



Date: 18 May 2022

Dear Colleagues,



The Staff-Management Committee (SMC), which brings together UN staff unions and their management counterparts, held its annual meeting in Valencia from 23 to 28 April 2022. Your Staff Union was represented by Ms. Keiso Matashane-Marite (Vice President, Executive Committee)

and Mr. Messkir M. Lemma (Chair, Staff Council). We wanted to highlight some of the discussions that took place. We will circulate the final report once it has been cleared by the Secretary-General.

- ✓ **Fixed-Term Contract Duration:** We detailed concerns over a lack of updated continuing contract envelopes and the practice of renewing fixed-term contracts for short periods. We requested that five year fixed-term appointments be issued to staff eligible for conversion to continuing contract that did not fall within the established envelope, as requested by the General Assembly. On duration and renewal of fixed-term appointments, management confirmed that appointments should be renewed at the maximum term feasible given the funding environment and that the current funding situation would often constrain durations to two years rather than five years at this point.
- ✓ **Eligibility for Continuing Contracts:** We noted concerns about G-1 to G-4 staff not being eligible for continuing contracts as they had not been recruited through a Central Review Body (CRB). Management confirmed that the policy is being to include all categories of staff and all grades. However, the policy-change would not be retroactive as a central body review is a requirement imposed by the General Assembly.

- ✓ **Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA):** Staff representatives proposed improvements to the FWA policy to ensure fairness and consistency in its implementation. Management did not agree to modifying the administrative issuance but did support certain principles, including privacy of personal information, reasonable timeframes for approval of requests and promoting FWA where possible. Management reinforced that FWA was not an entitlement and could not be applied equally to all staff.
- ✓ **Roster Management and Recruitment/Staff Selection Policy:** Management provided background on the initiative to mutually recognize rosters within the UN system. We supported this initiative as it would provide greater opportunities for staff. We also requested that extant roster memberships be maintained and updated in terms of data and status accuracy, and that selection from the roster be more stringently applied in the recruitment process to increase recruitment from rosters.
- ✓ **COVID-19 and Next Normal:** We requested discussions on COVID-19 and the next normal (including the impact of long Covid, and the use of flexible working arrangements to mitigate risks) and the establishment of occupational health and safety (OHS) committees at all duty stations. Management agreed, taking into consideration duty station context and size, that offices should set up OHS committees or similar bodies. Management also agreed that some medical facilities could be improved. Here in our Duty Station, we are working on it and it and already have a draft TOR and work should be completed very soon.
- ✓ **Delegation of Authority:** We noted that the policy on delegation of authority to entity heads had resulted in uneven application of the rules, particularly for contract renewals and flexible working arrangements. We called for better monitoring, reporting of abuses and training for senior managers. Management asked for specific instances of alleged abuses to be reported to them. We take this opportunity to inform you that our Staff Union President was nominated Co-Chair of the SMC Working Group on “ Delegation of Authority” last year during SMC IX in Bonn.
- ✓ **Staff Engagement Survey:** We requested full details by entity and location to better address issues at the local level. Management agreed to ask heads of entities to share the full results of the survey. Heads of entities would have to hold townhalls to discuss the full results shared in advance and establish engagement teams to implement and monitor the action plans, with the participation of staff and staff representatives.

- ✓ **Anti-Racism Strategy:** We requested specific guidance to entities on how to implement the strategy. Staff representatives also requested accountability for inclusive staff selection processes, and appropriate testing or recruitment methods that did not disadvantage particular groups of candidates. Staff representatives supported education and training for staff at all levels and noted the positive impact of open dialogues among staff to share experiences. Staff representatives also raised the issue of data confidentiality in the context of the Secretary-General's Strategic Action Plan in this regard, which calls for all entities to publish on both internal and external websites, names, photos, titles and regional groups and level of all senior leaders at D1 level and above. Management confirmed that for certain job functions, staff names, nationality and job titles were already published for which either consent or awareness were already in place.
- ✓ **Data Confidentiality:** We expressed concerns over the protection of staff members' data and privacy as well as liability in the context of using official equipment for personal reasons, and the absence of constraints in investigative bodies' access to private data stored on private devices used by staff members to perform their work. Management assured us that several policy issuances had undergone significant updates which were nearing finalization, including a new Data and Privacy Protection Policy. Management did not agree to implementing the EU GDPR as it was not applicable to the UN.
- ✓ **Downsizing:** SMC first started work on a policy to regulate downsizing nine years ago and it still is not out. Management explained it had had to update the draft policy to reflect recent tribunal judgements. Eligible downsized candidates would have to be considered on a priority and non-competitive basis prior to any other candidate. Staff would not retain personal grades with higher pay when selected for a lower-level post.
- ✓ **Gender:** We requested information on gaps between women and men, such as by age/grade, incidences of job stagnation, differences in job families and internal promotion versus external recruitment, highlighting the need for gender analysis on key issues, including flexible work arrangements, whistle-blower protection and interplay with other diversity criteria. We also noted the lack of recognition of a non-traditional gender identification. Management provided examples of outreach activities to strengthen the female talent pool and noted it was reviewing gender definitions.
- ✓ **People Strategy :** Management briefed us on their people strategy. We suggested improved succession planning, greater clarity on the mobility framework in the absence of a General Assembly decision,

better support to the mental health strategy and support to diversity initiatives. Dissatisfaction among certain Young Professional Programme (YPP) staff was also raised. Management agreed to examine these issues.

Discussions also took place on safety and security; accountability for crimes against UN staff; unemployment and other insurance initiatives; coaching in lieu of career development; roles and status of the various focal points established within the Secretariat; job nomenclature and titles; work-life balance; and duty of care for incapacitated staff, particularly with regards to mental health.

Best regards,

Mahamadou Nassirou Ba, President

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