



29 August 2021

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Over the past two weeks from 16 to 27 August, UNISERV attended the 92nd ICSC session, hosted in “hybrid” mode by WIPO in Geneva, Switzerland.

The physical face to face session was attended on behalf of UNISERV by Mr. Mark Polane, President UNFSU, Mr. Aitor Arauz-Chapman, President UNSU and as advisor former President UNSU, Ms. Patricia Nemeth.

In virtual attendance were Ms. Vesna Markovic Dasovic, President of the Staff Council, as well as Ms. Fikerte Aseffa from the Staff Council.

The session dealt with several important issues such as the comprehensive review of the compensation package of the United Nations common system, including Salary Scales, Dependency Allowances and Education Grant, Field Package, relocation and separation payments, Hardship Classification Methodology, review of the definition for “H” category duty stations, Mobility Incentive review, Education Grant review of sliding scale and level of boarding lump-sum.

Additionally, issues such as Geographical distribution, age distributions and gender parity were discussed.

Conditions of service for the GS and other locally recruited categories were discussed, in particular the review of the salary survey methodologies report of the working group.

And, conditions of service in the field: the payment of amount in lieu of settling-in grant at category E duty stations not designated as non-family were addressed as well.

There was good collaboration and coordination between the three staff federations, FICSA, CCISUA and UNISERV during the session.

An initiative from the three federations in relation to the comprehensive review of compensation package was to carry out a survey amongst United Nations staff to gauge their levels of satisfaction with the changes that were introduced in 2017, the survey is still ongoing as we intend to try and get more inputs from staff, the preliminary results of the survey can be accessed here, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-D6JRWMCD9/>

If you haven't yet completed the survey, we ask that you take some time to do so, your feedback is important and will allow the federations to present a more nuanced and more accurate picture of the areas of concern in relation to the UN Compensation package.

To access the survey and provide your feedback please follow this link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ICSC-Comp>



United Nations International Civil Servants Federation

The UNISERV Team that was attending the session in person, delivered several statements and interventions on the various topics discussed, which will be reflected in the report of the ICSC to the UN General Assembly.

Please find attached a copy of the annotated agenda as well as the opening statement of UNISERV and the various interventions/statements delivered.

Kind Regards,

Mark Polane

UNFSU President, UNISERV Vice President



Opening Statement by UNISERV – ICSC 92nd Session.

We wish to thank WIPO for hosting this session and the ICSC for organizing this hybrid meeting.

We also wish to thank in advance the interpreters for the work they are doing during this session.

Mr. Chair, Members of the Commission, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Firstly, let me pass on the apologies of the UNISERV President, Mr. Towler, for not being available today. Unfortunately, a family matter arose. We hope Mr. Towler will be able to join us by virtual means later in the session this week.

UNISERV supports the statements made previously by the other staff federations, FICSA and CCISUA, and wishes to add the following:

We wish to thank the Secretariat for making this hybrid session possible; however, UNISERV, like others, looks forward to the return of full-strength face-to-face sessions as working in the two-dimensional world of online meetings does not do these crucial meetings justice. The subjects under the purview of the ICSC are critical to the staff we represent, who are better served when we can discuss items both inside and outside the room.

UNISERV wishes to acknowledge the tremendous hardships the Covid-19 pandemic continues to place on the world population and our staff, in particular staff serving in the field who, along with their families, face a continuing strain due to lack of adequate services and other challenges imposed by remote working.

You are surely all aware of the ongoing situation in Afghanistan. UNISERV is extremely concerned for the safety and wellbeing of our United Nations colleagues and in particular our Afghan National Colleagues, who may face far more serious risks as the situation further develops. We hope and trust that the UN Leadership will do everything within its powers to protect the UN staff that have given their best for our organization. We must not leave them exposed to any avoidable risks.

UNISERV stands in solidarity with our Afghan colleagues and wishes to assure them that through our federation we will exercise all our influence to ensure that the UN lives up to its obligations of duty of care for all its staff.

We want to thank the ICSC for their efforts to increase the children's and secondary dependents' allowances. However, with much regret, we note that the GA was not forthcoming and declined to endorse the increase. It is now over 10 years since this allowance was increased and the gap between what it is and what it should be is growing ever larger. We believe that the children's and secondary dependents' allowances should be back on the agenda this year for another submission to the GA.

We note from the assessment that, taken together, the changes to the compensation package have provided savings to the common system organizations. UNISERV believes that this favorable balance should provide the necessary room for maneuver to correct various imbalances that are due to be addressed during this session, including children's and secondary dependents' allowances, performance



incentives, inadequacy of the education grant in some duty stations, and the removal of accelerated home leave travel for C duty stations.

UNISERV is looking forward to the work of the task force on parental leave continuing in the form of the ICSC working group and is a strong supporter of changes that will allow more time for parental bonding and co-parenting. We are overdue for a more standardized, up-to-

date and inclusive definition of parenting that will confirm the common system as an employer of choice, with due regard to our global and expatriate character.

We have taken note of the report on age diversity in the organization. We believe that it is important to have a balanced organizational make-up in terms of age, gender, geographic distribution and disability. The age diversity report provides some alarming insights regarding the correlation between age and geographical diversity, with the younger cohorts even more strongly dominated by a single regional group than the senior generations.

This does not bode well for the future of diversity at the UN. We are aware that these are aggregate data and that the situation is very different from one organization to another, but UNISERV is persuaded that it behooves all actors in the system to find ways to make the UN an employer of choice for diversity, equity and inclusion. We also believe that so-called “level creep” is a great contributor to the imbalances in age diversity and we urge the ICSC to closely examine this phenomenon with the aim of rectifying this situation. All staff categories without exception are underutilizing the entire breadth of their scales, which hampers efforts to rejuvenate the organization and provides for increasingly less career advancement opportunities to all staff.

Regarding the GS salary survey methodology, UNISERV has actively taken part in the working groups and is pleased to note that all parties are closer in their positions than before. We welcome the establishment of the Task Force in relation to the usage of the external data, which will assist us in evaluating the applicability of this method within the UN Common system.

UNISERV wishes to underline that the UN Common System bears a moral responsibility towards the world we serve. This responsibility can only be sustainably fulfilled by ensuring the engagement, motivation, and protection of the organizations' most valuable asset - their staff.

We look forward to a highly productive Session and welcome a collaborative and effective effort by all parties.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.



Intervention on Agenda item 6. Conditions of service of staff in the Professional and higher categories

After some initial growing pains and an adaptation period that required considerable additional work from our back-office HR colleagues, which we wish to acknowledge, the changes to the compensation package seem to have been well accepted in general terms. However, we wish to address some specific areas of dissatisfaction, based on the responses to a survey conducted by the three Federations. The survey is ongoing, and we will be happy to share the results with the Commission once completed. We will now approach some of the more salient areas.

On the **reduction in frequency of grade increments**, a majority of respondents stated they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Free text comments in the survey indicate that this change aggravates the sense of frustration for many staff who feel they have limited options for career progression.

The Federation's pulse survey also demonstrated staff's dissatisfaction with the **streamlined education grant** at HQ duty stations. While we agree with the design of the new system, we underline the need for regular adjustments to reflect rising tuition cost. In this connection, we wish to point out to the Commission to an apparent discrepancy between documents 91/R4 and 92/R3. While 92/R3 states that the scheme worked as intended and enabled cost savings, in 91/R4 the Commission reconfirms its 2019 recommendations (turned down by the GA in 2019 and sent back for further review), now with an effective date 1 January 2022. One may wonder whether the two reports' seemingly divergent conclusions may lead the GA to defer the increase yet again. This could put the education grant on the path of the children's and secondary dependency allowance, which has been awaiting an increase over 10 years.

Regarding the **discontinuation of the language incentive**, half of respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, vs. a minority who approved. What was striking under this question was the fact that fully one third of respondents chose the reply "not applicable". UNISERV endorses the recommendations contained in the recent JIU report on Multilingualism (JIU/REP/2020/6), namely for organisations to introduce learning policies that encourage continuous learning and improvement of the language skills of their staff members; and for the UN system to adopt a framework for language teaching, learning, assessment, and certification in the six official languages; and develop a system-wide, comprehensive and coordinated approach to multilingualism as a core value of the United Nations. We believe that the reinstatement of a language incentive would be fully aligned with and contribute to these objectives.

When gathering inputs from our constituents in preparation for this meeting, UNISERV also received a strong message from our colleagues in C Duty Stations regarding the **discontinuation of accelerated Home Leave**. (Mr. Chairman, we believe you may have also received communications in this connection.) Particularly for remote C duty stations with high travel costs, colleagues feel that this change to the compensation scheme places them at a disadvantage. We ask the Commission to reconsider this change.

Document 92/R3 recalls that one of the desired qualities for the new compensation system was that it should "**reward excellence and manage underperformance**". We feel that this dimension has not been adequately developed under the new system. Organisations have not



consistently established performance incentive schemes linked to compensation, while the elimination of accelerated step increments actually works against this objective. As stated by our CCISUA colleagues yesterday, adequately addressing underperformance is a concern for the Federations. We invite the Commission to examine the link between compensation and performance in further detail.

In relation to the HR Directors Survey so eloquently presented yesterday by Henrietta, we note **calls for more flexibility** in the compensation system, allegedly to allow for more flexible working methods. UNISERV feels strongly that the existing compensation system allows organisations broad flexibility to organise their mandate delivery and working modalities as they see fit, as amply demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, during the past year many of us have seen the limits of remote working, and its risks in terms of fragmentation, team cohesion and other managerial challenges mentioned by our CEB colleagues in their opening statement. We do not feel that a further analysis of the compensation package from the angle of flexibility is warranted at this time.



ICSC/91/R-3

Item 5: Monitoring of the age distribution of the workforce

UNISERV would like to thank the Secretariat for the note on the age distribution of the workforce. We support our sister Federations' interventions on the topic.

A diverse workforce is fundamental to serve the diverse constituencies of our common system organizations. In this sense, age diversity is one of the factors that will shape the future of work in the UN.

UNISERV takes note that all five generations are represented in the system's current staffing, in a bell-curve configuration, as expected. However, we do observe a noticeable change from 2016-2019 with an increase in staff aged 30-50 and a decrease in employment of the under-30 age group.

Women are more strongly represented in the younger age bands, holding a majority of posts up to age 35. These figures are promising for gender diversity going forward. However, we must remain attentive to the trends over time, as we know that women who choose to form a family often face a mid-career block. We will refer to gender dynamics more specifically under the respective agenda item.

By contrast with gender, the lack of positive progress in regional diversity by age group is a source of concern. The dominant regional group is in fact more strongly represented in the lower age bands. This does not bode well for our efforts to increase regional diversity over time. We will address the specific issue of regional diversity under the respective agenda item, but UNISERV asks all stakeholders to remain attentive to these worrying trends.

UNISERV recognizes the efforts made by the organizations, as well as the challenges they face in achieving more equitable age distribution. There is clearly a need for further action to ensure we have the workforce we need to respond to the high demands brought about by technological innovation, climate change, globalization, and demographic change. Our ability to deliver on the SDGs is directly linked to successful achievement of an age-diverse workforce.

UNISERV has referenced the phenomenon of "level creep" earlier during this ICSC session. In addition to an inflation of senior posts, we observe that the lower grades exist on paper, but there has been no recruitment at the lower grades for quite some time. Recruitment at lower grades will facilitate the onboarding of younger people with less work experience who can develop and grow within the system, and will increase the scope for career progression over time.



UNISERV would like to propose concrete actions to support balancing age diversity in the organizations' recruitment policies and practices:

- Develop specific programmes to attract young talent to the system and make efforts to improve the existing programmes supporting generational diversity by targeting youth from underrepresented countries and regions.
- Provide incentives to recruit and retain older age groups, women over 50 in particular, to build upon their experience and institutional memory in the benefit of organizations' mandate delivery.
- Incorporate the age distribution factor in any analysis of grade/post structure and geographical diversity.
- Reinforce the mandatory age of separation to preclude recruitment of candidates above the mandatory age of separation.
- Harmonize the minimum age for recruitment across the system at age 18.
- Review the utilization of the existing staffing structures in terms of the full breadth of grades, for example P1 through P5, GS1 through GS7 and FS1 through FS7.

Thank you



ICSC /91/R.6

Item 6 (I): Monitoring geographical diversity in the UN Common system

UNISERV takes note and thanks the Secretariat for the paper on Geographical diversity in the UN Common system (document ICSC/91/R.6).

A diverse workforce is fundamental to serve the common system's diverse constituencies. For this reason, the principle of equitable geographical distribution is embedded in the organizational culture and in our founding documents, including in Article 101 of the Charter and in various GA resolutions.

We note that, of 25 organizations that responded, only 6 have established criteria for the equitable representation of States in their staff through quotas and desirable ranges. However, all organizations that responded identified non represented, underrepresented and overrepresented countries in their workforce.

While the situation is very different from organization to organization, UNISERV has concerns regarding the representativity of this data. Paradoxically, for those organizations that have a system of quotas or desirable ranges, the figures are rarely representative of the entire workforce. In the case of the UN Secretariat, the system of desirable ranges, which designates certain posts as "geographical", covers barely 8% of the global workforce. We therefore urge the Commission to approach these figures with caution. There are risks to taking desirable range data as a proxy for diversity, as they may paint a very different picture from the real diversity (or lack thereof) that staff see when they look around in the workplace, thus undermining the credibility of the system's efforts.

Figures referred to regional diversity are more representative, as they reflect the entire organization's composition in the Professional and higher categories or equivalent posts subject to international recruitment, as applicable. Applying the regional (as opposed to national) angle also makes the figures more manageable, as we can talk about five regional groups and not 194 separate countries. UNISERV supports efforts to approach diversity from the regional angle, in addition to any legislative mandate based in nationality. This is the angle proposed by the Secretariat's Geographical Diversity Strategy launched in 2020.

The figures by regional group reflected in para 31 of 91/R.6 paint an unfavorable picture of diversity across the common system, with a single group holding a clear dominance. Para. 32 indicates an even greater dominance by the same regional group in the senior decisions-making grades. It is worth pointing out that this is not simply a North vs. South or East vs. West dynamic. The problem is complex and tailored decisions, as well as firm political determination will be required to address these imbalances.

UNISERV acknowledges the constraints faced by the organizations in achieving geographical diversity and supports the measures proposed by organizations in document R.6. We will need a broad shift in organizational culture to overcome implicit cultural, racial, language and related biases in recruitment processes if we are to correct the glaring imbalances reflected in these figures.

However, outreach and education will not be enough. If we accept the principle that competence and talent are equally distributed across the world, then the outcome of hiring



processes, when taken in the aggregate, should reflect an adequate geographical balance and not consistently favor one group. Organizations now have the tools available to monitor the aggregate outcomes of hiring processes over time and hold individual hiring managers and departments or offices accountable if the outcome of their hiring decisions do not reflect the respect for diversity that their organizations espouse in theory.

On a related note, staff in our constituencies report the perception that gender parity is being pursued to the detriment of geographical diversity. This may be due to the fact that binary gender parity, as currently conceptualized by the organizations, is easier to quantify and enforce than geographic diversity. Organizations must avoid this pitfall and ensure they devote equivalent political will and resources to measuring, promoting and enforcing diversity across regional groups as they are devoting to overcoming the conventional male/female divide.

In addition to the proposals from the organizations, UNISERV wishes to recommend the following:

- Organizations in the common system, possibly through coordination with the ICSC, should compile standardized data on national and regional diversity covering the entirety of their workforce, in parallel to any specific scheme applicable to separate organizations.
- All organizations should implement measures to reduce the proportion of the most highly represented regional groups by attrition and to increase the proportion of less represented regional groups, thereby reducing the overall imbalance among regional groups and achieving a greater regional diversity within the workforce.
- Many organizations of the common system have taken measures to improve outreach to applicants from underrepresented and unrepresented countries and regions. These measures should be strengthened, and their effectiveness monitored.
- We call on all common system organizations to develop strategies with clear targets and timelines on gender balance and geographical representation, designed to avoid one dimension overtaking the other, to monitor and report regularly on progress made and to substantiate lofty aspirations with enforcement and accountability mechanisms in cases of flagrant non-compliance.
- We highlight the need for a balanced focus on efforts targeted at geographical diversity at both junior and senior levels – given that a diverse leadership will encourage the development of a diverse workforce, but a diverse pipeline is also required to ensure sustainability over time.

We would also encourage the organizations not to look at gender balance and geographical representation as separate goals but aim for a workforce that includes the equal representation of all genders from all regions, providing for an organizational culture and strategy that truly embraces Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Thank You.



UNISERV – ICSC/91/R.7 Monitoring of the implementation of existing gender policies and the achievement of gender parity in the UN Common System.

UNISERV welcomes the detailed note on “Monitoring the implementation of existing gender policies and the achievement of gender parity in the UN common system”, and thanks the ICSC secretariat for their work in this regard.

We note that the UN common system has not met the target of 50/50 at all levels set by the Beijing Platform, but that progress has been made with 44.2% women in the professional and higher categories as of 2017 and 35.1% at the D1 and higher levels. We regret that data are only available for professional staff and not for the entire workforce.

We note the negative correlation between women's representation and seniority and urge for greater efforts to address this long-standing imbalance. We commend the efforts of the SG on accelerating progress towards parity at the USG and ASG levels, i.e. "ungraded levels", in recent years, and on achieving gender parity for Resident Coordinators.

We are concerned about the slower level of progress in field locations. While we are in support of efforts to achieve gender parity through various recruitment efforts, we believe that more emphasis on retention and support for career advancement is needed. We also welcome the recently introduced “field specific enabling environment guidelines¹” which were developed by UN-Women to help facilitate creating an organizational culture that embraces gender parity.

Gender parity has only been achieved for professional staff on permanent, continuous and fixed-term appointments at P2 and P3 levels. We call for sustained and expanded efforts to achieve gender parity at all levels and for all contract types. In this connection, we highlight para 25 c) of ICSC/91/R.7, which reveals higher comparative rates of resignation amongst women in the professional and higher categories. One of the charts presented by Henrietta clearly illustrated that there is a mid-career bottleneck. While the Secretary-General may be able to compensate via discretionary appointments at the higher levels, it would be far preferable to ensure equitable organic career progression for all women in the system. The reasons for contract expirations and resignations disproportionately affecting women need to be further explored. In this connection we commend the ICSC's recommendation on mandatory exit interviews and regret that barely half of the organisation have taken it up. We wonder what valuable insights the increased use of interviews may have generated. The ICSC's ongoing support for a family-friendly compensation package remains critical in addressing these imbalances.

We call on the UN common system to address gender parity and geographical representation together and not as separate issues. When looking at region of origin, there is gender parity only for women from the WEOG group, who, however, have been overrepresented at P1-P4 levels. Women from Africa are represented at significantly lower levels and greater efforts should be made to achieve gender parity across all regions, while simultaneously aiming for more equal geographical representation.

Indeed, a more targeted approach may be needed for non-HQ locations, specific regions and specific entities that are consistently under-performing.

¹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/01/make-parity-a-reality>



We acknowledge the use of existing temporary special measures towards accelerating the achievement of gender parity and encourage their expanded use until gender parity is achieved and maintained, following which they may be discontinued.

It is important that all policies on work/life balance be applied to all colleagues, men and women. This is particularly important with regards to parental leave. As a UN system, we need to communicate through our policies that care responsibilities (for children, elder relatives and others) impact the work of all colleagues.

We commend the ICSC's recommendations towards the achievement of gender parity by all agencies in the UN common system. We express concern at the unsatisfactory rate of uptake to date of many of the recommendations and call for measures to ensure greater uptake of these important recommendations.

We fully endorse the conclusions of the note: that corrective measures are needed to ensure that all organisations in the UN common system achieve gender parity at all levels as a matter of urgency and that these policies need to be accompanied by efforts to drive implementation as well as initiatives to change culture and attitudes, and that monitoring and accountability mechanisms and temporary special measures are vital and must be put in place. Efforts toward gender parity should be closely linked with broader gender equality strategies, including gender mainstreaming across all policies and programmes.

As the Commission concludes its examination of three items related to diversity and inclusion, we wish to highlight the interconnectedness of these various dimensions, as has become apparent during the debates. We invite the Secretariat to continue to highlight salient intersections in its future report, as well as to strengthen the chronological angle, so as to allow the Commission to follow the evolution of these important trends.

Thank you.



UNISERV Statement on item 6 (i) - doc 92/R.9

UNISERV has taken note of document 92/R.9 on Mobility Incentive: Review of purpose, effectiveness and efficiency, and thanks the ICSC secretariat for the document provided. UNISERV believes that the mobility incentive is fit for purpose and, judging by the responses from the staff survey launched by the Staff Federations to gather inputs from staff on the compensation package, we note that a large majority of staff report being satisfied with the mobility incentive.

As we had already indicated in our intervention related to the “H” duty stations, we would appreciate a review of the “H” duty stations within the European Union with the aim to potentially rectify some inconsistencies related to this designation purely because these Duty Stations are in the EU. We still have a peacekeeping operation in at least one of these EU Duty Stations, and as we know staff are disadvantaged since they are not eligible to receive the mobility incentive in “H” duty stations.

Furthermore, we hold that mobility and, in particular geographic mobility, should be encouraged and incentivised across the board. Considering that staff only need to be incentivised to move to field duty stations may be somewhat disingenuous. Field staff may not necessarily be that keenly interested to be mobile towards an “H” duty station, in particular if this will negatively impact them financially. This inbuilt disincentive may have negative effects on effective mandate delivery, as Organisations are depriving themselves of valuable field experience moving to HQ duty stations.

We believe that there is a need to continue the incentive to contribute to a culture of mobility within the UN system. It should be noted that a culture change initiative is often a multi-year project. A flow between field and Headquarter entities will not only create a more rounded and skilled workforce but will also create a UN Culture that is more field focussed, with staff who have a keen understanding of what is required in our field locations, to ensure the most effective and efficient support possible.



UNISERV has taken note of document 91/R.10 Conditions in the field: Payment of amount in lieu of settling-in at category E duty stations that are not designated as non-family.

UNISERV is of the opinion that the pilot project has served its purpose and has proven to be of benefit for both the staff and the organizations.

UNISERV wishes to acknowledge and appreciate the solicitation and usage of feedback from staff from the various organizations' which helps to put a human face on these types of entitlements recognizing the impact on the staff that serve the United Nations. It is also important to note the trends in relation to the reasons for staff to opt for the entitlement, which appear to centre mostly around lack of medical facilities, lack of educational facilities, isolation and lack of recreational facilities.

This brings us to the process and methodology for designation of duty stations to "not non-family". While the importance of security should not be underestimated, a lack of suitable health systems and family medical care facilities should carry an appropriate weight in the determination of hardship classification. Similarly issues such as social isolation, lack of educational facilities and entertainment options understandably weigh significantly in terms of staff deciding to utilize this entitlement. We believe that a member of the ICSC secretariat personally experienced the dire conditions in one of our field duty-stations in Guinea-Bissau which was a "not non-family" duty station, where the very basics in relation to medical facilities etc. simply didn't exist.

With that in mind, we would like to request that these elements are given more careful consideration and appropriate weight in the determination and designation of "non-family" or "not non-family" duty station.

Finally, we wish to point out that this entitlement really creates a "win-win" situation, in that staff are happy with this this arrangement and the organization saves money.

Based on the results of this pilot project and given the positive responses from organizations' as well as staff and the original request for this entitlement to be applied to both "D" and "E" classified duty stations, we wish to reiterate our earlier request to expand the use of this provision to "D" classified duty stations. If not formalized, then at least we propose that the pilot is extended further and that the pilot include the "D" duty stations with the aim for a final review one year from now to gather data on the expansion of the pilot.



UNISERV has taken note of document 92/R.7, Hardship classification methodology: impact of the revised criteria.

UNISERV thanks the ICSC secretariat for work carried out related to the report. While UNISERV agrees that overall, the revised criteria may have fulfilled its purpose, we have a few observations in relation to the system and transparency of the process. We wish to highlight that while a quantitative approach to the determination of hardship factors is adequate, it is also important to recognize the significance of the qualitative inputs that we feel are equally important in fully understanding the conditions in the duty stations. The value proposition of the tripartite working group is therefore clear and should be commended.

The Current Pandemic has been a catalyst in terms of a focus on mental health. The isolation factor in the hardship review needs to be given due consideration and given an adequate weight in the determination of a hardship classification. Isolation contributes to mental-health issues, which has become evident during the pandemic. Considering the UN has adopted a UN System-Wide Mental Health strategy, it would be important to consider such factors duly in the determination of a hardship classification.

We are pleased to note from the report that a proposal is made to establish a working group to make substantive proposals towards the modernization of the health section of the hardship questionnaire, and we would highly recommend that the role of the new Resident Coordinators system is leveraged to ensure that all UN entities in a given duty station are involved in the distribution of the questionnaires and guidance issued to ensure accurate and complete information is provided. Training is another aspect that should be considered in terms of the completion of the questionnaires, with clear communication of the importance of accurate data as well as efforts to educate the leadership and in particular HR specialists on the methodology etc. This way, all stakeholders will have a better understanding of the process, which will help facilitate improvements to the data collected.

The hardship review and methodology were designed to ensure objectivity and accuracy. We underline that this system must be respected, with no undue influence affecting the weighting of factors.

On a separate note, and while we do not expect the issue to be taken up immediately, we do ask ourselves why the Hardship Allowance varies according to Grade. A staff member's differentiated level of responsibility is already reflected in the salary scale. Common sense would indicate that hardship is experienced equally by all colleagues serving in the same location, after all we are all human beings.

We would like to underscore that a review of the hardship classification cannot be a statistical exercise alone.

It is very much an assessment of quality of life and work, which is something that is experienced by human beings.

It is not something that an Artificial Intelligence Algorithm will ever comprehend. Perhaps one day when robots pass the Turing test we might get there, but for now we are Human Beings that work and live under these conditions.



ICSC/91/R.4: Education grant: detailed review of the sliding scale and the level of the boarding lump sum

Mr. Chairman, UNISERV takes note of document ICSC/91/R4 and thanks the ICSC Secretariat for its preparation.

The education grant is an essential element of the compensation package and an important tool to attract and retain a global mobile workforce to deliver the mandates of the organizations - particularly a mid-career workforce with school-age children. Therefore, UNISERV expresses full support for the proposed adjustment of the sliding scale and agrees with the proposal to increase the lumpsum boarding assistance, which should be resubmitted to the General Assembly in relation to the academic year in progress on 1 January 2022. We hope that the recommendations will result in agreement and approval of the Fifth Committee.

We recall that the boarding assistance is granted solely to staff serving at field locations and – only under exceptional circumstances – to those who serve at H duty stations. However, there are clear examples where the duty station is classified as H, especially as a result of it being located in a Member State of the European Union, but relevant and certified international schooling might not always be available. In this regard, we ask the Commission to reconsider those eligibility requirements and also encourage Heads of Entity to exercise their discretionary authority to grant exemptions under General Assembly resolution 70/244 (sect. III, para. 29). Furthermore, we would like to encourage the Commission to keep analyzing and improving the functioning of the education grant scheme and ensure that it is fit for purpose for all staff, no matter where they are located.

We should also not forget about the special education grant. It is important to recall that adjustments pertain to both scales, and that not adjusting it would hamper the inclusion efforts of staff who have children with disabilities. It is important to emphasize the values of diversity and inclusion that are supported through the recruitment and retention of staff who have dependents living with disabilities.

Lastly, based on the assessment and findings in section C, on the patterns of support provided per household, UNISERV agrees with the Commission that there is no compelling or justifiable reason to introduce a maximum amount per household in the education grant as the cost-sharing principle is seemingly functioning well.

Thank you.