



NINTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

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

**Second report: Personnel questions**

**Part 1. Items submitted for decision**

**Amendments to the Staff Regulations**  
(Sixth item on the agenda)

1. The Committee had before it a paper<sup>1</sup> on amendments to the Staff Regulations. The Chairperson introduced the paper, noting that the point for decision was contained in paragraph 12.
2. Mr. Blondel, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group, recalled that it was for the Staff Union of the ILO, not the Governing Body, to negotiate on the situation of the staff. He was pleased to see that some of the outstanding issues had been resolved through negotiation and encouraged the parties to pursue their efforts. He also welcomed the fact that, for the first time, the new IRIS system was viewed positively in a document. He supported the point for decision.
3. Mr. Barde, speaking on behalf of the Employers' group, also considered that it was for the Staff Union to negotiate on these issues. That being so, he requested clarification as to the date on which separation from service would take effect under the proposed measures on special leave. Concerning the conflict prevention and resolution procedures, he agreed with the proposed amendments but wondered whether paragraph 1 of article 12.2 proposed by the Office was sufficiently clear.
4. The Director of the Human Resources Development Department explained that the date on which separation from service after special leave would take effect would be at the end of the period of special leave.
5. *The Committee recommends to the Governing Body that it approve the amendments to the Staff Regulations contained in Appendix I.*

<sup>1</sup> GB.295/PFA/6.

**Decisions of the United Nations General Assembly on  
the report of the International Civil Service Commission**  
(Eighth item on the agenda)

6. The Committee had before it a paper<sup>2</sup> on decisions of the United Nations General Assembly on the report of the International Civil Service Commission.
7. Mr. Blondel, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group, supported the point for decision in paragraph 12 of the paper, on the understanding that the Office would present in November 2006 a full report on the decisions of the General Assembly.
8. Mr. Barde, speaking on behalf of the Employers' group, pointed out that the intention was to anticipate a decision that the General Assembly had not yet taken, in order to avoid retroactive effects. He noted that these changes did not involve any cost increases, but wished to know how the different consequences of this decision would affect officials. He supported the point for decision.
9. *Subject to the approval by the United Nations General Assembly of the proposals contained in the ICSC report for 2005, as modified if appropriate, the Committee recommends that the Governing Body authorize the Director-General to give effect in the ILO to those decisions through amendments to the Staff Regulations, as necessary.*

**Matters relating to the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO**  
(Ninth item on the agenda)

***Recognition of the Tribunal's jurisdiction by  
the International Organisation of Vine  
and Wine (OIV)***

10. The Committee had before it a paper<sup>3</sup> on recognition of the Tribunal's jurisdiction by the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV).
11. Mr. Barde recalled on behalf of the Employers' group that, despite certain problems that had to do with the way it functioned, the Tribunal appeared to meet the needs of the 47 organizations other than the ILO that had recognized its jurisdiction and contributed to its costs. He therefore expressed his agreement with the point for decision.
12. The Workers' group welcomed the Tribunal's good reputation, which did credit to the ILO. They supported the point for decision. In addition, recalling the discussions concerning possible amendments to the Tribunal's Statute and jurisdiction with regard to a collective action, they requested that efforts be pursued with a view to finding a solution that was acceptable to all of the organizations that had recognized the Tribunal's jurisdiction.
13. *The Committee recommends that the Governing Body approve the recognition of the Tribunal's jurisdiction by the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV), with effect from the date of such approval.*

<sup>2</sup> GB.295/PFA/8.

<sup>3</sup> GB.295/PFA/9/1.

## **Composition of the Tribunal**

14. The Committee had before it a paper on the composition of the Administrative Tribunal.
15. Mr. Barde, Employer spokesperson, regretted the fact that there had been insufficient time to consult the Officers of the Governing Body about the proposed appointments and hoped that, in future, consultations would be held in accordance with standard practice.
16. Mr. Blondel, Worker spokesperson, endorsed the observation made by Mr Barde.
17. The Legal Adviser explained that consultations had not been possible, despite the preparatory work that had been done well before the session of the Governing Body. She expressed the hope that everything would be done to enable the Officers of the Governing Body to examine the Office proposals before the end of the session with a view in due course to preparing a document for the Conference.
18. *The Committee recommends:*
  - (a) *to the Governing Body and, through it, to the Conference, that they express their profound appreciation to Mr. James K. Hugessen of his contribution to the international community over the last nine years;*
  - (b) *to the Governing Body to authorize its Officers to submit a proposal on its behalf directly to the Conference concerning the renewal of the term of office of Mr. Seydou Ba and the filling of the two vacancies.*

## **Part 2. Other items**

### **Statement by the staff representative**

(Sixteenth item on the agenda)

19. The statement by the staff representative is reproduced in Appendix II to the present report.

### **Exceptions to the Staff Regulations**

(Seventh item on the agenda)

20. The Committee had before it a paper<sup>4</sup> reporting exceptions made to the Staff Regulations in 2005.
21. Mr. Barde, speaking on behalf of the Employers' group, expressed concern about the situation of the Abidjan Office, given that the Staff Union had strongly criticized the way the issue had been handled the previous year. The Employers wished to know whether the Office had been definitively relocated and, if so, what would happen to the 16 officials who were still there. Concerning the 12 officials who had been reassigned elsewhere, they wondered whether they were still receiving their salary plus indemnities. He also requested an explanation concerning the indemnities being received by only three of the 12 reassigned officials. He asked for more detailed information concerning the indemnities paid for humanitarian reasons to the 17 persons who had been terminated.

<sup>4</sup> GB.295/PFA/7.

22. Mr. Blondel, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group, took note of the paper. Having encouraged consultations between the administration and the Staff Union, he welcomed the negotiations and their outcome. The Workers wondered whether the ILO would remain definitively in Addis Ababa or whether there were plans to return to Abidjan.
23. The Executive Director for Management and Administration, who had represented the administration during the negotiations with the Staff Union concerning the staff in the Regional Office in Abidjan, recalled that the information contained in the document was the outcome of such negotiations. The Office had had to deal with a very difficult situation, involving staff whose prospects for redeployment were not good or who had very heavy family responsibilities. The staff who remained in Abidjan comprised six verifiers, as well as the minimum number required to ensure the basic operations and safety of the Office. She wished to pay tribute to those staff who continued to work in the Abidjan Office.
24. In response to other questions raised, the Director of the Human Resources Development Department confirmed that the move of the Regional Office to Addis Ababa was still considered to be a temporary relocation. All payments made to staff fell mainly within the provisions of the Staff Regulations concerning termination of contracts, with some additional payments made in recognition of the exceptional circumstances. The present document indicated those payments made to the three staff who had been reassigned to Addis Ababa and for whom special payments had been deemed appropriate.

### **Composition and structure of the staff** (Seventeenth item on the agenda)

25. The Committee had before it a paper<sup>5</sup> on the composition and structure of the staff.
26. Mr. Blondel, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group, noted that, in his statement, the Chairperson of the Staff Union had denounced the high number of short-term contracts. He expressed concern at this trend, which affected the external offices particularly severely, while noting that, in 2005, despite the request made by the Workers, no fixed-term contracts had been changed to without-limit-of-time (WLT) contracts. While he hoped that this was not a deliberate policy of casualization on the part of the ILO, the speaker requested an explanation. The Workers further noted that the number of those funded by extra-budgetary resources was increasing more quickly than the number of those funded by regular budget resources. They yet again condemned the fact that 60 member States, mainly located in Africa, the Pacific and Eastern Europe, were still not represented in the composition of the staff. They requested that efforts be made in that regard. The Workers welcomed the fact that the statistics showed that, as of 1995, growth in the number of female staff was relatively stable. However, the increase in the proportion of women had occurred mainly in senior positions. Efforts needed to be made to ensure that such growth occurred across the board. The Workers noted a considerable decline in staff at P5 grade, and warned against the practice of systematically replacing retiring P5 staff with P3 staff.
27. Mr. Barde, speaking on behalf of the Employers' group, expressed regret that the document did not specify the number of staff with enterprise experience; these were too few in number, even though the Office was dealing with the world of work. The Employers expressed their satisfaction with the document and recalled that the first criterion of recruitment should be the ability of the candidate to do the job in question and, wherever possible, enterprise experience.

<sup>5</sup> GB.295/PFA/17.

28. The representative of the Government of South Africa, speaking on behalf of the Africa group and supported by the representatives of the Governments of Kenya and Nigeria, noted that, according to table III of the document, only eight women had been recruited during 2005, compared to 14 men in the same period. No women had been recruited to linguistic posts. He found the number of unrepresented nationalities of great concern, particularly since 14 of the 60 nationalities listed were from the African region. He noted that information in IRIS was organized differently and looked forward to more detail and precision in the future.
29. The representative of the Government of Kenya further noted that the statistics provided gave summaries by various criteria. He wished nevertheless to see table I broken down further to show WLT and FT staff by grade and nationality as well as by location. He noted that paragraph 3 of the document indicated that IRIS would add value in the future. He wished to see the evolution of the statistics over time. The African region was still under-represented, and he requested an explanation of the criteria used for establishing geographic distribution. He also indicated that all vacancies should be filled through the competitive process.
30. The representative of the Government of Nigeria commended the Office for its efforts in recruiting women. Women at some levels on non-linguistic posts represented more than 50 per cent of staff, which she felt was a better record than that of the United Nations, and the percentage of women on linguistic posts was even higher.
31. The representative of the Government of the Netherlands also welcomed the improved gender balance, and encouraged the Office to continue its efforts in that regard. He noted the modest decrease in the number of P5 staff, but expressed concern at the increase in the average age. He also noted a slight increase in the number of D staff, compared to the situation in 2004. He requested more information on the Office's current and planned action to balance the decrease of P5 functions and the rise in the average age with the recruitment of young staff at the P2 and P3 grades. He enquired whether the Office could make use of national competitions in recruiting its younger staff, and requested information in the future on the number of vacancies in the Office.
32. The representative of the Government of Japan noted that in table IV(b) the number of P5 staff had decreased, undoubtedly owing to recent retirements, but that the number of P3 staff had also gone down. He considered that this possibly reflected a concern by line managers that their output could be adversely affected by the replacement of senior staff with junior staff. He counted on the Office, under the leadership of the Director-General, to help address this problem, particularly through the training of young officials. He also encouraged the Office to recruit competent young persons from as many countries as possible to replace retiring senior staff.
33. The Director of the Human Resources Development Department thanked the Committee for its comments. She indicated that the Office would examine the various requests made in order to see how best to respond. With the increasing functionality expected from IRIS in the future, the Office would be in a position to produce data not only with greater detail and precision but also with greater ease. That would enable it to generate more of the kinds of analyses and reports that members of the Committee had requested. In the meantime, the Office would continue to respond to individual requests for additional information. In response to various comments made, she cautioned against analysing the data merely from one year to the next, since trends could only be discerned over a longer period of time. Nevertheless, the Office would continue to analyse the annual statistics produced with a view to assessing their implications for the implementation of the Human Resources (HR) Strategy and determining the adjustments that needed to be made. In response to the comment from the Workers' group, she indicated that the exercise for the granting of WLT

contracts in 2005 had been delayed for administrative reasons, rather than because of a change in policy. The 2005 exercise had been implemented in February 2006, and the figures would be reported in the next document presented to the Committee.

34. Concerning the 60 unrepresented nationalities, the Director of the Human Resources Development Department admitted that progress had indeed been slow, but this was so for a variety of reasons, including systemic ones. The Office was developing a more robust approach to widening the geographical distribution of its staff targeted at those regions and subregions that were unrepresented or significantly under-represented. Critical in this respect was a strong partnership with governments and the social partners in helping the Office to identify qualified candidates who could enter the competitive process. Partnership was also important with line managers, who would be held increasingly accountable in helping the Office achieve this important policy objective. The Office was also looking to learn from the experiences of other United Nations organizations. Concerning comments on the gender balance, those points had been noted but, again, comparisons should be made over a longer period, not just from year to year. While some progress had been made, much work remained to be done, since women still represented only 39 per cent of staff in the Professional and higher categories. Upcoming retirements, mainly of men at the P5 level, would provide additional opportunities for recruiting female staff. With respect to the rejuvenation of the staff, improvement was also slow. The retirements mentioned above, however, also provided opportunities to recruit younger staff. Indeed, of the 21 external competitions held during 2005, one-third of recruits were under the age of 35, and one-half were under 45. Concerning the comments from the Employers' group and the need for enterprise experience and high levels of competency, these attributes were indeed highly valued, as could be seen from the document on the HR Strategy. Competency was, and would remain, the primary consideration. Regarding the request for information in the future on the number of vacancies, she wondered whether it would not be of more value to the Committee to have an oral report during the session, in order to provide up to date figures.

### **Preliminary update on the implementation of the revised Human Resources Strategy** (Eighteenth item on the agenda)

35. The Committee had before it a paper<sup>6</sup> on a preliminary update on the implementation of the revised Human Resources Strategy.
36. Mr. Blondel, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group, congratulated the Office on its efforts in reducing recruitment time, encouraging persons with a disability to apply for posts and diversifying the geographical distribution of staff. The Workers also supported those initiatives aimed at encouraging recruitment within trade union and business circles, launched following the repeated requests made by the two groups. The Office was invited to consider the possibility of secondments. Efforts to rebalance the hierarchical structure were praiseworthy, but should be the subject of consultations and should not be carried out to the detriment of the living and working conditions of the staff, or of the internal efficiency of the Office. Lastly, referring to the statement by the Chairperson of the Staff Union, they emphasized the need for discussion and negotiations between the administration and the Staff Union, as the best way to avoid a build-up of tension within the Office, or even the exercise of other trade union rights, such as the right to strike.

<sup>6</sup> GB.295/PFA/18.

37. Mr. Barde, speaking on behalf of the Employers' group, requested further information from the Office, in particular with regard to developments concerning line managers (with regard to strengthening their role and duties), excessively long recruitment and dismissal times, the mobility policy, security, the application of the new collective agreement on conflict prevention and resolution and the consequences of the new arrangement with the Turin Centre on the staff at both institutions. The Employers' group asked about the status of discussions with the staff concerning information sessions and ongoing negotiations, while rumours were going around among the staff. The Employers welcomed the announcement of initiatives to encourage recruitment in business circles but warned against the consequences of possible secondments for pensions, especially given the absence of unrestricted transfer in the old-age insurance system of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund. They also emphasized that, unless it corresponded to a real need, a systematic downgrading policy could be counterproductive in terms of staff motivation. They expressed concern at the latest judgements of the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO and requested further information from the Office in this regard, particularly in view of the increasing amounts of compensation the Office had to pay. Finally, the Employers' group wished to be informed as to the situation regarding the funding of the new strategy and reiterated its concern at the spread of bureaucracy within the ILO.
38. The representative of the Government of the Netherlands, speaking on behalf of the IMEC group, expressed his appreciation for the clear, concise and informative Office paper and looked forward to a more detailed report in November 2006 that would elaborate on some of the areas outlined in the current paper. The November document should include an overview of implementation of the different elements of the Human Resources Strategy, including their relative level of priority and indicate, a time frame and financial implications. He referred the Committee to previous IMEC statements on this issue and, in particular, stressed the importance of linking the HR Strategy to other results-based management tools. He also recommended that the Office observe the recommendation made by the External Auditor in 2004 with respect to the 2002-03 financial period<sup>7</sup> for cost-benefit analysis exercises to be carried out for all current and future HR Strategy activities to help to prioritize the use of resources. He approved the Office insistence on the implementation of a performance management system and of tailored training on ILO activities, requesting confirmation that funds provided would include training on results-based management. He also requested information on Office activities as regards security and urged the Director-General to mobilize existing administrative resources to enable the Office to take forward the HR Strategy.
39. The representative of the Government of the United States added that her Government welcomed the strategy to increase management buy-in. Delegation and devolution of authority, as well as providing support to line managers in the field, were good ways to achieve results-based management. She considered the prospection database to have good potential and inquired whether it would be part of IRIS and funded within existing resources. She asked why the target for reclassification of grades at the P5 level had been set at 33 per cent and recommended a proper assessment of duties to ensure classification at the correct grade. She supported the work with the JIU and hoped that this would provide comparable information on staff contract types, especially on the use of without-limit-of-time contracts in the ILO as compared to other United Nations organizations.
40. The representative of the Government of the Philippines, speaking on behalf of the Asia-Pacific group (ASPAG) and supported by the representative of the Government of the Republic of Korea, welcomed the emphasis on recruitment and prospection, and on

<sup>7</sup> GB.292/PFA/4.

performance management. She encouraged the Office to redefine the roles and responsibilities of all staff as part of the work on grading and classification of staff. She welcomed the collaboration with the JIU to facilitate benchmarking. She looked forward to receiving a more substantial report on the HR Strategy at the November 2006 session. In addition, the representative of the Government of the Republic of Korea welcomed the Office's work on recruitment, placement and career progression. He requested more information on how the prospection database would be established and sought clarification on paragraph 15 on the review of the collective agreement on the procedures for recruitment and selection.

41. The representative of the Government of South Africa, speaking on behalf of the Africa group, supported efforts to achieve line manager buy-in. He was pleased that the strategy could be achieved within existing budgets and was encouraged by the continuing collaboration with the Staff Union. He also congratulated the Office on its work to improve recruitment of people with disabilities and for its prospection efforts to improve gender and geographical representation. He supported training targeted at women and the work to be continued on safety and security. The Africa group requested a specific target for recruitment of young people and asked for a breakdown by region of the staff members due to retire until 2009.
42. The representative of the Government of the Russian Federation noted that many of his Government's previous concerns had been addressed, for instance on grading targets for all categories of staff. He supported management training activities and stressed the importance of linking them with results-based management. He acknowledged the efforts to enhance security measures and reiterated the need for competency-based recruitment.
43. In addition to the statements made on behalf of the IMEC and ASPAG groups, the representative of the Government of Japan welcomed the Office's intention to set targets in November for all grades in headquarters to rebalance the grade structure and also asked that targets be set for field offices as soon as possible. He also supported the development of a prospection database and encouraged the Office to continue working with the JIU to collect comparable data for the major components of the HR Strategy. He requested that the November report include a cost-benefit analysis report.
44. The Director of the Human Resources Development Department thanked the Committee for its comments. Noting that reform had been a common theme running through the discussions of the current session of the PFAC, she stressed the pivotal role of HR management in the change process. She reassured the Committee that the Office was conscious of the importance of the HR Strategy in driving and supporting the process of change and creating a results-based culture in the ILO, and would continue to strengthen its links with other areas of results-based management, especially in performance management and staff development. She thanked those governments who had offered their support on performance management and confirmed the Office's commitment to achieving progress on that front. She informed the Committee that the funds set aside for staff development included an element for training to support results-based management. This was indispensable if the Office was to better promote the type of managerial responsibility and accountability consistent with results-based management. In response to a comment from the Worker members on the grade structure, she offered reassurance that the Office was proceeding carefully and cautiously, cognizant of the need to undertake the rebalancing process in a way which responded to organizational needs but, at the same time, retained incentives for staff progression. She stressed the importance that the Office attached to social dialogue, not only at the level of the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) but also in day-to-day operations.

45. The Executive Director for Management and Administration responded to the questions raised regarding the renegotiation of collective agreements. On recruitment and selection, a great deal of work had been done on both sides and a good understanding had been reached in relation to the overall objectives of improving transparency, effectiveness and equity. However, the Staff Union had decided that it was not in a position to pursue the negotiations, but the administration was ready to resume them at any time to finalize the review of this important agreement. On conflict prevention and resolution, it was too early to carry out a detailed evaluation of the revised procedures, some of which had only become operational in October 2005, but a review was planned for later in 2006. She also informed the Committee that a mediator had recently been appointed, in consultation with the Staff Union.

### **Pensions questions**

(Nineteenth item on the agenda)

46. The Committee took note of two papers concerning the report of the 188th meeting (July 2005) of the Standing Committee of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board (UNJSPB)<sup>8</sup> and the report of the Board of the Special Payments Fund.<sup>9</sup>

Geneva, 28 March 2006.

(Signed) M. Blondel,  
Reporter,

*Points for decision:* Paragraph 5;  
Paragraph 9;  
Paragraph 13,  
Paragraph 18.

<sup>8</sup> GB.295/PFA/19/1.

<sup>9</sup> GB.295/PFA/19/2.

## Appendix 1

### Amendments to the Staff Regulations

(Additional text appears underlined in bold, text proposed for suppression is struck out.)

#### ARTICLE 3.17

##### *Effective date of application or suppression of entitlements arising from changes of family status*

Changes in family status affecting entitlements under articles 3.1, 3.9, 3.10, 3.11, 3.12 and 3.13 of the Staff Regulations shall be taken into account in the application of these articles as from the ~~first day of the month following~~ the date of the change.

#### ARTICLE 11.2bis

##### Separation from service after special leave

**1. Any official on special leave in accordance with article 7.7 may provide, during the period of leave authorized, timely notice in writing of intent not to return to duty at the expiry of the period of leave. Upon acceptance by the Director-General, such notice will result in separation from service.**

**2. Failure of an official on special leave in accordance with article 7.7 to report for duty on the foreseen date at the expiry of the period of leave authorized will, absent a duly-provided justification accepted by the Director-General, result in separation from service.**

**3. Upon separation from service under the provisions of the present article, payments due upon resignation under article 11.2 will be made to the official concerned.**

#### ARTICLE 12.2

##### Procedure for application of sanctions

1. Before the application of any sanction other than warning, a proposal to apply it, stating the reasons for which it is made, shall be communicated in duplicate to the official concerned. The official shall initial and return one copy of the proposal within eight days of its receipt, adding to it any observations the official may wish to make.

2. Subject to the provisions of article 12.8 of the Staff Regulations, in the case of any sanction other than warning or reprimand the official shall have the right to refer the proposal, **together with any observations made in accordance with paragraph 1 above** to the Joint Advisory Appeals Board within one month from receipt of the proposal, said period to include the eight days referred to in paragraph 1 above. Reference to the Joint Advisory Appeals Board may **also** be waived with the agreement of the official concerned.

3. The decision to apply a sanction shall be communicated in duplicate to the official concerned, who shall initial and return one copy. In the case of a warning, the official, if he/**she** so wishes, may add his/**her** observations.

ANNEX IV  
Procedure of the Joint Advisory Appeals Board

1. Any case brought to the Joint Advisory Appeals Board shall be filed with its secretary by means of the form prescribed to that effect, in ~~four~~ **six** copies, in any of the three official languages of the Office. Any communication relating to the case addressed to the official shall be written in the language used by the official or in any other official language that s/he is able to understand. The official may appoint a representative, who shall be a former or serving staff member of the Office, the United Nations or a specialized agency, or a Staff Union representative, to act on her/his behalf during the procedure before the Board.

[...]

5. The Human Resources Development Department shall dispatch its comments on the case in ~~four~~ **six** copies to the secretary of the Board within one month of receipt of notice from the secretary. **The secretary shall communicate a copy of the comments of the Human Resources Development Department to the official or the official's representative.**

**xx. Any written communication of the Board with one of the parties shall be copied by the Board's secretariat to the other party.**

**xx. At any time before the panel begins its deliberations in the case, the parties may agree to suspend, for a specified time, the consideration of the case by written notification addressed to the Board's secretariat. If no further action is taken by the official or the official's representative following the specified period of suspension, the Board may consider the matter withdrawn.**

**xx. The official or the official's representative may withdraw the case, with prejudice, at any time before notification of issuance of the report by the panel by submitting a written communication addressed to the Board's secretariat notifying it of the official's intent to withdraw the case.**

## Appendix II

### Statement by the representative of the Staff Union

Mr. Chairperson,

Members of the Committee,

Director-General,

The last time I had the honour of addressing you, in November of last year, I discussed at length the lack of social dialogue within the United Nations system and the continual decline in working conditions, due essentially to the recommendations of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) to the United Nations General Assembly and to the inconsistencies between these recommendations and the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Code of Conduct for International Civil Servants, which affect the quality and capacity for independence of the international civil service.

At the most recent General Assembly of the United Nations Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations (CCISUA), of which the ILO Staff Union is a member, the extent of this decline was revealed: very little social dialogue or none at all; an unfair internal justice system; management of staff and services characterized more by arbitrariness than by a rigorous application of methodologies and procedures which, while they could certainly be improved, had proved effective in the past.

This situation led our colleagues at the World Health Organization (WHO) to hold a strike last December to preserve the conditions contained in their contracts, in defiance of threats by management to dismiss those who used this perfectly legitimate means of defending their rights. Very soon after this, in February, more than 700 of our colleagues in the United Nations Staff Union met to respond to the acts of deliberate provocation carried out by United Nations management.

All this is taking place against a background of United Nations reform. And what a major undertaking that has turned out to be! So much empty pontificating, so many speeches that are more concerned with tossing around ideological questions than with simply and effectively managing the administration of a large institution. It seems that the future of the United Nations is to be held hostage to political game-playing that has its roots outside the United Nations itself. This very forum would doubtless be better qualified to debate this matter.

The pensions issue is a telling example of this political game-playing. A proposal has been made, which is to be discussed at the next sitting of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board, to reduce the membership of that Board. This proposal, which will doubtless be put forward as a recommendation to the General Assembly, will considerably reduce the voice and voting rights of smaller organizations within the Pension Fund and increase the power of the United Nations. In that case, the role of the ILO itself – the Organization whose mandate includes social security – will effectively be reduced. Our Pensions Committee has always played an active part in the United Nations Pension Fund in ensuring that the principles of the relevant Conventions are applied within that Fund. There is now very good reason to fear that principles of this kind have been struck off the agenda for purely ideological reasons.

All of this is taking place in the context of contradictory statements from senior management at the United Nations concerning the management of Pension Fund

investments – with the intention of introducing reforms opening the way to transforming our Fund into a savings fund. The July meeting and the decisions of the General Assembly to follow it will provide further information.

One thing is certain: international civil servants have always united to defend their Pension Fund entitlements. Indeed, over the last few years, all our colleagues have made it possible to gather a majority of staff to defend this fundamental aspect of our conditions of employment.

Is the ILO doing any better when it comes to social dialogue? What is the situation in our Organization?

No progress has been made on an issue which, to our eyes, seems most important – the precarious contracts given to colleagues who work regularly in the Organization. To our knowledge, it remains true that there are around 400 external collaborators working for the Organization every day. This figure leads us to believe that the large majority of these workers are performing regular work within the Organization, often without decent salaries or any social protection. Several departmental directors blatantly disregard the circulars laying down the procedures to be followed in this area – and with complete impunity. This impunity is perpetuated because the administration of the Organization is either unwilling or unable to fight this persistent problem. To give one example out of many, we have been informed of the case of one colleague who was employed on a short-term contract. Once he had worked under this contract for as long as permitted, the director of his department converted his contract into an external collaboration contract and then, all for the sake of his cost-cutting policy, offered the worker in question an even less expensive internship contract. And all this for exactly the same amount of work! We have also been informed that this practice is being extended to technical cooperation projects: there are more than 200 people in this category working in the field without any social protection. Can this level of exploitation even be called “employment”? Has labour become a commodity in the ILO itself? This kind of situation has an impact on the reputation and interests of the Organization.

Talk of decent work for the whole world is all very well but – apparently – it does not apply to our own colleagues.

What about the staff who have the opportunity to work under a real contract? The Staff Union was told by the Human Resources Development (HRD) Department that personal development plans would not be extended to other regions or departments. This is the programme that was set up as a pilot programme in Latin America and in the social protection sector. According to our information, it is a tool enabling line managers and officials to put in place the training needed to match the objectives of the unit to the career goals of the official.

This tool was enthusiastically welcomed by officials. HRD justifies discontinuing the programme merely on grounds of the costs involved for that department in monitoring it. This is an argument we find hard to accept precisely because it is a programme that has been decentralized to the units that use it, and because no figures have been provided in support of this claim.

We have not yet decided with the representatives of the administration what we are going to do with the collective agreement on personal development plans which, in our view, remain a valuable objective.

You are aware that a provision for training was included in the budget for the current biennium for every department. We agreed with HRD that a guide should be produced to help our colleagues at all levels in the hierarchy to use these funds.

When I last spoke to this body we had high hopes of rapidly adopting a revised collective agreement on recruitment and selection. However, the proposals that we had discussed with the representatives of the administration last December were so far removed from those that had been under negotiation in September 2005 that we do not believe that they are in keeping with the principles of transparency and fairness necessary to guarantee a procedure that would enable the recruitment or appointment of high-quality, motivated staff.

In addition, participation by HRD, the department responsible for these issues, has been minimal throughout the process, and I can confirm that directors generally have little experience in the matter.

The current agreement is unsuitable for the same reasons – lack of conformity with the principles of transparency and fairness. What is more serious is that for some time now we have witnessed increasing distortion of the system owing to political considerations that have no place in a technical process. A recent example highlights the current weaknesses of the system. In 2003, during the competition for a vacancy in a field office, a colleague in a headquarters position was selected and interviewed, only to have the selection panel recommend that the competition be declared unsuccessful. After the whole procedure they then went back on their decision three years later, in 2006, and appointed that same colleague, the post having remained vacant all that time! This was not a director's post with major political implications, it was a P4 position. Should we let politics guide us in technical decisions? The flexibility that is so often called for by some directors is more like a balm for a stiff neck than a smooth and harmonious yoga exercise.

This aspect of the procedure is, we believe, of fundamental importance, particularly because during your session last November, a document from HRD showed that there were 188 P posts and 69 G posts vacant. We have every reason to be concerned about this trend, and wonder whether it is being used to finance the Organization's other obligations.

We observe a rise in trade union activity in the regions, particularly on issues such as those mentioned above. For our colleagues, technical cooperation is one of the key tools of the Organization. It enables concrete services to be provided to the constituents, additional financial resources to be mobilized, and ensures that the Office keeps in touch with what is happening in the field. The quality of technical cooperation depends firstly on the quality of the expertise that the Office is able to make available to the projects. In this regard, human resources management with regard to technical cooperation staff is therefore a particularly vital issue. However, technical cooperation staff are currently discriminated against in a number of ways, making them "second class citizens" within the Organization. It is therefore important to open talks on this issue in the very near future, to bring the reality of how these members of staff are managed into line with the declared priority given to technical cooperation.

Insecure contracts, no career management tool, and a vague recruitment and selection procedure – all of this gives the impression that social dialogue has broken down at the ILO.

It is in this climate that a growing number of appeals are being filed with the Joint Advisory Appeals Board (JAAB) and our colleagues are winning more and more cases before the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO. Over the last three years, all the appeals supported by the Staff Union at the Tribunal have been won.

I mentioned the breakdown of social dialogue. But in fact it is more of a misconception as to what negotiation is about: an exchange of views resulting in a consensus that generally satisfies all the parties and enables them to avoid conflict.

Here are some additional examples – as if they were necessary. Over a year ago, the Secretary-General of the United Nations amended the internal rules on parental leave, which are more favourable than those in force at the ILO. Our communications sent in 2004 and in 2005 have not received a reply, even though it would be so simple to take the only possible decision, that is, to align the system on the more favourable rule. Is it a question of lethargy or simply a lack of concern for issues that affect the working environment of those who serve the aims of this Organization?

Another example is the caseload of the Union's legal adviser, who considers the responses to our demands unacceptable. Has it come to this – that negotiation is now only a matter of offering what you already know the partner will refuse, so as to blame the other side for the failure of negotiations? That is all too easy, and shows a serious lack of a spirit of conciliation and openness. We are talking about a process that has become essential for the success of collective agreements. It is recognized as useful, including by colleagues in HRD.

In spite of all that I have just said, I can confirm that there is dialogue at the ILO – through the Joint Negotiating Committee, the Joint Training Council and other direct contacts that Union representatives have with the administration. So there is still hope.

This is my fourth year as a union official and this lack of progress on such fundamental issues is puzzling and seems to indicate that only a power struggle can force progress on work-related issues in this Organization, which should be the showcase for these principles. In view of the above, it should come as no surprise to the Governing Body if, in the near future, my colleagues' response is stronger than just a speech to this body, once they refuse to be fobbed off with vague promises, dubious procedures or the lack of transparent and specific procedures regarding issues relating to their contractual relationship with our employer, their careers and their training.

Thank you for your attention.