

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, which 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 thirty-third annual report of the Commission,² which is to be considered in December 2007 by the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-second session. Decisions that are expected to be taken by the United Nations 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 subject concerned is the remuneration of the professional and higher categories.

3. The main elements of the Commission's report are summarized below:

Retaining staff of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

4. The United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-first session adopted resolution 61/274, which requested the International Civil Service Commission to advise the General Assembly on the proposal of the Secretary-General contained in his report entitled "Comprehensive proposal on appropriate incentives to retain staff of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia".⁴

5. The Commission recognized the exceptional mission of the tribunals. It nevertheless concluded that granting financial retention incentives to staff of the tribunals would set a precedent for the common system, which should be avoided. The Commission also deemed that the future downsizing and operational closure of the tribunals was not sufficiently unique to justify exceptional treatment, as other entities faced similar phenomena.

¹ WHO Official Records, No. 226, 1975.

² General Assembly Official Records, Sixty-second session: Supplement No. 30 (A/62/30) (copies available in the meeting room).

³ Documents EB122/30 and EB122/30 Add.1.

⁴ Document A/61/824

Evolution of the United Nations/United States net remuneration margin

6. Under a standing mandate assigned to it by the United Nations General Assembly, the Commission continued to 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 (hereinafter referred to as “the margin”).

7. Based on the information before it, the Commission decided to report to the United Nations General Assembly that the margin between the net remuneration of United Nations staff in grades P.1 to D.2 in New York and that of employees of the United States federal civil service in Washington, DC, for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2007, was estimated at 113.9. It also drew the attention of the General Assembly to the fact that the average margin level for the preceding five years (2003–2007) had been below the desirable mid-point of 115, currently standing at 112.3.

Post adjustment matters

8. The Commission continued its review of 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 of its twenty-ninth session.

9. The Commission decided:

- (a) to endorse the recommendations of the Advisory Committee in respect of the proposed simplifications of the post adjustment index structure;
- (b) to request its secretariat to conduct an out-of-area survey to determine the out-of-area index and information on Internet purchases;
- (c) to authorize its secretariat to negotiate with the data provider’s specific proposals to improve the transparency and readability of its biennial report, postponing, however, any methodological modifications to 2010;
- (d) to approve the Advisory Committee’s recommendation to use the cost estimation models developed by its secretariat to estimate the financial implications of changes in both the base scale for staff in the professional and higher categories, and the mobility and hardship scheme;¹
- (e) to request its secretariat to develop a model to estimate financial implications of the education grant and present it at the Commission’s sixty-sixth session.

Progress report on the development of the Senior Management Network

10. The United Nations General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session adopted resolution 59/268, which requested the Commission to continue to monitor the project regarding the improvement of management capacity and performance among senior staff by CEB and to make recommendations to the General Assembly, as appropriate. At its sixty-second session, the Commission decided to request

¹ See Annexes IV and V of the Commission’s report.

updates at regular intervals from the CEB/Human Resources Network on the development of the Senior Management Network.

11. At its sixty-fifth session, the Commission received a progress report on the implementation of the CEB/Human Resources Network's strategic plan. The representative of the CEB/Human Resources Network recalled that the Commission had been informed of the development of a competency map by the United Nations System Staff College, the purpose of which was to align the six core competencies of the Senior Management Network with existing organizational competency frameworks.

12. The Commission was informed that the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University had been contracted to design the Leadership Development Programme. It was envisaged that this Programme would be launched in the fourth quarter of 2007 for 50 members. The United Nations Secretary-General would be sending letters to all heads of agencies to request nominations for inclusion in the Senior Management Network. As of 2008, each agency would be expected to fund the participation of its own staff. It was estimated that the cost per participant would be between US\$ 10 000 and US\$ 12 000.

13. The Commission took note of the information provided by the CEB/Human Resources Network on the development of the Senior Management Network among the organizations of the United Nations common system.

Monitoring of the pilot study of broad banding/reward for contribution (progress report)

14. The discussion with representatives of the volunteer organizations at the Commission's sixty-fifth session highlighted the differences between individual organizations in terms of what they had been able to accomplish. The Commission was thus conscious that certain difficulties confronting the volunteer organizations had slowed down progress on the pilot project.

15. The Commission decided to request its secretariat both to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the pilot study of the broad banding/pay-for-performance project in the five volunteer organizations, stressing the lessons learnt, and to report to the Commission at its sixty-sixth session, which would enable the Commission to take an appropriate decision on the study.

All leave entitlements

16. The Commission had before it a document prepared by the CEB/Human Resources Network and the Commission secretariat, focusing on three categories of leave: (a) annual leave; (b) sick leave including family-related leave; and (c) special leave with and without pay and leave related to service in field locations.

17. The Commission recognized that, insofar as leave entitlements were concerned, it should focus on those items that were essential for the cohesiveness and effective functioning of the common system, such as annual, home and sick leave; however, with regard to other types of leave, flexibility to recognize the organizations' diverse operational goals could be appropriate.

18. The Commission decided that its coordinating and regulating role in the area of leave entitlements should be concentrated on ensuring a consistent common system policy with respect to those elements of leave that were essential to maintaining harmonized recruitment incentives,

facilitating mobility of staff and ensuring coherent conditions of employment among organizations with staff whose general situation was comparable. The areas of concentration would include, but would not be limited to, annual, home and sick leave.

19. Taking into account any guidelines established by the Commission on other leave entitlements, the organizations should have the flexibility to tackle these issues in the light of recent trends and best practices, such as those concerning work/life balance and health care. When considering such issues, the organizations should consult with the Chairman of the Commission.

Language incentives

20. The document of the Commission's secretariat on the issue of language incentives identified a divergence of approaches on the part of common system organizations with regard to language recognition and the promotion of multilingualism. Nevertheless, all organizations were satisfied with the current arrangements, which they saw as providing an efficient set of tools to improve organizational effectiveness based on specific operational needs, which differed among the organizations.

21. The Commission decided to make several recommendations to the United Nations General Assembly:

- (a) the long-standing flexibility provided to the organizations in applying the language recognition schemes and other tools to promote multilingualism in the United Nations common system has been effective in meeting their diverse operational needs and should therefore be maintained;
- (b) the organizations should be encouraged, taking into account their practical needs and budget considerations, to continue efforts to promote the use of additional languages in a multicultural environment of international civil service in order to further their operational goals;
- (c) when reviewing or developing programmes to improve organizational effectiveness through multilingualism, the organizations should, where appropriate and advisable, consider the general guidelines set out below:
 - (i) if the operational mandate so requires, proficiency in more than one official language of the organization should be included in vacancy announcements as a qualification requirement;
 - (ii) the knowledge and use of additional languages should be taken into account in the career development and promotion of staff;
 - (iii) where a language allowance or a language incentive is administered, verification of language proficiency should be in place, with specific mechanisms to be determined by operational requirements and budget considerations. Such mechanisms could include retesting examinations or certification or observance of language use under the performance appraisal system;

- (iv) where it could improve organizational effectiveness (e.g. facilitate mobility), free training in official as well as other languages could be considered for staff and family members;
- (v) where language proficiency is a job or mobility requirement, training should be fully paid for by the organization; in other cases, cost-sharing could be considered;
- (vi) the language incentive or allowance should not be applicable to the use of the mother tongue or to language staff;
- (vii) free training or cost-sharing could be considered in lieu of providing a language incentive or allowance;
- (viii) where monetary language incentive schemes are to be administered, the focus should be to encourage the practical use and application of languages in the interest of improved organizational effectiveness.

Strengthening the role and functioning of the Commission

22. Immediately prior to its sixty-fifth session, members of the Commission and its secretariat held a retreat in order to consider ways to further strengthen the Commission and maximize its ability to support the United Nations General Assembly in guiding the common system. The Commission sought to be more proactive by improving relationships with its partners and by focusing on strategic planning. It also examined how it could improve its functioning by streamlining working methods; by using existing resources more effectively; and by making its reports to the United Nations General Assembly more concise and easier to understand. It further committed itself to responding to requests of the United Nations General Assembly in a more timely manner.

Meeting with representatives of executive heads of the Geneva-based organizations

23. As part of its effort to strengthen partnerships with its stakeholders, the Commission held a special meeting, prior to the opening of its sixty-fifth session, with the Geneva-based organizations. The meeting focused on identifying issues of high strategic value to most or all organizations, where the Commission could have a particularly important role to play. Such issues included, inter alia, contractual arrangements, mobility and rotation, conditions of service in the field and the simplification of the pay and benefits system. Ways of enhancing the Commission's interaction with the organizations were also discussed.

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

24. The Executive Board is invited to take note of the report.

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