



UNISERV Statement at the 94<sup>th</sup> Session of the ICSC  
UNESCO, Paris, 11 – 22 July 2022

**Item: Opening Statement**

delivered by Mark Polane, UNISERV President, 11 July 2022

Mr. Chairman,

UNISERV would like to thank UNESCO, our hosts, for their generous hospitality, as well as the ICSC Secretariat for the excellent preparation of this session. It is a true pleasure to meet the Commissioners, ICSC Secretariat, administration colleagues and sister federations in Paris for the ICSC's first fully onsite sessions since the COVID-19 pandemic struck in early 2020. During these two and a half years of multifaceted crises and instability, the ICSC has demonstrated the true value it contributes to the UN Common System through the predictability and stability it provides. Assured that their remuneration and benefits were secure, our colleagues in the international civil service were able to focus their entire energy on addressing the challenges of the moment. These two years have reminded us that our security is not to be taken for granted.

However, the disruptions caused by the pandemic and other global challenges are far from over. According to all predictions, we are headed into a period of continued global instability where an effective, responsive and reliable ICSC will be required to continue to play a stabilizing role for the common system and the international civil servants who support it. Over the past two years, the ICSC has demonstrated its ability to continue to perform its regular functions whilst also tackling new areas in a creative and constructive manner. Sky-rocketing inflation around the globe is one of those areas where the system's flexibility will be put to the test. UNISERV undertakes to remain an active and productive counterpart to the ICSC in all areas of its work.

The organizations' duty of care has emerged as a key consideration in ensuring our workforce can continue to operate in a safe, healthy and therefore sustainable manner amidst uncertainty. The ILO's recent recognition of a safe and healthy work environment as a fundamental principle and right at work is an indication that Member States are sensitive to these concerns. The ICSC is called on to play a key role in ensuring that duty of care is provided consistently across the system in accordance with unified standards, and also that the underlying principles are well understood and supported by the Member States. This duty takes the form of conventional and well-established benefits such as healthcare, R&R and the hardship classification, as well as areas that are ripe for review, as are the parental leave provisions we will be considering during this session. Duty of care also manifests in emerging areas that will require a strong commitment from all those involved if we are to develop them appropriately, including a focus on mental health and psychological safety dimensions of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Related to psychological safety is the area of zero tolerance for fraud, corruption and abuse of authority, and the corresponding protection from retaliation for whistleblowers. The common system has been rocked in recent months by various high-profile scandals that could have been avoided if adequate measures had been taken on time. While the primary responsibility and accountability for addressing wrongdoing lies with the leadership of each individual organisation, each successive scandal questions our collective integrity as a common system and the credibility and viability of our daily work. While we must all pledge to do our utmost to address this scourge in our respective organisations, UNISERV calls on the ICSC to take a long, hard look at how the common system is equipped to deal with corruption and whistleblower protection. In this context, the review of the Code of Conduct for the



## United Nations International Civil Servants Federation

International Civil Service could not be more timely and could provide an appropriate avenue to ensure the development of a UN Culture that does not tolerate impunity and fosters open and transparent mechanisms to deal with issues related to wrongdoing.

In this brief statement we have touched on some of UNISERV's priority areas, but we have a packed agenda ahead of us and there will be ample time to address each issue in turn. We look forward to engaging constructively in the coming two weeks to achieve tangible outcomes for our global constituency.

Thank you.