

UNOG Staff Union General Assembly

Statement by the Executive Secretary, Brad Smith, on the activities of the Staff Union in 2022

31 January 2023

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for attending. It has been another busy year with many challenges but also significant achievements.

We have worked closely with other staff unions and with CCISUA, the staff union federation to which we belong. We have also worked strategically with management at all levels, including both at United Nations Headquarters and at UNOG, as well as in various fora, such as the JNC, SMC and its various working groups, and the ICSC. We have provided support and advice to sectoral assemblies that are part of the Staff Union representing different departments and entities as well as to numerous staff members.

An extensive report has been prepared on all of our activities in 2022. I would just like to highlight some of the key accomplishments and developments.

Pay Raise

We were able to achieve an increase in your post adjustment by working together with CCISUA and supported both industrial and legal actions to ensure fairer methodology and operational rules to reflect the reality that staff faced. Ian Richards, our President, played a key role in influencing discussions at the ICSC, which resulted in a favourable outcome for staff. All P and D staff received a pay raise of 2.6 per cent, coupled with the prior pay raise of 1.3 per cent, resulted in an increase of 3.9 per cent.

Likewise general service staff received an inflation-related increase of 2.9 percent.

Mobility

Many staff contacted us with their concerns regarding the discussions on the new mobility policy. The staff unions overall support mobility but had numerous misgivings about a mandatory geographic mobility policy and pushed for a voluntary mobility scheme. We participated in the Working Group that made recommendations to the SMC plenary. At SMC, the recommendations of the working group were approved. In short, the new mandatory mobility policy will only apply to new staff on-boarded on the date of or after the promulgation of the policy. Existing staff, those that joined the Organization prior to the date of the policy, will not be subjected to the mandatory geographic mobility scheme throughout their careers. Existing staff will be able to move to other posts, even designated rotational posts, and can also participate in the mobility reassignment exercises, without being subject to mandatory mobility nor to the respective maximum duty station occupancy limits.

Parental Leave

We were able to secure a significant increase to parental leave which is now 16 weeks for all parents plus an additional ten weeks for birth mothers. The leave must be taken within 12 months of becoming a parent. This is a significant improvement on the old rules. It allows

the equal sharing of childcare duties, and provides equal treatment for same-sex partnerships, adoption and surrogacy.

Continuing appointments and contractual framework

We have also been pushing management to cut the current six-year backlog for the award of continuing appointments. For memory, continuing appointments are supposed to be awarded after five years of continuous service and subject to having passed a selection process that was cleared through a central review body. We are pleased to inform you that management has now agreed to accelerate the review of continuing appointments. Between this month and October it will process continuing appointments for each year between 2016 and 2021. Further communication on this will be made by OHR.

As you may be aware colleagues in the grades of G1 to G4 were not considered eligible for continuing appointments because selection to these positions did not pass through a central review body. We raised this matter on several occasions and we are pleased management finally agreed that all new selections for G1 to G4 will now be considered by a central review body. To this end, the body is being expanded in order to handle the additional caseload. In practical terms, this means that as soon as staff in this category are next selected for a position, they will be eligible to be considered for a continuing appointment, as long as they have five years of prior service. Please note that all continuous service, including service performed before such staff were selected through a central review body, will count towards those five years.

CCISUA was able to push back against the introduction of another precarious “agile” contract with the ICSC deciding that the current contractual framework was fit for purpose.

Administration of Justice

There are a number of legal issues that we have been involved in. With respect to the jurisdictional set-up of the UNAT and ILOAT in cases of concurrent jurisdiction, CCISUA opposed any changes to the current set-up, namely the establishment of a joint chamber between UNAT and ILOAT and called for the preservation of judicial independence of the Tribunals. The GA has requested the SG to continue consultations to find a long-term solution on the jurisdictional set-up and to preserve the unity of the common system and so this is something that will require additional follow-up.

Staff representatives also pushed back on a proposed amendment to Art. 9 of the UNDT Statutes which was included in the Secretary-General’s latest Administration of Justice report to the GA. On the procedural level, the proposed amendment was not submitted for consultation with staff representatives. On the substantive level, the proposed amendment would curtail effective judicial oversight of OIOS investigations. The General Assembly referred the matter back for consultation.

We are also involved in a SMC Working Group on Administration of Justice and are currently discussing ways to strengthen the retaliation policy.

SMC

Within SMC, we have also been discussing performance management, compassionate leave, career prospects for general service staff and roster management and many other issues. SMC agreed to establish a WG on GS Career Prospects, which will make recommendations to the plenary.

Staff representatives continue to call for continued engagement with management at SMC on gender and data sharing and analysis on various gaps between men and women. We continued to suggest ways to support diversity, the implementation of the mental health strategy, and to improve career prospects for staff, including YPPs.

CCISUA

CCISUA played a key role in protection of pensions by organizing a campaign to stop the outsourcing of a large percentage of the fixed income portfolio. CCISUA was able to reach an agreement with the Pension Fund to reduce the percentage of asset management outsourced from 18% to between 5 to 7% with a commitment to further review the situation in 2023 allowing time for the internal team to reach their full potential.

CCISUA continues to follow-up on addressing sexual harassment with the Organizations of the UN system. A CEB task force was established and established a system-wide model policy and developed tools, such as the Clear Check database to prevent the rehiring of perpetrators. Work continues on advancing improved processes for survivors as well as survivor engagement and support. The UNOG Staff Union has also been following up with entities on cases of harassment and abuse of authority, has filed an OIOS complaint in the case of one problematic supervisor at one entity and has involved the ASG of OHR in New York with respect to numerous complaints involving another entity.

CCISUA also followed-up on human resources issues, the compensation package, security matters and the evacuation of national staff, delays of investigations and audits, and the informal and formal justice system.

We have taken part in the Working Group on addressing racism at UNOG, which has undertaken a number of awareness-raising activities and has also submitted recommendations to the Director-General to implement the Secretary-General's Strategic Action Plan.

I would invite you to read the report to have a full appreciation of all of the work that the Staff Union does on behalf of staff. We have tried to keep you informed and to solicit inputs through town hall meetings, surveys and numerous broadcasts to staff as well as communications to relevant entities updating staff on all relevant matters.

This past year, we worked tirelessly and with dedication to protect your interests and hope to continue to do so in the future.

I would like to thank the members of the Bureau and Staff Union Council for their hard work, and in particular, our Administrative Assistant, Froylan Silveira, who is an invaluable asset to the Staff Union Council.

I also wanted to thank the staff at large for their support and positive feedback.