

Sir,

The United Nations Joint Pension Fund is in an unprecedented crisis. Thousands of new retirees from all participating Organizations have to wait for their first retirement benefits for months, sometimes years.

While in the past we knew that such delays could occur, especially in the field, the backlog has become massive in the last year and now also affects headquarter duty stations.

Former staff and their families who are not receiving their benefits often find themselves in dire situations. They don't know when they can expect to receive their entitlements, cannot get responses to phone calls and emails, and consider the treatment they receive as particularly unfair and incompatible with the values of the United Nations.

Contrary to the recent communications by the Pension Fund management, the backlog is not gone, but rather questionable arithmetic that does not take into account all new claims, especially those that came in since 1 March 2016) makes the situation look better than it is. In addition, the decision of the Fund to maintain the task force hired to deal with the backlog confirms that the backlog still exists. (The related numbers have been brought forward in the recent exchange of letters between the President of CCISUA and the Under-Secretary-General for Management you will find attached herewith.)

The reality is that thousands of new retirees are still waiting, and with large downsizings in peacekeeping missions starting 30 June their number will only grow.

While I commend the extraordinary efforts of the Pension Fund staff who are doing their utmost to eliminate the backlog, it is clear that without adequate planning, organization and sensible interpretation of the rules they will not succeed. During the past year, the current management of the Fund demonstrated that it is not willing to find and propose solutions, nor are they even willing to act unless put under pressure. It is obvious that this management team simply does not care about retirees.

However, there is a simple and practical way to put an end to the dire situation of the aforementioned former staff members. When there is no doubt about the identity of the beneficiary and number of his or her years of service, regular payment of an approximate ad hoc benefit can start immediately after separation. The full benefit amount can be paid later, when it is finally and accurately calculated.

The Pension Fund management pretends that this is not allowed by the rules, because pensions cannot be paid "in advance". But payment "in advance" actually means payment before it is due, which in the case of a pension means before retirement. After retirement the pension becomes due, and its payment cannot be considered as an "advance".

These initial or ad hoc payments can be decided by the Pension Fund, as was done in the past. I am also sure that information technology can make this task, including future

reconciliations, relatively easy. And even if it were difficult and costly, such an effort is called for.

In the end, what is at stake is the livelihood of our former colleagues, many of whom have dedicated their entire lives to United Nations as well as the reputation of the United Nations. How can it be trusted to take care of millions of people in need around the world if it cannot honour its financial obligations towards its own former staff members?

Sometimes, we, Staff Representatives are told that the reputation of our Organization suffers from those who blow the whistle.

I strongly disagree. It does not suffer from those who do the right thing. It suffers from those who refuse to do it.

Respectfully,

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