



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

EXECUTIVE BOARD
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Report of the International Civil Service Commission

Report by the Secretariat

1. Under article 17 of its statute,¹ the International Civil Service Commission is required to submit to the United Nations General Assembly an annual report that is transmitted to the governing bodies of the other organizations of the United Nations system through their executive heads.
2. The Director-General submits to the Executive Board herewith the thirty-first annual report of the International Civil Service Commission.² The report is to be considered in December 2005 by the United Nations General Assembly at its sixtieth session.
3. Decisions expected to be taken by the General Assembly on the Commission's recommendations and that require a revision of WHO's Staff Rules are reported separately to the Board.³ The subjects concerned are the staff assessment scale and remuneration of the professional and higher categories; they are therefore not dealt with in this document.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSION

Monitoring of the pilot study of broadbanding/reward for contribution

4. In reviewing the current status of this study, which it initiated in July 2004, the Commission discussed issues raised by participants. Consideration was given to whether it was desirable to allow more flexibility (i.e. setting bands to suit the individual needs of participating organizations) and to include classes of staff other than the professional and higher categories. The Commission was also informed that a variety of broadbanded structures had already been implemented in the comparator civil service – the United States federal civil service in Washington, DC – and that this trend was expected to continue.

¹ WHO Official Records, No. 226, 1975.

² *Official records of the General Assembly, sixtieth session; supplement no.30 (A/60/30)* (copies available in the meeting room).

³ Document EB117/23.

5. In subsequent discussions, the Commission noted that from the beginning it had been decided that the testing of new human resources approaches would start with the professional and higher categories. The Commission also recalled its decision in 2003 (reported to the United Nations General Assembly in 2004) that the pilot study should be conducted on one broadbanded model. This approach reflected the Commission's determination that the organizations of the common system should not be competing among themselves for staff. In its decision, the Commission welcomed the progress report on the pilot study but reminded volunteer organizations that its approval would be required prior to any deviation from the original modalities of the study.

Mobility and hardship allowances

6. The current mobility and hardship scheme, established by the International Civil Service Commission in 1989, comprises three elements (mobility, hardship and non-removal). The United Nations General Assembly had expressed its concern that the scheme was pegged to the midpoint of the base/floor salary scale, and that as a result the associated entitlements were automatically increased whenever the annual adjustment procedure was applied to the base/floor salary scale.

7. At its session in July 2004, the Commission had decided to de-link the mobility and hardship scheme from the base/floor salary scale and separate the mobility element from the hardship element, deferring implementation of those two steps until a new system had been put in place. The Commission had also decided to establish a working group to develop options for compensating service in hardship duty stations and encouraging mobility. The Working Group's recommendations were submitted to the Commission at its session in July 2005; they included proposals for new flat-sum schemes for the mobility, hardship and non-removal elements.

8. The Commission decided to recommend to the United Nations General Assembly that it should approve the proposed arrangements for payment of flat sums for the mobility, hardship and non-removal elements. As no decision can be taken by the General Assembly before December 2005, and given the significant implications of the proposals for WHO's payroll and information technology systems, a start date of 1 July 2006 is envisaged. Subject to the decision of the General Assembly, the WHO Secretariat will submit to the Executive Board at its 118th session in May 2006 the staff rule changes required to implement this new scheme with effect from 1 July 2006.

9. Prior to implementation, a comprehensive communication programme will be launched to inform staff about the new arrangements. As part of the programme, training will be provided for human resources specialists. In addition, clear guidelines on transitional arrangements will be prepared.

Education grant: review of the methodology for determining the level of the grant

10. In the context of the review, the Commission considered proposals developed by its secretariat and decided to request the latter – in cooperation with the organizations and staff representatives – to continue its work, paying particular attention to the lump-sum approach and respecting the principles underlying the grant. The secretariat was also requested to illustrate the practicality of its proposals, bearing in mind the objective of streamlining assessment and payment procedures while ensuring fairness.

Contractual arrangements

11. Proposals for model contracts for continuing, fixed-term and temporary appointments were put before the Commission by its secretariat for consideration at its July 2004 session. The Commission then requested its secretariat to further refine the models in collaboration with the organizations for consideration at the Commission's next session. The Commission was subsequently provided with draft guidelines prepared by its secretariat; these took into account many of the concerns expressed by the organizations in 2004.

12. As a result, the Commission decided to adopt the framework of guidelines for contractual arrangements as set out in Annex IV to its thirty-first annual report and to submit its final report to the United Nations General Assembly at its sixtieth session. The WHO Secretariat will subsequently review WHO's Staff Regulations and Staff Rules to ensure compliance with this framework, adapting them where necessary. Any such changes will be submitted to the Executive Board at its 118th session.

Hazard pay: review of the level

13. The Commission introduced hazard pay in 1984. The criteria established at the time for the payment of hazard pay were (a) service at duty stations where very hazardous conditions, such as war or active hostilities, prevailed and (b) service at duty stations where the evacuation of families and non-essential staff had taken place. A review of hazard pay takes place every three years, the last review being in 2002. The current level of hazard pay for international staff is US\$ 1000 per month; for locally recruited staff, it is 25% of the midpoint of the local salary scale.

14. The Commission decided to reiterate its commitment to the principle of hazard pay and to express its appreciation for the dedication and commitment of all staff working in hazardous conditions. The Commission also decided to establish the level of hazard pay for internationally recruited staff at US\$ 1300 per month as of 1 January 2006; the current level of hazard pay for locally recruited staff was retained unchanged. On the basis of the recommendation made by the working group established to review the mobility and hardship scheme, hazard pay would be reviewed on the same three-year cycle as, and simultaneously with, the review of the allowances for mobility, hardship and non-removal.

15. The Commission also decided to adopt the recommendation of the working group to revise the definition of criteria for the application of hazard pay to take account of the emergence of life-threatening diseases such as severe acute respiratory syndrome and Ebola virus haemorrhage fever, as set out in Annex III of the Commission's report.

Evolution of the United Nations/United States net remuneration margin

16. Under a standing mandate from the United Nations General Assembly, the Commission is required to keep under review the relationship between the net remuneration of United Nations staff in the professional and higher categories in New York and that of United States federal civil service employees in comparable positions in Washington, DC. This relationship is known as "the margin". In discussions at its February 2005 session, the Commission recalled that the General Assembly had, on a number of occasions, reaffirmed that the range of 110 to 120 should continue to apply, on the understanding that the margin would be maintained at a level around the desirable midpoint of 115 over a period of time.

17. The Commission decided to take note of the margin forecast of 111.1 between the net remuneration of the United Nations staff in grades P.1 to D.2 in New York and that of the federal civil service in Washington, DC, for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2005. It also decided to draw the attention of the General Assembly to the fact that the current level of the margin was 3.9 percentage points below the desirable midpoint of 115.

Assessing the implementation of the new job evaluation Master Standard for the professional and higher categories

18. A review by the Commission in 2000 of the scope for modernization of the pay and benefits system led to the conclusion, inter alia, that there was a need to update and streamline the job classification system. Subsequent developments led to the emergence of a new automated system of job evaluation, which was validated during 2003 and promulgated on 1 January 2004.

19. The new job evaluation system has the following features: a Master Standard to serve as the authoritative base for grading jobs; grade level descriptors to define the demands of the job, the competencies required and the measures of success applied; and lastly, a simplified job description format.

20. At its July 2005 session, the Commission reviewed the latest update from its secretariat on the implementation of the new system by 12 organizations (including WHO). In its decisions, the Commission endorsed the approach proposed by its secretariat for enhancing the new system, encouraged organizations to increase the rate of implementation, and requested a further progress report in time for its July session in 2006.

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

21. The Executive Board is invited to take note of the thirty-first annual report of the International Civil Service Commission.

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