

Statement by the United Nations International Civil Servants Federation (UNISERV) to the 5th Committee of the United Nations General Assembly at its 78th Session on Item 142: UN Common System
(8 November 2023, delivered by Karin Esposito, UNISERV President)

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Members of the Fifth Committee,

UNISERV appreciates the opportunity to speak on this item – the UN Common System – to reflect on the 49th annual ICSC report, document A/78/30.

The ICSC report reflects the extensive and inclusive consultative processes underpinning its recommendations. UNISERV highlights that the ICSC recommendations stem from the need to ensure that the common system remains fit for purpose and an employer of choice. The harmonized implementation of package components, including when they are amended – such as the new parental leave framework – are essential for common system cohesion.

Consensus on implementation of the updated levels of the hardship allowance, with an increase by 3.1% as decided by the Commission in 2022, should be urgently found to ensure that staff are correctly compensated for difficult living and working conditions – particularly considering current conflict situations, rising insecurity, and the tragic loss of staff lives. Consistency is also needed in adhering to the 2022 ICSC decision to increase the mobility allowance.

UNISERV echoes concerns that discussion about elements, such as the children's and secondary dependents' allowances, need to be concluded – ideally by reinstating the methodology linking the two related allowances and ending the 10 year-freeze on revising the flat rate. A means-tested approach would not correctly reflect that this allowance is a replacement of the loss of national benefits.

Making this statement as a federation of staff unions, UNISERV conveys the sentiments of staff, who – as the dedicated workforce of the common system – directly experience and feel the impact of global financial challenges and budget decisions.

The review of the compensation package could deeply impact this workforce, its morale, and the attractiveness of the service. We appreciate our role as a stakeholder in the compensation review process, which will be conducted in a cooperative, technical and objective manner.

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Since the last review was conducted in 2015, UNISERV stresses that this current review should focus on ensuring the continued ability of organizations to effectively deliver on their respective mandates, while maintaining that the package should both attract *and* retain the best combination of talents, competencies, and diversity.

The scope of the current review, which will provide inputs to shape the Commission's decisions and subsequent recommendations to the General Assembly, will require extensive and time-intensive work in 2024.

Staff deeply appreciate the work that has already been conducted to ensure success of the review - including the Global Staff Survey. This allows staff voices to be heard. Recognizing the time and resources needed for such a review, UNISERV concludes this statement with support for the ICSC proposal that comprehensive reviews be conducted every 10 years.

Thank you for your attention and kind consideration of the staff views presented through UNISERV.