19.15%), and the number of loans granted during the year stood at 1,011, 180 more than in 2021. Despite a general environment of rising interest rates, the members of the Committee did not wish to pass on this increase to the loans granted by La Mutuelle, given that household budgets are already suffering terribly from the rise in the cost of living. It should be noted that the interest rates offered by La Mutuelle are currently among the lowest on the market, making the Association highly competitive with private banks.

Loan application activity in 2023 should remain strong, but vigilance will be required to avoid over-indebtedness among members.

The year 2022 was also a busy one for GPAFI, with Zurich Insurance terminating its loss-of-earnings and accident insurance contracts on 31 December, due to non-compliance with Swiss group contract rules.

To avoid, at all costs, leaving a large number of policyholders without cover, the Board of Directors set about finding a new partner and, since 1 January 2023, has had the pleasure of working with the French insurer MGEN, a major player in the field of social protection, on almost similar terms and conditions as permanent life insurance cover.

GPAFI's profit for the year amounted to CHF 941,000.

The updated risk analysis carried out by the Association, and the two audits carried out by PricewaterhouseCoopers SA, did not give rise to any remarks other than those already made, which still concern IT. Measures to strengthen systems have been taken, including the replacement of servers for La Mutuelle, the setting up of a test environment separate from the backup for both entities, and an off-site systems backup environment for GPAFI, all of which further minimize risks. Joint work with our IT colleagues at UNOG enables us to make progress on fundamental issues such as architecture and systems.

As the Association's statutory aim is to provide mutual support for international civil servants and their family members, our objective for 2023 is to focus on strengthening these ties. Advances in IT development and increased visibility will enable many colleagues who wish, for example, to have access to property at an advantageous interest rate, or to benefit from wider medical cover, and who are not yet members, to make their wishes come true.

In conclusion, the Board of Directors reiterates its unfailing commitment to the prudent management of the Association, with the aim of continuing to safeguard the interests of all members with regard to the Mutual Association and GPAFI.

The ILO Intern Board**Staff Union representative for relations with the Intern Board:** Leillah Abdallah and Ian Orton

Since the interns returned to the ILO after the pandemic, the Staff Union has re-engaged with the interns and looked to support them wherever possible and provide guidance on issues relating to their work conditions and well-being.

We meet regularly with representatives of the Intern Board to discuss any concerns or issues they want us to work with them on. In the last year, we have supported them in accomplishing some very concrete gains for interns by helping them shape their case (i.e. internships are now recognized as a professional experience). We remain focused on ensuring the ILO remains a pacesetter in providing an excellent intern experience. This means regularly reviewing the intern stipend, and ensuring interns do receive mid and end-of-cycle feedback from their supervisors, among many other priorities that require regular attention.
