Staff Union
of the International Labour Organization
Syndicat du personnel
de l'Organisation internationale du Travail
Sindicato del personal
de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo

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Update on Geneva Pay Cut following the July 2017 ICSC meeting

You will recall that our staff federations' campaign led many Geneva-based organizations, including ILO, to defer implementing the proposed 7.7 percent pay cut, express strong support for staff and persuade the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) to reconsider the issue at its summer session in Vienna from 10 to 21 July 2017.

Given the seriousness of the issue, staff unions from Geneva participated at the session in large numbers. Senior management was also well-represented, jointly led by UNOG Director-General Michael Moller, ILO Director-General Guy Ryder, his deputy Greg Vines as well as WHO's Assistant Director-General Dr Hans Troedsson. Also present were two of the three expert statisticians who questioned the ICSC's calculations and the application of the methodology in management's submission to the ICSC.

During these intense days in Vienna, staff federations requested the ICSC to:

- **Reintroduce** the 5% gap closure measure[1];
- **Review** their calculations and methodology in a special forum where the ICSC, Administrations, Staff Federations and independent experts would be participate;
- **Freeze** the implementation of the pay cut in all duty stations - especially Geneva, Rome and Madrid - until the requested revision of the methodology is finalized;

Intense discussions - punctuated by endless timeouts - on the pay cut took place over four days (with blatant disregard from the ICSC towards Staff Federations, high level UN management and representatives of millions of workers – namely PSI and ITUC).

Finally, on Tuesday 18 July, the ICSC announced peremptorily its decision.

The ICSC:

- Reaffirm its calculations for all the HQ duty stations surveyed in October 2016, despite the concerns raised by the expert statisticians;
- Reintroduce a "margin" (mitigation buffer) of 3 percent to the post adjustment index, which would reduce the cut;

[1] Measure aimed at mitigating the impact of a pay cut. This measure was abrogated by the ICSC in 2015.

- Introduce a delay in the implementation of the pay cut (**for current staff only**), making the new effective implementation date February 2018, after which the pay cut would be progressively implemented; and
- Will conduct a review of the post adjustment methodology for the future.

We remain deeply concerned

Notwithstanding the fact that the ICSC agreed to reintroduce a "margin" and has proposed to delay the pay cut:

- The reintroduced "margin" is only 3 percent, when the gap closure measure removed in 2015 was 5 percent (more seen as a "fait du prince" than as a measure based on reliable calculations);
- This "margin" seems to apply to 2016 surveys only;
- The ICSC still refuses to review its calculations, despite the concerns raised about possible errors that would have significantly reduced the cut, thus questioning the ICSC's technical work and governance model (we have been told that "statistics is not an exact science");
- The ICSC proposed a 6-month implementation freeze applicable only to current staff and not to new staff, creating two categories of staff remunerated differently;
- Despite delaying the implementation, the eventual overall size of the cut remains unknown, as it is unclear whether future adjustments would take into account favourable developments such as a pay increase for the US federal civil service (against whom our pay is benchmarked); and
- The ICSC's commitment to review the post adjustment methodology is vague. The ICSC's decision didn't address the root cause of the problem - the methodology and its application.

In summary:

- The ICSC is unwilling to accept any feedback from recognised statisticians and will not revise its findings that have been shown to lack robustness. This undermines the technical credibility of the ICSC, a body that sets the pay of 120,000 staff globally. Gap closure measures ("margin") and a personal transition allowance do not make indefensible survey results acceptable.
- The "no pay cut" campaign, which has included meetings, rallies, demonstrations, a work stoppage and a petition with almost ten thousand signatures, has showed the strength and unity of staff in Geneva and around the world.
- We acknowledge that the Management has played an important role in the discussions with the ICSC and consistently argued that they have a duty of care to staff and a managerial responsibility to implement decisions based on evidence. So far, this united front has been crucial.

Is it a victory?

The ICSC decision to review its earlier decision is UNPRECEDENTED and the effective reduction in the pay cut is mitigated. This could be considered as a victory and it has only been possible thanks to the mobilisation of thousands of staff members!

However, the ICSC's confirmation of its calculation despite the report shared by the experts statisticians – which highlighted 51 errors – and affirmation that the surveys were carried out in accordance with the approved methodology cannot be considered as a victory. It means that all the subsequent decisions are based on erroneous calculations!

Moreover, It is worth noting that, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the working and employment conditions of more than 120,000 international civil servants of the United Nations system continue to be at the mercy of a Commission, certainly appointed by the United Nations General Assembly but where lacks a collective bargaining mechanism. This situation is in fact in contradiction with the fundamental rights at work and human rights advocated precisely by the United Nations. If this gap is not filled urgently, the problems will come back again and again.

What's next?

We are still analysing the ICSC decision and to prepare our response (possible legal actions, collaboration with international federations of workers, other rallies, etc…). We will keep you updated.

The fight is not over!

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