Conclusions of the ninth session of the High-level Committee on Management

(United Nations Office at Geneva, 4 and 5 April 2005)

Contents

I. Introduction

1.   The High-level Committee on Management (HLCM) held its ninth regular session at the United Nations Office at Geneva, on 4 and 5 April 2005. The list of participants is contained in annex I. The agenda of the session (CEB/2005/HLCM/R.4/Rev.1) focused primarily on:

(a)   Security and safety of staff;

(b)   United Nations system collaboration in regard to accountability and transparency;

(c)   A comprehensive information and communications technology (ICT) strategy for the United Nations system;

(d)   Financial and budgetary issues;

(e)   Human resource management issues;

(f)   Progress made by the United Nations General Assembly on the report of the Panel on the Strengthening of the International Civil Service.

2.   All documents related to the session and presentations thereto can be viewed on the HLCM website: http://ceb.unsystem.org/hlcmsessions/.

3.   The agenda was adopted by the Committee.

II. Dialogue with the representatives of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations and the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System[1]

4.   The Committee had a fruitful dialogue with the representatives of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) and the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System (CCISUA) on issues related to its agenda, especially: (a) the safety and security of staff, in particular the restructuring of the new United Nations Security Directorate; (b) the report of the Panel on the Strengthening of the International Civil Service; (c) the introduction of the Senior Management Network, including how it was planned to filter the acquired competencies of high-level managers downwards throughout the system; (d) reform by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) of General Service job classification; and (e) support provided by administrations for staff representation, including training and other measures which could serve to enhance relations and understanding between staff representatives and line managers.

5.   The Committee:

(a)   Expressed its thanks to the representatives of the staff bodies for their active engagement and dialogue with the Committee;

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[1] The statements of the representatives of CCISUA and FICSA are attached as annexes II and III, respectively.

(b)   Took note of the intention of FICSA to revert to the Committee on the issue of financial support in due course;

(c)   Agreed that consultations with staff were essential for effective management reform.

III.   Security and safety of staff

6.   In accordance with its decision to retain security and safety of staff as a standing item on its agenda, the Committee focused on issues relating to the new security arrangements.

A.   Presentation by the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security

7.   The Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, United Nations Secretariat, joined the session to meet members of the Committee and share his thoughts on future work in regard to the security and safety of staff.

8.   He informed the Committee that the newly established Department of Safety and Security envisioned achieving the following main goals:

(a)   To be the world's most effective, professional, flexible and supportive department of safety and security;

(b)   To have the enhanced operational ability to enable and deliver the United Nations mission in the most demanding locations on the globe;

(c)   To work with a team of men and women who are respected and envied as the gold medal standard of international safety and security achievement.

9.   The Under-Secretary-General expressed his strong support for the originally proposed approach of funding field-related security costs from the regular budget of the United Nations.

10.   He informed the Committee that he was engaged in a broad process of consultation with all constituencies, seeking candid and constructive cooperation so as to ensure the protection of the staff of the United Nations system. In particular, he was in the process of meeting with designated officials to resolve what he saw as an evident imbalance between what the system sought to do centrally and what could be decentralized.

11.   The Committee:

(a)   Welcomed the assumption by Mr. Veness of his new position and expressed its appreciation and support for the objectives of the new security arrangements as presented by him;

(b)   Noted two specific issues for future consideration by the Department of Safety and Security: the appointment and role of designated officials at headquarters duty stations (the role rotated in Rome but nothing existed in Geneva); and the need to look at and improve the interrelationship between the Department of Safety and Security and the specialized agencies.

B. Cost-sharing formula for field-related security costs: report of the working group

12.   The General Assembly, at its fifty-ninth session, adopted resolution 59/276 of 23 December 2004, concerning, inter alia, a strengthened and unified security management system for the United Nations. While recognizing the operational difficulties linked to cost-sharing by organizations, the General Assembly decided to maintain the existing arrangements with regard to cost-sharing for safety and security rather than to fund those costs under the regular budget of the United Nations. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in his capacity as the Chairman of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), while fully implementing the decision of the General Assembly to maintain the current cost-sharing arrangements, to submit a report to the Assembly at its sixty-first session on measures taken to improve the operational administration of existing cost-sharing arrangements. By the same resolution, the Assembly recognized the need for a clearer presentation of security spending by each organization of the United Nations system, and therefore requested the Secretary-General, as Chairman of CEB, to inform the Assembly at its sixtieth session on that issue.

13.   Subsequently, a technical meeting of HLCM, chaired by the United Nations, was convened by the CEB secretariat in Geneva on 3 and 4 February 2005 to discuss details of field-related security costs for the biennium 2006-2007 and adopt a new approach for the apportionment of such costs.

14.   The Assistant Secretary-General, Office of Central Support Services, United Nations Secretariat, reported on the conclusions of the technical meeting (CEB/2005/HLCM/R.4), which he had chaired, as follows:

    (a)   It had been recognized that, although staff presence in the field was a logical criterion for the apportionment of field-related security costs, the census exercise was not an adequate tool to provide reliable staff counts for that purpose, in view of the difficulty of comparing contract types and tracking staff on mission, constantly changing figures etc.;

    (b)   Nevertheless, the meeting had agreed that staff data contained in the census as at 18 July 2003, as checked and updated, should be kept as the basis for the apportionment of field-related security costs for the biennium 2004-2005;

    (c)   Organizations had agreed to provide the CEB secretariat with any corrections on their staff data contained in the census as at 18 July 2003; the resulting updated figures would be used as the basis for the apportionment of field-related security costs for the biennium 2006-2007;

    (d)   The meeting had recommended that HLCM approve a new approach for the apportionment of field-related security for the biennium 2006-2007, based on staff figures as per the revised 2003 census. With the proposed new approach, field-related security costs would be apportioned on the basis of the actual percentage of staff, with a minimum amount of $75,000 (an option outlined in annex V to CEB/2005/HLCM/R.4).

15.   Organizations reiterated their concern about the lack of consultation during the process that had led to the adoption of Assembly resolution 59/276. This had resulted in a lack of critical financial information at the time of preparation of the

budgets of organizations and in the consequent difficulty that they would face in providing coverage for security costs that were subject to cost-sharing. The requested additional funding of security-related costs could also lead to depriving programme activities of resources that had already been assigned.

16.   The Committee agreed that a governance system which would ensure more participatory and transparent procedures for future exercises on budgets subject to cost-sharing should be established. This would ensure that all organizations participating in cost-sharing arrangements would be periodically consulted in a timely manner on each step of the formulation, approval, recosting and revision of cost-shared budgets.

17.   The Committee also agreed that organizations would raise the awareness of their governing bodies of the potentially negative impact that the decision to support the cost-sharing approach could have on the funding of programme activities.

18.   On the cost-sharing formula, the following organizations expressed reservations regarding the level of the minimum amount ($75,000), since this amount would place a disproportionate burden on them, given the size of their budget: World Meteorological Organization, Universal Postal Union, International Telecommunication Union, International Civil Aviation Organization, International Maritime Organization, World Trade Organization, World Tourism Organization and International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO.

19.   The proposed formula (apportionment on the basis of actual percentage of staff, with a minimum amount of $75,000) was nevertheless agreed to by the majority of participants.

20.   The Committee agreed to establish a working group to:

     (a)   Outline participatory and transparent procedures (see para. 16 above) for consideration by HLCM at its tenth session;

     (b)   Explore alternative criteria for the apportionment of field-related security costs, as well as more appropriate methodologies for the collection of reliable data on field staff. In this regard, the tracking system currently being finalized by the Department of Safety and Security in connection with the exercise concerning the malicious acts insurance policy should be evaluated as a possible tool;

     (c)   Formulate a campaign strategy for the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, when the cost-sharing approach would be reviewed. In this regard, organizations recognized the need to strongly advocate with States members of their governing bodies the review of such an approach in favour of the originally proposed funding from the regular budget of the United Nations.

IV.   United Nations system collaboration in regard to accountability and transparency

21.   Pursuant to a videoconference held by HLCM on 4 March 2005, at which a proposal was presented for a draft policy statement on accountability and transparency, organizations were asked to provide information on a number of issues related to the extent to which (a) their external and internal audits were made public and (b) they had established accountability frameworks. The compilation of their

replies (CEB/2005/HLCM/9th SESSION/INF.1) was found to be very useful in that it demonstrated that there were a large variety of mechanisms across the United Nations system to ensure accountability and transparency. It was recognized that this issue was very broad and was related to overall organizational culture and not just audit processes.

22. After a far-ranging discussion, the Committee agreed:

(a) That internal audit reports were an important management tool for executive heads and should therefore remain confidential;

(b) That, as appropriate, each organization should emphasize to its governing body that external auditors should receive full access to all internal audit reports;

(c) That in order to foster the credibility of internal audit functions, organizations could suggest that these functions be audited by their external auditors if this were not already the case;

(d) That there was a need for the United Nations system as a whole to be proactive, by explaining the audit process and, most importantly, how audit recommendations were followed up and reported on;

(e) That all external audit reports should be made publicly available;

(f) To request the CEB secretariat to set up a working group to examine current accountability mechanisms in organizations, to raise awareness of such tools and to identify best practices;

(g) To request organizations that had not already done so to provide the CEB secretariat, as soon as possible, with information on issues related to the treatment of audit reports and accountability frameworks.

V. Update on the work of the High-level Committee on Programmes

23. The Committee heard a briefing by the Director of the CEB secretariat on the outcome of the recently concluded meeting of the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) which had held its ninth session in Rome (Castel Gandolfo), Italy, from 23 to 25 February. The Committee had reviewed the major developments since it had last met so as to frame the context for its consideration of its report on the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, "One United Nations — catalyst for progress and change: how the Millennium Declaration is changing the way the system works". The draft of the report would be considered by CEB at its spring session, after which it would be finalized for issuance early in June as a contribution of the United Nations system to the summit meeting being convened to undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. The report was the product of a joint effort by the entire United Nations system of organizations, and it focused on how the Millennium Declaration had changed the way the organizations worked. Indeed, the consultative and inclusive process for the preparation of the report had forged stronger links among the organizations of the system.

24. The value of the report depended upon the capacity to introduce a truly system-wide perspective on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, that

is, how the contribution of each part of the system fitted into the larger picture, and how results in advancing progress in achieving the goals and commitments set forth in the Millennium Declaration could, through enhanced policy and operational coherence, become greater than the sum of their parts.

25.   The Committee had also prepared position papers on United Nations system support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and a system-wide strategy on conflict prevention for consideration by CEB at its forthcoming session. In addition, the Committee had agreed on approaches for the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 59/250 of 22 December 2004, on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, and had reviewed the progress made towards forging a strategic United Nations system-wide response to transnational crime.

26.   The Committee:

(a)   Reiterated its wish for closer communication between HLCM and HLCP with a view to ensuring the meaningful and practical sharing of information;

(b)   Suggested that a retreat should be organized in autumn 2005 to bring together representatives of both committees.

VI. Information and communication technology (ICT) issues: report of the ICT Network on the elaboration of the United Nations system ICT strategy

27.   The General Assembly, by resolution 57/295 of 20 December 2002, requested that the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of CEB, develop a comprehensive ICT strategy for the United Nations system. At its eighth session in October 2004, HLCM had endorsed the ICT strategy as a framework of principles for inter-organizational collaboration in this critical area. It also had agreed on a road map to identify priority areas for collaboration, including estimates of the expected costs and benefits of pursuing them.

28.   The Director of the Administrative Division, International Maritime Organization, convenor of the ICT Network, introduced the report of the meeting (CEB/2005/HLCM/R.3) held in Vienna on 10 and 11 March 2005, at the invitation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. He pointed out that a number of external specialists had contributed to the work of the Network (Mckinsey & Co., a representative of the Geneva Group and Joe McDonagh of Trinity College, Dublin). A consistent theme in all of the presentations was the importance of support from senior management for the business changes necessary to realize any long-term potential savings from additional ICT investment. Furthermore, the need for effective governance from the business leadership of all the organizations was emphasized.

29.   The Director of the Information Systems and Technology Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), presented the methodology used for identifying key areas for elaborating business cases under the ICT strategy framework. He outlined the recommendations of the Network (see para. 31 (b) below) and asked for the guidance of the Committee in that regard.

30. The Committee expressed strong support for the work of the ICT Network and recognized the potential of ICT in producing substantial savings through the increased efficiency and effectiveness of management practices and programme delivery. Noting that information technology systems do not operate independently of the business of the organizations, it was considered that business processes may need to change so that savings were achieved. In the discussion, the possibility of the United Nations System Staff College developing ICT training programmes, as well as the terms of reference of the governance group, was also mentioned.

31. The Committee:

(a) Expressed its thanks to the ICT Network, its convenor and the coordinator of its working group for their leadership;

(b) Endorsed the business case selection methodology and the following eight selected priority areas:

(i) ICT services sourcing strategy;

(ii) ICT development network;

(iii) Common application solutions;

(iv) Knowledge-sharing;

(v) Enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems;

(vi) ICT governance and best practices;

(vii) Business case development and costing;

(viii) ICT training.

32. The Committee agreed:

(a) To establish a small ICT strategy steering group, composed of representatives of the members of HLCM, HLCP and the ICT Network, to provide oversight and direction for further work on the development of the ICT strategy framework. In this regard, it requested the convenor of the Network, with the assistance of the CEB secretariat, to identify the members of the group;

(b) To fund the development of business cases under the strategy, beginning with $200,000 for the ICT development network.

VII. Financial and budgetary issues

A. United Nations system accounting standards

33. At its seventh session, HLCM had approved a project to take forward the development of accounting standards within the United Nations system, whereby a dedicated accounting specialist, assisted by consultants, would review United Nations system accounting standards and other international accounting standards with a view to (a) recommending an accounting standard that could eventually be adopted by the United Nations system of organizations, (b) studying the implications for each organization and (c) concurrently recommending the best accounting practices for incorporation into the United Nations standards. An

aggressive timetable had been established for recruitment and completion of the various phases of the study, with an overall budget of $881,000.

34.   The Committee was informed that the Task Force on Accounting Standards had most recently met in Paris in December 2004, and had noted that because of the delay in receiving the contributions of organizations, the recruitment of the accounting specialist had been delayed by almost eight months. The recruitment process had now been completed and the specialist, Gwenda Jensen from New Zealand, had taken up the position as at 7 March 2005. The first progress report had therefore recently been released.

35.   At the most recent meeting of the Task Force, all organizations had been reminded that only one standard should be adopted and that therefore individual organizations should not make their own choices until the study had been completed. The Task Force had held a useful discussion with the technical group of the Panel of External Auditors on a wide range of issues with a view to (a) improving the working arrangement between the auditors and the auditees, (b) further developing a cooperative spirit and (c) improving the oversight mechanisms.

36.   The report of the Task Force on Accounting Standards (CEB/HLCM/R.5/Rev.1) was presented by the Chief of the Treasury and Accounts Branch, International Labour Organization, on behalf of its Chairman.

37.   The Committee was informed that the Chairman of the Task Force had met with the Panel of External Auditors, which was comprised of the auditors general of various member States currently auditing United Nations common system organizations. The message from the Panel was that the United Nations organizations should have a clear-cut road map for the adoption of external standards. Some of the members of the Panel had expressed concern about developments in their own national jurisdiction which required them to comment on non-compliance with good accounting practices; this mainly related to issues of disclosure of post-retirement benefits, its recognition in accounts and funding of the liabilities. The Chairman of the Task Force had assured the Panel that United Nations organizations were taking these issues very seriously and that the work by the specialist would progress in earnest.

38.   The Committee was informed that the United Nations Secretariat would soon be submitting a report to the General Assembly on the accrued liabilities for after-service health insurance. That report would provide proposals on funding over a period of time. The Assembly had indicated that the United Nations could start the recognition and funding of the liability over a period of time. Currently, the unfunded liability of the United Nations was approximately $1.5 billion.

39.   It was noted that the project's accounting specialist was preparing the road map, based on the revised time frame. While the urgency of the tasks had been emphasized, a technical review of different types of organizations in the common system would take some time to complete. There were also a number of financial implications which would need to be considered if organizations were to adopt an external standard; otherwise, they would obtain qualified audit opinions.

40.   The Task Force had also exchanged experience and current practices regarding the issue of single audit, recognizing that such practices varied from one

organization to another. It was agreed that the matter would be reviewed during its consideration of the United Nations system governance structure.

41. The Task Force had requested that HLCM take note of the report and confirm the revised time line, as provided in annex IV to its report.

42. The Committee:

(a) Expressed general concern about the pressing need to conclude the study and to suggest a common direction for the accounting standards to be applied by the organizations of the United Nations system;

(b) While eventually agreeing with the proposed new work plan, requested the Task Force to move ahead more aggressively in completing the study and to report to HLCM periodically on the advancement of the project;

(c) Took note of the offer of the International Fund for Agricultural Development to provide advice on its experience in the use of international accounting standards;

(d) Took note of the intention of the World Food Programme to go ahead in reviewing the report of its external auditors and reporting back on it to its governing body by October 2005;

(e) Requested the Task Force to add the issue of governance principles and improvement of financial reporting to its terms of reference in the light of the General Assembly resolution regarding the financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors (see para. 70 below).

B. Fraud prevention

43. This item on fraud prevention was brought to the Committee's attention in view of a request by the Board of Auditors to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, that the United Nations system establish a corruption and fraud prevention mechanism.[2]

44. The spokesperson of the Finance and Budget Network informed the Committee that the Network had established a working group on the subject of fraud prevention, led by FAO. The working group was expected to meet in the near future to define its scope, objectives and expected output, also in the light of the report of the Board of Auditors.

45. The Committee requested the working group to compile information on the current practices of organizations and to develop proposals for HLCM on how better to communicate to member States which mechanisms were already in place to counter fraud.

C. Results-based budgeting

46. The representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) presented a study (CEB/2005/HLCM/R.6), produced by the Finance and Budget

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[2] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 5* (A/59/5), vol. I, para. 349.

(FB) Network working group on results-based budgeting. The main conclusions showed that agencies were at different levels of readiness in terms of existing internal results-based management frameworks, information systems, budget management, internal accountability frameworks, internal leadership etc. This would be reflected in implementation strategies for results-based budgeting, which would represent the means for presenting both to donor partners and recipient countries the competing priorities that agencies were confronting, the resource requirements to achieve the mandated outcomes or results, the decisions on strategic allocation of resources and accountability for success or failure.

47. It was acknowledged that results-based budgeting entailed a complex and lengthy change in the management and organizational culture of each organization, and that there were no shortcuts. Moreover, it was widely recognized that results-based budgeting was not a purely financial concept, but rather a management approach that had to be shared and owned throughout the organization, in particular by line managers. ERP systems introduced by organizations must also take in due consideration the requirements of results-based budgeting methodologies and procedures.

48. The Committee:

(a) Took note of the study contained in CEB/2005/HLCM/R.6 and endorsed it as a common framework for results-based budgeting, which could be adapted by each organization of the United Nations system in line with its own requirements;

(b) Recommended that a one-day retreat with the combined participation of HLCM and HLCP be organized, facilitated by UNDP and with the organizational support of the CEB secretariat (see also para. 26 (a)).

D. Treatment of tax reimbursement from the United States of America in the United Nations common system

49. In the light of the judgement of the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization, establishing that the "last income" method was the only acceptable method for determining United States tax reimbursement levels, the Committee reviewed the results of a survey conducted by the International Atomic Energy Agency on the current methods used by organizations for reimbursement (CEB/2005/HLCM/R.7).

50. The Committee took note of the report and reiterated its view that those organizations currently applying the "first income" method should collaborate in the negotiations with the Government of the United States of America.

E. Process of selection and appointment of external auditors

51. The representative of FAO presented a document (CEB/2005/HLCM/R.8) requesting the Committee to consider the matter of eligibility to bid as external auditor of the organizations of the United Nations system, in particular whether private sector auditors could be invited to bid, and to provide such views and comments thereon as appropriate.

52.   One organization reported that it currently used a private firm as its external auditor. Several other organizations advised that private firms had been used for various project-specific audits. Still others mentioned that their internal and/or external auditors had on occasion subcontracted elements of their audits to private firms.

53.   The Committee noted that nothing would preclude an organization's governing body from taking a decision, if it so wished, through amendment to its financial regulations or as otherwise appropriate, to allow private sector firms to participate in the bidding process along with the auditors general of member States.

F.   Withholding of funds under different programmes

54.   In a document presented by FAO (CEB/2005/HLCM/R.9), the Committee was invited to provide guiding principles on the separation of responsibilities for funds held in trust by the United Nations under legally distinct and separate arrangements.

55.   The Committee agreed that the issue should be addressed bilaterally between the United Nations and FAO.

VIII.   Human resources issues

A.   Progress report on enhancing the capacity of senior managers

56.   The Committee considered a progress report (CEB/HLCM/2005/R.10), introduced by the Director of the Division for Organizational Development, Office of Human Resources Management, United Nations Secretariat, and spokesperson for the Human Resources (HR) Network, on the establishment of a Senior Management Service in the United Nations system, which had been approved by CEB in 2004 as a means of strengthening managerial and leadership capacity throughout the system. The Service had subsequently been discussed by the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, in the context of its consideration of the annual report of ICSC. Discussion in the Fifth Committee had centred on the respective responsibilities of CEB, ICSC and the General Assembly. While some Member States had been strongly supportive of the Service and wished to expedite its establishment, some had been concerned that it might lead to the establishment of a new category of staff, and others had not fully understood its objectives. In the consensus reflected in resolution 59/268 of 23 December 2004, the General Assembly had requested ICSC to continue to monitor the project regarding the improvement of managerial capacity and performance among senior staff by CEB, and to advise and make recommendations to the Assembly as appropriate. The Assembly had requested the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of CEB, to redesignate the Service to reflect its character as a set of collaborative efforts to enhance the managerial capacity and performance of senior staff by respective executive heads, and to report to the Assembly at its sixtieth session, clarifying the scope and content of such efforts.

57. Following consultations with the members of the HR Network and in response to the request made by the General Assembly, it was proposed to rename the Service as the Senior Management Network. This designation would reflect the main

purpose of the initiative in creating a managerial network across the system, would be in line with existing CEB terminology and would put to rest any remaining concerns about the possible creation of a separate category of staff.

58. With regard to the leadership programme being developed to underpin the Service, a competitive bidding process, initiated in the autumn of 2004, had elicited responses from a large number of prestigious institutions with expertise in the field of executive development. An inter-agency committee was evaluating the proposals in collaboration with the United Nations System Staff College. As previously requested by HLCM, the continued cooperation of organizations in the development of the programme would be essential. This included making provision in the budgets of organizations for the participation of their senior managers in the programme. It was estimated that the participation cost would be in the range of $10,000 per participant. The programme was expected to start in 2006.

59. Responding to the concern expressed earlier by the representative of CCISUA that the development of managerial skills was required at all levels of staff and therefore should not be limited to the senior level, the spokesperson for the HR Network emphasized that the envisaged leadership programme was only one way of strengthening management capacity in the common system. The intention was not to create an elitist group; rather, the focus of the project on the senior management level was fully in line with research findings that an initial focus on the leadership group in organizations impacted positively on the management culture and could have a positive effect on the rest of the staff. The leadership and managerial development tools expected to be introduced for the Service were expected to cascade to other groups of staff and improve overall organizational performance.

60. The Committee:

(a) Endorsed, on behalf of CEB, the redesignation of the Senior Management Service as the Senior Management Network;

(b) Expressed support for the development and implementation of the leadership development programme and requested all organizations to cooperate with the HR Network and the United Nations System Staff College in this regard.

B. Harmonization and simplification of entitlements: entitlements of staff serving at non-family duty stations

61. The Committee considered a document (CEB/2005/HLCM/R.11), also introduced by the Director of the Division for Organizational Development and spokesperson of the HR Network, which reported on the progress made with regard to harmonizing the various remuneration packages offered by organizations of the common system to staff working at non-family duty stations. While the various entitlement schemes had evolved over the years to respond to the respective operational needs of organizations, increasing concern had been expressed about equity in situations in which staff serving with different organizations at the same duty station received different compensation packages. Such differences could also constitute a serious obstacle to inter-agency mobility. In response to these concerns and a request from ICSC, an HR Network working group had analysed current practices and reached agreement on the further harmonization of practices, which had been approved by the HR Network at its meeting in February 2005. A

comprehensive report on the subject had been presented to ICSC at its most recent session. Achievements included the adoption of common nomenclature and policies for the special operations approach and the rest and recuperation scheme, which were now being implemented by the majority of organizations with a significant field presence; the establishment of an HR Network working group to coordinate the determination of special operations approach locations and rest and recuperation cycles; and a harmonized approach to determine the level of the special operations approach. The major difference remained in the conditions of service of staff in peacekeeping operations in view of the particular nature of these missions and the very large number of personnel involved. The United Nations would therefore continue to use the mission subsistence allowance but would harmonize its rest and recuperation cycles with other organizations. ICSC had expressed its satisfaction with the progress made and requested the organizations to undertake further work in this area.

62.   The Committee took note with appreciation of the progress made towards the harmonization of entitlements of staff serving at non-family duty stations.

C. Inter-agency games

63.   The Committee, at its seventh session in March 2004, had requested the CEB secretariat to conduct a survey on the practices of organizations with regard to staff participation in the inter-agency games and financial support to participating staff.

64.   The Committee considered the outcome of the survey, contained in CEB/2005/HLCM/R.2:

(a)   Responses to the request for information had been received from 24 organizations, of which 21 reported that their staff participated in the inter-agency games;

(b)   All organizations which reported staff participation in the games confirmed that participants were granted paid leave for the period of participation, ranging from one day to three days;

(c)   Of the 21 participating organizations, 10 provided financial support to the participants, either from their administrative or regular budgets or through a staff welfare fund. In 4 organizations, the staff associations also provided financial assistance. Financial support was not provided by 8 of the participating organizations.

65.   The Committee discussed the usefulness of harmonizing the approaches of organizations to supporting staff participation in the inter-agency games. Some members were of the view that providing such support was appropriate and seen as a positive contribution to staff welfare and morale. Other members expressed concern over the potential negative repercussions of a common system-wide policy, in particular as regards possible misrepresentation of organizational support by the media.

66.   The Committee agreed to maintain the current practice of individual organizational responsibility for determining the most appropriate way to support staff participation in the inter-agency games.

IX. United Nations common system issues

A. Report of the Panel on the Strengthening of the International Civil Service

67.   At its eighth session, HLCM had been informed of the work achieved with regard to the work of the High-Level Panel on the Strengthening of the International Civil Service. CEB, at its second regular session of 2004, expressed its deep disappointment to the Chairman of ICSC in regard to the Commission's negative response to the recommendations of the high-level Panel, which raised strong doubts about its commitment to reform and change and put into question the value of dialogue with the ICSC Chairman.

68.   The Committee heard statements by the CEB secretariat and the spokesperson of the HR Network, providing updated information on the status of the consideration by the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly of the report of the Panel. The item, which had been postponed from the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly to its resumed session in March 2005, had again been deferred to the sixtieth session of the Assembly.

69.   The Committee:

    (a)   Reaffirmed the view that the strengthening of ICSC and its functioning, as put forth in the recommendations of the Panel, was of critical importance to the organizations and staff of the common system;

    (b)   Decided to request executive heads to convey to member States the utmost importance of strengthening the international civil service and to urge them to support a constructive review of the recommendations of the high-level Panel.

B. Financial reports and audited financial statements and reports of the Board of Auditors

70.   The item concerning auditing was discussed in conjunction with the item on accountability and transparency (see paras+. 21-22 above). At its fifty-ninth session, the General Assembly had, inter alia, reiterated its request to the Secretary-General and the executive heads of the funds and programmes of the United Nations to examine governance principles and to consider strengthening the internal control framework.[3] In response to the previous Assembly resolution on this issue (resolution 57/278 A of 20 December 2002), the Committee at its eighth session had decided that, in the first instance, this item should be carried forward by the FB Network, in particular as regards format and consideration of the reports of the Board of Auditors.

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[3] The Committee had before it the text of the draft resolution, as contained in the report of the Fifth Committee (A/59/588, para. 7).

X. Secretariat of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination

A. Proposed jointly funded budget of the secretariat for the biennium 2006-2007

71. The Committee considered the budget proposal of the CEB secretariat for the biennium 2006-2007, which had been circulated on 18 February 2005 to HLCM and HLCP and copied to members of the FB Network.

72. The Committee:

(a) Noted that the budget represented zero-growth and would require adjustment for inflation and exchange rate fluctuations in accordance with the standard methodology of the United Nations and as applied to all budgets administered by it;

(b) Recalled that it had agreed at its eighth session that the CEB secretariat should receive a six-monthly statement and a year-end closing statement in order to monitor more effectively the status of all cost-shared budgets;

(c) Agreed that, for the future, it would be desirable, in accordance with the results-based budgeting being applied by all organizations, to have the opportunity to discuss the programme of work and output of the secretariat;

(d) Endorsed the budget proposed for the biennium 2006-2007.

B. Secretariat staffing situation in New York and Geneva

73. The Director of the CEB secretariat informed the Committee that the process of selection for all vacant positions had been completed, which should enable the secretariat to better support all aspects of inter-agency work, especially in the finance and budget and ICT areas.

74. The Committee expressed its satisfaction that the secretariat was now staffed in accordance with the structure approved in October 2000.

XI. Other matters

A. United Nations system medical directors' group

75. The Committee considered a proposal by FAO (CEB/2005/HLCM/R.12) to accept the United Nations medical directors' group as a working group of HLCM.

76. The Committee:

(a) Expressed satisfaction with the work of the medical directors' group and the leadership that it had shown in harmonizing and implementing medico-administrative and health policies throughout the United Nations system;

(b) Agreed to establish the United Nations medical directors' group as a working group of HLCM.

B. Rules governing compensation in the event of death, injury or illness attributable to the performance of official duties on behalf of the United Nations: appendix D to the Staff Rules of the United Nations

77.   It was noted by UNDP that a revision of appendix D to the Staff Rules of the United Nations, governing compensation in the event of death, injury or illness attributable to the performance of official duties, had not been undertaken since 1966. It therefore requested that the matter be referred to the HR Network for consideration.

78.   The Committee, while noting that appendix D applied only to the United Nations and its funds and programmes, decided to refer the issue to the HR Network in order to determine the proper manner of dealing with the issue.

C. Items for information

79.   The Committee received information on two draft resolutions submitted to the General Assembly on procurement reform (A/C.5/59/L.44) and outsourcing (A/C.5/59/L.45), as well as recommendations of the Inter-agency Network on Women and Gender Equality.

D. Date and location of the tenth session of the High-level Committee on Management

80.   Noting that, while the Committee should hold its next session in New York, this could be logistically difficult because the summit meeting on the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which would bring together heads of State and Government, would take place at that time. Also, in the light of the discussion held on the work of HLCP (see sect. IV above), it would be beneficial to hold its meeting around the time of the HLCP meeting, depending upon the availability of members.

81.   The Committee requested its secretariat to consult with organizations on an appropriate venue and timing.

E. Chairperson of the High-level Committee on Management

82.   The Committee was informed by its Chairperson, Catherine Bertini, that she would be leaving the United Nations at the end of April in order to pursue other interests. She would nevertheless continue as the Chairperson of the Subcommittee on Nutrition. She expressed her gratitude to the membership for all their support.

83.   The Committee:

     (a)   Warmly expressed its thanks to Catherine Bertini for her strong stewardship of the Committee since 2003 and its best wishes for her future endeavours;

     (b)   Agreed that David Waller, Vice-Chairperson of the Committee, should serve in the Chair in the interim.

Annex I

List of participants

Chair:
Catherine Bertini

Vice-Chair:
David Waller

Secretary:
Mary Jane Peters

Organization	Name and title
United Nations	Catherine Bertini, Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management
	David Veness, Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security
	Andrew Toh, Assistant Secretary-General, Office of Central Support Services
	Jan Beagle, Director, Division for Organizational Development Office of Human Resources Management
	Bertrand Juppin de Fondaumière, Director, Division of Administration, United Nations Office at Geneva
	Vladimir Belov, Chief, Common Services Unit
	Vivian van de Perre, Department of Safety and Security
International Labour Organization	Patricia O'Donovan, Executive Director, Management and Administration
	Keiko Kamioka, Chief, Treasury and Accounts Branch
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Khalid Mehboob, Assistant Director-General, Administration and Finance Department
	David Benfield, Director, Information Systems and Technology Division

Organization	*Name and title*
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Dyane Dufresne-Klaus, Director, Bureau of Human Resources Management
	Getachew Engida, Comptroller
	Yolande Valle-Neff, Director, Bureau of the Budget
International Civil Aviation Organization	Agya P. Singh, Director, Bureau of Administration and Services
World Health Organization	Anders Nordström, Assistant Director-General, General Management
	Hilary Wild, Controller
International Monetary Fund	Michael Gehringer, Senior Adviser, Technology and General Services Department
Universal Postal Union	Guozhong Huang, Deputy Director-General
	Michael Mauer, Director, Human Resources
World Meteorological Organization	Joachim Müller, Director, Resource Management Department
International Telecommunication Union	Dirk Jan Goossen, Special Adviser
	Michel Rolland, Chief a.i., Personnel and Social Protection Department
	Alassane Ba, Chief a.i., Accounts Division
	Frank Sap, Internal Auditor
International Maritime Organization	Roger Jones, Director, Administrative Division
World Intellectual Property Organization	Helen Frary, Senior Counsellor
International Fund for Agricultural Development	Ana Knopf, Assistant President, Finance and Administration Department
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	Renato Fornocaldo, Managing Director, Division of Administration
International Atomic Energy Agency	David Waller, Deputy Director-General and Head of Management

Organization	Name and title
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	Oluseye Oduyemi, Chief, Administrative Service
	Marc Weidman, Chief, Information Technology Section
United Nations Children's Fund	Toshi Niwa, Deputy Executive Director
	Anna Maria Laurini, Senior United Nations Affairs Officer
	Andre Spatz, Director, Information Technology Division
	Bill Gent, Principal Security Officer, Emergency Programmes
United Nations Development Programme	Jan Mattsson, Assistant Administrator and Director, Bureau of Management
United Nations Environment Programme	Alexander Barabanov, Director, Division of Administrative Services
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	Wendy Chamberlin, Acting High Commissioner
	Saburo Takizawa, Controller and Director, Division of Finance and Supply Management
United Nations Population Fund	Imelda Henkin, Deputy Executive Director (Management)
World Food Programme	Susana Malcorra, Deputy Executive Director
International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO	Gian Piero Roz, Director, Division of Programme Support
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	Franz Baumann, Director, Division for Management
The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS	Johanne Girard, Manager, Human Resources
	Eddy Haarman, Chief, Finance and Administration
World Tourism Organization	Peter Shackleford, Director, Division of Administration
World Trade Organization	Miguel Figuerola, Director, Human Resources Division
	Lawrence Elmer, Chief, Budget and Control Section

Organization	Name and title
United Nations Office for Project Services	Nigel Fisher, Executive Director
Office of the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva	Waheed Hassan, Associate Director
United Nations System Staff College	Paolo Ceratto, Deputy Director, Administration and Management
Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization	Pierce S. Corden, Director of Administration
Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System	Susan Thompson, Vice-President
Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations	Robert Weisell, President
	Leslie Ewart, Information Officer
	Maria Dweggah, Member for Compensation Issues

Secretariat of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination

Qazi Shaukat Fareed, Director

Mary Jane Peters, Secretary, High-level Committee on Management

Phyllis Lee, Secretary, High-level Committee on Programmes

Kristiane Golze, Inter-Agency human resources management adviser

Ken Herman, Senior Adviser on information management policy coordination

Remo Lalli, Inter-Agency adviser on finance and budget

Richard Maciver, ICT specialist and webmaster

Annex II

Statement by the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System

1. I would like to express the appreciation of members of the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System (CCISUA) for this opportunity to once again share this dialogue with members of the High-level Committee on Management (HLCM). In the current context of the reform and evolution of our organizations, there are many subjects to be considered. In the interests of brevity, CCISUA will refer only to certain among them.

2. Firstly, as a brief follow-up to the last meeting of HLCM in Rome, CCISUA reiterates its interest in the establishment of the Senior Management Network and the means envisaged to ensure the downward filtering of management know-how once the Network begins to function. Further, CCISUA would like to note the continuing positive interaction and exchange of information between the secretariat of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and staff representatives, in particular, concerning our ongoing discussions to organize a further training session for staff representatives. On the basis of previous experience within our constituencies, would it not be feasible to consider joint staff/management training sessions which would enhance both relations and understanding between parties?

3. The recent report of the Secretary-General entitled "In greater freedom", presents a tunnel of optimism into which the Organization is entering, and staff representation, in that context, has both a strategic and an important role to play in helping to reinforce the morale and confidence of staff. CCISUA, as an active partner alongside management, feels even more strongly that staff representation should be included as a core element in the overall vision of human resources management. Isn't it now time to redefine together the key element of that role, and precisely where we should stand, where we should channel our involvement in the application of rules and regulations, and clearly the natural right of any given union to discuss and negotiate with management the general conditions of work and other matters, such as salaries and promotions?

4. The Secretary-General referred in his report to the possibility of a staff buyout. When it has been recognized that staff are our most valuable resource, and that institutional memory is invaluable in our everyday work, such a buyout should ensure that cuts in the Organization are introduced where necessary and not be treated as either an arrangement between friends, as has been the case in the past, or a simple means of making budgetary savings. CCISUA would therefore ask primarily that staff representatives be included in the establishment of criteria for separation and the process thereafter. The report on integrity called for the need to tone at the top. Does HLCM consider that the proposed buyout should be across-the-board or concentrated in the higher managerial levels of the Organization? Does HLCM consider that a buyout could or should be used as a means to enhance integrity?

5.   CCISUA is currently fully participating in the debate on the reform of the internal system of justice. Will this question be considered on the agenda of HLCM, on an inter-agency basis?

6.   CCISUA has noted the ongoing establishment of the Security Directorate. One of the major actions to be taken after the restructuring of the security department will be the recruitment of numerous security officers. We have learned that vacancies are being posted both internally and externally and in this context would ask for a balanced approach, based on current recruitment procedures. Such an approach would take into account the experience and knowledge gained by a certain number of the many current short-term staff within the Security Section, who deserve on this occasion to be regularized, as well as a certain amount of external expertise that we recognize is also needed. As you are all aware, G-3 and G-4 are considered as entry levels in the Secretariat. As such, there are no provisions in the current selection system of central review panels to ascertain that regular procedures are well taken into account by management in the recruitment or promotion of staff at these levels. We would therefore suggest that duty stations be encouraged to create ad hoc panels for this purpose, to assist security management and human resources departments to undertake this task in the most efficient and transparent manner. CCISUA would therefore appreciate comments on the methods of recruitment which are being considered for this exercise. On a wider consideration of this question, CCISUA would be interested to learn of progress made in establishing an overall budget for the Directorate, in relation to the reaction of the Fifth Committee, when the budget was presented in October 2004.

7.   The International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), with the assistance of a consultant, launched in 2004 a survey of General Service classification standards. CCISUA has worked with FICSA on this question and strongly considers that this question should not be dealt with as a simple update of classification standards for this category. As was done for the Professional category, adequate time should be devoted to bringing the General Service category into the twenty-first century and therefore to consider its reform, wherever necessary, in accordance with the current environment. During the first joint working group meeting on this subject, a primary concern of both CCISUA and the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) was that the classification standard should not be changed independently without first reviewing the evolution of General Service jobs and questioning exactly what is meant by reform. During that meeting, support was received from some of the organizations present. CCISUA considers that in working together with organizations in the context of the working group, such reform can be achieved to the benefit of all. Do members of HLCM consider this to be a viable proposition?

8.   CCISUA is grateful that the report of the Panel on the Strengthening of the International Civil Service has not been put to one side, but disappointed that the question has been referred to the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. We would hope that progress is made at that session, and would once again express the support of CCISUA for paragraphs 1 to 8 of that report.

9.   CCISUA has noted the interest of HLCM in the inter-agency games and would fully support proposals for a system-wide policy on providing assistance to staff wishing to organize and participate in this annual event.

10.   It is understandable at this particularly difficult time for the Organization that we look for new solutions to achieve a more efficient and forward-looking Organization. In this context, CCISUA fully supports the Secretary-General in his efforts to impose full transparency and open managerial practices, and will continue to work to help maintain and improve the conditions of employment and morale of the staff of the Organization.

11.   CCISUA would like once again, in this forum, to underline the need to advance with the staff in mind and not simply to institute cost-cutting exercises throughout the Organization.

Annex III

Statement by the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations

Cost-sharing for the Federation: staff/management relations

1.   At the last meeting of the High-level Committee on Management (HLCM) in October 2004, the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) informed those in attendance of its efforts to establish a cost-sharing arrangement with the organizations to assist the Federation in meeting its increasing recurrent costs, stemming from its involvement in attending the increasing number of meetings and working groups covering common system issues. We would like to reiterate that we are continuing to seek this assistance and are doing so, as requested by HLCM, through the Human Resources (HR) Network, and we continue to hope for a definitive (and hopefully positive) response to our request in the near future. We are even more convinced today of the justification for this assistance. FICSA has engaged itself consistently and actively in a number of United Nations forums — for example, on security issues, sessions of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) and the Guatemala working group on hardship and mobility. Considerable appreciation has been expressed for our participation, which is described as serious, constructive, conscientious and professional. This performance cannot be taken for granted; there is an increasing cost and it should be recognized that, for FICSA to sustain this kind of working level (which greatly benefits the organizations and staff, both FICSA members and those who are not members), ways must be found to meet these ever-increasing costs.

2.   This topic is related to a broader issue, which is very much on our minds. That is, staff/management relations — a topic recently revisited at our most recent FICSA Council. The last really serious attempt to strengthen and reinvigorate the relationship between staff and management was in 1982 when guidelines and minimal standards of support for staff representation work were drawn up. Regrettably, not all organizations fulfil those standards, even today. FICSA would like to develop enhanced standards, in collaboration with the administrations.

3.   At the 58th Council, the membership approved a resolution on staff/management relations, which, as per normal practice, is being sent to all executive heads. Copies of this resolution are available to the members of HLCM. Essentially, FICSA and its members call upon all administrations to provide more proactive and positive support to staff representation. This includes the provision of necessary tools, such as office space, access to communication facilities and meaningful release time for staff representation activities. In addition, the resolution calls for staff to become involved in staff representation activities, with assurance to them that there is no stigma to engaging in these activities. Some might question why such activities should be strengthened, particularly if these are viewed as adversarial activities. If working properly, staff/management relations, even conflict at times, can work for the betterment of an organization, predicated on its most precious resource — its staff. It should also be noted that the framework for human resources management, which has been accepted by the administrations, recognizes the important role played by staff in participating in and influencing decisions

affecting personnel/human resources policies and practices. Administrations need to create an enabling environment to empower staff to fulfil those roles.

United Nations system collaboration in regard to accountability and transparency

4.   The staff welcomes the statements and efforts being made regarding enhanced accountability and transparency. We understand that considerable work went into the attempts by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) secretariat to reach agreement on a statement to this effect and trust that agreement will be reached on actions that promote accountability and transparency. At this time, when the United Nations is being scrutinized, we believe that such a statement should not be construed as defensive but as a positive statement of belief in not only in the concepts of accountability and transparency but in the unswerving and honest efforts made by the majority of staff in the common system. In addition, we believe it is imperative that any statements should be accompanied by the adoption of policies on the abuse of authority, which will show in real terms the administration's commitment to transparency and accountability. Attention to abuse of authority is particularly important in the field, where it can easily occur undetected and unchecked.

Security and safety of staff (CEB/2005/HLCM/R.4)

5.   Taking into account that the annual meeting of the Inter-agency Security Management Network (IASMN) will take place after the present meeting, FICSA will not comment specifically on those items on the IASMN agenda until the next session of HLCM, when the items are normally considered. FICSA will of course, participate fully in the IASMN meeting. However, there are two matters under this agenda item that warrant mention. First, FICSA would like to thank Ms. Bertini for arranging for FICSA and the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System to receive the monthly briefings on the work of the security transition team which is overseeing the development of the reform of the newly created Department of Safety and Security. FICSA looks forward to following closely all developments as the Department takes shape. Second, we are aware that the issue of funding for field-related security costs is a difficult subject that should be dealt with among the organizations themselves. However, FICSA would like to reiterate its strong belief in the necessity to ensure regular and continuous funding for the safety and security of United Nations staff worldwide. We were disappointed that the General Assembly did not approve the funding of security costs from the United Nations regular budget and we will continue to advocate for this. Paragraph 4 mentions that the Group of 77 were concerned over the risk that central funding by the United Nations regular budget would lead to the development of autonomous security measures by each organization. The conclusion of FICSA is just the opposite, and it believes that this is an excuse for not approving central funding from the United Nations regular budget. Secure and continuous funding, together with the creation of the Department of Safety and Security, will actually go further in ensuring a secure and coherent security management system, rather than the other way around. I might add that, during meetings of the Standing Committee on Conditions of Service in the Field at

the recent 58th FICSA Council held in Rome, it was noted that, at present, some agencies have more budgetary resources available than others for security measures and for supplementary security measures at a particular duty station. So, in a certain sense, autonomous measures already exist under the current cost-sharing arrangements. We would also like to express our concern about the statement by the World Bank in paragraph 14 that proposed discussions with the United Nations Secretariat may lead to the exclusion of locally recruited staff of the World Bank from central security coverage arrangements, which would be very regrettable.

6.   Some FICSA members have already drawn attention to the topic that is already raised in paragraph 8, where it is stated that the requested additional funding of security-related costs could also lead to depriving programme activities of already assigned resources. We are aware that this has posed problems for some organizations and only offers more support for the argument that there must be mechanisms in place to ensure secure funding for security measures. We are also aware that some Member States have expressed the view that putting money into security means taking it away from development. The fact remains that putting money into security measures only ensures that those programmes and the resulting development can take place. FICSA considers that, regardless of whether funding is cost-shared or provided from a central source, when programmes are approved and mandates adopted by Member States, funding for security measures must be provided.

Progress report on the Senior Management Service (SMS) (CEB/2005/HLCM/R.10)

7.   We understand from what was reported at the HR Network meeting late in February 2005 that the Senior Management Service will be renamed as the Senior Management Network. FICSA has expressed its views before on this issue and we have followed the debate closely at the past few ICSC sessions. It is apparent that part of the debate revolves around who has jurisdiction over the Service — ICSC or CEB. FICSA supports improved management skills at all levels but we also remain concerned that the Senior Management Service could evolve into an elite group. The HR Network has stated on several occasions that it does not intend for the Service to be a separate category of staff and both ICSC and the General Assembly have made it clear that this would not happen. Nevertheless, FICSA would ideally like to see the same considerations given to the Senior Management Service (i.e., opportunities for training, networking and career development) extended eventually to all staff. This would assist in dispelling notions of elitism and fears of a separate category of staff.

Entitlements of internationally recruited staff serving in non-family duty stations (CEB/2005/HLCM/R.11)

8.   As you know, this paper was discussed at the sixtieth session of ICSC in Bangkok, where it was well received and appreciated. ICSC is continually calling for harmonization in a number of areas and we are well aware that the organizations oppose measures which are seen as too prescriptive and do not take into account the unique missions and operational requirements of the different organizations. Of

particular concern to FICSA is that, in the process of harmonizing entitlements, the Commission is also scrutinizing entitlements and conditions of service and doing so on an all-inclusive basis with a view to assessing the total costs incurred for compensating staff, particularly with respect to hardship and mobility. For example, at the first meeting of the working group convened to review the current hardship and mobility scheme, organizations were asked by the commissioners to explain the entitlements listed in CEB/2005/HLCM/R.11 with a view to assessing the total cost of hardship and mobility in the system and with a view to considering the subsuming of these entitlements into the overall mobility and hardship scheme. It is possible that, at the second hardship and mobility working group meeting that is soon to be held in Cyprus, an attempt will be made to factor the cost of these entitlements into the overall costs for mobility and hardship, which would no doubt impact on the way revisions to the scheme could be constructed.

9.   I would like to interject at this point in regard to a broader issue concerning the conditions of service for United Nations staff. The changing nature of the United Nations staff is not only linked to the dangerous proliferation of contracts (and I make reference specifically to the recently adopted framework for contractual arrangements in the organizations of the United Nations common system as a signal to possibly reduce the misuse of appointments of limited duration and other temporary contracts), but also to the high number of ongoing revisions in the staff's conditions of employment. These include the ongoing reviews of the Flemming and Noblemaire principles, pay and benefits, pensionable remuneration and social security, job and performance evaluation and security. The impact of these reviews as well as the current situation is far more serious in the field than at the headquarters duty stations. The working pressure/environment has been rapidly changing for staff representatives (e.g., new competencies) and this requires that adequate measures be taken to enable them to work according to best practice standards, enhancing their independence and freedom of opinion. We are increasingly concerned about the independence of the international civil service.

10.   I would like to return to the subject of the upcoming working group meeting in Cyprus. One increasingly recurrent call being heard from ICSC is the call for more data and information from the organizations. This is particularly relevant with respect to the upcoming meeting in Cyprus. It is vital that the organizations provide the necessary statistics for this working group meeting, primarily for costing purposes. FICSA fears that without this data, or insufficient data, the commissioners may be provided with an excuse for recommending undesirable changes. Another topic where a call for data and a stand-off with the organizations often occurs at ICSC sessions concerns the claim by organizations that there is difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff. The Commission has repeatedly asked for evidence to back up this claim. If organizations are to stand by this claim, then not only is it important that the message be consistent among all organizations, but also that the evidence be available.

11.   I would like to close this topic by informing members of HLCM that, at the 58th session of its Council, FICSA adopted the position that, in reviewing the mobility and hardship scheme, ICSC must take into account fair international standards and the need for transparency in deciding on any revisions. We are confident that the organizations share this view.

Panel on the Strengthening of the International Civil Service

12. FICSA has provided both written and verbal comments on the review of the international civil service — to the Panel itself, members of CEB and member States. We have been following closely the recently concluded discussions and debates on this topic by the Fifth Committee, which took place in informal sessions during the resumed fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. It is apparent that the Fifth Committee is polarized on the topic. We have just learned that it has been decided to defer consideration of the report of the Panel until the sixtieth session of the Assembly. Although FICSA would like to have seen more positive and concrete steps taken, particularly with respect to recommendations 1 to 8 in the Panel's report, we are at least grateful that the Fifth Committee has not merely noted the report and shelved it. FICSA will continue to advocate actively for action on the first eight recommendations of this report.

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