



9 January 2004

**SYMPOSIUM ON THE FUTURE OF STAFF UNIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS  
IN THE UNITED NATIONS COMMON SYSTEM,  
UN HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK  
(1 – 3 DECEMBER 2003)**

*Statement of Agreed Principles by Staff Representatives  
at the Symposium on the Future of Staff Unions and Associations in  
the UN Common System, 1 – 3 December 2003, UN Headquarters,  
New York*

The world has dramatically changed. The United Nations is in the process of reform which presents a new challenge for the staff of the Organization.

In view of this evolution, the staff associations and unions of the United Nations Common system, who met at a symposium in New York from 1 to 3 December 2003, are committed to close cooperation and support for the creation and development of actions towards:

1. Ensuring that measures are put in place against the improper use of certain types of contractual arrangements;
2. Ensuring that maximum protection is provided for the safety and security of all staff of the United Nations;
3. Ensuring the respect of the right to staff representation;
4. Protecting international civil servants against arbitrary decisions relating to the working conditions;
5. Ensuring that the Noblemaire and Flemming principles are strictly upheld;
6. Guaranteeing the right of all staff members to suitable social protection, including but not limited to, family, health, and vocational risks;
7. Defining career development policies for all staff in particular within the framework of mobility and work/life issues.

As a first step in this direction, we have decided to explore together the issue of unity in action through the establishment of a working group, to explore draft practical proposals, as a proactive measure. The working group should produce its proposals by 31 May 2004. We will explore the possibility of holding a meeting similar to this symposium at that time.

New York, 3 December 2003

The following staff unions and associations have agreed on and support the aforementioned principles:

- ECLAC Staff Association
- ESCAP Staff Council
- FAO Field Staff Association
- Field Staff Union
- ICAO Staff Association
- ICTY Staff Union
- ILO Staff Union Committee
- International Staff Association of UNESCO
- ITC/ILO Executive Committee
- Nairobi Staff Union
- Staff Association of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
- UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Staff Association
- UNHCR Staff Council
- UNICEF Global Staff Association
- UNICTR Staff Association
- United Nations Staff Council at Vienna
- United Nations Staff Union, New York
- UNOG Staff Coordinating Council
- UNU Staff Council
- WIPO Staff Association

COMMON SYSTEM: TOWARDS UNITED ACTION

**INTER-ORGANISATION UNION SYMPOSIUM REPORT**  
**NEW YORK, 1-3 December 2003**

Organised on the initiative of the CCISUA, the Co-ordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations' System, a symposium on "The Future of Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations' common system" was held in New York from 1 to 3 December 2003.

A dozen or so staff unions and associations from various specialised agencies (FAO, ICAO, WIPO, WHO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNHCR, etc.) and subsidiary organisations (Economic Commissions, United Nations New York, Geneva, Nairobi, Vienna, Biodiversity Convention, International Tribunals for Rwanda and Yugoslavia, etc.) as well as two Federations of United Nations' system associations and unions (CCISUA and FICSA) had sent approximately forty delegates.

The ILO Staff Union was represented by the Chairman of its Committee, the Staff Representative of its New York Office and its legal advisor. The Turin Centre's sister union was also well represented, and our two delegations worked actively at all times to make the symposium a success.

According to the agenda put forward by the organisers, the discussions were to relate mainly to the future of the unions, the administration of justice, the safety of staff in the field, mobility, relations between staff and management, and the role of Staff Federations. The aim of the meeting was to identify common problems in terms of United Nations' system conditions of employment, to inform the public and establish a common approach to ensure that the administrations consulted staff representatives to a greater extent.

Before the meeting, the exceptional nature and importance of which it recognised, the ILO Union had sent a memo to those due to attend, proposing in particular that the symposium set up a working party with the task of drafting a common action project within a set timeframe, and of reflecting on the possibility of more consistent action in structural terms as regards the United Nations' system. In other words, the ILO Union was asking for common and pragmatic union action on concrete matters, and hoping that the symposium would not satisfy itself with a mere discussion.

During the first two days of the meeting, discussions focused on observing the difficulties encountered by staff representatives in international organisations such as difficulties in terms of certain associations being recognised by their respective administrations, difficulties in terms of even setting up a limited consultation system and unions' powerlessness regarding certain injustices due to the immunities of common system international organisations.

On the last day of the meeting, inspired by the ILO Staff Union's proposals, the participants finally made a commitment to act together on a list of specific questions of significant common interest, and to create a working party with the task of setting out a series of demands within six months for future action on:

- Implementing measures against the improper use of employment contracts;
- Maximum protection concerning the safety of all United Nations' staff;
- Respect for the right to union representation;
- Protecting international civil servants against arbitrary decisions relating to their conditions of employment;
- Strict application of the Flemming and Noblemaire principles (general services staff salaries and professional staff salaries);
- Guaranteeing the right to welfare protection;
- Defining career development policies, particularly in the context of mobility.

The Symposium decided that this working party would be made up of representatives from CCISUA, the WIPO Staff Association and the ILO Staff Union.

When the Group has completed its work, it will be possible for the first time to envisage presenting the United Nations' General Assembly with a series of clear demands, supported by a common platform for action, on behalf of all Common System staff.

This pragmatic approach, for which our delegation, along with many others, has striven, has already ensured the success of the New York symposium, which was able to end on something concrete.

EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ARE SOMETHING YOU WIN, NOT SOMETHING YOU BEG FOR!

ILO Staff Union - Geneva, December 2003.