



**Statement by the Coordinating Committee of Staff Unions and Associations on the mandatory age of separation**

81<sup>st</sup> session of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC)  
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Mr. Chairman,

The issue of the retirement age cuts to the heart of the role of the Commission.

Twice the Commission has decided to set the implementation date of 1 January 2016 for staff to be able to choose to retire at 65. Twice its decisions have been lobbied against – although not by staff.

If the ICSC originally decided two years ago on 2016, it wasn't by accident. At the time, the organizations argued that they had already submitted their 2014/15 budgets and therefore 2016 would be more appropriate.

Yet as soon as that recommendation was made, it was lobbied against by the organizations and the issue returned to the ICSC last summer.

Fortunately the ICSC wisely saw through the organizations' claims.

The organizations argued that allowing current staff to be able to work until 65 would come at the wrong moment since the organizations were currently in a spate of reorganizations. Yet Mr. Chairman, from what we have seen, there are constant reorganizations. There is never a perfect time.

They said that the ICSC should hold until the compensation review is complete so as to know the full costs. Yet even once the review is complete, compensation will still be modified on a regular basis as part of the ICSC's work programme. So again, there is never a perfect time.

The organizations said that this would prevent rejuvenation. Yet Mr. Chairman, in the UN at least, the average age for new entrants who replace those retiring, is 41 – hardly young.

The organizations said it would prevent workforce planning. Yet as the JIU and others have pointed out, workforce planning doesn't exist in the common system.

The organizations said that it would prevent gender diversity. Yet if organizations are interested in gender diversity, they should examine their recruitment policies.

The organizations said it would make it harder to get rid of dead wood. Firstly Mr. Chairman, we do not feel this is an appropriate way to describe our senior

colleagues. In any case, this is why managers are supposed to make use of their performance management tools, and not wait until someone retires to tell them to improve their performance.

The organizations said that they needed time to implement the change because they needed the approval of their governing bodies once the General Assembly would have ruled on this matter. Yet many organizations are bound by the General Assembly, which will be deciding this fall, and in any case it is the same member states in the General Assembly as in the governing bodies of agencies.

Mr. Chairman, we are glad that the General Assembly agreed in principle that current staff be able to retire at 65, so the issue is when, not if.

But we are disappointed that having had two years to prepare, organizations are asking for another two years.

The position of CCISUA is that of the ICSC, that this should be implemented as soon as possible.

Mr. Chairman, we cannot ignore both global and in-house trends.

Colleagues up to 65 can make a valuable contribution including in experience and know-how. 60 or 62 are no longer an age at which a person become dysfunctional. This is recognized by the country in which we find ourselves, Austria, which has a retirement age of 67, as well as neighbouring Germany. The United States Federal Civil Service doesn't even have a retirement age.

Within the UN, new entrants as of 2014 work until 65. Meanwhile the Secretary-General is 71, and his deputy, who two days ago oversaw the agreement of the Sustainable Development Goals, is 75.

A report of the JIU recently noted that absent a policy to allow staff to work until 65, common system organizations were retaining 20 percent of their staff beyond retirement and rehiring 71 percent. Further, on average UN Women extends staff twice beyond retirement. The UN rehires staff on average one to two times.

Thus there is a high rate of retention and rehiring, which shows that line managers, most of whom support working until 65, appreciate colleagues beyond 62.

Yet as the JIU notes, this creates a lack of transparency, puts unnecessary pressure and uncertainty on staff nearing retirement and prevents succession planning as it is impossible to advertise positions 6 months before retirement if the retirement date is not known.

This brings us to an important point.

Many managers and directors have come forward to complain of the uncertainty and inability to plan in their divisions and units because the date of implementation for 65 keeps being changed.

It also creates huge uncertainty among staff nearing retirement who need to know whether or not they will be able to work further, whether they should extend their leases or prepare for life back in their home country, and how to handle the continuing education of their children.

Other trends to consider are that within the UN, staff and management are putting the finishing touches to a fit for purpose performance management system that will allow to identify and manage underperformers, thus addressing the concern made by organizations.

We should also note that the WTO and OSCE allow staff to retire at 65 and this has not negatively impacted their diversity or performance.

Further, the ICSC has already reported that allowing staff to retire at 65 would reduce the pension fund's actuarial deficit by a fifth – very important given the governance problems at the fund which we learned about at its board meeting last week – and reduce our organizations' after service health insurance (ASHI) liabilities by \$31 million – essential given that ASHI liabilities are not secured.

So let's stop procrastinating the inevitable.

We already have some staff who can work to 65. But we also have others who must leave at 60 and 62, which means we have three categories of staff – hardly easy to manage or provided planning for, especially once you throw in mobility.

The ICSC has been discussing this issue since 2009. It has plenty of other work to do and needs to move on.

We therefore reiterate our position of an implementation in 2016.

For the sake of the commission, the organizations and staff, let's close this issue, work to prepare the new policies, and move on.

Thank you.

*(Delivered by Ian Richards, President of CCISUA)*