

# STAFF UNION BULLETIN BULLETIN DU SYNDICAT BOLETIN DEL SINDICATO



21 July 2003

## *EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING*

*25 June 2003*

### *Minutes*

At 1.10 p.m., the Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee opened the discussion of the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) concerning General Service Salaries: headquarters and the field. He said that it was the first Staff Union meeting governed by the new rules of procedure for the conduct of General Meetings (Appendix V of Union Rules), recently adopted by the Union.

#### **Election of a Chairperson**

1. The Chairperson of the Committee turned to provisional agenda item 1: **Election of a Chairperson (of the EGM)**. Proposed by one member, and endorsed by several others, Mr. Ben Lakp Low, Union representative of the Abidjan office, was elected, by show of hands, as chairperson of the EGM.

#### **Adoption of the agenda**

2. The Chairperson thanked the participants for his election, which reflected the good relations that existed between headquarters and field offices. He thanked the Committee for having listened attentively to the Abidjan office during the crisis that had beset Côte d'Ivoire the previous autumn, and for remaining vigilant with regard to the threats to workers' salaries.

3. **The agenda** was adopted as proposed (item 2).

#### **General Service Salaries: headquarters and the field**

4. The Chairperson of the Staff Union introduced the main item on the agenda: item 3: **General Service Salaries: headquarters and the field**. He said that the Staff Union had always been the expression of solidarity between all categories of staff, both at headquarters and in field offices. He explained that the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) was an offshoot of the United Nations General Assembly and, as such, its members were appointed by the

Assembly. Among other things, it defined the methodologies used in the calculation of salaries for professional and general service staff in the various headquarters (New York, Geneva, etc.) and other duty stations (Bangkok, Jakarta, Moscow, Lima, Abidjan, etc.). Those methodologies were established for application by the various organizations in the United Nations system. They were based on the so-called Flemming principle, or best prevailing rate, with a view to recruiting the best staff under the best prevailing salary conditions (pursuant to paragraph 101.3 of the United Nations Charter).

5. At its meeting of March 2003, the ICSC adopted a new methodology, the main elements of which, in the case of headquarters locations, were as follows:

- Even where staff representatives do not take part in salary surveys, the reviews shall remain valid;
- Staff representatives shall be required, on pain of sanctions, to respect the confidentiality of the entire procedure and of any information provided, unless such information has been published by the ICSC.
- The second of these provisions would undermine the very grounds for union representation in such procedures.

6. The ICSC also adopted the following principles applicable to non-headquarters duty stations:

- Increase in the number of comparators (employers whose salary and employment conditions are considered within the scope of a comparative study) in the various duty stations;
- Increase in the proportion of public sector employers used for comparison (25 to 33%);
- Use of alternative survey methods in the enterprises selected (information gathered by means of telephone calls to regional headquarters, no contacts with staff representatives from the enterprise concerned).

7. Those decisions were an obvious erosion of the Flemming principle and would lead to a significant reduction in salaries at non-headquarters locations. There was a strong likelihood that such measures would subsequently be extended to headquarters locations.

8. The Chairperson of the Committee provided details of the various steps, petitions and motions prepared by colleagues from field offices in support of the Union's action on this matter.

He added that, for headquarters locations, the pledging of allegiance required by the ICSC had given rise to the expression of official reservations by staff representatives.

He pointed out that appeals could be made regarding the negative impact of steps taken by the ICSC to define applicable methodologies, as soon as they were used in any given duty station (which would not occur until 2004).

9. The Chairperson of the Committee said that the Staff Union Committee and the ILO Administration were, at the moment, on the same wavelength regarding this issue, and remained in permanent contact with a view to making a joint assessment of the best way to diffuse a potentially dangerous situation for locally recruited staff in all duty stations, at headquarters and in the field.

10. Concluding his speech, the Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee welcomed the fact that, in a great many duty stations<sup>1</sup>, activities had been undertaken jointly by the Unions and Associations of all organizations belonging to the common system. It was a demonstration of the solidarity among staff and their refusal to accept the diktat that the ICSC was trying to impose.

11. The Chairperson of the EGM thanked the Chairperson of the Committee for his presentation and informed the meeting of the activities undertaken by staff at the Abidjan office, which had come together for a General Meeting.

12. The discussion moved on to the draft resolution presented by the Staff Union Committee. The resolution, as amended during the meeting, was adopted unanimously.

13. With no other business, and after the customary expression of thanks, the Chairperson of the EGM declared the meeting closed.

**The meeting rose at 2.45 p.m.**

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<sup>1</sup> Reports on activities undertaken have been received from ILO offices in Abidjan, Antananarivo, Bangkok, Beirut, Bonn, Brasilia, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Colombo, Islamabad, Jakarta, Kathmandu, Lima, Lusaka, Manila, Moscow, New Delhi, Port of Spain, San Jose, and Tokyo.

**EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING**

**25 June 2003**

**RESOLUTION**

**on the methodologies for salary surveys**

The Staff Union of the International Labour Office, convened in Geneva in an Extraordinary General Meeting on 25 June 2003

**NOTING WITH DISMAY** the attempts made by the ICSC to proceed in future with reductions in local salary scales in the field as well as at HQ duty stations through arbitrary manipulation of relevant methodologies;

**WELCOMING** the determination of ILO staff in the Field to fight, together with all staff from other UN Agencies, against this unacceptable deterioration in their conditions of employment;

**RECALLING** that the common system cannot function on the basis of arbitrariness, and has to build upon technically sound methodologies;

**AWARE** of the financial difficulties of a few Agencies, but recalling that these difficulties cannot be solved through measures detrimental for all the others;

**DETERMINED** to resist the attack of the International Civil Service Commission against salaries of general service and national officers (NO) staff members through all available means of action;

**STRESSING** that solidarity between categories of staff is a key element in industrial relations at the ILO,

**CALLS UPON** the Director General to inform the UN Secretary General and his counterparts in other Agencies of his serious concern with decisions made by the ICSC during its Spring 2003 session concerning methodologies for salary surveys;

**ASKS** the Director General to instruct his representatives at the July 2003 sessions of the HRD Network and of the of the ICSC to act in favour of the withdrawal of all of the impugned decisions;

**ALSO ASKS** the Director General to include a representative of the ILO Staff Union in the delegation he will send to take part in the July 2003 session of the ICSC to deal with local salary issues;

**INSTRUCTS THE STAFF UNION COMMITTEE**

1. To continue promoting staff mobilization at all duty stations to obtain the withdrawal of changes in methodology adopted by the ICSC concerning local salaries;
2. To continue acting to achieve full collaboration of CCISUA and FICSA with actions towards mobilization;
3. To contact the ILO Administration to jointly review the consequences of the changes in the methodologies, and the ways in which the Office should face them in the interest of local staff.

**AUTHORIZES** the Staff Union Committee to launch, at the appropriate moment, either on its own or in agreement with other staff organizations, associations or unions, any call for action, including strike, which it deem's necessary to face the situation.

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