



**Release of union representatives
to exercise their functions**

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¹ To each official. Broadcast by email.

Preamble

1. The Staff Union and its representatives play an important role in promoting staff-management relations within the Office. This role is recognized in the Staff Regulations, in particular article 10.1, and in the Recognition and procedural agreement between the ILO and the ILO Staff Union.
2. Arrangements have long been in place for the provision of facilities to the Union as the body representing the interests of the staff for the exercise of its mandate. Such facilities include inter alia staff resources, office space, communication and interpretation costs and release of its representatives from the duties to which they are assigned under article 1.9 (Assignment of duties) of the Staff Regulations.
3. This Circular, which cancels and replaces Circular No. 448, Series 6, of 22.10.1990, sets out the practical arrangements for the release of Union representatives from their duties in order to perform their union functions. The term “Union representative(s)” as used in this Circular includes:
 - (a) elected members of the Staff Union Committee;
 - (b) officers of the Staff Union Committee;
 - (c) elected Union shop stewards at headquarters and in the field; and
 - (d) union officials and other such officials who may be appointed by the Union to represent it.

General

4. Union representatives both at headquarters and in field offices shall be entitled to such release time as may be reasonable and appropriate in order to enable them to carry out their functions promptly and efficiently within their normal working hours. The granting of this release time shall not impair the efficient operation of the department or service concerned.
5. The functions of union representatives as referred to in paragraph 4 above include:
 - (a) representing staff in statutory committees and bodies as well as preparation for meetings of these statutory bodies, and related duties;
 - (b) representing staff in all meetings convened by the Director-General or his authorized representatives, the aim of which is to collaborate in the administration of the Office, to defend the interests of the staff before the Director-General or his authorized representatives, or to assist him in the application of the Staff Regulations within the meaning of article 14.1 of those Regulations;
 - (c) representing or accompanying officials in grievances and other procedures; and
 - (d) representing ILO staff in inter-organizational bodies of the United Nations common system and participating in their work, as well as representing ILO staff in federations of international civil servants and participation in their activities.
 - (e) coordinating union activities at the regional level and interacting with the headquarters structure.

Extent of release to be granted

6. Without prejudice to the general principles contained in paragraph 4 above, the following specific arrangements are put in place in order to enable Union representatives to discharge their functions falling within the scope of paragraph 5, subsections (a) to (d) above.
 - (a) the members of the Staff Union Committee at headquarters shall be released from their duties to the extent of thirty (30) work-months per year, which they shall divide up among themselves in accordance with their needs; they shall notify HRD of the distribution of the release time and of the units to receive such work-months, which is intended to enable them to properly carry out their mandate, including preparation for statutory and other meetings;
 - (b) members of the Staff Union Committee at headquarters shall be released from their duties to attend meetings of the Committee normally one half day each week;
 - (c) union representatives may be granted, upon request, properly documented special leave with pay to enable them to take part in meetings convened by or on behalf of the Staff Union Committee or meetings at which they are to represent the Staff Union, including travel time when the meeting is to be held in another location than that of the representative's duty station. Where such leave is granted this should be approved by the responsible chief and recorded on the leave card in the space reserved for this purpose.
7. Responsible chiefs shall ensure that the workload of officials entitled to release is such that it can be handled adequately in the time devoted to duty in the unit. The release of all the members of the Staff Union Committee is intended to cover all representational functions considered to be official duties under the terms of the Staff Regulations (e.g. Joint Negotiating Committee, etc.), as well as international duties, e.g. including attendance at meetings of federations of international civil servants. However, if an ILO official is elected as full-time officer of a federation of international civil servants, separate arrangements will be made.
8. Any official who is granted full-time release from his/her unit will normally be entitled to return to that unit.

Exigencies of service

9. All release is subject to the overriding consideration that it shall not impair the efficient operations of the Office, particularly as regards the International Labour Conference and other major ILO meetings.

Arrangements within units as regards partial release

10. Union representatives shall discuss individually with their responsible chief, as early in advance as possible, the practical measures to be taken that are provided for in these arrangements, and in all cases such measures and any release time taken must be recorded.
11. The primary consideration shall be to agree on measures that disrupt the work of the unit the least, taking account of the legitimate needs of the Union. Protracted unbroken absences from units, as well as last-minute arrangements to be absent from units should be avoided, and shall normally not be accepted.

Status of officials under these arrangements

- 12.** Officials to whom these arrangements apply including any on full-time release shall be considered to be on official duty while on release from their units in accordance with the terms of these arrangements. They shall continue to be subject to the Staff Regulations and to any rules established by the Director-General. In particular, their conduct shall continue to be governed by the provisions of Chapter 1 of the Staff Regulations. Consequently, authorization to engage in outside activities in accordance with those provisions shall continue to be sought in the normal manner by officials on release.
- 13.** While the statutory provisions applying to the officials concerned are not affected, special procedures of a practical nature which are required by the circumstances shall apply, e.g. in respect of sick leave, annual leave and travel. These special procedures are established in agreement with the Staff Union Committee.
- 14.** Subject to the provisions of Chapter 1 of the Staff Regulations, officials to whom the present arrangements apply shall not be the object of sanctions or disciplinary measures in respect of activities such as are listed in paragraph 5 above, nor shall they suffer any prejudice as a result of such activities, both during and after the expiration of their term of office.

Performance appraisals

- 15.** The assessment of the performance of an official on release shall continue to take place as at present. The responsible chief will assess in the normal manner the work accomplished by an official during the part of his/her time that was devoted to duties in the unit. Mention shall be made in the performance appraisal that the official was on release as a Union representative for a specified amount of time within the reporting period. With respect to any official who is on full-time release, the responsible chief shall note on the performance appraisal form that the official was entitled to full-time release for a specified period within the reporting period, and shall assess in the usual manner the work done by the official in the unit.
- 16.** In so far as they cover a period during which release for Staff Union duties was authorized, performance appraisals shall have no negative effect on the grant of annual increments or of special merit or long-service increments.

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