



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited  
3 July 2020

Original: English

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## Committee for Programme and Coordination

### Sixtieth session

8 June–3 July 2020

Agenda item 7

### Adoption of the report of the Committee on its sixtieth session

## Draft report

*Rapporteur:* Mr. Felix-Fils **Eboa Ebongue** (Cameroon)

### Addendum

## Programme questions: proposed programme budget for 2021

(Item 3 (a))

### Programme 27

#### Jointly financed activities

1. During its sixtieth session, the Committee considered programme 27, Jointly financed activities, of the proposed programme plan for 2021 and programme performance information for 2019 ([A/75/6 \(Sect. 31\)](#)).
2. The Chair of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), the Chair of the Joint Inspection Unit and the Secretary of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and Director of the CEB secretariat introduced the programme and, together with other representatives of the Secretary-General, responded to questions raised by the Committee during its consideration of the programme.

#### Discussion

3. Delegations expressed support for the programme and its role with respect to the coordination and coherence of activities within the United Nations system.
4. With regard to the International Civil Service Commission, several delegations reaffirmed their support for the United Nations common system and the crucial role that the Commission played in fostering a single unified international civil service with common personnel standards, methods and arrangements, which was essential for the effective and efficient functioning of the United Nations system. Concerns were raised at the current disparities in the United Nations common system arising



from the decision of the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization on post adjustment, and delegations thanked the Commission for its efforts in addressing the issues relating to post adjustment. It was emphasized that the General Assembly had made clear its view on the mandate and authority of ICSC, and it was pointed out that full and consistent implementation of the compensation package by the organizations of the common system remained an important performance measure.

5. A delegation expressed its full support for a single and unified approach in regulating and coordinating conditions of service within the United Nations common system. It was emphasized that the only subsidiary organ of the General Assembly mandated through its statute to make corresponding decisions was the International Civil Service Commission, and that those 28 organizations which voluntarily accepted the regulations applied in the common system were expected to implement such decisions without exception and undue delay. The same delegation noted that the proposed programme plan for 2021 did not contradict the Commission's mandate and supported the intention of the Commission to strengthen and develop a common system of salaries, allowances and benefits.

6. It was stressed that the basic Noblemaire and Flemming principles must be respected, with the hope that the review of salary survey methodologies would be completed as planned and that the conditions of employment of General Service staff would still be based on best prevailing local conditions. While taking into account the declared objective to make the post adjustment system more stable and predictable, the view was expressed that post adjustment, as a variable element, should, as previously, reflect the real difference in the cost of living between duty stations and the base city, New York.

7. Speaking about the issue of diversity, a delegation recalled that staff composition throughout the organizations of the United Nations common system should reflect a workforce that was also diverse from a geographical distribution perspective and requested the Commission to compile a comprehensive report reflecting all the perspectives of diversity. Emphasis was also placed on the role of the Commission, which should be determined only by the General Assembly, without the need to involve third parties in the process.

8. While delegations welcomed the focus in the proposed performance measure for 2021, which reflected the impact on organizational programme delivery, the view was expressed that it was not just a matter of paying staff more, as there needed to be a clear focus on ensuring that measures were in place that met organizational needs and were affordable and that the Commission was encouraged to consider Member States as part of its focus on stakeholders. A question was raised as to whether the "absence of litigation from staff" was a realistic performance measure, especially since evidence-based changes did not always result in an increase in allowances. Additional information was requested on the number and points of contention in cases of staff litigation against decisions by ICSC in 2019 and 2020 to date and the current situation of such cases. An updated timeline of the review of the post adjustment methodology and the implementation of the next round of cost-of-living surveys, considering the impact of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), was also requested.

9. In reference to paragraphs 31.14 and 31.15 of the report, some delegations requested clarifications on the communication strategy that ICSC planned to implement, including how to raise awareness of the technicalities involved in the Commission's work and outreach to management in organizations, in addition to the staff of participating organizations in the United Nations common system. The view was expressed that efforts in building a robust communication strategy would go a

long way to maintaining coherence and increasing communication on the various aspects of the United Nations common system compensation package.

10. As regards the Joint Inspection Unit, several delegations welcomed the work of the Unit and its continuing efforts to improve efficiency and effectiveness and coordination in the United Nations system. In particular, the relevance and quality of the Unit's reports were highly appreciated. Another delegation expressed satisfaction with the proposed programme plan of the Unit for 2021. As the Unit remained the only independent external oversight body of the United Nations system mandated to conduct evaluations, inspections and investigations system-wide, a delegation expressed the view that it should also integrate a geographical distribution perspective into its operational activities, deliverables and results, as appropriate, and expected to see a system-wide report on improving the geographical distribution of underrepresented and unrepresented countries.

11. In reference to paragraph 31.38 of the report, it was noted that the choice of inspection subjects was important to maintain and enhance the relevance of recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit. Questions were raised on how the Unit decided on target organizations or themes from competing proposals and inputs. Clarification was also sought on the measures being taken by the Unit to increase the rate of acceptance of its recommendations.

12. Several delegations welcomed the work that CEB had done over the previous year and expressed appreciation, in particular of the important work carried out system-wide to strengthen the efforts of the United Nations system to prevent and address sexual harassment in the workplace. Delegations emphasized that it was important that the United Nations system maintained its efforts to ensure zero tolerance for sexual harassment, with a strong victim-centred approach, and expressed confidence that the model code of conduct for United Nations events, the Clear Check screening database and robust and timely investigations of cases of sexual harassment would help realize that goal. It was noted that innovation was crucial to ensure that the United Nations was able to deliver its mandates effectively and could respond to new and emerging challenges and priorities. It was stated that it was equally important that the United Nations system entities had the human resources policies and practices to ensure that they recruit, retain and develop the talent needed to be able to respond to the new demands and challenges that the United Nations faced in delivering its programmes.

13. While several delegations welcomed the work of the CEB task force on addressing sexual harassment within the organizations of the United Nations system and expressed gratitude for the victim-centred approach, a delegation expressed the need for a more transparent and balanced approach in CEB priority setting and emphasized that any form of discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, language or religion was absolutely unacceptable, as reflected in several articles of the Charter of the United Nations. The importance of having a working environment free of any form of harassment was highlighted. On the proposed programme plan for 2021, the same delegation was of the view that the work of the CEB task force on addressing sexual harassment within the organizations of the United Nations system should also cover cases of false charges of sexual harassment, as well as address the need to work out guidelines that ensured the preservation of the rights and freedoms of those defamed.

14. The same delegation noted that CEB should carry out its activities in strict compliance with the existing mandates and questioned whether CEB was mandated to perform several activities mentioned in the report. Clarification was sought on the reason for launching a complementary initiative to develop a framework human resources strategy for the United Nations system workforce. Further clarification was sought on the joint procurement action (request for proposal) for banking services and additional information was requested regarding the mandates. A delegation also

requested an update on requests made by the General Assembly to the Secretary-General in his capacity as the Chair of CEB to conduct a review of the jurisdictional setup of the common system, since the United Nations common system organizations faced the challenge of having two independent administrative tribunals, and to make every effort to ensure that decisions of the General Assembly were implemented across the United Nations common system in full and without undue delay.

15. Delegations congratulated CEB on its work in providing support to Member States on multilingualism and requested an update on the invitation of the General Assembly to the Secretary-General, through his role in the Board, to support a comprehensive and coordinated approach on multilingualism within the United Nations system.

#### **Conclusions and recommendations**

16. The Committee commended the work carried out by the International Civil Service Commission and noted its key role in enabling member organizations to deliver on their mandates by creating conditions of service to attract and retain staff, the most valuable resource of the United Nations common system.

17. The Committee reiterated the authority of the Commission, as reaffirmed in General Assembly resolution [74/255 A-B](#), to establish post adjustment multipliers for duty stations in the United Nations common system, and underlined paragraph 3 of resolution [74/255 A](#), in which the Assembly urged the member organizations of the United Nations common system to cooperate fully with the Commission in line with its statute to restore consistency and unity of the post adjustment system as a matter of priority and as early as practicable.

18. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of CEB, to continue to urge all common system organizations to ensure the full, uniform and timely implementation of all decisions of ICSC and the General Assembly.

19. The Committee reiterated that the General Assembly, in resolution [74/255 B](#), requested the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of CEB, to conduct a review of the jurisdictional setup of the common system and submit the findings of the review and recommendations to the General Assembly as soon as practicable.

20. The Committee commended the work carried out by the Joint Inspection Unit and underlined the importance of its long-standing commitment to strengthening transparency and accountability across the United Nations system.

21. The Committee underlined the fact that the General Assembly, in its resolution [73/287](#), took note with appreciation of the preparation by the Joint Inspection Unit of a medium-term and long-term strategic framework for the period from 2020 to 2029, and encouraged the Unit to consult and engage with the participating organizations, as well as to apply lessons learned in developing its strategic framework for the period from 2020 to 2029, while taking into account ongoing organizational reforms.

22. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of CEB, to continue to foster a coordinated approach to multilingualism, which was a core value of the United Nations system, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

23. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve the programme narrative of programme 27, Jointly financed activities, of the proposed programme budget for 2021.