

Report of the International Civil Service Commission

Report by the Secretariat

1. Under Article 17 of its Statute,¹ the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) is required to submit an annual report to the United Nations General Assembly 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-fifth annual report of the Commission,² which is to be considered in December 2009 by the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. Decisions expected to be taken by the General Assembly on the Commission's recommendations that require a revision of WHO's Staff Rules are reported separately to the Board.³ The subject concerned is the remuneration of staff in the professional and higher categories.
3. The main elements of the Commission's report are summarized below.

CONDITIONS OF SERVICE APPLICABLE TO BOTH CATEGORIES OF STAFF

Mandatory age of separation

4. The Commission considered a document from the Human Resources Network of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), prepared in response to a recommendation by the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit that the Secretary-General of the United Nations should initiate a review, with the involvement of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board and ICSC, of the possibility of changing the mandatory age of separation.⁴ The document contained an overview together with an analysis of data and practices relating to the separation/retirement age.

¹ WHO Official Records, No.226, 1975.

² *Report of the International Civil Service Commission for 2009. General Assembly Official records, Sixty-fourth session, Supplement No. 30* (documents A/64/30, A/64/30 Corr.1 (in French only) and A/64/30 Corr.2 (copies available in the Executive Board room)).

³ Documents EB126/39 and EB126/39 Add.1.

⁴ Document A/62/628, recommendation 7.

5. The Commission requested its secretariat, in cooperation with the organizations and the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, to prepare a comprehensive report on the possibility of changing the mandatory age of separation, taking account of the various implications in the human resources and pension areas and decided to revert to this issue at its seventy-second session.

Standards of conduct for the international civil service – update on implementation

6. In 2001, the Commission adopted an updated version of the standards of conduct for the international civil service and recommended them to the General Assembly and to legislative organs of the organizations of the United Nations common system. The standards of conduct approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 55/223 were developed to promote a common system of values and ethics essential to the international civil service; they thus articulated the basic values and ethical standards of the United Nations.

7. Organizations identified gaps and ethical challenges not dealt with by the present standards of conduct. These included issues associated with conflict of interest, post-employment restrictions, accountability, protection of whistle-blowers from retaliation, abuse of authority, disclosure of information and negligence in the management of the organization's assets and resources.

Draft system-wide code of ethics for United Nations personnel

8. In response to General Assembly resolutions 60/1 and 60/254, the system-wide code of ethics for United Nations personnel was initially developed by the United Nations Ethics Office. Following its establishment in January 2008, the United Nations Ethics Committee further developed and finalized the draft code.

9. The Director of the United Nations Ethics Office, in a briefing to the Commission, indicated that the Ethics Committee was mandated to establish a unified set of ethics, standards and policies for United Nations personnel. He emphasized that the code of ethics was intended to complement rather than replace the ICSC's standards of conduct. He pointed out that the standards of conduct had formed part of the base upon which the code of ethics had been developed. The draft system-wide code of ethics, which had been approved by the Secretary General, was a "value-based" document that set out the core values and principles of ethics and integrity to guide the conduct and behaviour of United Nations personnel. Once adopted, the code was expected to serve as the principal document outlining the ethical standards to be upheld by United Nations personnel.

10. The Commission was informed that the code of ethics would be presented to the General Assembly for its consideration and endorsement at its sixty-fourth regular session.

11. The Commission decided also to request its secretariat to work with organizations and representatives of the staff federations to undertake an initial review of the standards of conduct to ensure that they continued to meet the needs of the organizations, and to define areas that might need updating.

Review of separation payments

12. At its sixty-ninth session, ICSC concluded its review of separation payments, namely: termination indemnity, repatriation grant and death grant. The Commission's considered, inter alia, variations in termination indemnity schedules across organizations and contract types; possible introduction of an end-of-service grant stemming, in particular, from the inequality in treatment of

staff on fixed-term contracts at the time of separation due to the expiry of their contracts; and variations across organizations with respect to both eligibility for repatriation grant and the eligibility for death grant of surviving secondary dependants of a deceased staff member.

13. The Commission decided to recommend that the General Assembly should invite the governing bodies of the common system organizations to harmonize their termination indemnity schedules in line with that of the United Nations, as approved in General Assembly resolution 63/271.

Evolution of the United Nations/United States net remuneration margin

14. 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”).

15. 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 their counterparts in the United States federal civil service in Washington, DC, for the period 1 January to 31 December 2009, was estimated at 114.0. The Commission also drew the attention of the General Assembly to the fact that the average margin level for the preceding five years (2005–2009) was 113.6 – below the desirable mid-point of 115.

Conditions of service of the general service and other locally recruited categories: considerations related to reviewing the job evaluation standards for the general service and related categories

16. At its sixty-first session (July 2005) the Commission established a working group to review the changing nature of work in the organizations of the United Nations common system, to assess the impact of changes in the work of the staff of the general service and related categories of the organizations and to develop a global job evaluation system for general service and related categories across the United Nations common system.

17. The Commission was informed that the working group had developed a system consisting of a master standard, which would be the primary job classification tool, together with grade-level descriptors that would provide linkages to competency development and performance management. The supporting elements, consisting of a glossary, guidelines and benchmark post descriptions were not yet completed, but were expected to be finished within a few months. Like the standard for staff in the professional and higher categories, the working group’s proposed standard operates from an automated platform. The “factors” used for the proposed standard are similar to those of the standard for staff in the professional and higher categories, with some adaptations to better reflect general service work.

18. The Commission decided to:

- (a) approve the new job evaluation system for the staff in the general service and related categories;
- (b) approve the following new definition of general service work:
 - (i) The general service category contributes to the execution of the programmes of the organization through work that is procedural, operational and technical. These functions

support programme and process continuity and are central to efficient service delivery. The work ranges from routine or repetitive work undertaken in line with detailed instructions, to functions that are varied, complex and paraprofessional, requiring identification and consideration of alternatives, sometimes requiring analysis, and based on extensive and in-depth knowledge of a specific subject area;

(ii) General service work involves the application of specific knowledge gained through experience and familiarity with the procedures of the organization. The performance of general service functions often requires post-secondary education and technical or administrative training;

(c) approve the changes to the Common Classification of Occupational Groups;

(d) request its secretariat to finalize the work on the new job description format, a glossary and written guidelines on the use of the system, as well as benchmark post descriptions, and to present the final elements at its seventieth session for final promulgation of the standard.

Report on the development of a Senior Management Network

19. At the sixty-ninth session of the Commission, the Human Resources Network reported on a newly redesigned course entitled “United Nations Leaders Programme: Developing Strategic Leaders”, which was being run by the United Nations System Staff College in Turin. The Commission heard that the first cohort of students had successfully completed the course in May 2009.

20. It was anticipated that this training programme would provide an opportunity for senior managers to exchange information and develop contacts in a structured and continuous manner and that it would support the creation of a network of senior managers across the United Nations system. Thus, the aims and objectives of the Senior Management Network were expected to be achieved through the process of the United Nations Leaders Programme. The Human Resources Network believed that, in the light of those new developments and in support of the bottom-up approach to developing a network, it was more appropriate and effective to allow a senior managers network to develop in this manner. Therefore, the Human Resources Network concluded that direct involvement on the part of CEB in managing a separate network was no longer required.

21. The Commission decided to report to the General Assembly that CEB had decided to discontinue further work on the Senior Management Network.

Monitoring of the implementation of decisions and recommendations of the International Civil Service Commission by organizations of United Nations common system

22. Under Article 17 of its Statute, the Commission submits to the General Assembly information on the implementation of its decisions and recommendations. The Commission considered implementation of its recommendations made to organizations during 2007 and 2008. The Commission had before it information from 23 organizations relating to incentives to promote multilingualism in the organizations of the United Nations, salary surveys for general service staff in headquarters duty stations and the status of implementation of the standards of conduct. A separate report will be presented to the General Assembly on the standards of conduct.

23. The Commission took note of the high response rate to the questionnaire on the implementation of its decisions and recommendations and encouraged those organizations that had not responded to do so. Recalling that, in 1992, it had decided to submit a comprehensive report to the General Assembly every two years in keeping with the biennialization of the work programme of the Fifth Committee, the Commission requested its secretariat to ensure that all decisions and recommendations it had made since 2007 were included in its report to the General Assembly, and that information on implementation of contractual arrangements in organizations and harmonization of the conditions of service was included in its next biennial report .

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

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

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