



NINTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**Reports of the Programme, Financial and
Administrative Committee**

Second report: Personnel questions

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1. The Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee met from 12 to 13 November and was chaired by Mr. Chung (Government, Republic of Korea). Mr. Les Kettledas (Government, South Africa) was the Reporter.

I. Statement by the staff representative

2. The statement by the staff representative is appended to the present report.

II. Amendments to the Staff Regulations: Amendments approved by the Director-General (Fifteenth item on the agenda)

3. The Chairperson introduced agenda item 15.
4. Mr. Botha, on behalf of the Employers' group, noted the contents of the paper before the Committee¹ and thanked Mr. Gruat for his extremely interesting and very positive presentation.
5. Mr. Blondel, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group, noted the document. Referring to the staff representative's statement, he pointed out that no mention had been made of the disappointment of staff members in P1-P3 grades, who had not received an increase in their salaries.
6. As no other members took the floor, the report was noted.

III. Human Resources Strategy: Update (Seventeenth item on the agenda)

7. The Chairperson informed the Committee that as there had been no exceptions to the Staff Regulations, no paper had been submitted as the sixteenth item on the agenda. He offered the floor to Mr. Ng, Director of the Human Resources Development Department, to make some brief remarks on the paper before the Committee.²
8. Mr. Ng informed the Committee of three issues. First, he referred to the conclusion of the review of the collective recognition and procedural agreement and the text of the accompanying circular on the release of Staff Union representatives to exercise their function. An important issue raised by the Governing Body in previous sessions had been addressed. The original text of the agreement had stated that the provisions of the agreement should take precedence over relevant provisions of the Staff Regulations in the event of conflict between the two texts. Members of the Governing Body had earlier expressed their concern about this provision. In the revised agreement, this wording has been deleted and replaced by the following text: "The implementation of agreement shall be subject, where appropriate, to the authority of the Governing Body concerning approval

¹ GB.288/PFA/15.

² GB.288/PFA/17.

of amendments to the Staff Regulations or of the resources necessary to enforce the agreement.”

9. Mr. Ng’s second remark concerned the issue of over-grading in the Office. This was an area of major concern both to the Committee and to the Office itself. As indicated in the document, the Office has taken further steps to reduce the average grade level. Concrete measures were being introduced to achieve this objective and Mr. Ng assured the Committee that the Office would take every opportunity to develop a more rational and appropriate grading structure in the Office in the shortest possible time.
10. Finally, Mr. Ng discussed the issue of staff development and training. This issue was linked to the use of cash surplus allocation, to meet management challenges – a subject which had prompted a number of comments from the Committee when they had reviewed agenda item 8 on the use of the cash surplus. He stressed the importance of staff development in a knowledge-based organization which spent around 80 per cent of its budget on staff costs. Mr. Ng also reminded the Committee that the External Auditor’s report on human resources presented in March 2003 had noted that the Office’s current allocation for staff training was very low. In the context of reviewing the 2004-05 Programme and Budget proposals, the Director-General again emphasized the need to use cash surplus to support the development of a fully functioning results-based management culture throughout the Office. Indeed, the 2000-01 cash surplus allocation to the management challenge provided the Office with a unique opportunity to achieve this goal. Mr. Ng noted that the cash surplus allocation would lay the foundations for a new organizational learning and development framework across the Office, to provide its managers and staff with sufficient capacity to meet the challenges ahead. This would require analysing needs and designing appropriate responses, involving line managers and the Staff Union and in cooperation with the Turin Centre and the United Nations System Staff College. Mr. Ng reported to the Committee that this preparatory phase would soon be completed and the Office would be able to commence implementation of the surplus proposal at the beginning of 2004. Full and effective use of the surplus fund would be made to finance various pilot activities for improving the content, approaches and fully developing active partnership and for preparing the necessary building blocks for a more effective learning and developing framework. The Human Resources Development Department was working – and would continue to work – closely with the IRIS project team to ensure that respective training efforts were well coordinated and that all opportunities were examined to direct available training funds to the highest priority needs.
11. Mr. Botha, speaking on behalf of the Employer members, recognized and appreciated the openness of the Office in sharing information with the PFAC in this whole area – and it was a difficult area – of human resources. He also indicated areas of concern: the issue of young professionals; the length of time taken to recruit staff and the process of selection on merit; the utilization of assessment centres, the lack of evaluation criteria, the serious over-grading problem which had been raised; and lastly, the little or no planning for replacements which has been evidenced during some of the meetings. The Employers’ group felt that the Office should consider establishing an oversight committee to monitor the Human Resources Strategy.
12. Mr. Botha looked forward to receiving a more substantial report on the Human Resources Strategy at the March 2004 session that would specifically highlight the changes made in the approach from the original policy document presented to the Committee in 1999. He noted from paragraph 3 of the document that the Senior Management Team had extensively discussed and, as appropriate, made decisions on issues concerning staff training and management development, succession planning, gender equity, the Office grading structure and communication. He added that some of those decisions could, in fact, be shared with the Committee.

13. Mr. Blondel, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group, felt that the statement by the staff representative reflected the concerns spelt out in document GB.288/PFA/17. Relations now seemed to be normal and efficient between the Staff Union, the management and the Human Resources Development Department. The Workers' group would like, however, to have details on the nature of the difficulties encountered with the implementation of the two agreements. He seconded the Employer Vice-Chairperson's statement on training and allocation of posts. It was necessary to recruit and train young professionals, both men and women, so that they would be able, in due course, to replace officials leaving – without having to recruit from outside. He believed that the fruitful experience over the past ten years should be renewed. Leaving it up to the heads of departments to recruit directly could give rise to abuses which were even more serious because they were not visible. The speaker ended by expressing his satisfaction once again that relations between the Staff Union and the Human Resources Development Department had improved.
14. The representative of the Government of the United States commended the Office for preparing this useful and informative update and appreciated the input of Mr. Ng and Mr. Gruat. He supported the introduction of innovative and effective human resources measures at the ILO, and emphasized that such measures should be consistent with the United Nations system's core elements, such as pay levels, classification and grading standards, leave policy and other benefits. While the Governing Body should not involve itself in the details of the negotiation of collective agreements, it should provide oversight on the general scope and parameters of these agreements. To assist the Governing Body in its oversight role, he requested the Office to provide the Governing Body in a timely manner with a written copy of the collective bargaining agreements and an analysis of the consistency of those agreements with the United Nations common system.
15. The representative also expressed concern with the serious over-grading problem at the ILO which the External Auditor had highlighted. Prompt implementation of a workable plan to solve this over-grading problem was essential. The plan should include the specific measures the Office intended to take, as well as milestones to monitor progress in correcting the problem. Further, he called on the Office to work expeditiously to implement the new master standard for job grading classification which will soon be issued by the International Civil Service Commission to ensure that the ILO's job grading and classification system was compatible with the new United Nations common system as soon as possible. He requested the Office to provide a progress report on this matter to the Governing Body in March 2004. Finally, the emphasis being placed on the mobility of ILO Professional staff between headquarters and the field was welcomed. The implementation of an effective policy could significantly enhance Professional staff skills. The representative of the Government of the United States looked forward to learning more about the new mobility policy being developed by the Office at the March 2004 Governing Body.
16. The representative of the Government of India congratulated the Office on behalf of the Asia and Pacific group for producing this useful document on the Human Resources Strategy being pursued by the ILO since its adoption in 1999. The group was pleased to note that the Office was making efforts to improve all areas of human resources management in the Organization and had taken a step towards implementing the changes recommended by the External Auditor. The group believed that greater efforts should be made to improve the number of Office staff from under-represented countries which would create a greater level of sensitivity about cultural and developmental diversity. Despite recent developments to improve national diversity the group believed that there was still a long way to go. Almost one-third of the population lived in the Asia-Pacific region, whose members paid nearly 30 per cent of the contributions of the ILO. As only 16.8 per cent of the Professional staff of the ILO came from the Asia-Pacific region, it was needless to say that this number of Professional staff in the ILO was too small. Moreover, six out of 11

Arab States were not represented. However, the group noted with satisfaction that paragraph 12 of the report mentioned that the Office was developing an appropriate strategy for improving national diversity and sourcing candidates from non- and under-represented countries. The group welcomed this approach.

17. The Asia and Pacific group had constantly held the view that there was a need to increase the number of women in management positions at the headquarters and in the field offices of the ILO in order to ensure gender equality. The group was pleased to note from the report that the Office had made progress in recent years to improve gender equality and was committed to increasing female representation at senior levels from its current level of 25 per cent to 33 per cent by 2005. The group strongly supported the efforts of the ILO to correct significant over-grading identified by the External Auditor and hoped that it would take less time than the four years currently estimated.
18. The Office's work on contract and policy reform was also commended, as was the reduction in the time for the recruitment process. Nevertheless, the group believed that this time frame should be reduced even further as 246 days was too long a time to fill a vacancy. The group also welcomed the strategy undertaken by the Office, outlined in paragraph 12, under which advertisements had been placed in a range of publications in various regions to attract candidates with specific profiles. However, the group would like to point out that such information often reached the region quite late, and the prospective candidates were left with very little time to apply before the deadline. The group would therefore request the Office to ensure that such information was circulated to the various regions well in time, so that the candidates would be able to put in their application before the due date.
19. There was a need for recruitment of young professionals at the ILO headquarters and in the field offices. Recruitment processes should be merit-based and as transparent as possible. Extra efforts should also be made to identify and recruit young professionals from the countries that were currently under-represented.
20. The Asia and Pacific group welcomed the level of commitment that the Office had shown to staff mobility as this would play a very important role in building a strong corporate identity and boosting the capability of field offices – both of which were central to the effective delivery of the results on the ground. The group also supported further work on the development of key performance indicators for human resources policies. In conclusion, the group looked forward to receiving a substantial report on the implementation of this strategy to be prepared by the Office and submitted to this Committee at the next session in March 2004.
21. The representative of the Government of China considered that the Human Resources Strategy was extremely well developed, comprehensive and sound because it allowed the Office to enrich the staff's experience, and to develop competence, build team spirit, and make full use of their potential. As regards recruitment and selection, China welcomed initiatives to simplify and reduce the time necessary to recruit staff to within five months, as well as efforts to improve national diversity in all regions.
22. The representative of the Government of Canada welcomed the updated report and looked forward to receiving a more substantive report at the March 2004 session of the Governing Body that would include timetables and action plans to deal with some of the points that had been raised by other speakers. The representative also welcomed the initiatives that had been flagged by the Director-General in his address on security.
23. The representative of the Government of Japan appreciated the Office's efforts in submitting this report as the human resource strategy was essential for the ILO's future. He

appreciated the Office's initial efforts to review its grading structure and looked forward to receiving a more substantial report in March 2004. By promoting gender equity and equitable geographical distribution and reviewing its grading structure, the Office would build staff capacity within a more streamlined and effective Organization. The Office also needed to take concrete action on its plans on national diversity and grading, setting numerical targets for each policy, as it is doing on gender equality. The representative also strongly supported a policy of staff mobility.

24. The representative of the Government of the Russian Federation thanked the ILO for presenting this document. His first observation was on the collective agreements and he asked for a guarantee that this matter should not only be dealt with by the administration and Staff Union but also by the Governing Body. A narrow representation was considered insufficient. As regards the first agreement, he therefore requested information in writing regarding the discussions in March 2004. On post classification, he shared the Director-General's concern that the Office should cease the practice of over-grading. As regards the recruitment of staff, the representative welcomed the reduction in the average time taken for this process and requested a more careful study of how much it cost. On the same subject, he sought evidence that the Office selected the best candidates using an equitable competition system for both internal and external candidates. For instance, if the Office had an assessment system for external candidates, it would be logical to apply the same system for internal candidates. This should be clarified in the March 2004 policy paper.
25. The representative also stressed the importance of maintaining a performance appraisal system to recognize good and bad performance, with rewards for good work. Finally, as regards monitoring and evaluation, the representative reiterated his delegation's request to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy through a cost-benefit analysis. He therefore requested an analysis of the cost of implementing the Human Resources Strategy compared with the impact of the strategy on productivity of ILO staff.
26. Mr. Blondel, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group, was of the opinion that the Governing Body should not be involved in discussions concerning collective agreements. Entire responsibility should lie with the Director-General and the Staff Union. However, the Workers' group wished to be informed and made familiar with the relevant documents.
27. As there were no further interventions, the Chairperson requested the Committee to approve paragraph 34 to note progress made in implementing the Human Resources Strategy.

IV. Pensions questions – Report of the Board of the Special Payments Fund (Eighteenth item on the agenda)

28. The Chairperson introduced item 18 on pensions questions. However, as no comments were made on the document before the Committee,³ the report was duly noted.

³ GB.288/PFA/18.

V. Report of the International Civil Service Commission
(Nineteenth item on the agenda)

29. The report of the International Civil Service Commission was submitted to the Committee for information purposes.⁴ As there were no comments, the report was duly noted.

VI. Matters relating to the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO
(Twentieth item on the agenda)

(a) Recognition of the Tribunal's jurisdiction by the International Olive Oil Council (IOOC)

30. The Committee had before it a paper⁵ on the recognition of the Tribunal's jurisdiction by the International Olive Oil Council.

31. *The Committee recommends to the Governing Body that it approve the recognition of the Tribunal's jurisdiction by the International Olive Oil Council (IOOC), with effect from the date of such approval.*

(b) Statute of the Tribunal

32. The Committee had before it, for information purposes, a document⁶ concerning the progress made in modifications to the Statute of the ILO Administrative Tribunal since its last meeting. The Legal Adviser referred to the reservations and objections raised by a number of organizations that had accepted the Tribunal's jurisdiction as to the modalities concerning the trade unions' and staff associations' ability to take action. He felt that most of the objections could be overcome during consultations with the legal services of these organizations – to be held before the next meeting of the Governing Body. At this stage and depending on the outcome of the consultations, he would be in a position to provide the Governing Body with three options: either a text that could be accepted by the organizations that had accepted the Tribunal's jurisdiction; or, in the event that it had been impossible to overcome these objections, either to propose a text applicable to the ILO alone or to maintain the present text and provide for an option for the organizations concerned.

33. Mr. Blondel, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group, drew attention to two unsatisfactory situations that might arise if the last two options were adopted: on the one hand, there might be a risk that specialized agencies would withdraw their statement of recognition of the jurisdiction of the ILO Administrative Tribunal which would undermine a tribunal of which his group was proud; on the other hand, it might result in a Tribunal that would operate according to different standards for all organizations that had accepted

⁴ GB.288/PFA/19.

⁵ GB.288/PFA/20/1.

⁶ GB.288/PFA/20/2.

its jurisdiction and for the ILO. He stated his preference for the first option put forward by the Legal Adviser and urged him to create the conditions necessary to achieve this.

34. The Committee noted the document, the explanations provided by the Legal Adviser and the wishes expressed by the Workers' group.

VII. Other personnel questions: Examination of the situation regarding renewal of the terms of office of executive heads of organizations of the United Nations system
(Twenty-first item on the agenda)

35. The Committee had before it, for information purposes, a document⁷ concerning renewal of the terms of office of executive heads of organizations of the United Nations system.
36. Mr. Botha, on behalf of the Employers' group, took note of the document.
37. The representative of the Government of India, speaking on behalf of the countries of the Asia and Pacific group, noted that the majority of United Nations agencies were in the process of introducing limits for the renewal of the terms of office of their executive heads. Resolution 51/241 of the United Nations General Assembly had invited all the specialized agencies to consider the length of and limitations on renewal of the terms of office of their executive heads. Term limits were not targeted at individuals but were a response to the needs of a complex and fast-changing world. The countries of the Asia and Pacific group considered that it would be useful to create a tripartite working group, which would report to the next Governing Body meeting, to carry out a necessarily detailed examination of the introduction of limits to the length of ILO terms of office.
38. The representative of the Government of the United Kingdom, speaking on behalf of the IMEC group, also recalled the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 51/241 of 1997 on strengthening the United Nations system. The document submitted showed that the vast majority of organizations of the United Nations system had introduced limitations on the length of terms of office and on the number of times they could be renewed, and that the ILO was the only Geneva-based agency still not to have seriously addressed the issue. The IMEC group firmly supported the principle of limiting all executive heads of agencies to two terms, as this would ensure that the organizations would benefit from a regular revitalization of leadership and management. The introduction of such a policy in each United Nations agency represented a joint commitment for both its membership and its secretariat to reform and to the adoption of modern management principles. The representative stressed that this position related solely to the principle of term limits and was not related to any individual Director-General. For this reason, the IMEC group considered that the Governing Body should discuss the introduction of term limits now, when the Director-General had been re-elected by a landslide majority, in order that there would be no confusion. She recalled that the principle of term limits could be adopted by the Governing Body through a simple amendment to the Staff Regulations. Detailed discussion of this matter could take place in a formal tripartite discussion before the March 2004 Governing Body meeting.

⁷ GB.288/PFA/21/1.

39. The representative of the Government of Italy, speaking on behalf of the Members and future Members of the European Union which are members of the Governing Body, indicated that the European Union supported the current process in organizations of the United Nations system to limit the number of terms of office held by executive heads. This principle was intended to establish effective and coherent management rules and good governance in the context of reform of the United Nations. He proposed that a truly tripartite discussion should take place before the next Governing Body meeting.
40. The representative of the Government of the Russian Federation concurred with the previous speakers. He agreed with the usefulness of a unified practice on this issue in the UN family and expressed the desire that this issue be examined by a small tripartite group.
41. The representative of the Government of Ecuador, speaking on behalf of GRULAC, noted that the Office document showed that there were no uniform standards regarding the term of office of executive heads of organizations. While GRULAC considered that re-election for indefinite periods of time limited the chances for nationals of different regions to accede to such positions, it was of the opinion that it would be premature at this stage for the Governing Body to take any decision. GRULAC considered that governments needed more time to examine this question in regard to both substance and procedure. She therefore said that GRULAC wished the Governing Body to defer its examination to a future session and was not in a position to accept the proposal to set up a working group on the issue.
42. The representative of the Government of South Africa, speaking on behalf of the African group, noted that the document had been submitted for the purposes of information and did not contain any point for decision. He considered that the African group needed time to hold consultations on this matter, and that its position would be presented when the question was debated for decision. Furthermore, with the support of the Government of Ecuador, speaking on behalf of GRULAC, and the Governments of Argentina and Brazil, he indicated that he had no mandate to agree to formal or informal consultations in this regard.
43. In response to a question from the representative of the Government of the United Kingdom as to whether a mandate was necessary or not in order to hold informal consultations, the Legal Adviser recalled that the principal characteristic of informal consultations was clearly their informality. Consequently, holding informal consultations, the aim of which was to resolve issues before holding formal consultations, did not require a formal mandate which, in any case, would deprive them of their informal nature.
44. Mr. Blondel, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group, recalled that the length of the term of office was something of a secondary issue to his group. What was important was that the three groups should agree on a choice of Director-General who would meet the needs of the ILO, and to make that choice in total independence – that is to say, without having to take into account political considerations which went beyond the mandate of the ILO. He stated that the fact that he had not requested the document did not signify a lack of interest in the issue, and he reserved the right to take the floor in all future official or other discussions.
45. The representative of the Government of the United States observed that it seemed difficult to reach an agreement at this stage, but that it was important that the members did not entrench themselves in their positions and cease discussion. Thus, since there would be truly informal discussions amongst those interested in moving ahead in this area, it would probably be a good idea to hear those who had concerns about this idea.

46. The Chairperson noted that there was disagreement among the Government group and hoped that the discussions to take place would allow both sides to understand each other's points of view.

Geneva, 18 November 2003.

Point for decision: Paragraph 31.

Appendix

Statement by the representative of the Staff Union

The Staff Union Committee is preparing to welcome new members elected at headquarters, and the second session of our Annual General Meeting has just taken place, so it seems to me a good time to give a brief review of the way we see things have gone during 2003, a year during which our activities will have been in the hands of an almost completely new team.

A year of renewed contacts

Both the Union team and that of the administration were new when the first contacts were established in December 2002. The fact that we were able to start afresh, without any inherited antagonisms, certainly made it easier to re-establish social dialogue.

The path of consultation and collective bargaining was thus open to us once again, and some important advances were made, thanks especially to the climate of pragmatism and mutual respect which prevailed during the discussions of the Joint Negotiating Committee.

Among these advances, we can note that:

- A new reclassification procedure was adopted.
- Significant progress was made towards revision of the disputes settlement agreements, with the aim of simplifying them, using them more effectively and improving the protection of staff members' interests.
- The proposed reform of the Administrative Tribunal remains on track, even if it is advancing slowly (this was to be expected).
- The periodical titularization and promotion exercises proceeded smoothly.
- The role of Union representatives, in the field and at headquarters, won greater recognition.
- The Office should soon have a policy on the employment of disabled people and a policy on the induction of interns.
- Existing occupational safety and health mechanisms are in the process of being updated.
- The administration and the Staff Union are working on ways of dealing with the negative human effects of restructuring exercises in Geneva and in the field.
- There is a trend towards greater transparency with regard to mobility; the Joint Training Council is monitoring the implementation of pilot Personal Development Plans (PDPs).
- The ILO is leading the common system when it comes to security for its staff, both local and international.
- Respect for linguistic diversity (especially French and Spanish) is an undisputed positive feature of the ILO.
- The Office speaks with one voice when it comes to challenging certain initiatives or attitudes on the part of common system bodies – especially some proposals concerning pensions and local salaries. We hope this will also be the case if and when we are obliged to adjust contributions to our medical insurance fund, which, despite a considerable increase in medical costs, have remained unchanged for 14 years.

Some difficulties persist

At the same time, some of the procedures and areas of discord of the past are unfortunately still with us and put a strain on relations between staff and management, particularly with regard to individual cases, protection against arbitrary decisions, regular employment or simply the right to be heard by the administration.

The Staff Union must therefore take advantage of its authority by putting some new proposals on the table, concerning for example precarious “seasonal” workers or the part-timers working in

different jobs and departments, whose employment and social conditions are not what might reasonably be expected of an institution like ours.

We have also drawn the attention of senior management to the traditional system of performance appraisals which has hardly changed, with all that this implies in terms of arbitrary decisions. A Reports Board which did not include any staff representatives managed to survive the criticism directed at it and the performance appraisal procedures by your Committee in March 2001.

Bureaucracy sometimes gets in the way of recruiting or promoting women and young officials, and the assessment centres are increasingly becoming an impediment, rather than a useful tool. Reform of recruitment and selection procedures will certainly be one of the main areas of work in 2004.

Staff working away from headquarters, and in particular local staff, have the feeling – alas, all too often with good reason – of being left out of consultations, and mindsets are sometimes very hard to change, despite the clear commitment of the Director-General. In particular, our colleagues in the branch offices in the industrialized countries are acutely sensitive to what they regard as the inherent unfairness of their different treatment in terms of contracts, training and career development. There have been calls for an in-depth review of the discriminatory provisions in this area for more than 40 years but it has never taken place, despite the fact that we and the local staff and their managers have been pushing for one. Nothing has come of the commitment undertaken three years ago by representatives of the Director-General.

Because procedures are so slow, we are still waiting for the results of the 2000-01 reclassification exercise, and the administration and the Staff Union are seeking ways of making the Independent Review Group more effective.

Attempts to combat fraud, which were on a “back burner” for so long, are bearing some bitter fruit, albeit late in the day, and strike some very vulnerable members of staff. The Staff Union has sometimes had a hard time making its case heard for a reasonable degree of leniency.

Lastly, too much time has been spent by the common system on the search for lasting solutions to improve the situation of domestic partners of officials. This inertia is becoming intolerable for everyone concerned, and there has been no real development since this issue was first discussed two years ago. We believe that the ILO has the right, the duty and the wherewithal to move ahead, and should not lag behind other organizations such as the World Bank.

A full agenda

On the other hand, the difficulties that persist should certainly not make us forget the problems which we have managed to overcome. The former remind us how far we still have to go; the latter show us that progress is possible.

The document GB.288/PFA/17 which you have before you presents an effort to update the ILO’s Human Resources Strategy. I would now like to consider this strategy in a little more detail, going through each agenda item in turn.

Collective bargaining – I am happy to report that discussions within the Joint Negotiating Committee on our proposed common programme are proceeding smoothly and effectively. There is no reason for this to change, and the sound state of relations in this key collective bargaining body give the Staff Union, staff members and the Director-General, every reason to feel confident. The Committee faces a full agenda in the coming months, and will have to become familiar with every aspect of an ambitious and multifaceted human resources policy.

Job classification – With regard to job classification, the Staff Union is determined, with all the means available to it, to assert the principle that the only attitude that can be tolerated in the international civil service is respect for law. In other words, under our system grades must depend on the duties involved, rather than on any contingent considerations. A change in the grading structure can therefore only be achieved gradually, as posts become vacant, and in the light of opportunities resulting from restructuring initiatives undertaken in accordance with existing rules. But nothing of any real substance will be achieved unless the desired structural changes are based on recruitment procedures that promote overall objectives, on in-depth consultations with staff aimed at defining practical means of restructuring, and on constant efforts to practice transparency, fairness and equality of opportunity in the management of human and labour relations.

Prospection, recruitment and selection – The document you have before you describes some notable advances that have been made in shortening the recruitment process. However, Staff Union representatives directly involved in this process believe that this information should be interpreted with caution. It refers to only one period – the first half of 2003 – during which the Human Resources Development Department dealt with relatively few recruitments and a number of precarious contracts were regularized, which takes little time once the objectives have been identified. The procedure itself is also open to criticism in a number of respects: the assessment centres in some cases have acted as the sole and final decision-making body; it is far from clear that their methods and testing procedures are geared to the cultural diversity of our organization; gathering of data crucial to effective career planning is slow and not sufficiently coordinated to support a medium-term strategy; and some line managers, whose prerogatives in this area have been enhanced, prefer to look outside the Office for higher level recruitment, rather than trying to facilitate internal promotion. In short, the Staff Union representatives believe that a good deal more than just cosmetic measures will be required when recruitments and selection procedures are reviewed in 2004.

Gender equality – Gender inequalities persist, and will continue to do so until those principally affected by it are given the means of enforcing the desired policies. This applies to recruitment, it applies to career planning and it applies to training.

How can the representation of women in senior posts be improved, while we also attempt to redress the balance in grade structure? The Office document seems to put its faith (no doubt with good reason) in the recruitment of young professionals. We must not forget, however, that not so long ago (barely ten years), recruitment of young female professionals was an accepted practice, and was easy to implement. Those young women have all shown themselves to be excellent officials; but they have not – with a few exceptions – made much headway in terms of career advancement during those ten years, simply because when the time came, the Office looked to outside candidates to fill the more senior posts for which the women in question had not been prepared, although the eventual need for replacements was known well in advance.

Past experience thus showed us that getting women into the senior grades could not be achieved in the short term without a targeted policy of recruitment at those grades, or without clearly defined objectives by sector and by region.

The absence of career prospects, the feeling of being forgotten, is not unique to young professional men and women. The same applies to the general service category: is it not true that most of those promoted to the national professional grades are men? How do we stand in terms of gender equality when it comes to the transition between “local” and “international” careers – a transition which other organizations in the United Nations family seem to manage with far less difficulty than the ILO?

Listing the difficulties and referring to past mistakes does not mean giving up on the idea of achieving progress. When it comes to equality of opportunity, then, as in other fields, the Staff Union will not give up, even if the road is a long and hard one. But we believe that words alone are not enough, goodwill alone is not enough, and a fundamental change in culture will be needed if our declared aims are to be achieved.

Career development – The introduction of Personal Development Plans (PDPs) was in its way a minor change in culture, and one which met with the wholehearted agreement of the Staff Union and colleagues in the sectors where pilot PDPs were introduced. The assessment of these Plans has been positive thus far. There is great interest in them, even beyond the pilot sectors. It is already clear that the PDP can be valuable both as a training tool and as a means of integration and planning. Using PDPs in pursuit of the Office’s overall human resources objectives appears to be a promising approach.

It seems reasonable to differentiate between PDPs and performance appraisals, even if there is some overlap between the two. And performance appraisal is an area where, in the view of the Staff Union, major efforts will be needed to create mechanisms that are honest, efficient and generally accepted. The present system has not been changed for decades, despite this Committee’s decision in March 2001 to undertake an in-depth reform. The current system is obsolete and leads to some perverse effects. The unilateral action taken in response to performance appraisals sometimes seems more like score settling. The Staff Union is therefore anxious to enter into serious discussions with the administration on the different aspects of the performance appraisal system.

Staff mobility – As for staff mobility, another recurrent theme in staff-management relations at the ILO, the Staff Union can only confirm that the consultations that have been held by the Human Resources Development Department have been extensive, serious and productive. All of us – staff from headquarters and the regions, men and women, single people and those with families, local and expatriate staff, line managers and their staff, new recruits and experienced officials, those who are mobile and those settled in one locality – have contributed our ideas in what has been a reasonably broad exercise in freedom of expression.

What we now have to do, together with the representatives of the Director-General, is to analyse the information obtained so far in the light of the Organization's needs and to lay the foundations for a new policy which everyone will be able to support, one based on the freely given consent of all those involved, one which will include measures to prepare people for their return as well as for their departure, as well as help for those in the process of moving, and social assistance. This means a policy that reflects the fact that it must be applied in more than one direction – from headquarters to the field, from field to headquarters and between regions – and does not exclude a priori certain categories of staff who can render great service to the Organization outside their countries of birth.

Strengthening the role of managers – Mobility often comes with greater staff management responsibilities for which officials may not be adequately prepared. The Staff Union therefore notes with interest the intentions of the Office to facilitate the “active participation of line managers” in implementing its Human Resources Strategy. Much remains to be done in this area – some of us think a great deal indeed – and we appreciate the efforts by the Human Resources Development Department to raise awareness among line managers of the constraints and obligations inherent in their position, given that they are not always sufficiently aware of the fact that they are managers not only of financial resources but also of human resources.

Contract policy reform – Line managers have often done much to help bring about the regularization of so-called “precarious” contracts. Much progress has been made, as the Office document emphasizes, even if in some cases a long-term solution has yet to be found. The Staff Union has proposed that consultations should now be extended to groups and categories of workers which have a regular but intermittent employment relationship with the Office, or those who combine jobs in different departments or units. We have submitted what we believe to be useful proposals for helping these colleagues who have hitherto had very little protection. I hope that a Staff Union representative will be in a position at the next meeting of this Committee to report on substantial progress.

Field security review

I sincerely hope that at the next meeting, we will not have to mourn the loss of more of our colleagues in the international civil service. The recent period has been a particularly bad one – and the opening on 24 October, United Nations Day, of the monument to officials who have fallen in the line of duty was a solemn and emotional occasion for all of us.

The document you have before you notes a number of advances in security in the field, and we pay tribute to those who have brought about that progress, including the Director-General himself, the Regional Directors, our colleagues in the Human Resources Development Department, and the various Staff Union representatives involved.

We believe that even more can still be done in the area of information, especially measures aimed at helping members of staff least familiar with modern communications techniques or foreign languages, who nevertheless, because of their jobs, face the greatest dangers. We are committed to working actively on this with representatives of the administration and in close collaboration with our field representatives.

With regard to headquarters, we also believe that consideration must be given to reasonable security measures, drawn up in the light of likely risks, and we are prepared to play an active part in any forums where such measures are examined. This might well include discussion on the scope of employer liability with regard to occupational hazards.

And it is with this double commitment on our part, Mr. Chairperson, that I now close. Thank you for your attention.