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## Open letter to responsible chiefs of the ILO

Geneva, 1 April 2010

### **A response to the new guidelines imposed by HRD regarding the recruitment and selection procedure**

Dear colleagues,

Many of you have been discussing the message coming from HRD regarding the so-called “key principles” governing competition procedures. The Staff Union Committee wishes to draw your attention to these new guidelines which call into question your role, which is to assess the qualifications of the candidates to the competitions for which you are responsible, as well as the role of the technical panels and the entire philosophy of a recruitment system based on a competition procedure.

While we are aware that the Administration often likes to use the term “the Staff Union is blocking” any proposal of change, the staff representatives are in fact standing up for the integrity of the recruitment and selection system. Above all, they defend objective, transparent and fair recruitment procedures.

#### **Today, we ask you to stand up too for the defence of these principles.**

The recruitment and selection procedures are governed by a collective agreement and such a modification should have been the subject of negotiations between the Administration and the Staff Union. But in your quality as managers, you are directly concerned by the scope of the changes imposed by HRD unilaterally and without taking your needs into account.

In short, these principles force you, the panel members and responsible chiefs, to:

- **Respect the confidential nature of the procedure**, which in itself is not a problem, as it is a confidential procedure. However, one is led to wonder why such an obvious message is necessary.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The answer lies in articles 6.2 and 6.3 of the collective agreement (6.2 Internal candidates may request in writing an interview with the responsible chief in order to obtain feedback on the technical evaluation. The interview shall take place, where possible, within ten working days of receipt of the request. At their discretion, they may be accompanied by a member of the Union or another past or

- **Put forward the names of all appointable candidates, with a minimum of two.**
- **And, above all, refrain from ranking the candidates.<sup>2</sup>**

Why did the Administration modify so abruptly the applicable rules?

Several colleagues who had participated in the last RAPS exercise have submitted grievances based on the fact that they had been considered as the most qualified candidates by the technical panels and yet other candidates had been appointed to the positions concerned. It is regrettable that the Administration takes the role of the panel and does not allow you to recruit the person that you consider to be the best qualified for the position.

Competitions should remain the “normal method of filling vacancies between grades G.1 and P.5 inclusive.” We all work for an Organization which defends workers’ rights and conditions of employment and which should hence guarantee a fair and transparent recruitment procedure. Otherwise, what is the point in investing your competence, your judgment, your objectivity, your time, and your energy to recruit the best qualified candidate if your decision is not respected?

You, responsible chiefs, have rights and responsibilities under the Staff Regulations. You are called upon to “undertake and ensure rigorous technical evaluation of all candidates who have successfully completed the Assessment Centre’s process [...]” (paragraph 11, Annex I of the Staff Regulations). The Staff Regulations also clearly indicate that “the paramount consideration in the filling of any vacancy shall be the necessity to obtain a staff of the highest standards of competence, efficiency and integrity” (article 4.2.a *i*) of the Staff Regulations).

We know, because we review the competition files in the exercise of our official functions, that the vast majority of you want to ensure that the results of the competitions be objective and correspond at best to your needs, even though discussions with the staff representatives are sometimes necessary.

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present ILO official. 6.3 Where a candidate is dissatisfied with the result of the interview, s/he may request a written feedback. The feedback will be provided, where possible, within 10 working days of receipt of the request.) These two articles allow for a meeting between responsible chiefs and unsuccessful candidates with a view to analyzing the reasons for which the latter were not selected. This is the link between the recruitment and selection policy, on the one hand, and the policy on career development, on the other hand. It is also the safeguard which permits unsuccessful candidates to appeal against a recruitment and selection decision. During this meeting, candidates could be informed on how they had been ranked in the competition procedure. It appears that in the RAPS/2/2009, several responsible chiefs have informed candidates that they had been ranked first in the competition to which they had participated, but that the Director-General had decided to appoint other candidates.

<sup>2</sup> The decision not to rank the candidates would allow for a greater opacity in the final decision-making and prevent candidates from launching an appeal. Indeed, the Director-General no longer needs to justify the appointment of a given candidate, and this amounts to direct selection. Unsuccessful candidates would no longer be ranked and could not be fully informed on their qualifications, aspire to another position with similar requirements nor raise a possible irregularity in the competition procedure.

These new guidelines were not discussed with you, responsible chiefs, nor with us, members of the Staff Union Committee. We are therefore asking you whether you can continue to play your role in full objectivity and professionalism.

- **The Staff Union Committee wishes to assure you that there is nothing which obliges you to violate the long-standing good practice of ranking candidates according to their performance in the competition.**
- **In addition, should you conclude that only one candidate is appointable – particularly given the new unilateral changes restricting the number of short-listed candidates – there is nothing that stands in the way of your doing so.**
- **Finally, we reiterate that it is in fact the duty of a manager (and not HRD) to provide honest and comprehensive feedback to a candidate who is unsuccessful in a competition.**

We count on you, as key actors in the recruitment and selection procedure, to safeguard its integrity as well as the reputation of our Organization.

Yours sincerely,



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Chairperson,  
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