



### FUNSA PRESIDENT Speech

#### Townhall with DSG: Tuesday February 8, 2022

Good Morning Colleagues from Addis and All the regions of Ethiopia, our regional offices around the continent and to Colleagues outside the continent

Thank you, ES and the RC, for organizing this townhall.

A big Welcome to the Deputy Secretary General. Welcome Madame, we are all delighted to have you in our midst. We always appreciate the commitment of the SG's office to be here at the AU summit and represented at the highest level.

Madame, I am addressing you today not only as the President of ECA staff Union, but as the President of the Federation of the United Nations Staff Unions and Associations in Ethiopia (FUNSA).

FUNSA covers the whole country and as such I will touch upon issues which cut across all if not most of the UN organizations here. Here are the issues we want to engage with you on:

- 1. Request for effort to ease Anti -UN Sentiment:** The host government just ended the "State of Emergency" in Ethiopia. For the last 3 years we have been in and

out of state of emergency and that has affected and continue to affect the quality of life in Ethiopia in general and in Addis in particular. The recent war and some related issues has created a great anti UN-sentiment in the population, against UN Staff in general and particularly those in the field in: Debre Berhane, Awassa, Shire, Mekadida, Gambella, Tigray, Dire Dawa, Assosa, just to cite a few and we appreciate the continued effort of the DO and the RC and that of the Secretary General himself in engaging the Prime Minister of Ethiopia. Although it is the responsibility of all of us to be neutral, professional and to show good citizenry, we will appreciate more engagement at the SG level with the government to ease the tension so people can go about their work without fear of reprisals.

- 2. Reclassification of Addis Ababa and several other duty station in Ethiopia:** I would like to bring to your attention and seek your support for our request to **reclassify Addis Ababa from B to C duty station** and further downgrade several other duty stations in Ethiopia We have been raising this issue with ICSC over and over and the bureaucracy and the almost-impossible -to -reach-conditions make it difficult to make progress while all indicators point to the re-

classification for a “duty Station C”. I have engaged Mr. Larby Djacta on it during the CCISUA midterm meeting in New York last November and I am currently in touch with one of his assistant Ms. Henrietta Maria de Beer. We need your support in this. *What we need Madame, is an early classification review* and we hope to get it with your support.

**3. Continuing Appointment for G1 to GS4, NOs & Ps:**

That is an issue which has been lingering for longtime. The rules said that to be eligible for continuity appointment staff selection should be vetted by Central Review Body either CRB or CRP and neither the G1 to G4 nor the Nos selection has been through a CR body. But in retrospective and under the lenses of transparency and equity, We the staff Unions under SMC entered in discussion with management and we were pleased to learn now that that rule will be changed and from now on the continuing appointment will cover all G staff (including G1 to G4), but for Nos we have not heard anything yet. Also, we learned that it will not be retroactive. Although the decision is not yet out, we think it should be both for all categories of GS and for NOs as well. We think if it is not retroactive it will even hurt more. Madame Deputy Secretary General,

we are talking about staff who have given 10, 15, 20 and more years to this organization. Can you imagine, being denied a continuing appointment after 20 or more years of service and the person who is hired just 5 years from when the decision is out, can get it? so, our joy will be incomplete if the non-retroactivity applies. We need your office to take a closer look at this and support us to make it for all GS including G1 to G4, and NOs Period!!

- 4. Regarding the P Staff:** This also is being discussed at SMC. It is unbelievable that the last continuity exercise for the P staff was in 2015. Am not going to the details here, but we need your support for OHR to speed this up
- 5. 360-degree Performance Evaluation:** As you know the Staff side in the SMC has been requesting the 360-degree performance evaluation for all the staff. The best we got so far will be D1 and above. Madame, you will agree with me that what we really need is a 360 for the entire staff grade, from P1 to USGs . Why D1 and above only get it while it can really help at all level as we have seen stuff happening at all levels: such as harassment, abuse of authority, discrimination, and other kind of injustice etc. If 360o is going to fix anything, it should across

the board. . We are working on this at the SMC level with USG Catherine Pollard and ASG Martha Helena Lopez, but we need your support to make this an all UN instrument.

6. **Harassment, Retaliation and Abuse of Authority:** As the Staff Union President, I am in a unique position where several vulnerable staff members approach me with their experiences of being subjected to harassment, retaliation and abuse of authority, often by very senior functionaries in the organization. It is painful to hear their stories and the staff union takes these instances very seriously. We provide a shoulder to such staff and also educate them about the various channels that are available within the organization to seek redressal of their complaints. However not all such staff members prefer to use the official channels to submit their grievances, due to the fear of further retaliation and possibly loss of job as well. The instances of staff coming to the Staff Union with such grievances has only increased in the past 2 years. This speaks about a climate of fear that pervades ECA and needs to be discussed and addressed by all levels of the Secretariat. Staff who engage in harassment, retaliation and abuse of authority, however high positions they may hold, should know that their deeds and actions will not go unpunished by

the UN's system of administration of justice. I am using this platform to echo that we are all equal in front of ST/SGB/2019/8 (The Secretary General Bulletin) and it is disturbing to see abuse of authority going on in this institution.

- 7. G to P:** This is a continuous debate and on account of time, I will not go into details here But I just want to underscore that the Staff-Management Committee (SMC), where all Staff Unions under the Secretariat are represented, has been working hard in the past years to provide compelling reasons including, positive effects on gender parity, equitable geographical representation, ensuring the highest standards of efficiency, competency and integrity, amongst others, to provide strong arguments for the discontinuation of what we feel to be a clearly discriminatory practice against colleagues serving in the General Service (GS) and related categories or as Field Service Staff (FS). Given the importance of the matter in promoting a flexible, dynamic and motivated UN workforce, we call on both the Secretary-General and yourself Madame Deputy Secretary general to consider both the recommendations of the ACABQ as well as the report and recommendations of the Staff-Management

working group of the SMC to promptly establish, under the SG direct authority, an internal programme targeted at improving the career opportunities of the GS and related categories as well as those of the FS staff across the Secretariat. We need your support here also.

**8. Long Service Award Certificate:** This celebrates our long-serving and dedicated staff members, whose achievements are nothing less than a mark of passion, dedication, and perseverance. As the SG said, “It is needless to say that our greatest asset in fulfilling the purpose of the United Nations is our staff”. As the United Nations becomes more diverse and the challenges, we face, more complex, we must continue to invest in policies to recruit, retain, and develop the best and brightest from around the world”. We would like the award certificate to continue. It is a good thing and many staff are waiting their turn.

**9. Staff Union participation at OMT:** As you the Operation Management Team (OMT) provides guidance, recommendations and management support to the UNCT on operational matters. And more importantly nurture the mandate and purpose of Delivering as One initiative. As such, we have

repeatedly asked to be part of the OMT whenever staff issues are discussed but that has still not happened. It forces us to react to decisions instead of participating in them. Many decisions are taken in the absence of the staff representatives, that need to stop if we want the delivery as one to succeed.

**10. Staff Selection and Mobility and Delegation**

**of Authority:** This issue has been discussed during SMC Annual meeting last year in Bonn. We were there Our concern remains: transparency, accountability and compliance with standards that will reduce biases and discrimination in staff selection. We clearly expressed concerns with the Management practice of reflecting certain elements in policy guidance and not in the ST/AI, including some of the SMC agreements on this issue. The Key Performance Indicators (KPI) under “Delegation of Authority” are not applied adequately. Gender parity is the one everyone looks at, so much so that, Madame DSG that all men now wish they were women so they can get a job at the UN. In the meantime, the other KPI such as geographical representation and regional diversity, although equally important are disregarded most of the time. All this because of “Delegation of authority” applied



narrowly and most of time without commensurate accountability. We really want to call on the SG office to take a close look at that across entities

**11. Return to Office/ Covid-19 and vaccination:**

We are now discussing here return to office on Phase 2 of a One UN Strategy put in place under the leadership of the ES and the RC and we as staff representatives will make sure the return to office is aligned to OHR guidelines making sure that the physical return of UN personnel to the duty station and/or to the workplace is based on a cautious, phased, flexible and people-centred approach, and staff are given sufficient time as per the guideline. I take this opportunity as the President of FUNSA to call on the ES as the Designated Official of this Duty Station and the RC to instruct the putting in place of the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Committee in this duty station. Because this duty station doesn't have one such committee, we are relying on the Covid-19 Task Force which does a fantastic job, "chapeau" to all the members, but it does not have any authority except for monitoring the indicators and the statistics and making recommendations. We need an Occupational Safety and Health Committee in the duty station

## **12. Locally Recruited ICs with Precarious**

**Contracts:** Madame Deputy Secretary General, here I am talking about the Individual Contractors who are a good 20 to 25% of our workforce and with precarious contracts. These men and women, some with 20 years of service with the UN have no benefits whatsoever and when they reach retirement, they have nothing to live on. Many are here today participating in this townhall. Although, this issue is on our plate at the SMC level, we want you to help us convince the Management side that something needs to be done for this category of Staff. We call on you to support their cause for sustainable jobs.

**. Staff Engagement Survey:** The biennial Staff Engagement Survey exercise is an important activity to gauge the mood of staff and the temperature of the institution. It is a platform which can help restore confidence in management and at the same time give a chance to staff to express their feelings and therefore can help restore moral and staff well-being. Results from the 2019 Survey led to an “Action Plan” which was preceded by 3 simple Low-hanging fruits requested by the staff: **(1)** to avoid same grade staff

reporting to one another except if it is mutually agreed, **(2)** Staff Union Representative to sit at the SLT whenever Staff related issues are discussed and **(3)** Decisions taken by staff engagement project team not to be unilaterally changed by the SLT .These 3-simple low-hanging fruits were still not accepted by SLT while they were an outcome of extensive consultations within the Staff Engagement Project Team ( SEPT) and as per the review and analysis of the Staff Engagement Survey results conducted by the SEPT. If this continues, staff's confidence in the staff engagement survey will diminish over time. We have just taken one, last December, while issues related to the previous one are still lingering. We should take Staff Engagement results seriously and use them to strengthen the working environment.

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I acknowledge that I have been long but  
**I thank you for your attention**