



Coordinating Committee of International Staff Unions and Associations

Submission on management reform

November 2017

Global service delivery model

We remain concerned at the proposed global service delivery model. The Secretariat currently comprises a number of administrative centres offering varying levels of price, quality and services to suit the needs of different clients, through transparent price lists. Over the past year (following the UMOJA roll out), this competition has driven improvements in costs and efficiency, giving clients a choice in which provider to choose.

The current proposal would create a monopoly with no incentive to improve costs and standards or innovate. It will also move clients further away from service providers, also affecting the ability of local staff to access services in their language. The outcome will be detrimental to speed, quality and client satisfaction. GSDM's savings are only premised on moving staff to lower cost locations. However, the savings obtained by a competitive environment through technological efficiencies will likely exceed those obtained through wage differences.

The General Assembly may wish to request the Secretary-General to further study the opportunities of a competitive model.

Performance management

A number of proposals are made with regards to performance management. However, while underperformance can result in loss of steps and termination of contract, exceeding performance brings no benefit. Comparable private sector schemes provide annual step increments for normal performance (which encapsulates the vast majority of staff) and accelerated increments for exceeding performance. Performance is also reviewed when applications are made for promotion. At the UN, exceeding performance does not bring accelerated steps. Nor is selection to posts at a higher position linked to performance. Without these provisions, any changes to the performance framework will be of limited impact.

The General Assembly may wish to recommend that the Secretary-General study options for linking overperformance to accelerated steps and faster career progression

Gender strategy

On the gender strategy, staff unions have long been calling for a fully diverse workplace with an enabling environment that empowers women, and discrimination and sexual harassment. As the strategy makes clear, tackling issues such as the higher departure of women mid-career requires concrete resources, including on issues such as childcare, shared and extended parental leave, and increased outreach and leadership training, which we urge you to fund. It is also time to update the policy on preventing sexual harassment, and to promulgate a related administrative instruction on investigations and disciplinary matters, for which consultations were completed last year.

With regards to target-setting and timelines for achieving parity, these should be realistic and take into account current demography, a shrinking pool of posts, an annual 0.5% forecast retirement rate, greater departures of women mid-career, an average joining age of 41 and the concurrent need to ensure geographic diversity. Any HR policy must also motivate hard-working women and men with promotion opportunities - based on the calculations we have seen it is not clear this will be possible. The targets and measures in the strategy should be reasonable and proportionate.

The General Assembly may wish to reaffirm the importance of merit in staff selection and that no barriers be erected to the career progression of women or men.

Flexible workspace/hot-desking

Following New York, the Committee is considering implementation of flexible workspace in other duty stations. It should note the survey results of New York staff on hot-desking floors, which showed that:

- 47 percent reported hot-desking affected productivity negatively (26 percent positively);
- 58 percent reported it affected concentration negatively (8 percent positively);
- 25 percent reported increased exposure to contagious illness;
- staff also reported losing time at the start and end of the day setting up and clearing their desks.

Additional discussions with staff show that:

- the 8 to 10 desk ratio is insufficient on certain occasions;
- senior managers, as well as those with back-aches and other ailments tend to “nest” desks, which is hard to challenge by other staff and leads to social tension;
- quiet desks are hard to get after 9am;
- managers are less likely to talk to staff as they don’t know where to find them;
- this has undermined overall team spirit.

Attention has been drawn to space occupancy ratios in Geneva, but this did not account for staff away in meetings or at meals. Certain samples were also taken at 8 a.m. The General Assembly may wish to discontinue the practice of flexible workspace.

Long term planning and contracts

Resolution 65/247 (paragraph 58) “urges the Secretary-General to consider granting five-year fixed-term contracts to staff members” who qualify for continuing contracts with five years of continuous service and good performance, but who fall outside the post envelope. Some departments, (DM, OIOS, UNODC, ESCAP and ESCWA) have failed to do so, including on regular budget funded posts, leading to a two-track system within the UN, adding additional administrative workload and creating unnecessary uncertainty for good performing staff.

The General Assembly may wish to reiterate paragraph 5 of Resolution 65/247 and urge the issuing of five-year contracts, subject to the conditions stipulated, on a consistent basis.

Staff unions are concerned with unequal conditions provided for temporary appointments as well as the high number used in functions of an ongoing nature. Differences include reduced leave and participation options for the pension fund. The General Assembly may wish to request a review.