



ELEVENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

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

Second report: Personnel questions

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I. Statement by the staff representative (Twelfth item on the agenda)

1. The statement by the staff representative is reproduced in the appendix to the present report.

II. Human Resources Strategy: Annual report (Fourteenth item on the agenda)

2. The Committee had before it a paper¹ on the Human Resources Strategy (the Strategy). The Chairperson noted that it was a document for information and invited Ms. Strachan, the Director of the Human Resources Development Department (HRD), to introduce it.
3. The Director of HRD stated that the first report presented an overview of progress to date, outlining the actions taken and the outcomes achieved against the priorities and targets endorsed by the Governing Body in November 2005. During the first nine months of implementation, the Office had laid the foundation for achieving targets with a focus on initiating and strengthening HR processes, establishing baseline indicators and creating “buy-in” by managers and staff. The Office had made progress, but the reform process was an evolving one. She recognized that if progress were to be maintained, several areas of concern would have to be addressed.
4. First, there was the need to deepen accountability processes, particularly for managers, and a managerial accountability framework was being devised to address that. With respect to the management of staff resources, accountability was shared between line managers, senior managers and HRD. She admitted that progress was slow and continued efforts would be made to accelerate the process. Such efforts would be supported by work in two key areas of the Strategy: the further development of leadership and management skills, and the new staff performance management system to be introduced in 2007.
5. A second area of concern related to rebalancing the grade structure. The Director of HRD reassured the Committee of the Office’s continued commitment to that objective. The target already set for the regrading of one-third of the P5 positions coming vacant through retirement during the year would be realized. Separate targets for other grades would be set further to the outcome of the ongoing grade structure and field structure reviews. The Office had adopted a deliberate and systematic approach to that exercise so as to respect current statutory obligations to incumbent staff and to minimize unintended negative consequences.
6. A third area of concern highlighted by the Director of HRD related to the current contracts policy. In anticipation of the United Nations General Assembly decision on a new United Nations system-wide contracts policy, the Management and Staff Union Joint Negotiating Committee had established a working group on contracts policy to consider the appropriate use of different contract types as well as the range of options required to meet the operational needs of the Office.
7. A final area of concern was that of streamlining the recruitment and selection process. While the Office had made some progress in that area, certain procedures were still too cumbersome. The Office had been working with the Staff Union Committee on that area to

¹ GB.297/PFA/14.

identify and remove remaining bottlenecks while respecting the need to have a fair, transparent and rigorous recruitment and selection process.

8. The Director of HRD emphasized that the Office had embarked on a significant undertaking requiring fundamental changes to the way staff resources in the ILO were managed. She stated that that would require a systematic approach and sustained effort on the part of the administration, managers and staff. In that regard, the new staff performance management and development and learning systems would play a crucial role.
9. In concluding, the Director of HRD thanked those member States which had already provided assistance in implementing different components of the Strategy.
10. Mr. Blondel, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group, welcomed the preparation of a report on the Human Resources Strategy and was pleased that it would be provided annually. While the report contained a wealth of information, the Workers wished to request some further details. With regard to subparagraph 20(c), the speaker welcomed the initiative and asked in which countries the trade unions had been consulted about the lists of potential candidates, given that the Workers had often asked that experience of the world of work be a recruitment criterion. He also drew attention to the role of the Global Labour University. Concerning Part II of the document, the Workers supported the intention contained in point (b). In that regard, and returning to paragraph 24, they asked how many persons with disabilities had been recruited in the framework of the new policy. Given that decent work was no doubt also helping in the struggle against precariousness, the speaker asked the Office to provide details on the precarious contracts that existed in conjunction with technical cooperation, and on the contracts of some 400 IPEC officials, only four or six of whom had contracts without limit of time. He also wished to know the number of people holding short-term contracts while occupying a regular position, and the number of fixed-term contracts. The speaker warned against the policy to reclassify P5 positions to P4, and asked that it be applied carefully and that it not be systematic. With regard to paragraph 22, he was pleased about the progress made towards greater gender balance in senior positions and hoped that the target of 33 per cent of women in such positions would be reached for the following annual report. Concerning the meetings held with the line management of the technical sectors, mentioned in paragraph 62, the speaker understood that such consultations had not been held with ACTRAV, resulting perhaps in the 5 per cent reduction which was forcing that department, so important for ILO action in favour of workers, to eliminate one position. It would be desirable in budgetary matters for decisions to be based on prior consultations. The budgetary reductions afflicting the Organization were both real and deplorable, but the human resources policy should take into account the fact that certain positions were indispensable to the mission of the ILO. With respect to paragraph 65, the specificity of the Organization should not be forgotten, namely tripartism.
11. Mr. Barde, speaking on behalf of the Employers' group, recalled that the previous year, the Employers had insisted that directors should take greater responsibility for recruitment, the management of their teams and training. They therefore wished to know what HRD was doing to support directors in that regard. On the issue of training and the 2 per cent of staff costs allocated to it, the Employers wished to know how it was being managed between HRD and each of the other departments, from the point of view of finance and of evaluation. Each official should benefit from training corresponding, on the one hand, to the needs of the Office, and on the other, to his or her own aspirations. As to the use of external collaboration contracts, the Employers shared the Workers' concerns. They were also concerned that regular ILO work was sometimes performed by external collaborators and not by people whose salary was paid out of the regular budget. Lastly, the Employers wished to know why there were so many vacant positions. They reiterated their stance on

recruitment, namely that the Office should recruit the person best qualified for the position, irrespective of gender or nationality.

- 12.** The representative of the Government of the Netherlands, speaking on behalf of the IMEC group, recalled the statement of the IMEC group made at the November 2005 session. He thanked the Office for having reflected in the present document some of their earlier suggestions. He stated that HR was one of the cornerstones of the results-based management (RBM) policy matrix, and encouraged the Office to continue to make progress in creating stronger linkages between the implementation of an effective HR strategy and the application of other RBM tools. However, he expressed disappointment that the document did not sufficiently show the synergies with other pillars of the RBM matrix. The main HR targets should also be integrated in the RBM roadmap.
- 13.** The IMEC group considered that the HR Strategy document should evolve and develop. While appreciating HRD's use of the targets already set to monitor performance, several of those targets were not sufficiently specific and measurable. The group welcomed the Office's statement that staff performance assessment and reporting as well as the strengthening of the learning culture were the centrepiece of reform measures, and looked to the Office to confirm that those were the overall HR policy priorities that had been mentioned in the Strategy update presented last March.
- 14.** A key issue for the IMEC group was the need for a check on policy implementation and, in that context, it encouraged the Office to identify innovative indicators and evaluation tools, including periodic staff surveys. The Office should call on further expert advice from the External Auditor on ways to strengthen the Strategy. He recalled the Joint Inspection Unit's (JIU's) intention to further review human resources management within the context of its work on RBM and requested confirmation on the timing of the JIU's continued involvement. IMEC also felt that it would have been useful to include in the document a schematic overview of action lines for implementation, including their priority levels, time frame and financial implications. An annual report should also contain detailed information on composition, structure and breakdown by staff category, including consultants. He suggested that the document on staff composition submitted to the Committee at its spring session each year would be more usefully presented in connection with the annual report. The IMEC group considered the following components of the Strategy to be of high priority: recruitment and the introduction of the Resourcing, Assignment and Placement System (RAPS); strengthening diversity; rebalancing the grade structure; mobility; performance management; learning and development. On the last point, IMEC suggested that the Office commission a skills audit and align its policies to the outcomes of the audit. On training, IMEC requested further information on the use of training funds, the fate of any surplus training resources, and the involvement of the Turin Centre.
- 15.** The IMEC group noted developments in the field of staff welfare and security, and urged the Office to intensify its efforts to meet the targets, especially on occupational safety and health (OSH). IMEC also recognized the attention being paid to work-life balance issues. The group was also pleased to note that HRD had reviewed its own organizational performance and would like further information on the client satisfaction survey. With regard to effective monitoring, reporting and evaluation, the group expressed concern and again asked for a cost-benefit exercise to be carried out in respect of components of the HR Strategy, to ensure not only efficient use of resources, but also to inform the budget discussion.
- 16.** The representative of the Government of Australia, speaking on behalf of the Asia-Pacific group (ASPAG), recalled that an effective HR Strategy recognized that performance of all staff had a direct bearing on the performance of the organization as a whole, including the

delivery of outputs and strategic outcomes. The group looked forward to the results of the grade structure review, expected in early 2007, and hoped that the analysis would form the basis for the establishment of a more appropriate grade structure that would accurately reflect the work of the Office. The ASPAG group was particularly interested in progress towards an effective performance management system, but was disappointed that the Office had not shared the results of the preparatory assessments made. While noting the intention to align HR policies and practices with the Decent Work Agenda, the group was concerned that there was no clear strategy to incorporate HR objectives within the Strategic Policy Framework, and programme and budget. With regard to training, the group noted the evaluation of the Management and Leadership Development Programme and its finding that the Programme continued to benefit individuals and the Office as a whole, but cautioned against the imposition of training quotas, as they often led to staff undertaking training for training's sake. Training activities should equip individuals to better contribute to the Organization's strategic objectives. The group noted the considerable work done towards the implementation of the Strategy and looked forward to the next progress report.

- 17.** The representative of the Government of South Africa, speaking on behalf of the Africa group, was encouraged by the progress made over the previous nine months, particularly in reducing the average time required to complete competitions. However, he felt that there was not an equitable spread in the recruitment of interns, who seemed to come primarily from Europe and North America. He reiterated the group's concern about the general lack of representation of Africa and the forthcoming retirements of a number of Africans and felt that the internship programme could be used as an important mechanism to build capacity and provide a pool for future recruitment. He called for greater efforts in attracting candidates from non- and under-represented nationalities. The group welcomed the work aimed at achieving a more balanced representation of staff and requested the upcoming review of the field structure to take that into account. The group also welcomed the progress made towards gender balance and the measures taken to implement the policy to promote the employment and retention of persons with disabilities. The group noted the progress in preparing for the introduction of the new staff performance management project. The group requested future reports to provide detailed data on breakdown of staff by region, indicating the number of filled positions and vacancies by individual office, and the number of staff due to retire up until 2009. The group recognized that addressing security issues was very important for staff, and felt that the security workshops held recently were a good initiative. The group welcomed steps to enhance the effectiveness of HRD, the alignment of HR policies with the Decent Work Agenda, and the establishment of effective monitoring, reporting and evaluation. The group looked forward to a further update in March 2007.
- 18.** Noting that the report demonstrated the Office's willingness to make efforts in order to achieve real progress, the representative of the Government of Japan supported the statements made on behalf of the IMEC and ASPAG groups. He expressed interest in the results of the measures taken to implement the Strategy, particularly those related to diversity and the grade structure review.
- 19.** The representative of the Government of Brazil thanked the Office for the document. He noted the information provided on recruitment and selection, and highlighted the importance of the competence, efficiency and integrity of candidates. Technical and professional knowledge was obviously important but the value of face-to-face interviews could not be ignored, including for senior-level positions. He also supported efforts to achieve a more balanced regional representation, and the need for gender equality when filling senior positions, as well as the employment of persons with disabilities. He also emphasized the importance of training and development, and a management system on security and on OSH for all staff.

- 20.** The representative of the Government of the Russian Federation stressed that the HR component of RBM reform was very important. He also suggested that the recruitment and selection system should allow for a degree of flexibility. He felt that the current method for determining geographical distribution was not transparent, as the data provided in the document showed only average quotas for each region. He indicated that he would like to see statistics by country, position and type of appointment, as was the case for some other United Nations organizations, to demonstrate the imbalances within the regions noted in the report. With regard to the grade structure review, he felt that targets were also needed for grades other than at the P5 level. He did not agree with a statement made earlier that downgrading positions could affect the competitiveness of the Organization; he felt it was not necessary for all staff to occupy high-level posts and that savings resulting from a comprehensive reclassification exercise could help fund some of the additional activities which were foreseen.
- 21.** The representative of the Government of the Republic of Korea thanked the Office for the document and requested an explanation as to how to determine regional balance for geographical distribution purposes. She raised the question as to why the desirable range of staff was not based on considerations such as demand or population size.
- 22.** The Director of HRD thanked the Committee for the useful ideas and suggestions emerging from the discussion, as well as from the earlier discussion on RBM. Many of those reflected issues which were the subject of ongoing discussions within the Office itself. She assured the Committee that the Office had taken careful note of their views and those would provide guidance to them in moving forward. She indicated that, while time would not permit a response to all comments and questions, some of the issues had already been addressed in her introduction. Further, she would be available to provide additional responses to Members on other issues on a bilateral level if necessary.
- 23.** She indicated that extensive discussions had already taken place in the Office regarding the need for a skills audit, particularly in the context of the field structure review. The Office recognized the importance of a global assessment of competencies and skills to guide the process of mapping those with needs and providing a solid basis for staff development and learning. Various approaches were being considered, taking account of the Office's needs and the resources available.
- 24.** She agreed that staff surveys could play an important role in testing the impact of measures taken, but indicated that any survey would have to be timed and organized in a way to avoid survey fatigue since there were already three surveys in the pipeline, in the areas of client satisfaction, learning culture and work-life balance. She confirmed that the Office shared the Committee's views on the importance of the new performance management system in deepening the RBM culture and indicated that HRD was fully engaged in consultations and preparations for the introduction of the new system.
- 25.** On external collaborator contracts, the Director of HRD noted that the Office needed to have the ability to use them under well-defined circumstances. The problem arose when they were used inappropriately. A working group had been set up by the Joint Negotiating Committee to review the issue of contracts policy. On staff learning and development, she pointed out that staff development resources representing up to 2 per cent of staff costs had been devolved to individual units, and line managers were directly responsible for their equitable use to bridge the skills gaps in their units. HRD played a supporting role in the process by establishing the framework, providing advice and guidance, and identifying themes which could be addressed Office-wide. She concluded by assuring the Committee that all Sectors had been consulted as part of the process of communicating and explaining the role of managers in implementing the HRD Strategy, and looked forward to continued collaboration with the Committee.

26. Mr. Blondel, speaking on behalf of the Workers, repeated that ACTRAV considered that it had not been consulted. Furthermore, he was surprised not to have received a response about the contracts of the 400 IPEC officials, only a few of whom had fixed-term contracts. The Workers insisted on having a reply on that point, as well as to their question about the number of persons with disabilities recruited by the ILO, either immediately or in the following days
27. The Director of HRD informed the Committee that she would come back to them at a later date on certain questions, but clarified that the issue of the inappropriate use of contracts was being addressed within the joint Working Group on Contracts Policy and outlined the consultative mechanism that had been used with each Sector.

III. Amendments to the Staff Regulations (Thirteenth item on the agenda)

28. The Committee had before it a paper² on amendments to the Staff Regulations. The Chairperson informed the Committee that the document had been submitted for information. There were no interventions.

IV. Report of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) (Fifteenth item on the agenda)

29. The Committee had before it a paper³ on the Report of the International Civil Service Commission. The Chairperson introduced the paper, noting that the point for decision was contained in paragraph 8.
30. Mr. Blondel, taking the floor on behalf of the Worker members, supported the point for decision.
31. Mr. Traore, taking the floor on behalf of the Employer members, endorsed the point for decision.
32. There were no interventions on the document. *The Committee recommends to the Governing Body that it:*
- (a) *accept the recommendations of the ICSC, subject to their approval by the United Nations General Assembly, on the following entitlements:*
 - (i) *an increase of 4.57 per cent in the base/floor salary scale; and*
 - (ii) *consequential increases in separation payments for staff in the Professional and higher categories with effect from 1 January 2007; and*
 - (b) *authorize the Director-General to give effect in the ILO, through amendments to the Staff Regulations (as necessary), to the measures*

² GB.297/PFA/13.

³ GB.297/PFA/15.

referred to in subparagraph (a), subject to their approval by the General Assembly, as modified if appropriate.

V. Matters relating to the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO
(Sixteenth item on the agenda)

33. The Committee had before it a paper⁴ on matters relating to the composition of the Tribunal.
34. The representatives of the Employers and the Workers paid tribute to Mr. Gentot, who would be leaving the Tribunal the following year, for his independence and wisdom, as well as for the quality of his work.
35. As there were no other interventions, the Chairperson noted that the document had been submitted for information.

VI. Other personnel questions: Adoption leave
(Seventeenth item on the agenda)

36. The Committee had before it a paper⁵ on adoption leave. The Chairperson introduced the paper, noting that the point for decision was contained in paragraph 5.
37. Mr. Traore, speaking on behalf of the Employers' group, asked that the decision on that point be postponed until the March 2007 session of the Governing Body following the reactions of the staff representative.
38. Mr. Blondel, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group, supported the proposal to postpone the decision until the following session of the Governing Body and expressed the wish that the decision be made following negotiations between the Staff Union and HRD management.
39. There being no other interventions, *the Committee recommends that a decision on this document be deferred until March 2007.*

Geneva, 13 November 2006.

Points for decision: Paragraph 32;
Paragraph 39.

⁴ GB.297/PFA/16.

⁵ GB.297/PFA/17/1.

Appendix

Statement made by the representative of the Staff Union to the Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee of the ILO

Mr. Chairperson,
Members of the Committee,
Director-General,

This is the third occasion on which I have had the honour to address this Committee and express the concerns of ILO Staff Union representatives. It is an honour that few colleagues working in this Organization have had in the course of their careers.

An official is responsible for carrying out a certain mission, the terms of reference of which are defined by you, the ILO's constituents, through bodies like this one. You are thus the "owners" of this Organization, and you have entrusted the leadership of it to the Director-General and his team. Nevertheless, you have agreed to limit your authority by delegating certain powers concerning conditions of employment to the United Nations and, in particular, to the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC).

The ICSC continues to pursue a systematic policy of undermining everything the international civil service does. This is aggravated by the reform of the United Nations, certain aspects of which will put an end to the independence of international civil servants.

The ICSC shows little respect for the United Nations Charter, or for its own Standards of Conduct in the International Civil Service. Suffice it to recall the words of the *Rules of the game* published by the ILO: "labour is not like an apple or a television set, an inanimate product that can be negotiated for the highest profit or the lowest price. Work is part of everyone's daily life and is crucial to a person's dignity, well-being and development as a human being". The same idea is expressed more succinctly and with greater depth in the Declaration of Philadelphia: "labour is not a commodity".

As ILO officials, we claim, ridiculous though it may seem, that our terms of reference entitle us to advise other international organizations, including the ICSC. But the distinguished members of this Committee have in the past spoken more than once of the difficulties faced by the administration as an employer of international civil servants, without the power to set all their terms and conditions of service, which meant that it did not have all the cards when it came to collective bargaining.

A prime example here is the pensions issue, on which views have been expressed by representatives of the participants on the Joint Staff Pension Board. We have seen the attempts by senior United Nations management to deal politically and diplomatically with a financial issue, when the Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations decided to outsource the management of North American assets. Is such a move necessary? I am no expert on this. If it were proved to me that such a measure were justified by the long-term interests of our pensions, I would support it. But what would you think if someone decided on your behalf how to invest your retirement capital without submitting a financial plan, without giving certain basic information on the predicted growth expected from the fund? This is why, with the agreement of our colleagues on the Joint Staff Pension Board, we launched a petition on the issue, which should shortly be considered by the General Assembly. Governments of United Nations member States are expected to be the guarantors of staff members' pensions but are at the mercy of decisions over which they have little direct influence. The recent recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) have broadly endorsed the position of our representatives on the Board.

Does our Organization set an example? If you look at the statement I made in March 2006, it certainly does not. On the other hand, to use a phrase dear to our Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, we have noted certain “cases of progress”. I would cite the trend towards more consultation with representatives of the Human Resources Development Department (HRD). During the recent painful conflict in Lebanon, we saw how our colleagues in HRD spared no effort to ensure the safety of our local and international staff. The ILO Staff Union takes this opportunity once again to thank those colleagues in HRD for their sterling efforts.

Within the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC), too, consultations have intensified. The paper GB.297/PFA/14 reports on the discussions on contractual conditions, a subject to which the Staff Union ascribes great importance, in particular the precarious nature of some employment at the ILO. It is absolutely essential in our view that the rules adopted by the administration be respected by department chiefs. This is not merely a matter of authority but of putting into practice sound ethical standards. The Staff Union does not want to find new cases of reports in the press of colleagues employed under contractual terms that are not acceptable in an institution like ours.

Here is one regrettable example. An official hired following a competition was terminated after nine years of service simply because his profile no longer matched the requirements of the department that had hired him. The Staff Union does not wish to reproach the department concerned. It is rather an indictment of the ILO, with more than 2,000 members of staff, for its apparent inability to find a place in another department for an individual whose worth after nine years of service has been acknowledged. In our view, this suggests that the ILO as an employer is at fault.

Discussions with representatives of the administration have also begun on measures to achieve an appropriate work-life balance. Some welcome steps have been taken to comply with decisions taken by the United Nations General Assembly regarding paternity leave, although we have some concerns about implementation which, we hope, we will be able to resolve within the working group. A questionnaire is being produced to enable staff members to identify needs and possible ways of working that will improve productivity while reducing the stress that sometimes arises as a result of the conflicting work and family responsibilities facing many workers.

Document GB.297/PFA/17/1 sets out for your approval new provisions allowing adoption leave. These provisions will benefit members of staff, although the Staff Union regrets that it was not possible to discuss this issue with the administration. The recommendation provides for a longer period of parental leave for an adoptive father than for a father whose partner has just given birth. This anomaly, and another point concerning leave in cases where both parents are ILO employees, could be interpreted as unequal treatment. We would have hoped that more thorough discussions on the issue might have resulted in a more equitable policy.

A document summarizing the points of agreement on recruitment and selection procedures will shortly be presented to the JNC for approval. Once the text has been approved by that body, it will become the basis for a revised version of the collective agreement currently in force. We would like to base this agreement on the same model as the one on conflict prevention and resolution, in which the implementing annexes are linked to the text of the main agreement. I will not conceal from you the fact that the stumbling block in our discussions remains the extent of the authority of department chiefs. The Staff Union agrees that they must remain central to the procedure, but their obligation to produce results within the limited context of their own particular departments does not allow them to have an overall view of the ILO’s requirements and obligations in the field of human resources. We would like to see the role of HRD strengthened in the entire process in order to ensure as far as possible that these overall objectives are attained, since it would not be desirable to manage an organization like the ILO solely in the light of the particular objectives of each department’s individual programme. In our view, the role

of the Staff Union in all this remains that of ensuring that the system is fair, equitable and transparent.

The Staff Union also claims the right of members of staff to have a career within the organization. Having a career encourages officials to remain loyal to the ILO and its goals, and guarantees their independence of judgement as required by the code of conduct and by general principles of ethics. It can promote a high level of productivity through enhanced motivation. It does not necessarily mean ascending the promotion ladder. It means allowing people to broaden their experience, their field of competence, in order better to fulfil their own mission. This is the point of having a Personal Development Plan (PDP). That is why we believe the revision of the current Collective Agreement on Personal Development Plans remains a desirable goal. Without a tool for career management, or any other tool that would enable people to make full use of their own particular skills, we will fail to do justice to the natural aspirations of the staff. Efforts made by the Office on rules for using dedicated staff training funds are no substitute for a career management policy. According to the *Rules of the game* referred to above, "Investment in vocational training can result in a better trained workforce and higher employment levels". This is interesting in more ways than one, and I leave you to think about it the implications of having to apply it within the ILO.

Another issue of importance to staff is that of performance appraisals. The document GB.297/PFA/14 reports on a plan currently under way to revise the current system. Representatives of the Staff Union were consulted on this, and we remain at the disposal of the administration with a view to continuing the discussion once the first components have been put together.

We are aware that this Committee will not be responsible for considering the issue of the state of the ILO building, but the Staff Union would like to take this opportunity to draw delegates' attention to the report commissioned by the ILO. The report contains a number of recommendations regarding priority work. The Staff Union endorses this initiative and hopes that the Governing Body may give careful consideration to these proposals, in the interests of those who work in this building.

The Staff Union, with the support of the Administrative Tribunal and its President, Mr. Gentot, is organizing a day of discussion on the various calls to reform the institution which were made in 2002 and 2003. We are sure that this will enable us to make progress on the question of allowing unions and staff associations to bring cases before this body as part of their mandate to defend and protect the rights and interests of staff employed by organizations that have recognized the competence of the Tribunal.

In this context, it is entirely possible that our own Staff Union will shortly be making a complaint in order to clarify the question of hiring an official as a legal adviser. It is regrettable that we should have come to this, and we are very interested in the position of the Tribunal on this question.

Having spent four years as a staff representative, I would like to say that the members of the Staff Union Committee have always found that our colleagues in the Human Resources Development Department keep an open door, and the questions requiring discussion have always had an attentive hearing. I have always been able to contact the Executive Director when I needed to. Social dialogue obviously does not prevent disagreement, but dialogue is at least something. Nevertheless, I am sorry not to have had the opportunity to meet the Director-General during the course of this year. In my view, it is always worthwhile for the Staff Union Committee to have an opportunity every year to present its views directly to this Organization's chief administrator. The fact that this was not possible was probably due to a busy schedule.

I close by expressing the hope that social dialogue and collective bargaining will endure within this Organization.

Thank you for your attention.