

Report of the International Civil Service Commission

Report by the Secretariat

1. Under 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 organizations of the United Nations system through their executive heads.
2. The Director-General submits to the Executive Board herewith the report of the Commission for the year 2016.² The report is scheduled to be considered in December 2016 by the General Assembly at its Seventy-first session. Decisions expected to be taken by the General Assembly on the Commission's recommendations that will require a revision of WHO's Staff Rules will be reported separately to the Board.³ The present report contains a summary by the Secretariat of other decisions taken by the Commission in 2016.

CHAPTER III OF THE COMMISSION'S REPORT

CONDITIONS OF SERVICE APPLICABLE TO BOTH CATEGORIES OF STAFF

Framework for human resources management

3. The proposed revised human resources framework⁴ is the outcome of a comprehensive review process that involved working groups composed of key stakeholders. It was designed to be strategic, staff-centred and results-based, and it highlights the strategic role of human resources management in helping to maximize present and future human resources capacity to meet the goals of the organizations. It should be seen and used by organizations as a living document that interlinks subject matters. Furthermore, it places stronger emphasis on human resources analytics and includes references to the Commission's standards of conduct.

¹ International Civil Service Commission: Statute and Rules of Procedure. New York: United Nations; 1987 (document ICSC/1/Rev.1), Article 17. Available at <http://icsc.un.org/resources/pdfs/general/statute1.pdf> (accessed 10 November 2016).

² General Assembly Official Records, Seventy-first session: Supplement No. 30 (document A/71/30). Available at <http://icsc.un.org/resources/pdfs/ar/AR2016.pdf> (accessed 10 November 2016). In particular, the Board is invited to refer to pages 11–13 and 18–54 of the Commission's report.

³ Document EB140/48.

⁴ Set out in Annex III to the Commission's report for the year 2016.

DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSION

4. The Commission decided: to approve the revised human resources management framework; to encourage organizations to use the new framework as an instrument to reinforce human resources management in the organization; that the framework should continue to be updated to be useful for all stakeholders; and invited organizations to include links to their own relevant policy documents.

Contractual arrangements: review of the implementation of the three types of contracts

5. At the request of the Commission, its secretariat had prepared a document with findings from a survey in which organizations of the common system were asked to provide feedback on their implementation of the Commission's framework for contractual arrangements. The Commission concluded that the organizations were in general satisfied with the three types of appointments and that the contract modalities contained in the framework adequately met their needs. The Commission reiterated that organizations were not required to use all three types of appointments outlined in the Commission's contractual framework, but rather that the framework presented a menu of available options from which the organizations could choose on the basis of what best met their needs. However, from the particular angle of contracts that are "fit for purpose" in time-bound project environments, some organizations would still like to see more specific modalities for truly time-limited contracts that extend beyond the current two-year limit on temporary appointments.

DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSION

6. The Commission decided, inter alia: to take note of the information provided in the secretariat's document; to encourage the organizations to follow the guidelines of the framework for contractual arrangements when considering and introducing any changes to the contractual status of staff; to request the organizations that had not implemented the contractual framework to review their contractual mechanisms to align their contractual arrangements with those of the common system at their earliest convenience; and to review the framework for contractual arrangements at a future session, to be determined in the light of the programme of work of the Commission.

Separation payments

7. The Commission was of the view that providing severance pay, in lieu of an unemployment benefit, to long-serving staff separating from the organization at the expiration of their fixed-term contracts seemed reasonable. In particular, it recalled that the current separation arrangements resulted in a discrepancy in the treatment of long-serving staff, depending on whether they were terminated prior to the expiration of their fixed-term contracts or completed their contracts exactly at the time of separation owing to non-renewal. It also upheld its view that the termination indemnity differed from proposed severance pay in that the former was offered on the foreshortening of the contract, thus carrying the element of compensating for the loss of continued employment, while the latter implied no such loss.

8. The proposed guidelines for agreed termination are still under discussion. The need for what is seen by some organizations as "one-size-fits-all regulations" is questioned as such regulations potentially defeat the purpose of agreed separations that typically take into consideration a highly individualized set of very specific circumstances.

DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSION

9. The Commission decided, bearing in mind the decision of the General Assembly to revert to this issue at its Seventy-first session and in view of the change in operational needs, particularly in peacekeeping, and the resulting needs of workforce planning, to submit its earlier recommendation to the General Assembly that end-of-service severance pay be introduced for fixed-term staff separating from the organization upon the expiration of contract after 10 or more years of continuous service;¹ and to revert to the guidelines for agreed termination at a later session.

Compensation package-related issues

10. Apart from the discussion on current practices in the use of categories of staff, notably the widening of criteria for the use of national professional officers, which is proposed to be further studied, the compensation issues discussed by the Commission are covered in the report by the Secretariat on amendments to the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules.²

CHAPTER IV OF THE COMMISSION'S REPORT

CONDITIONS OF SERVICE OF THE PROFESSIONAL AND HIGHER CATEGORIES

Base/floor salary scale

11. In its resolution 70/244 (2015),³ the United Nations General Assembly approved a new unified base/floor salary scale, with effect from 1 January 2017, which should be updated to reflect any adjustments in reference salaries of the comparator that might be made between the approval of the scale and its implementation. It was therefore necessary to consider the movement in the comparator reference salary points on the basis of officials with no primary dependants.

12. The Commission was informed that a 1% increase had been implemented with effect from 1 January 2016 in the base general schedule scale. In addition, minor changes with respect to tax schedules and the personal exemption amount had been introduced at the federal level for 2016.

DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSION

13. The Commission decided to recommend to the General Assembly, for approval with effect from 1 January 2017, the revised unified base/floor salary scale shown in Annex V to the Commission's report, reflecting a 1.02% adjustment over the unified salary scale previously approved by the General Assembly, to be implemented by increasing the base salary and commensurately decreasing post adjustment multiplier points, resulting in no change in net take-home pay.

¹ Document A/64/30, para. 59 (b), and Annex III to the Commission's report for the year 2016.

² Document EB140/48.

³ See http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/244 (accessed 1 November 2016).

14. The Commission also decided to approve the pay protection points, shown in Annex VI to the Commission's report, which are necessary for the purposes of pay protection for staff presently on steps higher than those foreseen in the new salary scale.

Evolution of the United Nations/United States net remuneration margin

15. Under a standing mandate from the General Assembly, the Commission reviews the relationship between the net remuneration of United Nations officials in the professional and higher categories in New York and that of United States federal civil service officials in comparable positions in Washington, DC. For that purpose, the Commission annually tracks changes occurring in the remuneration levels of both civil services.

16. The Commission was informed that, on the basis of changes that had occurred in the United States federal civil service, the estimated net remuneration margin between the two civil services for 2016 amounted to 114.1. While the new trigger points seemed to render the measurement of the five-year average margin no longer necessary, the Commission was also informed that the five-year average margin (2012–2016) would be at 117. The details of the comparison are shown in Annex VII to the Commission's report.

DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSION

17. The Commission decided to report to the General Assembly that the margin between the net remuneration of United Nations officials in the professional and higher categories in New York and that of officials in comparable positions in the United States federal civil service in Washington, DC, was estimated at 114.1 for the calendar year 2016; and to continue monitoring the level of the margin and to take the necessary corrective action under the operation of the post adjustment system should the trigger levels of 113 or 117 be breached in 2017.

Report of the Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions

18. Pursuant to Article 11 of its statute, the Commission continued to keep under review the operation of the post adjustment system and, in that context, considered the report of the Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions on the work at its Thirty-eighth session, in 2016.

19. The Commission also considered the Advisory Committee's main conclusions and recommendations on methodological issues pertaining to the 2016 round of cost-of-living surveys.

DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSION

20. The Commission decided: to approve the revised list of items, together with their specifications, while granting the Commission's secretariat the flexibility to make further minor revisions, subject to the approval of the Chair of the Commission, prior to its finalization before the launch of the 2016 round of surveys; to approve the proposed procedures and guidelines for data collection for the baseline cost-of-living surveys at headquarters duty stations, as recommended by the Advisory Committee; and to approve the schedule of the 2016 place-to-place surveys, as recommended by the Advisory Committee.

Report on gender balance in the United Nations common system

21. In response to the request of the General Assembly, contained in resolution 70/244, the Commission's secretariat presented a report providing information on gender-sensitive policies and measures that had been put in place to support a work environment conducive to achieving gender balance in the organizations of the common system. In the report, it was noted that efforts had to be made to overcome the informal organizational cultures that constrained the advancement of female staff in the organizations of the common system. The Commission was of the view that the goal of 50/50 gender balance should be achieved in an evolutionary manner, as the current levels of representation of women varied by organization and grade level, and that this was a long-term exercise. It was important to create an organizational culture conducive to attaining and sustaining gender balance at all levels and to fostering a healthy work environment for all staff, both men and women, which implied changing attitudes, behaviours and biases that perpetuated gender inequality.

DECISION OF THE COMMISSION

22. The Commission decided: to take note of the information provided in its report; to urge organizations to continue implementing existing gender balance policies and measures; to request its secretariat to continue reviewing holistically all issues relating to inclusiveness and diversity, such as gender parity, geographical distribution, multiculturalism, generational diversity and multilingualism; and to request its secretariat to provide a report on inclusiveness and diversity at the Commission's Eighty-fifth session.

CHAPTER V OF THE COMMISSION'S REPORT

CONDITIONS OF SERVICE OF THE GENERAL SERVICE AND OTHER LOCALLY RECRUITED CATEGORIES

Adjustment of dependency allowances

23. The General Assembly had decided in its resolution 70/244 to discontinue the freeze on allowances for staff in the general service and related categories with effect from 1 January 2016. The Commission was therefore in general agreement that the allowances for those locations under methodology I that had been affected by the freeze (Madrid, London, New York and Geneva) should be reviewed by the Commission, on an exceptional and one-time basis, before the next surveys of best prevailing conditions of service, with the resulting recommendations applied at the time of the next interim adjustment to the salary scales at those locations.

24. The Commission, at its Eighty-second session, requested its secretariat to conduct an ad hoc one-time review of the levels of the dependency allowances in Madrid, London, New York and Geneva. The results of the Commission's review at its Eighty-third session would be recommended to the organizations for implementation at the time of the next interim adjustment to the salary scales at the aforementioned duty stations. The recommended levels of allowances are shown in Annex X to the Commission's report.

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

25. The Board is invited to take note of the report.

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