



# Staff Union



## U.N. STAFF ASSOCIATIONS / UNIONS:

### - WORKING TOGETHER ON COMMON SYSTEM ISSUES – PROGRESS REPORT

1. At an informal meeting held in ICAO (Montreal) on 16 July 2004 at the invitation of ICAO Staff Association, representatives of the ILO Staff Union, of the WIPO Staff Association, of the UNOG Coordinating Council / CCISUA exchanged views on practical approaches to ensure better and more efficient action of staff representatives across the UN system to jointly address common system issues and concerns. The representatives of the UNIDO Staff Union, also present in Montreal, subsequently endorsed the conclusions that follow.
2. It was noted that the successful experience of participants' representatives over the past decade has shown that representatives from all organizations could usefully maintain close relations between meetings, and agree on common positions in the interest of staff through permanent and positive dialogue among peers. The recent experience of the Rome meeting has shown that well informed participants and staff Unions / Associations representatives may rapidly reach common positions on burning issues – and that this can be expanded beyond concerns related to the future of the pension scheme.
3. The ICSC and indeed the HR Network meet twice a year in sessions where issues affecting the common system are decided upon, which affect the staff as a whole.
4. A practical way of ensuring that the opinion of staff representatives expressed on the ICSC or the HR Network be fully taken into account, is to ensure that this opinion corresponds to what staff actually think and endorse across the system.
5. To achieve this participatory representation, the following might be considered:
  - (a) Staff Unions / Associations should remain in permanent contact via e-mail networking, using New York symposium and other available mailing lists to establish the network;
  - (b) Ahead of each common system rendez-vous (HR Network, ICSC, UNJSPB) staff representatives would consider the agenda to be considered and available documentation, and share by e-mail preliminary opinions, draft discussion papers and notes, analysis conducted in respective organizations, to hopefully achieve common views and positions on individual items. Video or telephone conferences could also be useful at low cost in facilitating the attainment of common positions among all concerned staff representatives;
  - (c) A couple of weeks before the meeting takes place, a few representatives – typically those to attend ICSC/HR Network sessions and those most interested/active/available among Federations and individual staff Associations / Unions part to the participatory representation process - would gather for a two days discussion, to try and achieve common positions in terms of proposed joint statement submitted to the Network, and subsequently to be delivered in the name of all those that endorse it – i.e. the widest possible constituency, across organizations and across duty stations.

6. It would be possible to test this approach already for the Spring session of the ICSC, and indeed to initiate discussions without delay around recurrent topics on ICSC agenda, such as the Noblemaire principle, and the review of pay and benefits system.
7. It was noted in this respect that the ICSC Statutes clearly specify (art. 28.2) that “ ... staff representatives shall have the right, collectively or separately, to present facts and views on any matter within the competence of the Commission”, and that in that respect “"Staff representatives" means representatives of the staff of a participating organization recognized in accordance with the staff regulations and rules of the organization or, as the context may require, such representatives from several or from all participating organizations”.
8. To ensure equal access to documentation from ICSC website, all Staff Associations / Unions are invited to request ICSC to provide them with ad hoc username / password which they are entitled to receive pursuant to ICSC rules of procedure 5 and 8.
9. It was suggested that the ILO Staff Union pass the above message to addressees of its previous (attached) communication dated 7 July 2004, to CCISUA, to FICSA and to other UN Common System Staff Associations / Unions.

Done in Montreal, this 19th day of July of 2004,  
(signed) Jean-Victor Gruat,  
Chair, ILO Staff Union Committee



## **UN COMMON SYSTEM: PERCEIVED NEED FOR CLOSER AND MORE SYSTEMATIC CONSULTATIONS AMONG STAFF ASSOCIATIONS / UNIONS**

### **The ILO Staff Union to:**

- *All ILO Staff Union Field Representatives for submitting to other local staff Associations and Unions;*
- *The ICAO Staff Association;*
- *The Staff Union of the ITC, Turin;*
- *The ITU Staff Union;*
- *The UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Staff Association;*
- *The International Staff Association of UNESCO;*
- *The UNHCR Staff Council;*
- *The UNICEF Global Staff Association;*
- *The UNIDO Staff Association;*
- *The UNOG Staff Coordinating Council;*
- *The United Nations Staff Union in New York;*
- *The United Nations Staff Council in Vienna;*
- *The WIPO Staff Association*

Geneva, 7 July 2004.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As you of course know, the ILO Staff Union is very much preoccupied with the fact that ICSC has apparently entered into a phase where it lashes out in all directions against rights, entitlements, conditions of employment – as part of a coherent process which should in our view attract an equally coherent and strong response from staff representatives.

It is no secret that we also feel that staff representation across the UN common system should be more proactive, and promote its own views on what employment and working conditions should become, as well as on how collective bargaining should be generalized to achieve sound and constructive labour relations within and across our respective organizations.

We had hoped that the initiative taken by CCISUA to convene last December in New York a Symposium on the Future of Staff Unions and Associations in the United Nations Common System would represent a decisive step in this direction, but it seems that, for a variety of reasons, real progress is not happening in this area.

Furthermore, the ILO Staff Union delegation at the informal Geneva Group inter-organisations meeting held a few days ago was told politely but clearly that the Geneva Group was not the forum to raise concerns related to the common system.

We are therefore left with a situation where there is in fact no instance where staff representatives from the various organizations have the opportunity to consult with each other, all of them, on matters of obvious common interest – which definitely all the more weakens our position vis-à-vis the ICSC that universal, informed staff representatives position may be achieved at best after decisions are made or almost cooked, i.e. in a defensive hence vulnerable position.

The ILO Staff Union is not satisfied with this situation, even though we of course never fail to make our voice heard by the ICSC, and do not hesitate to mobilize our Field structure to share our worries and proposals for action with colleagues from other Agencies – who indeed responded very swiftly and favourably to our recent calls for joint action concerning either pension matters, or local salaries.

Our Staff Union Committee, meeting on 7 July 2004, therefore requested me to contact a few Staff Associations / Unions with which traditionally the ILO Staff Union entertains close and constructive direct relations, to seek their views concerning the possibility to establish among ourselves a kind of **informal Union ICSC – Inter-organizational Common System Connection** - that would facilitate contacts and exchange of information among those who so wish, and be conducive to a united approach backed by staff whom we represent on issues of common interest especially those related to conditions of service and of employment.

We do not see this proposal as a substitute to existing Federations for those Associations / Unions that are affiliated to inter-organizational groupings, be it on a local basis through FUNSA type arrangements, or via FICSA or CCISUA. On the contrary, we are of the opinion that systematically consulting and hopefully reaching agreement on a common position among the widest possible array of representatives would definitely contribute to the strength of such groupings, when addressing common system bodies and delegates on the basis of demands, positions and commitments explicitly endorsed by a broad variety of staff representatives.

Turning the idea of an informal “Union ICSC” – or whatever title we may chose – into an operational mechanism is in fact extremely simple. It is just a matter of good will and pragmatism, to be greatly facilitated by modern means of communication, which requires no complicated set of rules of procedure of any kind.

The ICSC is to hold a session in New York within the next few weeks. It would indeed be an important message to pass on to them, and to the Human Resources Network already preparing for this session, that a number of UN Staff Associations and Unions have decided to henceforth put their acts together to openly and decidedly mobilize with the staff against any attempt to jeopardize employment and working conditions in the International Civil Service.

We therefore look forward to your urgent and hopefully positive reaction to the above proposal, as well, of course, to any suggestion you may have in this respect.

In brotherhood,

Jean-Victor Gruat,

Chair

ILO Staff Union Committee