



Coordinating Committee for
International Staff Unions and Associations

Report of the CCISUA General Assembly Budapest, 8-12 May 2023



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I. Introduction

Representatives from the following organizations participated in the CCISUA General Assembly 2023, hosted by UNHCR Global Service Center in Budapest, Hungary:

- ECLAC
- ESCAP
- ICC
- ICJ
- ILO
- IRMCT
- UNICEF
- UNECA
- UNHCR
- UNON
- UNOG
- WFP

On Monday, 8 May 2023, Simon Ferrar offered a full-day workshop on negotiation skills to the participants of the CCISUA GA.

II. Discussions of Tuesday, 9 May 2023

1. Opening by Barnaby Jones, Head, UNHCR Global Service Centres

The General Assembly welcomed Mr. Barnaby Jones, Head of UNHCR Global Service Centres in Budapest who introduced the CCISUA members to UN work in the duty station, touching upon three points of interest: (1) the context of “global Hungary” where over 1500 colleagues work for the UN of whom around 450 international professionals, based in well-established offices of several organizations such as UNICEF, IOM, FAO, UNHCR, among others, adding that WFP will soon open an office too and others like WHO are increasing their number of staff; (2) the operational context of the post-covid environment, particularly concerning pay and economic deterioration around the world. He highlighted that Budapest was severely affected by both covid and higher inflation in Europe, that the UN needed to be competitive as an employer to secure stability for staff and attract talent, and was preparing for an upcoming local salary survey in October 2023; and (3) the issue of access to 24/7 quality medical and support services in Budapest, especially for international staff due to language barriers, but was improving with common UN efforts.

Mr. Barnaby heard remarks from the participants, namely concerning diversity among staff, the cost-cutting nature of the move to Budapest by organizations, the importance of bearing in mind staff from downsizing organizations upon recruitment, and the economic challenges. Mr. Barnaby stated that today’s Budapest was a more welcoming city in terms of racial diversity and that it was up to each organization to determine their own priorities upon managerial and recruiting decisions.

2. Election of the Presiding Officer and rapporteur, adoption of the agenda, and organizational matters

The General Assembly elected Nathalie Meynet (UNHCR) as Presiding officer and Avo Sevag Garabet (ICJ) as rapporteur.

The agenda of the General Assembly was adopted with changes as shown throughout this report.

Members were invited to submit nominations for elections in line with Article 19 of the CCISUA Statutes.

3. Report of the President and Bureau

The President and members of the (outgoing) Bureau welcomed the CCISUA members to the General Assembly and looked forward to fruitful sessions.

A brief recount of recent events was shared, and the President expressed her hopes to bring back unions who had left the federation recently. A discussion followed on the role of the members, highlighting the importance of active participation, working jointly as a federation, and focusing on the issues and policies past any personality issues. It was underscored that much coordination had taken place over the year, including on setting up a banking structure for CCISUA, document management systems, and standard operating procedures.

It was further noted that the Bureau held various meetings, was able to work as a team to advance the goals of the federation and had managed to operate without the need to hire a dedicated assistant thanks to the collaborative work of the Bureau members and some specifically engaged assistance. The federation successfully spearheaded the campaign against the Pension Fund outsourcing investments, which resulted in a drastic reduction of the planned outsourcing despite pressure and threats towards CCISUA.

It was recalled that CCISUA was represented at various meetings and settings, most notably (1) the ICSC sessions of July 2022 and March 2023, with an upcoming one in May that would touch upon the code of conduct; (2) the ICSC's working group on the HR framework; (3) an ACPAQ meeting; (4) two HLCM sessions; (5) the working group for the review of the jurisdictional set up; (6) the Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN); and (7) the mental health and wellbeing retreat.

Field and security issues were also tackled over the past year in different fora, namely touching on priorities such as classification of hardship duty stations, the inclusion of national staff's living conditions in those determinations, and the general quality of living conditions in various duty stations. In terms of communications, a newsletter was conceived, which was to be further developed over time. In addition, the coordination of training programmes with the UK's General Federation of Trade Unions and engagement with multiple stakeholders on the UN Workplace Mental Health and Well-being Strategy were discussed.

The fact that the mid-term meeting in New York in November 2022 was held over 4 days rather than 3 was deemed positive as it provided the opportunity to meet with many decision makers and senior managers; the to-be-elected Bureau was encouraged to maintain this.

4. Local salary surveys and other matters on the agenda of the ICSC

The CCISUA members prepared for the meeting with the ICSC Chair later that day. Issues to raise during the meeting included the dire economic situation due to inflation in many countries and how salary methodologies seemed to be failing to catch up the soaring prices. For instance, despite the elimination of dual salary scales, Bangkok remained under two scales as a result of the failure to phase out the lower one at a reasonable pace, keeping salaries frozen for those on the upper scale. It was proposed that the ICSC Chair should be made aware of the specific examples of how lives of staff were being affected where salary methodologies were failing.

Some members expressed concern that, often, managers were inconsiderate of the conditions of local staff. The ICSC should be made aware that sometimes not all entities were allowed to participate in the work of local salary survey committees (LSSC) and take action to remedy such situations, some participants highlighted. The importance of building relations with HR partners in field duty stations in the context of LSSC was highlighted, as well as staff unions' roles in ensuring that good inflation data reached the ICSC.

It was noted that the next ACPAQ session was scheduled for the following week in Warsaw. Issues it would discuss included inflation and lessons learned from the post-adjustment methodology, the next round of cost-of-living surveys, the negative effect on salaries due to rents going up in New York but not elsewhere, and web scraping in the context of price collection.

CCISUA members observed that there was confusion among LSSC members on the new GS survey methodology which now allowed to purchase external data, considering such external data would not be available or be reliable at times. Tax issues also played a part in local salary determinations which required preparation by, or advice for, LSSCs in that regard. It was noted as important for local staff unions and associations to be involved and knowledgeable of salary determination processes to intervene and contribute accordingly. To be able to do so, training was necessary, especially in light of the new local salary methodology. The lack of face-to-face training by the ICSC was deemed detrimental to learning. Resources could be pooled between the three federations to carry out proper training programmes for staff representatives in multiple duty stations.

CCISUA members further noted that organizations were seeing an increase in the use of home-based contracts that would end up eroding the international civil service. The need for dialogue and coordination between the ICSC and the federations was emphasized for the protection of the international civil service standards.

Further issues to be brought to the ICSC were said to include the need for social dialogue and the importance of keeping the ICSC a technical body and avoid its politicization, as well as diversity, equity, inclusion matters. Upon meeting with the Chief of the Compensation & Classification Section (OHRM), CCISUA members should also raise issues concerning delays in surveys, inflation and possible dollarization, the triggering of special measures, currency issues upon salary disbursement and related discrimination, and proactivity vis-à-vis events or crises of public knowledge. Clarifications should also be sought from the ICSC on practices such as “no gain, no loss” salary movements.

5. Meeting with Mr. Larbi Djacta, ICSC Chair

Mr. Djacta thanked the members for their invitation to the General Assembly and looked forward to a productive discussion. He praised the constructive role by CCISUA in the Commission’s work, citing as example the recent renewal of the parental leave framework, and called on staff representatives and organizations to intensify coordination.

Mr. Djacta added that the UNGA had requested the ICSC to undertake a comprehensive review of the compensation package which it was already preparing to carry out, and the Chair relied on the federations to participate in this undertaking. He added that the compensation package review would be completed in 2026, at the earliest. Mr. Djacta also recalled that the work of the working group on standards of conduct was in progress, as well as that on the HR framework.

Concerning post adjustment, Mr. Djacta recognized the constructive role of CCISUA on the review of the methodology, procedures, guidelines and operational rules for the round of surveys which continued as planned. He further indicated that surveys in field duty stations would commence in September 2023.

The ICSC Chair recalled that the ICSC’s aim was to preserve consistency across the UN common system but that policing the application of frameworks within organizations was not part of its role. Mr. Djacta concluded his remarks by wishing CCISUA a successful General Assembly.

A Q&A session followed:

The ICSC Chair was asked about the misuse by organizations of the contractual framework and his view on the priorities of organizations and Member States on the incipient compensation package review. The participants highlighted the difficulties with local salaries in certain economies, and inflation; they asked about the dollarization of local salaries; the phasing out of dual salary scales, the participation of smaller

entities in local salary surveys, training on methodologies, proper monitoring of the use of external data by LSSCs and the scope of “no gain, no loss” salary movements. The participants also raised the issue of proper use of the national officer category.

Mr. Djacta responded as follows:

- The ICSC was not an enforcement authority on organizations but it shared the sense of precarity. Processes were ultimately driven by Member States whose attention to the issues was drawn by the ICSC, and this would be kept in mind during the compensation review.
- Following consultations with heads of organizations, feedback from them included the possibility of lump-summing entitlements for easier, cost-wiser administration; changes to flexible working arrangements and post-adjustment; and exploring exceptions to the current framework. He added that the ICSC should strive to reach balanced outcomes.
- He would advise organizations not to impose home-based contracts as there was sufficient flexibility in the existing contractual framework. Member States generally preferred people working from the office.
- He explained that the P salary methodology took inflation into consideration and was tracked monthly by the ICSC, as were exchange rates; the impact of adjustments would not be felt immediately due to operational rules on stability of remuneration (4-month rule reflecting changes in March, July, and November).
- Local salaries depended on local practices at every duty station. If comparators adjusted for inflation, so should the UN. Adjustments, however, could become more complicated when comparators applied hidden practices such as non-pensionable benefits over salary.
- On dollarization of local salaries, the decision was not solely taken by the ICSC; it followed a study by a steering committee. That decision could be influenced by the comparators chosen by LSSCs, whereby – if a majority of comparators dollarized – the ICSC would do so as well. Reducing the number of comparators to increase the chances of a majority that dollarized could serve to reach that end.
- Dual GS salary scales were abolished but the implementation depended on organizations.
- Training was part of the new GS salary methodology and all LSSCs had to be trained on it.
- On comparators, their number could be reduced as a way to facilitate the LSSCs’ work.
- The practice of salary movements on the basis of “no gain, no loss”, where staff would see increases in salary but a reduction in post-adjustment for an ultimately unchanged take-home pay, happened because – as a matter of principle – increases in remuneration had to be based on cost-of-living increases only. With some exceptions, purchasing power had to be affected for an actual real increase in remuneration to be triggered. Therefore salary adjustments that had to be made for technical reasons, which did intend to compensate for a loss in purchasing power, had to be offset by a decrease in post-adjustment so the effect on take-home pay could remain neutral.
- National officers’ representatives would be part of the working group being set up for the compensation review.
- The ICSC was a collegial body, not tripartite. Decisions were made by commissioners while staff representatives and organizations were consulted as part of the processes but are not part of the decision-making.

6. Meeting with Mr. Bart Willemsen, Chief, Compensation and Classification Section, UN OHR

The CCISUA members welcomed Mr. Willemsen, explained the issues that had been raised earlier concerning ICSC-related issues and gave him the floor. Mr. Willemsen made the following remarks:

- The Compensation and Classification Section was under UN OHRM and was mandated to implement the ICSC's methodology in all the countries and survey duty stations other than nine HQ locations. Implementing salary methodology was a straightforward process with clear cut rules, notwithstanding room to maneuver as per the established rules.
- The work of LSSCs was crucial as they were responsible for finding the best comparators in the local labour market and persuading them to participate in the survey, followed by collecting data and running calculations. The quality of the data was key for a good outcome.
- The goal in all salary survey processes remained to obtain the best possible result, which did not necessarily mean an increase of salaries, nor did it consider organizations' budgetary issues if salaries actually increased. The goal was simply to get the best possible salaries in the local market for the local UN salaries to remain competitive. The methodology was not in place to benefit staff but the organizations by ensuring that they can attract and retain staff.
- On dollarization, the practice remained to align with the local market. Regardless of the number of comparators for any duty station, if the majority of them dollarized, the UN salaries would also follow suit. The number of comparators, which depended on the size of the organization, and their careful selection by the LSSC often played a key role in that process.
- Currency denomination of salaries, and currency of disbursement of salaries, were different topics. Regardless of the currency in which local salaries were disbursed, the denomination of the salary scale in USD was the absolute top factor that helped protect the value of salaries.
- The reviewed local salary methodology was now accepting purchased data. This change in the methodology stemmed mainly for obsolescence of the data collection system that had been used for decades.
- The Section was expected to conduct regional workshops to train LSSC members on the methodology but then Covid prevented this. A hybrid model with different modules was recently put in place which was being gradually rolled out. Training included spotting outliers in collected data, tax matters, job matching and titles.
- Members of LSSCs were not required to be staff reps, but it is possible that only staff reps be members of a particular LSSC. That being said, a mix of staff reps and management reps would normally prove to be the best setup; bearing in mind that any staff rep, while sitting on an LSSC, would not act in that capacity but as part of a technical body. Concerning participation of smaller entities, their size in a particular duty station was not an obstacle for it to send members to the LSSCs.
- It was understandable that, if purchasing power decreased because of inflation, staff would want to get an increase and would naturally be disappointed if that was not the outcome of a salary review. The rationale remained that the local salary methodology followed the local labour market, and it could be the case that local salaries were not going up as prices did – therefore the same would normally happen with UN salaries. A possible reason for this was that, often, employers could not match inflation with equal increments in salaries. Attention should be therefore put on comparators, where a badly chosen one by an LSSC could end up in a bad result for staff; the better the comparators, the more UN salaries could remain most competitive in the local labour market.
- Concerning special measures, the Section would reach out to LSSCs if it noted a relevant and/or complicated situation in the duty station, but it was also the LSSCs' duty to actively monitor them.

However, developments often happened so fast (such as fluctuations in the local currency, labour market, inflation, etc.) that local employers would be hesitant to adopt new salary scales for various reasons. If comparators did not update their salary scales, nor would the ICSC. But the ICSC could consider local employer's short-term measures (such as bonuses or other non-salary incentives) as special measures for UN salaries.

III. Discussions of Wednesday, 10 May 2023

1. Security of staff in the field

The CCISUA members discussed the dire security situation in a number of duty stations. In the case of Afghanistan, CCISUA had launched a campaign requesting the UNSG to evacuate national staff along with international staff. However, UN Senior Management considered that the evacuation of national staff was a quasi-impossible task. The members noted that similar issues, mostly related to unpreparedness, were witnessed in the more recent crisis in Sudan where UNDSS did not have a way to reach many affected staff. National colleagues would often be left to evacuate areas of conflict on their own, at their own risk, while convoys were organized for international staff. The members regretted to see that, overall, the UN's response to those kind of emergencies was not improving, and that the focus of the organizations shifted over time from the safety and security of staff towards "stay and deliver" (arguably related to funding issues).

As the USG for Safety and Security informed the federation one year ago, a document on lessons learned from Afghanistan was drafted. The members are dismayed that the conclusions from this report did not seem to help in the subsequent Sudanese crisis and proposed that management's attention should be drawn to that document. The inefficiencies were most notably observed in the context of the security of national staff, including lack of intelligence in light of clear public signs in the news (despite the UN not being an intelligence-gathering organization), and an inability to foresee risks.

The "stay and deliver" approach seemed to be at the heart of the overall problem where politics overshadowed the protection of staff – which was in itself contradictory, as the lack of proper protection of staff would be a reputational risk. This was worsened by the fact that staff were not represented in country teams that looked into the conditions of a duty station and whether it was safe for "family duty station" status; a country team formed by country directors whose jobs often depended on remaining in the country, likely creating an incentive to stay and deliver in a duty station regardless of staff safety.

The General Assembly agreed for the Bureau to request a meeting with the USG for Safety and Security to inquire on the application of the "stay and deliver" approach and request that staff representation via federations be allowed to participate as observer or member of the Security Management Team (SMT).

2. Impressions from the meeting with the ICSC Chair and Chief, Compensation and Classification Section

CCISUA members noted with concern what seemed to be an increasing trend of home-based contracts which could only erode the conditions of international civil servants. It was clear that the compensation package review would include the lumpsumming of entitlements, and it could be useful to request clarification on this. It was regrettable to hear that the ICSC was not tripartite in decision-making process which went against social dialogue.

The inequality of arms of staff representation across the UN common system was evidenced when compared to the centralized and accumulated knowledge, expertise, and economies of scale of those making UN salary determinations.

Members noted that some organizations were increasingly imposing “agile” contract modalities, such as home-based or alternate duty station contracts which removed certain elements of the compensation package. This was particularly accentuated in country offices and linked to issues related to building infrastructure, funding, and reputation. Caution was called for when advocating for flexible working arrangements in order not to go to the detriment of the conditions of service.

3. Upcoming compensation package review

The CCISUA members expressed their worry that Member States mandated the ICSC to carry out the compensation package review with the ultimate objective of cutting costs, which almost always comes at the expense of staff and their conditions of service, most notably in the field.

It was particularly worrisome to think of possible future scenarios stemming from the increasing use of home-based contracts, where the paramount consideration to hire international staff would be their place of residence rather than their skills and experience. There is a fear that asking for more flexible work arrangements may exacerbate this issue, and therefore staff representation should seek a fair implementation of FWA options that already existed, with the ultimate goal of achieving the best possible work-life balance while preserving conditions of service.

The compensation package review was noted to be a typical ICSC exercise conducted every 8-10 years, which was not exempt of risks for staff. Caution was called for as traps had been recognized in such exercises (e.g., a proposal for financial recognition of performance that would result in removing step increments, or the newly implemented education grant policy that ended up restricting the benefit to tuition).

CCISUA should direct the focus of the exercise towards staff and raise issues related to spouses, childcare, demographic change (not just taking care of children, but parents also), inflation, the competitiveness of the labour markets, multilingualism, allowances, and the system of increments. This would include challenging the often-generalized narrative of a “compensation package fit for purpose” towards a “compensation package fit for staff”.

An ICSC questionnaire on the subject was already circulated and commented among CCISUA members and feedback sent to the ICSC, who would be soon establishing a working group and eventually report back to the UNGA on the final result of their review by 2026. The next milestone was the staff survey on which the federations would be consulted. The federation should take a leading role in informing and educating staff on the survey by possibly preparing a guide on how to answer it.

Other issues to consider as the ICSC embarked on the compensation package review were the importance of finding good comparators in other international organizations outside the UN common system; following closely the protection of childcare and education benefits which the UNGA had recently refused to update and possibly aimed at removing, as well as the protection of mobility and hardship allowances.

A suggestion was raised for the federation to proactively tackle the review by doing its own survey, minding staff priorities, possibly jointly with other federations, which could be very useful to find staff stories that illustrated the importance of protecting conditions of service, and remind staff, especially the youngest with less knowledge of their rights and entitlements, of why it was important to protect their conditions of service. It was proposed to carry out the campaign with the assistance of an external advisor on communications.

The General Assembly mandated the Bureau to set up a federation survey prior to that of the ICSC on the compensation package review, to set up an educational and public relations campaign to educate staff on the related issues and engage with management (possibly with external assistance), and to actively engage with the ICSC throughout its process and sessions.

4. Review of the code of conduct of international civil servants

The CCISUA members recalled that the ICSC was undertaking a review of the code of conduct – which served as an umbrella document for organizations to draft their own specific rules – relating to participation in protests, gatherings, and online fora. The ICSC hence established a tripartite working group (composed of the ICSC, staff, and organizations) and had already met once for an exploratory session in November 2022, attended by three representatives from CCISUA.

A second meeting would take place on 24-28 May and a recommendation was put forward to send staff representative Jamshid Gaziyeu (UNOG) to represent CCISUA, given he was involved in the previous review of the code of conduct, had the institutional memory and a legal background. The Assembly agreed.

An important aspect for CCISUA to raise during this review was noted to be retaliation against staff representatives, where unions and the federation had been subjected to inquiries from management, being forced to prove that they were not in breach of any rules with their actions as a way of intimidation. Intimidation against staff representatives was noted to be a harsh reality in many organizations against anyone who would have the courage to speak up. Some organizations were going as far as very thoroughly scrutinizing what staff expressed through online media. This issue was also related to the protection of whistleblowers. Other matters included political and public engagement.

5. Review of the human resources framework

The CCISUA members recalled that the ICSC had put in place a working group to review the human resources framework which had recently met in London in February 2023 for preliminary discussions. This review was noted to combine several different areas where in fact only one of them (compensation) fell under the actual purview of the ICSC's mandate, other areas being more aspirational in nature. Elements that the federation could push for included adopting a standardized approach on an enabling work environment and multilingualism. The working group's next meeting was expected to be held in autumn 2023.

The importance of multilingualism and its promotion were particularly highlighted, as were the extent of language requirements in job openings in the different contexts of HQ and field duty stations.

6. Conditions of service of national officers

The General Assembly was informed that work continued on drafting a paper to be addressed to the ICSC concerning national officers and their conditions of service, including their contractual terms, terms of reference, education grant, relocations within the country, job descriptions, remuneration, and discrimination vis-à-vis other staff categories. A number of other issues were raised by CCISUA members which they observed happening in their organizations and across duty stations. These included very differential (lesser) treatment compared to other staff categories; discrimination on entitlements, hardship allowances, rest and recuperation; and lack of career opportunities.

It was recalled that the national officers' recruitment was restricted within the country and was comparable to benchmark local market. CCISUA and staff unions could tighten their scrutiny to ensure organizations were creating national officer positions for the proper reasons. Issues around benefits were also related to the nature of the position and where the staff was coming from, e.g., the purpose of the education grant would not necessarily be compatible with a post of local recruitment, while the relocation benefit should be for all who needed to travel to the place of work as opposed to already being in the country.

Other issues included the security of national officers in the context of difficult country situations, noting they would stay behind while internationally-recruited colleagues were evacuated; and lack of career opportunities, where often national officers were not prioritized over external candidates, arguably due to

discrimination on the basis of the national/local origin or the interpretation of what constitutes international experience.

The members agreed to set up a CCISUA working group on the subject to continue building up a case to bring to the ICSC.

IV. Discussions of Thursday, 11 May 2023

1. Report of the Treasurer

The Treasurer briefed the General Assembly on the CCISUA balance sheet for the closing financial year and the members exchanged comments as reproduced below. He notably indicated that the annual budget and contributions are approximately USD 100,000, and CCISUA's total assets are of a value of about USD 560,000.

Federations were no longer being invited to meetings of the CEB's HR network; clarification should be sought from the ASG, OHRM on their resumption and the federation adjust the relevant budget line accordingly.

The UNICEF Global Staff Association noted they did not seek reimbursement from CCISUA for the travel of the Vice-President on Field and Security but rather absorbed the cost. The members acknowledged and thanked the Association for this gesture and recognized it should be treated as a further financial contribution to the federation by the UNICEF GSA.

Some travel claims remained pending for submission by unions to the federation for reimbursement; it was suggested that, if CCISUA implemented travel advances before travelling on official mission, this would provide advance clarity on exact costs.

The need to protect the federation's assets against inflation was highlighted. The members' continued and increased contributions were key to that.

The federation had shown creativity upon designating representatives to attend official missions, often relying on staff reps available at locations and alternating participation over long missions to reduce daily subsistence allowance (DSA) costs. Special attention had also been put on the skills and value added of each representative to maximize their contribution to CCISUA during missions.

A suggestion was made, previously raised at the Bureau, to ask representatives who travelled on mission to provide proof of having stayed in rented accommodation, where otherwise a reduced DSA would apply. The CCISUA members overall rejected the idea of controlling the type of lodging of federation representatives during missions as it was not the practice in the majority of organizations, while maintaining normal rules for reduced DSA whenever accommodation or meals were officially provided during mission travel.

The CCISUA members thanked the Treasurer for his thorough keeping of accounts, as well as the Bureau members who supported him in the financial management of the federation throughout the past year.

2. Pledges

The following pledged contributions for the financial year 2023-2024 were recorded:

UNHCR Staff Union	USD	9,000.00
ILO Staff Union	CHF	12,500.00
ICC Staff Union	USD	4,500.00

UNECA Staff Union	USD	5,000.00
ECLAC Staff Union	USD	2,000.00
ESCAP Staff Union	USD	3,000.00
ESCWA Staff Union	USD	2000.00
UNICEF Staff Association	USD	6,000.00
UN CTSU	USD	2,000.00
UNOG Staff Union	CHF	23,000.00
UNON Staff Union	USD	6,000.00
WFP-PSA	USD	15,000.00
ICJ Staff Union	USD	500.00
ITU Staff Union	CHF	3,000.00

3. Adoption of the budget

The CCISUA members discussed and reviewed the proposed budget for the period 2023-2024, which was adopted by consensus as recorded by the Treasurer.

4. Health insurance schemes

CCISUA members were asked for their input on different insurance schemes available in different organizations and the experience of staff insured by different providers, e.g., Cigna, UN Worldwide plan, UNSMIS. Members shared experiences and noted how the economic global situation was affecting the coverage that certain insurance schemes were able to give, to the point where some staff members were forced to assume higher premiums or change to different plans with reduced coverage. The demographics of an organization and the not-for-profit character of the insurance services provider were discussed as some of the elements determining the viability and attractiveness of the plan. The Assembly mandated the Bureau to look into the creation of a comparative table of the different insurance plans that could be useful for staff members to make appropriate decisions when required, or for advocacy purpose within the organizations.

5. Mental health issues

CCISUA members were briefed on the engagement of the federation on mental health issues in the context of the CEB's [UN System Workplace Mental Health & Well-being Strategy](#). This was being led by an Implementation Board chaired by the ASG for UN OHRM. CCISUA had participated in a first retreat of the Board, a second one was expected to be held in Spain in May, and engaged with senior management at the level of HLCM on mental health policy discussions.

It was noted that, while the Strategy was a very positive step forward in tackling mental health issues, it was not a framework that addressed the root causes. The Strategy would give way to actions by organizations to tend to offer support to staff with a number of issues such as anxiety or depression (e.g., psychosocial services, professional support, funding for wellbeing services), but fell short of addressing systemic issues that triggered those symptoms, most notably contractual (in)stability, career advancement, and poor managers that created toxic work environments. The joint ILO-WHO policy on mental health was noted to be a benchmark in that regard and a model from which to draw good practices for implementation in other organizations.

CCISUA members reaffirmed the federation's commitment to continue engaging with CEB and HLCM stakeholders to promote mentally healthy working environments and at the same to continue advocating to improve the underlying issues of mental health problems – most notably toxic work environments. It should

also be a priority for the new Bureau to advocate for broader reporting by organizations on cases of mental health and the development of Occupational Safety and Health Committees.

6. Discussions with FICSA and UNISERV

CCISUA members welcomed the virtual attendance at the General Assembly of the Presidents of sister federations UNISERV (Mark Polane) and FICSA (Tanya Quinn-Maguire), both of whom gave speeches.

The President of UNISERV remarked the importance of strengthening the relationships between staff representative bodies; called for pragmatic, fair, and honest presentations of positions before governing bodies; and noted concerted efforts between federations to highlight grave concerns on the erosion of conditions of service, the lack of adequate whistleblowing protections, and mental health issues. The President of FICSA called for the reinforcement of cooperation between federations in the multitude of issues that affect staff of the UN common system and the international civil service, most notably the review by the ICSC of the compensation package, mental health issues, and security of staff in the field.

The General Assembly thanked the Presidents of the sister organizations for their interventions and expressed their commitment to work together towards common goals in all the mentioned areas. The members also reaffirmed their strong stance against retaliation towards staff representatives and were ready to provide explicit support to the other federations whenever it was deemed appropriate.

7. Pension Fund matters

CCISUA members welcomed the virtual attendance of Michelle Rockliffe, former participant representative at the UNJSPF, to brief them on the Fund's investments, issues of transparency, and CCISUA's role in the oversight of the Fund.

Ms. Rockliffe praised CCISUA for its campaign against the outsourcing of Fund investments which proved key in limiting financial losses following markets in turmoil over the past year, noting a market value of approximately USD 85 billion by 5 May 2023. Ms. Rockliffe called the attention of the federation on "impact investing" which was a concept mentioned many times in the UNJSPF Board's report of July 2022 but was still new in the industry without a clear definition, with a high risk of posing as sustainable investment while likely being a rebranding by ill-reputed private equity managers of risky, unproven investments.

Ms. Rockliffe called upon CCISUA to demand more transparency from the UNJSPF as a public pension fund; the participants as shareholders of such fund should demand it. Such transparency should extend to the investments the Fund was making, the deals it concluded, updated value of investments, and discussions of the Board. She added that CCISUA should continue to be a strong voice for active participants of the Pension Fund as it has over the last 8 years to ensure the UNJSPF's defined benefit scheme remained the safety net of international civil servants upon retirement.

Ms. Rockliffe finally encouraged the federation to engage with and support participant representatives who were elected by CCISUA's constituents; to continue promoting further transparency; to make the staff positions known to Member States; to regularly review Fund's reports and financial statements; to monitor impact investing which raised the likelihood of outsourcing; and to monitor the levels of separations and hires within the Fund.

The CCISUA members thanked Ms. Rockliffe for her valuable comments and suggestions and committed to maintain UNJSPF issues on top of their agenda.

V. Discussions of Friday, 12 May 2023

1. Elections

The CCISUA members were called upon to elect the new Bureau in line with the statutes. The General Assembly elected by consensus the below officeholders for the period 2023-2024:

President: Nathalie Meynet (UNHCR)

General Secretary: Giammichele De Maio (WFP)

Vice-President for Conditions of service: Ian Richards (UNOG)

Vice-President for Communications and Outreach: Carlos Carrion Crespo (ILO)

Vice-President for Field and Security: June Anyango (UNICEF)

Treasurer: Pamela Odhiambo (UNON)

The General Assembly further agreed by consensus for the following Bureau members to be the designated **signatories of CCISUA bank accounts:** Pamela Odhiambo, Nathalie Meynet, Giammichele De Maio, Ian Richards.

The following representatives were also appointed by consensus to constitute the statutory finance and procurement committees:

Finance Committee:

Messkir Lemma (UNECA)
Jayshankar Vridhagiri (UNICEF)
Laura Johnson (UNOG)

Procurement Committee:

Mohamed Chiraz Baly (UNOG)
Nattawut Boonpramook (ESCAP)
Avo Sevag Garabet (ICJ)

2. Jurisdictional set up review

The CCISUA members were briefed on the work of the GA-mandated working group between organizations to review the jurisdictional set up of the common system, following the dissenting judgments of UNAT and ILOAT on the Geneva pay cut (post adjustment) case. The working group had finally narrowed the proposals to one: the creation of a joint chamber between UNAT and ILOAT that would render preliminary advisory rulings on any issues that arose concerning the application of ICSC decisions (whether on the basis of its statutes or methodologies). Its ultimate goal would be to avoid the issue of a dual post-adjustment repeating at the judicial level. The working group was expected to submit the proposal to the UNGA at its next session.

It was considered unfortunate that the members of the working group were representatives of the employers, thus defending only the organizations' position. It was further recalled that CCISUA had participated in the working group sessions and had submitted comments on the proposals of the working group, most notably arguing against setting up a new judicial structure as it was deemed unwarranted.

While the recognition by the working group of the submission of ICSC decisions to judicial review was noted as positive, the proposal for a joint chamber was considered to be against delivering timely justice and likely

ineffective due to the proposed parity in the number of judges (three from UNAT, three from ILOAT). This joint chamber would add hurdles to the administration of justice with delays and additional layers of jurisdiction. The need to amend the Statutes of the UNDT, UNAT and ILOAT was also seen as a potential hurdle.

A discussion followed among the members who noted how such a joint chamber, if created, could perhaps never be activated due to its extremely limited scope, and how it would create more negative consequences than solutions by setting up new barriers to access to justice. The objections that CCISUA had raised throughout the process about this proposal continued to be valid and merited strong action from the federation upon lobbying Member States. Such action could include engagement with the President of the UNGA and of the 6th Committee; direct discussions with the diplomatic missions in advance of the mid-term meeting in New York; and coordination with the other federations. The Bureau would also be evaluating whether to engage external public relations assistance on this matter.

3. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) with a focus on racism

CCISUA members recalled the movement against racism and noted that the UN Secretariat had adopted a “Secretary-General’s Strategy Against Racism”. The UN SG had also recently appointed special advisor to fight racism who had proven to be vocal on important issues around racism. Unfortunately no strategy was yet adopted at the CEB level which meant the approach was not common and varied in intensity and scope between organizations. In recent years, the issue of racism had been seen to shift into the overall topic of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). While this was not necessarily negative, it was regretted that most of the discussion regarding discrimination inside organizations was being focused on national origin and nationality, while the core discussion on racial diversity was being left behind. It was deemed important for the federation to push for the adoption of a strategy against racism at the CEB level for a true common and thorough advancement across the UN common system on the subject. It was noted that an Inter-Agency Standing Committee was meeting regularly to discuss diversity and racism and that CCISUA should push for membership.

Other issues were raised by members on addressing racism at the workplace, namely related to recruitment; the intersectionality with other issues such as gender parity; the lack of measurement and statistics; and the lack of will by Member States who would tend to keep the discussion focused on geographic basis rather than race. Having straightforward discussions with the people affected by racism was key in addressing it, as was (or would be) mandatory training.

Members feared that the original purpose of the movement, which was to tackle racism, had gone somewhat astray in a context of consultancy firms intervening and influencing, all while the UN SG – to please Member States – seemed more inclined to portray racism under the partial light of nationality and geographic diversity.

The General Assembly advised the Bureau to actively engage the other federations on tackling racism under a common strategy wherever possible vis-à-vis organizations, to engage with the UN Special Adviser for Addressing Racism in Workplace on the advancement of the anti-racism agenda, and to continue CCISUA’s participation at the CEB level working group on DEI.

4. Resolutions

The General Assembly reviewed drafts and adopted three resolutions which stemmed from the week’s discussions, namely on the compensation package review, on the security of staff in the field, and on National Professional Officers. The CCISUA members would continue the discussion following the Assembly on other two draft resolutions on racism and on the jurisdictional set up.

5. Functioning of the Bureau & priorities for the upcoming year

The CCISUA members recalled the different priorities for the new term which included many of the issues raised during the General Assembly. The top issue to follow-up and on which to actively engage with stakeholders (including other federations) was without a doubt the review of the compensation package, which would have widespread repercussions across the entire UN common system; followed by issues of national officers, racism, the jurisdictional set up, security of staff in the field, and the root causes of mental health issues, toxic cultures, discrimination, retaliation, and harassment. Training for staff representatives on the key issues of concern was also deemed very important in order to prepare the new generations and bring them, along with all staff who cared, more involved in the fight for their rights and conditions of service.

6. Wrap up and next General Assembly

The newly elected President and General Secretary called upon all members to participate actively, share ideas and work collaboratively to maximize the impact of CCISUA in the year ahead.

UNON proposed to host the next General Assembly in Mombasa, subject to conducive conditions. WFP offered Rome as a secondary location should UNON not be able to host it for any reason, and ICJ offered The Hague as a third option. Seeing no other proposal, it was so approved.