



6 February 2024

A review of recent events

Dear colleagues and friends,

Let's start the first monthly broadcast by wishing you a Happy New Year. May 2024 mark the beginning of a Tidal Wave of Kindness, Good Health, Happiness, and a Brighter Future and may it be a year of fulfilled dreams.

Thank you very much for your dedication and unwavering commitment to achieving our collective goals and our mandate as ILO. The work of each one of you is important and valuable.

The Bulletin for the first quarter of this year is dedicated to the regions. This month's contribution comes to you from Africa with a summary of activities planned so far for the year and we encourage more to come within the year.

Renewal of Local Committees and Constructive Exchanges for Executive Assistants in the Africa region:

The offices in the Africa region, including DWT/CO - Cairo, DWT/CO - Dakar, DWT/CO - Pretoria, DWT/CO - Yaoundé, as well as the national offices CO - Abidjan, CO - Abuja, CO - Addis Ababa, CO - Algiers, CO - Antananarivo, CO - Dar es Salaam, CO - Harare, CO - Kinshasa, CO - Lusaka, are currently engaged in a dynamic process of renewing their local union committees.

The electoral timetable has been widely shared, marking the start of a crucial period when staff members will have the opportunity to choose their local representatives. This democratic process is designed to ensure that staff interests are faithfully represented and to strengthen the collective voice within these offices.

Constructive discussions also took place between the President of the Global Staff Union, the titular member for Africa and his alternate member, two representatives of the Management Assistants of the Africa region, and the Regional Management, including the Regional Director and the Deputy Regional Director. These discussions helped to highlight the specific concerns of the Executive Assistants and to work on appropriate solutions.

In the course of these discussions, a number of issues were raised and possible solutions identified. Management is committed to implement measures to strengthen the capabilities of Executive Assistant colleagues, thereby fostering a more supportive and fulfilling working environment.

This demonstrates the unwavering commitment of the Africa Region offices to creating working conditions that meet the needs and concerns of all staff. The renewal of local committees and constructive exchanges with the Executive Assistants help to strengthen cohesion and efficiency within these offices, thereby promoting a balanced and equitable professional environment.

From Antananarivo - We invite project managers to mobilize resources from the outset of projects, because the contracts of some project colleagues are about to expire.

The application of the FWA arrangements has helped colleagues a lot in terms of work-life balance. Mutual trust is essential, and we are satisfied with management's understanding and staff's facilitation of and compliance with the rules.

From Cairo - In light of the ongoing devaluation of the Egyptian Pound and its impact on the welfare of our staff, we have formally requested that the salary scale be transitioned to the U.S. dollar (USD). This critical step would shield our employees from the negative consequences of currency fluctuations and ensure their financial stability, but not doing so will significantly affect the well-being of our employees and potentially hinder our ability to attract and retain top talent.

We are also trying to contribute to a comprehensive salary survey throughout the coming weeks, but the recent ICSC reclassification from category 2 to category 1 will potentially hinder it.

Since 2016, we have witnessed recurrent devaluations eroding the purchasing power of our staff's salaries. The government anticipates further devaluations, which is particularly alarming. The recent categorization change by ICSC makes it very difficult to obtain good comparators, as the market is not stable. Category 2 would require 10 comparators but returning to category 1 will require obtaining 15 comparators, which is very difficult in the current situation. We have urged the ICSC to reconsider this decision and understand the unique challenges faced by our staff in Egypt due to the ongoing devaluation.

From Harare - Staff are greatly appreciating the current teleworking modalities as it is helping so much with the work-life balance. Staff are taking advantage of the new working arrangement.

The main problem in the country is the ever-increasing cost of living and UN staff are currently engaged with the RC's office to find ways of reducing the impact it is causing to the standard of living. This includes exploring ways to change the salary survey methodology for local staff because it is very difficult or near impossible to find comparators in a highly informalized economy currently obtaining in Zimbabwe. This resulted in Zimbabwe getting a negative increase in last year's salary survey.

In Namibia, things are a little bit different; last year's salary survey yielded a positive increase, and staff are appreciative of that outcome.

From Yaoundé - The Yaoundé office, which is active in union and professional activities, recently witnessed two significant events. The union's local committee extended a warm welcome to the new Director, Mr Claude Yao Kouame, the 17th holder of this position. The Local Committee meeting was an opportunity for staff to demonstrate their commitment to the union and show their support for the new Director, showing the solidarity that characterizes the professional environment within the Yaoundé office.

The new director, in turn, underlined his commitment to working closely with staff and the local union committee to advance the common goals of the office.

Unfortunately, the Yaoundé office also had to bid farewell to one of its outstanding members, Mr Bienvenu Ohana, who served with dedication on the KOICA Bertoua project. On 6 January 2024, the staff accompanied Mr Ohana to his final resting place, expressing their respect and gratitude to a valued colleague.

The loss was a moment of mourning for the Yaoundé office, and a reminder of the importance of the professional and human ties forged over many years of working together. The union's local committee expressed its condolences to Mr Ohana's family and friends, underlining the positive impact he had had on the professional community.

These recent events bear witness to the dynamic and sometimes emotional life within the Yaoundé office. The staff, united by shared values, continue to work together to ensure the success of the Office's mission, while paying tribute to those who have made a significant contribution to its history.

From Abidjan - The Abidjan Regional Office recently held its general meeting, a landmark event that provided an opportunity to present the achievements of the union's local committee. It was also an opportunity to share the progress of negotiations with management on staff concerns, particularly those relating to the Staff Health Insurance Fund (SHIF). Discussions also focused on the financial results and the prospects for the next renewal of the committee, scheduled according to the timetable drawn up by the Union's Secretariat in Geneva and shared with all the offices in the Africa.

At the meeting, all staff showed interest and gratitude for the information shared. Discussions covered the achievements of the local committee, concerns about SHIF, progress in the current negotiations, and prospects for the elections, which will follow the established timetable. The titular and his substitute for the region were present at the general meeting, providing clarifications to staff's questions and gave direction to the concerns expressed.

Special mention was made of Mr Fama Bakayoko, the outgoing President of the Staff Union in Abidjan, who is taking an early retirement on 31 January 2024 after nearly 26 years of loyal service to the ILO. Staff expressed their gratitude to Mr Bakayoko for his dedication and leadership over the years.

A special ceremony was held in honour of Mr Bakayoko, which was attended by his wife and children, the Regional Director, the Deputy Regional Director, the Country Office Director, the CRASs and all staff.

The ceremony was an opportunity to highlight Mr Bakayoko's positive impact on working life at the Abidjan Regional Office. His commitment and contribution have left a lasting mark, and his departure is greeted with respect and gratitude.

Staff expressed their best wishes for Mr Bakayoko's retirement and their continued commitment to the values and objectives of the Union. The period of renewal of the committee promises to be a crucial stage, when the next generation will be elected to continue working for the rights and interests of staff within the Abidjan Regional Office.

From Kinshasa – The Kinshasa office will host the ILO Directors' Retreat for Africa in the Republic of Congo from 13 to 15 February 2024. This meeting is of capital importance for our organization and demonstrates the recognition of our office as a strategic meeting place for the most senior ILO officials in Africa.

We would like to point out that Congo is one of the six countries covered by the Kinshasa Country Office, and the opportunity to hold the retreat in this setting reinforces our commitment to all the countries we serve in the region.

The retreat will provide a valuable platform to exchange ideas, share best practice and discuss the challenges and opportunities that shape our work in the region. We are confident that this event will help to strengthen collaboration and cooperation between ILO offices in Africa and boost our collective impact in achieving our common goals.

Have a wonderful February and Happy Chinese Lunar Year 2024, the year of the dragon - A year of strength, protection, fortune and prosperity.