



***Statement by Ms. Paulina Analena,
President of the Coordinating Committee for International
Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System
(CCISUA)***

**Agenda Item 141: United Nations Common System
New York, 13 November 2013**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On behalf of the Coordinating Committee for International Staff unions and Associations of the United Nations common System (CCISUA), I wish to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau of the Fifth Committee on your election. We wish to also thank Ms. Sharon Van Buerle and colleagues from the Secretariat of the Committee for coordination for our intervention. We also wish to thank Mr. Kingston Rhodes, Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission, for the introduction of the ICSC annual report.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Fifth Committee,

I represent 17 Staff Unions and Associations with more than 60,000 members. These dedicated staff work in difficult and even life-threatening situations around the globe - often far from their families and homes. They keenly await news from this session of the General Assembly on issues of deep concern, especially now as the fundamental principles of consultation and inclusion are strained.

CCISUA supports the United Nations Common System to ensure consistency in the conditions of employment throughout the UN System, promote coherence and equality, and foster efficiency. Technical analysis of issues and compliance with “tried and true” methodologies have served us well.

We stress that it is critical to ensure good staff-management relations in order to find the best solutions for all parties through dialog and exchange of ideas and information. Sadly, we have entered a very difficult period in that regard, and it will not be beneficial for any of us, or for resolving the many difficult issues on the table.

Every aspect of the Common System is of concern to CCISUA, but in the interests of time, I will submit a full statement for the record, while in my verbal delivery today, I will highlight just a few issues.

Review of the common system compensation package

CCISUA was pleased to participate in the initial steps of the compensation package review, despite worries that it may have been provoked by a dismaying trend to view staff as financial liabilities and not as critically important contributors to the values and goals of the United Nations.

We understand that some Member States would like to propose changes to the current compensation system, more specifically regarding the net remuneration margin, during this session of the Fifth Committee. CCISUA respectfully asks that the results from the review of the compensation package be considered before any changes to the existing system are proposed. This would certainly contribute to a more productive implementation of the exercise. The review is holistic; to change certain aspects of the *status quo* at this point might, in our view, compromise its final result.

The General Assembly requested a technically sound report on the common system compensation package and we do not think that this is where the current path leads. CCISUA asks your support, Mr. Chairman, to encourage a fully collaborative and open process that will reassure all parties, including the staff who will be affected by the decisions related to this exercise.

Mandatory age of separation

The ICSC recommends that the General Assembly raises the mandatory age of separation (MAS) to age 65 for *current* staff members effective from 2016.

CCISUA welcomed the changes in the MAS recently agreed for new staff, and supports the ICSC recommendation that the increase in the MAS be extended as a choice for existing staff. Several factors support this change: (i) worldwide trends to increase the retirement age, linked to increasing longevity, productivity and longer years as pensioners; (ii) the differential between the years worked at the UN and the retirement years; (iii) the potential positive impact on the financial position of the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund; and (iv) recognition that this would keep pace with international trends to increase or eliminate retirement age.

When we surveyed our members for their opinions, they largely supported an increase in MAS for current staff, if it would not affect the acquired rights of staff who wanted to retire without penalty at the age of 60 or 62. The number of staff affected would continue to decrease due to normal attrition, but giving staff the option to stay a few years longer will allow them to contribute longer to the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund, and will allow organizations to take advantage of their skills and experience.

We are aware of arguments that this change could negatively impact the UN's efforts to rejuvenate the work force, or undermine efforts towards improving geographical balance. We believe those strategies should have been incorporated long ago in organizations' workforce planning, and we are unconvinced that a small percentage of staff choosing to work a few years longer would negatively affect long-term administration of human resources in the United Nations but would instead offset the need for executive heads to make decisions on a case-by-case basis. It could also help to address other problems such as career stagnation or grade distribution.

CCISUA highlights the value of capitalizing on investments in existing staff. Denying this choice to current staff or using retirement age issues, particularly for a span of just a few years, does not provide a solution to performance management problems

nor to strategic workforce planning. We appreciate that the ICSC supports a rational approach amenable to staff.

Base/floor salary scale

The conditions of service for UN staff are of critical importance to their morale and ability to function, especially when they relentlessly put their own lives on the line to serve others, while accepting separation from their families, homes and cultures.

We are disappointed that the post adjustment system has not been allowed to function in accordance with the methodology agreed by the General Assembly.

We are concerned as well about insufficient focus on basic agreed concepts such as the Noblemaire principle, which aims to ensure competitiveness of United Nations remuneration in order to attract a diverse and highly talented workforce with wide geographical representation, without resorting to comparison with the private sector that has different parameters.

Staff members are a critical asset, not an “expense”. Without staff, no mandate of the United Nations can be delivered anywhere – including conducting disarmament in Syria and coordinating the provision of food, shelter and other much-needed humanitarian aid to the Philippines. Every single day, twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year, staff risk their very lives and sacrifice their family relationships in order to carry out the work of the United Nations as determined by its Member States. Staff support, guide and execute the programs, and they deliver results. They deserve to be recognized for their dedication and to be compensated accordingly.

Conditions of service in the field

UN staff are much, much more than numbers in a budget; we are human beings who work very hard, and who make the choice to serve those less privileged, sacrifice other career possibilities, and forego comfortable family lives – and sometimes even make the ultimate sacrifice of their own lives. Security is not a compensation for field-based staff members; it is an inherent necessity and critical element for agencies to manage their staff and their program operations. For that we ask your support and respect, including fair compensation for our services.

Crisis in staff-management relations

It would be hard to conclude without referring to the serious crisis in UN staff-management relations, directly affecting 13 CCISUA member organizations. The Secretary-General has unilaterally withdrawn the right of staff representatives to negotiate with management – a right that many of you take for granted in your own governments. That means, for example, that staff cannot negotiate on safety standards in the field at a time when record numbers are being killed by attacks; over 200 civilian colleagues have been killed in the last ten years.

The fact that the withdrawal of negotiation rights took place one week before the devastating attack in Mogadishu only makes the restoration of labor rights more urgent. Contrary to what you may have been told, our staff unions are not asking to co-manage the organization, nor veto change; indeed they have not done so. They are, however, asking for due process and a right to negotiate on safety in the field, which goes well beyond being observers at the Inter Agency Security Management Network (IASMN) coordination meetings because, Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, our very lives are at stake.

Distinguished members of the Fifth Committee,

In conclusion, let me reiterate CCISUA's appreciation to you for listening to our concerns and conviction that supporting those who serve the world's needs will strengthen the high standards of integrity that are reflected in the diverse and talented United Nations workforce.

Thank you.