



Date: 02 April 2021

Dear Colleagues,

This is to report back to you that we are delighted that staff at all levels from the UN Secretariat, agencies, funds and programmes took part in our recent survey on the **UN's Future of Work** initiative. It is very good to know that so many Ethiopia based employees took part also to give their views on a subject that is shaping up to have a big impact on staff, our jobs, and our terms and conditions of employment. The results should be big wake-up call for UN management.

To recap, UN management is considering major changes to the way staff work, including the role of **flexible working, the introduction of new 'agile' contracts**, and the **use of technology**. Each element has the potential to significantly affect the working lives of UN staff.

Given the importance of this, at the start of 2021 we, the Staff Unions put together a number of questions on the subject and asked all staff to give us their views.

Here is what you had to say:

- **Staff are clear in what they value about their current contracts**, with over 80% of respondents saying they like the alignment with the UN salary scale, the provision of annual, parental, and sick leave, access to a UN pension, and access to UN health insurance.
- **If UN management review contracts, then a massive majority of staff want this to be a moment when greater job security is achieved, alongside the ability to move within the UN system whilst similarly securing better job security.**

**Only 6% of respondents wanted more flexibility for the employer.** As one staff member commented, *"maintaining job security is my top priority. However, having the possibility to move within the UN organization while retaining a job security would be the ideal situation."*

- **Only 30% of respondents agree that UN management correctly uses the three types of contract currently in operation** (temporary/short-term, fixed-term, continuing/indefinite).

Many staff cited direct experience of how things were not working with one stating. *"It often seems like the organization covers what would be full-time, long-term positions with repeat temporary contracts."*

- **UN management is pushing for a fourth type of contract, the 'agile' contract, as they believe it is needed for the future, but just 15% of respondents agree with them.**

Instead of a new contract, staff wanted the current system to work properly with one member of staff saying, *“the existing categories should be used differently. Short term should be short term. Consultancy should be consultancy. Regular work should be done by regular staff.”*

- **There is real worry about the proposed ‘agile’ contract, with over two-thirds of staff saying they are concerned.**

The motivations behind this move are also questioned with **a huge 83% believing the new arrangements are being introduced to cut liabilities and save money.** One staff member was clear, *“I am concerned that they might be used to cut corners or cut down on benefits for employees, both within the new and within the currently existing contracts.”*

- For many fearing the impact of any **‘agile’ contract** or worried about the possibility of losing their job, there is little comfort in any social safety net with **over 80% of respondents reporting they are unable to claim national unemployment benefits.**

Clearly, if UN management is to proceed along this route then a significant change in mindset is needed when considering assistance and **83% of respondents want the establishment of a global UN unemployment scheme.**

These are highly significant results that, when taken in combination with the views expressed in response to our previous message on flexible working, show how staff are very concerned for the status of existing contracts and obligations, and have justifiable worries about the future.

UN management must listen to these wholly legitimate concerns and not embark on a programme of action that does not have the support of the very people it will directly affect – the staff. That’s the message we’ll be sending to management in the coming period.

Let us know what you think about these results by emailing any of your representative at the Staff Council or to the President of Staff Union directly. (M. Nassirou Ba → [ba31@un.org](mailto:ba31@un.org))

Stay safe and well.

Best regards,

Mahamadou Nassirou Ba, President

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