

Your Staff Union & Your Wages



What is it?

Wages in the ILO are unfortunately not set through a process of collective bargaining. Wages for ILO staff around the world, and throughout the UN Common System, are determined by an organ called the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), which is supposed to be an independent technical body. All UN Staff receive a wage, according to the grade and step to which they are assigned. For staff in Professional Categories and above, pay must be established in line with the Noblemaire Principle, which dates back to the days of the League of Nations and which the United Nations took over, embodies two rules: 1) to keep the international civil service as one, its employees shall get equal pay for work of equal value, whatever their nationality or the salaries earned in their own country; and 2) in recruiting staff, international organisations shall offer pay that will draw and keep citizens of countries where salaries are highest¹. Salaries for local UN Staff around the world are based on the Flemming principle which requires that local international civil servants should be paid in accordance with the best prevailing local conditions for similar work.



Why do we care?

Wages are one of the most important terms and conditions of employment for any worker. The United Nations reduced the compensation package for P staff in 2017 (new unified salary scale, child allowance, education grant, travel, hardship duty station measures etc...).

In many duty stations around the world, large numbers of NO and G staff seen their salaries reduced as results of the non-transparent salary surveys. On top of these cuts to pay and various benefits, the results of those surveys have been more and more contested around the world.

In previous years, ILO and their fellow UN Local colleagues protested the introduction of a 2nd salary scale and unequal pay for local staff in Bangkok in 2012 and filed an appeal at the ILOAT which they won. Geneva duty station P staff, from last year, also fought also for their salary. But many other duty stations in the world have problems with the lack of transparency and fairness of the ICSC's methodologies.

The arbitrary decisions on pay in Bangkok, Tokyo, Santiago, Geneva, and in other duty stations have resulted in a loss of confidence of UN Staff in the independence of the ICSC to carry out its technical function, as it has come to implement an austerity agenda of a number of major donors to the UN System.

1 ILOAT, Judgment No. 831, consideration 1.





What are we doing about it?

The Staff Union is focused on strengthening alliances at the international level and contributing to the institution of collective bargaining across the board within the United Nations system.

We are encouraging staff representatives to participate in or to set up local federations of United Nations staff associations (FUNSAs) in the field. The Staff Union is supporting its members in filing legal appeals against flawed decisions.

The Staff Union will work with its fellow staff unions and associations, under the leadership of the UN Federations (CCISUA), to advocate for the UN Agencies to freeze all remaining 2016 ICSC Decisions, and to insist upon ICSC Reform as part and parcel of the UN Reform announced by UN Secretary General António Guterres. We are working with Public Services International (PSI) to support staff around the world in their job actions against the ICSC decisions, and with PSI and our allies to press the UN Secretary General and the UN General Assembly to insist upon fundamental reform of the ICSC.