

UNISERV Statement on Item 1 for the 102nd session of the ICSC

delivered by the President of UNISERV

Tuesday, 14 July 2026, Vienna

Item 1: Opening of the Session

Good morning esteemed Chair, distinguished Commissioners, ICSC Secretariat, organizations, and staff federations.

Thank you for the opening of this session. [UNISERV approaches every ICSC session guided by our values as a staff federation, and led by our calling to be part of the preservation of the international civil service. We base our staff federation work on the principles and rights enshrined in international human rights and labour standards, and on our dedication to promoting the objectives of the UN Charter.]

With this session, the ICSC will reach the end of a multi-year process reviewing the compensation package and will be examining as well, salary surveys and margin management methodology. The organizations and commissioners know well the perspectives and preferences of the staff and their federations on these matters. UNISERV commends the constructive cooperation and hard work – particularly of the secretariat – that allowed us to come this far in the multi-year compensation review process. As directly elected staff representatives, UNISERV conveys in the ICSC the voices and preferences of tens of thousands of staff.

At this session of the Commission, even more than ever, the international civil service and international organizations are at a crossroads. This system is at an evident point of inflection, not only as challenges to multilateralism and international law continue to dominate public discourse, but also as the ability of many organizations to carry out their functions has the potential of being seriously compromised.

These challenges, which are unsettling the very core of the United Nations Common System, are also negatively affecting staff welfare and service conditions. We now find ourselves at a critical juncture, to not only protect

the livelihoods of colleagues, but to ensure the international civil service, as a whole, remains relevant and true to its founding principles, including independence and impartiality, vis a vis any state actors.

For the committed civil servants of this system, this is not just a cyclical moment of scaling back, budget reductions, efficiency, or reform. Rather, this is a moment where the choices being made now, in the name of modernization and preservation, will fundamentally alter what our multilateral system stands for and what it means to work in the name of an international organization and the United Nations.

Reforms and changes to the conditions of work should be principled, strategic, and rationalized, not based on accommodating temporary shortages of resources or funding. There should be principled staffing and workforce planning, grounded in a sound human resources framework and administration of justice system that allows all staff to work in an enabling environment where they can fulfil their essential mandates, while being compensated – above all *fairly* - for their endeavours and efforts for the sake of peace and security, humanitarian relief, human rights, and development.

UNISERV wishes, through this opening statement, to convey to the Commission and the Organizations that the staff sentiment, at this point in time, is one of feeling unappreciated and undervalued for their commitment to the work of our system. They feel voiceless in the face of immense pressures and a flood of imposed reforms, restructuring and downsizing. Workforce reductions across the Common System are occurring at unprecedented double-digit rates, significantly increasing the workload burden on remaining staff who must maintain continuity of critical services and support. Yet staff unions and federations have not been allowed a seat at the table to discuss the details of posts and staff cuts.

Staff expect us, as their representatives, to raise in a straight-forward manner their concerns in all possible fora and before all decision-makers, including this Commission. When we repeatedly state positions, it is out of concern that the gravity of decisions on the well-being of staff and the

actual survival of our organizations is not being adequately recognized or seen through the eyes of the implementers, our colleagues, who have been dedicating their careers and lives to this work and are now faced with losing their employment and ability to contribute to the noble causes of the various common system organisations.

Looking back into history, and UNISERV is want to do: We note that at the time of the League of Nations, the contractual modalities were designed to provide almost complete job security, not only out of concern for staff-welfare, but for operational reasons, including to the ability to withstand political pressures and maintain impartiality. In recent years, job security has eroded, and non-staff contractual modalities, which guarantee even fewer protections, have proliferated uncontrollably. In the past year, thousands of long-serving staff have lost their jobs and were separated without any indemnity or even health insurance.

Staff face a climate where they are being trained to increase their personal resilience and self-help skills, while whole organizational support and the basic resources to get jobs done are lacking. It is a kind of austerity, where compensation containment is discussed on one hand, while budgets are cut so much, that staff cannot even rely on the most basic of tools to be provided by the organisations, to meet their job goals, including office supplies, tools, research material, and equipment.

Despite all the challenges of pervasive austerity measures, UNISERV highlights the tremendous and tireless efforts of staff to deliver on the mandates of the Common System Organizations. Staff are trying their best to soften the impact of the defunding and cost-cutting initiatives on those who the United Nations has been created to serve, the peoples of the United Nations, including the most vulnerable populations.

Nonetheless, staff have an obvious sense of fear about their futures, what will be coming their way next, and what further challenges and risks they must accommodate. Staff want to know where in the history of the UN and multilateralism is this Commission going to be recorded. They look to the ICSC to help counter the erosion of the foundations of the international civil service.

UNISERV sees this Commission as a steadfast supporter of the system and the methodologies that it helped to create over so many decades. It is the status quo, or in other words *predictability*, that fosters staff and organizational trust and loyalty. The technical work of this Commission, in line with its full independence and impartiality, ensures that the organizations can attract staff with the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, and that the organizations will retain the best staff in service to implement the mandates of this system.

The consequential choices of this Commission and Member States in these two weeks before us, and the coming months, will fundamentally determine whether staff will be working under further hollowed-out conditions that will make implementation of mandates and day-to-day operations even more challenging or even impossible. Staff may not know the intricacies of your methodologies, but they expect and need stable and reliable pay checks. We reserve our comments on the proposals on the individual elements of the compensation package for the specific upcoming agenda item.

We conclude this statement by recognizing the solidarity of staff, who through their generous contributions to unions, ensured that their staff federation would be able to attend all working groups of the compensation package review in the past three years.

At the same time, it is a paradoxical and unfortunate situation where these colleagues, whose future work and take-home pay is at stake, have had to fund the very necessary participation of their elected staff representatives to a body that is effectively discussing reductions in their compensation. The lack of a dedicated organizational budget to ensure staff federations can participate in formal sessions, when the process is mandated by the General Assembly, remains a serious concern.

Esteemed Chair,

UNISERV thanks you again for the opening of this session and wishes all Commissioners and participants of this 102nd session the best in these deliberations. We particularly thank you for your dedication and tenure of service over the past many years, including by ensuring open and

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FEDERATION DES FONCTIONNAIRES INTERNATIONAUX DES NATIONS UNIES**

thoughtful dialogue, grounded in a genuine belief in the international civil service.

As always, we remain a constructive and cooperative partner guided by our firm belief in the value of serving the international community.

Thank you.