



## TWELFTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**Reports of the Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee****Second report: Personnel questions***Contents*

	<i>Page</i>
I. Statement by the staff representative .....	1
II. Human Resources Strategy: Annual report.....	1
III. Report of the International Civil Service Commission .....	5
IV. Other personnel questions.....	5
(a) General Service salary survey, Geneva .....	5
(b) Matters relating to the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO.....	6
Recognition of the jurisdiction of the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) .....	6
(c) Matters relating to the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO.....	7
Recognition of the Tribunal's jurisdiction by the South Centre .....	7
Appendix: Statement by the Staff Union representative to the Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee (November 2007) .....	9

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## **I. Statement by the staff representative** (Sixteenth item on the agenda)

1. The statement by the staff representative is reproduced in the appendix to the present report.

## **II. Human Resources Strategy: Annual report** (Seventeenth item on the agenda)

2. The Committee had before it a paper<sup>1</sup> on the Human Resources Strategy (HR Strategy). The Chairperson noted that the document was submitted for information.
3. Mr Barde, speaking on behalf of the Employers' group, said that the document should avoid using such terms as "target", which the programme and budget no longer used. The Employers regretted that the importance of the role of department directors was no longer a priority, and wished for information about the appraisal system for managers. They welcomed the emphasis placed on a results-based culture. The Office must equip itself with the necessary means to measure the performance of its officials. With respect to the average time for completion of the competition process, matters were simply getting worse, demonstrating a total lack of forward planning. The target of 90 days was still much too high, but the Office should at least try to keep to it, unless the delays were deliberate, in order to use the money saved for other purposes.
4. The Employers wished to know the number of vacant posts, at headquarters and in the regions. They wondered whether post regrading had made recruitment easier or whether it had only achieved savings. The Employers reiterated their wish to see staff with experience of the business world recruited. On the subject of diversity, they considered skills to be more important than regional criteria. The Employers called on the Office to show a real willingness to recruit persons with disabilities. As to mobility, they would have liked to see an assessment carried out and to be informed of department reactions. Concerning training, the Office did not seem very ambitious. The Employers wondered if it had a programme to train its staff in new technologies. As a general point, they would have liked to see an evaluation of the impact of such a strategy on the running of the Office.
5. Mr Blondel, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group, welcomed the improved relationship between the Staff Union and the management, the framework agreement signed on recruitment procedures and the negotiations that were increasingly underpinning the Office's occupational safety and health policy. Concerning the document, Mr Blondel welcomed the improved gender balance, and thought that as far as recruitment and selection were concerned, the situation had also moved forward. He noted the introduction of the Resourcing, Assignment and Placement System (RAPS), on which he would welcome further information. In respect of paragraph 14, he thought more consultations should be held with the Staff Union.
6. He was pleased about the progress seen in regional diversity. Like the Employers, the Workers were concerned about rebalancing the grade structure. Would that rebalancing take account of the gender balance? Mr Blondel was not convinced that recruitment into downgraded posts would have a positive effect on staff skills. On the matter of staff

<sup>1</sup> GB.300/PFA/17.

performance management, sufficient time should be given to internal and external consultations. The Workers approved of the management learning initiatives and thought that it was essential for managers to integrate that knowledge into their daily work and establish networks so that the information in their possession could be shared with other staff members. The Workers felt some concern about management learning in the context of United Nations (UN) reform. Sooner or later that reform would conclude with the temptation to standardize the terms and conditions of employment of officials in all the organizations in the system. Bearing in mind the fact that the ILO was the only international institution to respect its Staff Union, it should ensure that the other organizations aligned themselves with the ILO, rather than the other way around.

7. Concerning paragraph 68, the Workers wished to know what recommendations the external consultant had made regarding a skills audit. In the framework of staff mobility and career development, they asked if the ILO had a strategy to provide training that would allow staff to move from the General Service category to the Professional category. The Workers supported the training of learning coordinators and of managers. As to IRIS training, they stressed the need to plan for training and teaching materials in the three official ILO languages. With regard to training initiatives already under way, the Workers asked how frequently they were held and what impact they had. Had an evaluation been carried out of initiatives taken in collaboration with the Turin Centre? The Workers would like more information on the Joint Training Council, and also on how the US\$8.5 million allocated to training were spent. Mr Blondel welcomed the establishment of an Office-wide occupational safety and health policy. He also welcomed the way in which the problem of asbestos had been addressed and dealt with, and hoped that the Office could serve as an example in that area for other organizations. Lastly, Mr Blondel once again asked for information about the status of interns at the ILO and their contracts.
8. The representative of the Government of the United Kingdom, speaking on behalf of the group of 38 industrialized market economy countries (IMEC), noted that the document was submitted to the Committee for information, but felt that it should be submitted to the Governing Body for discussion. Staff costs made up approximately 70 per cent of the Office's budget and hence issues about staffing must be a major responsibility of the Director-General. The Governing Body should therefore be encouraged to provide its views on how the implementation of the HR Strategy was progressing. This was particularly important given the relevance of HR issues to other discussions within the Office including those on strengthening the ILO's capacity (SILC) and to developments within the external environment, largely dominated by the UN reform agenda. He recalled that the Human Resources Development Department (HRD) had challenging but measurable targets which enabled the Committee to monitor progress in the implementation of the HR Strategy, which was commendable. However, at its sitting in March 2007, the Office had promised also to provide a forward-looking document on human resources and he expressed regret that this had not been done.
9. He noted that, while solid progress had been made towards the targets dealing with gender equality and the recruitment procedures for persons with disabilities, there was less progress in other areas. Citing the example of the revised recruitment and selection procedures initially targeted for March 2006, he noted that these would not be submitted to the Governing Body until November 2008. He urged the Office to step up its efforts towards achieving a more balanced representation of its staff particularly with respect to non- and under-represented nationalities.
10. As regards management of staff performance, the speaker highlighted what he considered to be the slow progress made in achieving this target and noted that the pilots had only started in October 2007. He acknowledged that the introduction of a new system was complex and that the investment in additional consultations was worthwhile, but stressed

the need to proceed with urgency particularly given its importance in strengthening results-based management. Similarly on the question of rebalancing the grade structure, he acknowledged the progress made on the review of the grade structure, and the importance of assessing the outcome in conjunction with the results of the field structure review but urged the Office to move forward urgently in setting the revised targets to be presented to the Committee in November 2008.

11. In light of the concern which his group felt about the level of vacancies throughout the Organization, he requested the Office to begin including information about vacancies in the Staff composition paper presented to the spring sessions of the Committee beginning in 2008. While acknowledging the complexity of HR issues and the fact that change took time, he discouraged complacency. He felt that a further progress report should be submitted to the spring session, to lay the groundwork for the November discussions and to give the Governing Body the opportunity to discuss the HR Strategy in detail.
12. The representative of the Government of Mexico noted the targets set and the results achieved to date. As regards strengthening diversity, and recruitment and mobility measures, he felt the situation would be more balanced by the end of 2007, based on progress made. However, as regards regional representation, there were reductions in some regions but increases in others, and the same was true with regard to national representation. He requested the Office to redouble its efforts to bring about greater balance in regional representation.
13. The representative of the Government of the Russian Federation noted the progress made during the year. Some areas were still problematic as reflected in the document and he urged the Office to keep member States fully informed on further progress in these areas. He expressed interest in information on geographical representation at both the regional and national levels and repeated a request to be provided in written form before the end of the Governing Body session with the formula used for establishing the desirable ranges for the geographical representation of staff.
14. The representative of the Government of Japan noted that in the context of strengthening diversity, the figures in respect of the Asia and Pacific region indicated an improvement and expressed the hope that there would be further progress. He also noted that as regards the target for rebalancing the grade structure, 15 Professional positions had already been regraded downwards which demonstrated progress towards achieving the target by the end of 2009. He noted that the Office had also started to examine the grades of General Service staff and looked forward to seeing further progress in this area.
15. The representative of the Government of India indicated that he found the figures on strengthening diversity disturbing. The figures for the Asia and Pacific region had improved, but were still negative so further efforts were required. Merit and competence should be the decisive criteria in all recruitment but regional and nationality considerations should not be overlooked.
16. The representative of the Government of South Africa, speaking on behalf of the Africa group, welcomed the consultative process used to conclude the framework agreement on the procedures for recruitment and selection. He was hopeful that with increased efforts, the target for the completion of the competition process would be met. He expressed concern about the low number of interns from developing countries. He felt that the push for a more balanced regional representation would be achieved. Good progress had been made on gender balance. He suggested that the Office make use of additional measures to attract persons with disabilities, including the use of headhunters, and liaising with disability organizations, which maintained databases on persons with disabilities. He felt that that the increasing mobility of staff was important in the context of meeting the needs

of constituents. He welcomed the introduction of the new staff performance management system and noted its links with the knowledge-sharing strategy. He applauded the opening of a nursing room but said that the Office should explore the introduction of additional amenities in the future. He noted the information provided on the security and safety of staff, and looked forward to further progress in the future.

17. The representative of the Government of Spain expressed support for the IMEC statement. He felt that the technical skills and qualifications of ILO staff were recognized worldwide. The Governing Body and its committees created much work for staff but without recognizing the additional burden. It should be borne in mind that perhaps resources were not always appropriately allocated. As regards staff security, the document considered only two aspects: personal safety or protection with regard to accidents on official travel or caused by criminal acts, and safety at work in terms of occupational accidents. In his view, a third aspect was missing concerning security or stability in employment, which as a result of United Nations reform should have been considered in order to prevent anxiety and uncertainty. The staff were a good channel for expressing what the Organization was putting into practice, and, in that regard, deserved more consideration than had been indicated. He promised the full support of his Government.
18. The Director of HRD thanked the Committee for its comments, suggestions and questions. She noted that some concerns related to HR issues had also been raised during the discussion of other agenda items. While there would be insufficient time to respond to all of these during the current session, they had been carefully noted and the necessary follow-up would be undertaken. However, there had been some recurrent themes which she would take time to address. On the issue of vacant positions, she pointed out that vacancies existed for a variety of reasons, some of which were beyond the control of the Office. But the Office was committed to filling vacancies as expeditiously as possible and there was no strategy to hold back on the filling of vacancies to generate savings. She indicated that the introduction of RAPS would enable the Office to better manage the filling of vacancies, because of its emphasis on staff planning, including succession planning, and its more explicit consideration of the longer term and more global view of the needs of the Office. Discussions had been held with the Staff Union Committee on RAPS. Further discussions would take place and an information strategy was being developed.
19. As regards training, significant progress had been made during this biennium and a useful base had been established on which the Office would continue to build. Statistics would be generated on participation in various programmes once the learning coordinators had submitted their year-end reports. It was perhaps premature to undertake an evaluation exercise at this stage, but the Office would be undertaking its own informal review to determine lessons learned from the initial experience.
20. The Director of HRD acknowledged that staff had many concerns surrounding UN reform, not least of which were job security and high transactional costs. The Office had organized an information session for staff on UN reform and had provided a briefing to the Staff Union. She had also met with staff in Pakistan, Viet Nam and Thailand to discuss the possible HR implications of UN reform. She was aware that anxiety still persisted and took the opportunity to reiterate that any changes to the terms and conditions of employment of ILO staff would require amendments to the Staff Regulations, which would involve internal consultations and ultimately approval by the Governing Body.
21. As regards staff selection criteria, the Office gives paramount consideration to competence, efficiency and effectiveness. But there was nevertheless the obligation to have staff selected on the widest possible geographical basis. She recalled that the implementation of the HR Strategy was a significant undertaking which required fundamental changes in the way staff resources were managed in the Office. Such changes took time, but progress was

being made. The Office remained committed to building on this progress with the new staff performance management and staff learning and development systems as the centrepiece of its efforts. The continued guidance and support of the Committee was needed.

### **III. Report of the International Civil Service Commission** (Eighteenth item on the agenda)

22. The Committee had before it a paper<sup>2</sup> on the report of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC). The Chairperson introduced the paper, noting that the point for decision was contained in paragraph 6.

23. Mr Blondel, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group, had no comments.

24. Mr Barde, speaking on behalf of the Employers' group, said that they supported the point for decision.

25. *The Committee recommends to the Governing Body that it:*

*(i) accept the recommendation of the ICSC, subject to its approval by the UN General Assembly, on the following entitlements:*

*(a) an increase of 1.97 per cent in the base/floor salary scale; and*

*(b) consequential increases in separation payments, for staff in the Professional and higher categories, with effect from 1 January 2008; and*

*(ii) authorize the Director-General to give effect in the ILO, through amendments to the Staff Regulations (as necessary), to the measures referred to in subparagraph (a), subject to their approval by the General Assembly.*

### **IV. Other personnel questions** (Nineteenth item on the agenda)

#### **(a) General Service salary survey, Geneva**

26. The Committee had before it a paper<sup>3</sup> giving a report on progress made in the General Service salary survey in Geneva. The Chairperson noted that the point for decision was contained in paragraph 4.

27. Mr Barde, speaking on behalf of the Employers' group, said that they would like further details about the survey and the way in which it was conducted. Why were Swiss employers reticent? Why had the Federation of Enterprises of French-speaking

<sup>2</sup> GB.300/PFA/18.

<sup>3</sup> GB.300/PFA/19/1.

Switzerland (Fédération des entreprises romandes) not been consulted? Could the Office explain how surveys of that kind influenced salaries? Furthermore, the fact that the survey had been conducted by persons who would be affected by the result could call its independence into question. The Employers had some doubts about the methodology used. They were surprised that the Office should wish to align itself with the best salary conditions in Geneva, when it did not respect the Geneva standards on occupational safety and health where the headquarters building was concerned.

28. Mr Blondel, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group, said that the Workers had been ready to support the point for decision, but that they now felt disconcerted by the statement made by Mr Barde. They therefore agreed to examine the matter further.
29. The representative of the Government of the Russian Federation asked whether the salary survey would be completed and the results approved by the ICSC before the Governing Body in March next year. If the survey were not completed and approved before March next year, he proposed to postpone the decision on this issue until next year.
30. Mr Blondel, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group, considered that no one could say whether the report would be adopted before the following March. Nevertheless, funds could be released in case it was, to avoid any retroactive impact likely to create a budgetary imbalance.
31. The Director of HRD informed the Committee that the Chairperson of the Local Salary Survey Committee (LSSC) had indicated that the LSSC would be more than happy to collaborate with the Swiss Employers' Association at the time of the next survey. She also informed the Committee that the ICSC was making efforts to approve the results of the survey before its spring 2008 session, with a view to minimizing the retroactivity burden on the organizations.
32. *The Committee recommends to the Governing Body that:*
  - (i) *the Director-General be authorized to amend the Staff Regulations to give effect to the revised salary scales upon approval by the ICSC; and*
  - (ii) *the Director-General be requested to report back to the Committee on the final outcome of the salary survey, at its 301st Session (March 2008).*

**(b) Matters relating to the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO**

***Recognition of the jurisdiction of the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA)***

33. The Committee had before it a document<sup>4</sup> on the recognition of the Tribunal's jurisdiction by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA).
34. The Workers' group welcomed the fact that other organizations recognized, by submitting to its jurisdiction, that the Tribunal was competent and independent. It was an honour for the Tribunal, particularly as the request for the recognition of its jurisdiction came from

<sup>4</sup> GB.300/PFA/19/2.

specialists, as in the case of the PCA. The independence of the Tribunal was confirmed by the fact that it judged cases concerning the ILO in an equitable manner, although the Workers would prefer to see fewer such cases. He took the opportunity to invite the administration to explore further negotiated solutions to the conflicts that arose between it and its employees.

**35. *The Committee recommends to the Governing Body that it approve the recognition of the Tribunal's jurisdiction by the PCA, with effect from the date of such approval.***

**(c) Matters relating to the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO**

***Recognition of the Tribunal's jurisdiction by the South Centre***

**36.** The Committee had before it a paper<sup>5</sup> concerning recognition of the Tribunal's jurisdiction by the South Centre.

**37.** The Employers' and Workers' groups supported the point for decision. The Workers' group noted the importance of the South Centre for countries in the South.

**38.** The Legal Adviser informed the Committee that the Tribunal had elected that week Mr Justice Seydou Ba (Senegal) as its new President and Ms Justice Mary G. Gaudron (Australia) as its new Vice-President.

**39. *The Committee recommends to the Governing Body that it approve the recognition of the Tribunal's jurisdiction by the South Centre, with effect from the date of such approval.***

Geneva, 12 November 2007.

*(Signed)* Mr Barde,  
Reporter.

*Points for decision:* Paragraph 25;  
Paragraph 32;  
Paragraph 35;  
Paragraph 39.

<sup>5</sup> GB.300/PFA/19/3.



## Appendix

### **Statement by the Staff Union representative to the Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee** (November 2007)

Mr Chairperson, Director-General, members of the Governing Body, dear colleagues and others present here. With your indulgence I would like once again to say a few words to you in my capacity as President of the Staff Union and, above all, as an ILO staff member, since it is on behalf of all the members of staff, at headquarters and in the field, that I am here attending this forum.

The world around us, its technology, its different processes, life itself, are advancing at unprecedented speed, evolving at a vertiginous rate, and we are trying to respond to this rapid change: not always with the means we would like to have, but always with enthusiasm if we believe in the underlying ideas. That commitment is nevertheless often masked by a weariness that comes from a kind of discouragement; we often feel defeated even before we start.

The UN, and the ILO, as a UN specialized agency, are not immune from this rapid process of change. They, too, are generating new ideas and plans, seeking to achieve objectives and improve our imperfect world. We, the staff members of these organizations, number thousands, and we are supporting this process of change in the conviction that it is beneficial and, in our specific case, that decent work is a necessity.

But there are times when decisions are blocked, run into the sand, or become limited, for want of the resources (human and material) needed, and often lose their relevance before they have a chance to get off the ground. The means may be lacking but the work is still there and increasing. We are constantly being asked to meet ever more complex objectives, with ever more limited resources.

Similarly, I cannot here enumerate the numerous policies, circulars, reforms or plans which, every year, break in on our small world, our institutions, changing our working conditions but without any let-up in the flow of work that needs to be done, of new ideas, and strong commitment. And what do the members of staff of the international organizations feel about this? We witness relocations on a massive scale, leading to anxiety and a loss of motivation, the increased use of outsourcing for basic services, the loss of recognized rights and benefits, all in the name of saving money and improving control. New ideas, more work, but less of a social foundation. The ILO has hitherto been sheltered from such trends, but how would you feel in that situation?

I always believed that high-quality work required investment for excellence, which is the fundamental principle of our Staff Regulations. But this does not appear to be the main concern of those responsible for guiding our destinies throughout the system. Or perhaps a few basic principles of productivity have been forgotten: the fact that motivated staff, enjoying good working conditions, are more productive and generate profits. This is difficult to achieve nowadays, when cutbacks and the fear of being moved in two months, without any say in the matter, from Geneva or New York to Kuala Lumpur, simply to make savings, and without any other clear purpose, is now part of everyday reality in many of our institutions. Be it understood that we are not opposed to mobility. On the contrary, it is a necessary part of our job. We believe work in the field is of fundamental importance. But we also believe the environment we move in should be a rational one, even if it needs to be modernized.

The UN General Assembly, recommendations by the ICSC, national budgets – all are in agreement regarding the need for joint efforts and for standardizing conditions, but in which direction?

If we turn to internal ILO matters, the HR Strategy paper before you today (GB.300/PFA/17) highlights the need for joint efforts within the UN system to achieve greater coherence; but what is the purpose of such efforts? What is the ultimate objective? Is it, as we have seen at the UNHCR or WHO, to relocate services to take advantage of cheap labour? Or is the aim to work with the Director-General to ensure that the minimum common conditions (as defined by the “One UN” reform initiative) are in fact the best possible conditions? We are in no doubt that it is the latter that should be the ILO’s goal, since in the process of collective talks (and who knows this better than we?), the collective agreement with the most favourable terms is the one that prevails. What we would like is for another paper on the UN reform in the near future, like the paper GB.300/4, to refer to internal negotiation machinery and our consultation procedures, alongside the Decent Work Programme, as a positive achievement. This would be an achievement for the ILO and for the Director-General. Every time the ILO has been a leader on some matter of general import, there have been positive international repercussions.

This does not, however, appear to be the idea reflected in the decisions of the ICSC or in the statements emanating from the General Assembly. It is a curious fact that at this forum, the Governing Body, you have only one paper for decision, and a very short one at that, originating from that body, namely, GB.300/PFA/18, which proposes an increase in salary scales, contrary to the recent trend.

I would like to draw your attention, as Government representatives to both bodies, to a number of decisions by the General Assembly which aim to reduce our rights and benefits, without any clear rationale beyond making “savings”. It appears to have been forgotten that we are working away from our own countries, out of touch with our national roots, often finding it difficult to become integrated into the host country but without even being classified as migrants. That is why the review of the ILO field structure (GB.300/PFA/12) is of such great interest to staff. One paragraph in that paper refers to consultations with the Staff Union. One meeting at headquarters and a number of field offices marked the beginning of the process, and we hope this will not be the last occasion, and indeed it will not be if it involves genuine consultation.

I have a request to make of you. Please read carefully the ICSC proposals for the future of this Organization and of the others in which you have influence, seek ways of giving us your support in preserving the gains that have been achieved little by little over time but which are not, for all that, of less importance in social terms. Emphasize at the General Assembly what the ICSC needs to understand: that savings are not achieved by cuts that are prejudicial to the staff because it is the members of staff who are responsible for attaining the objectives.

This was the context in which the General Assembly agreed to outsource the management of the North American assets of the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund. In the summer of this year, our representatives accepted the explanations given by the Secretary-General on the changes in the management of our investments in the region, but did not agree that management of those assets should be outsourced. Perhaps that is another decision linked to UN reform.

I would like to remind you that less than six months ago, in the interests of making savings and a zero-growth budget, this body approved a US\$2 million reduction in the Staff Health Insurance Fund (SHIF) funds. It is obvious that the initial forecasts had been broadly based to allow more streamlined funding in future (the rapid changes I referred to earlier also affect costs), but is it fair for workers to find that their health insurance benefits will be affected, or at least to find themselves in a situation of uncertainty in this regard? For the time being, the result has been an increase in contributions, but will it be the last one? How will this affect our principles of solidarity, and our very concept of well-being? I

would also like to remind those of you on the Governing Body, and the Director-General, that this topic has numerous implications which it would be well to discuss in order to avert a situation in which staff members get the impression that their health is of no concern to those who employ them. We are all very attached to our SHIF, and we want it to work, but let us in future seek alternative solutions that are fair and progressive. We may share some of your ideas about savings.

Health and safety: these are two linked concepts, and we welcome the fact that the HR Strategy reflects approval of a policy in which the Staff Union has actively collaborated not only out of a profound conviction that safety and health are crucial, but also because as you can see, the conditions in our working environment are often less than perfect. Staff at headquarters find that cleanliness is a problem, there are certain other inconveniences, and problems with allergies that often arise in old buildings. The responsibility to do something about this is a common one, as staff do not always pay due attention to their immediate environment, but in any case it is clear that the situation requires special attention. We welcome this policy and the consultations (which have been genuine and more like negotiations) which the administration has held constantly with the Staff Union, but we hope they will also be backed up by appropriate training and the implementation of specific measures in which we all have a part to play.

Training, and the major contribution it makes to personal development, is invaluable; major efforts have been made in this first exercise, and those efforts made have borne their first fruits. Nevertheless, we believe that more can be achieved if the work is better planned and managed and based on effective evaluations, especially where a joint body in which both parties contribute, as was the case with safety and health, can be a decisive factor in achieving objectives.

We agree that at least ten working days should be devoted to training, but to judge by responses from members of staff, the courses and other training activities on offer are not always the ones really needed by staff for their personal and professional development. This is a subject that requires further discussion. It is important to note that the new work methods and systems, such as IRIS, create a need for staff with better and more rounded training, and these capacities need to be strengthened in order to ensure that staff members are multi-skilled, both technically and administratively. Training does not just mean (for example) an English language course; it is an ongoing process, and I would like to emphasize that the Staff Union's presence must be stronger and more effective, facilitating the revision of the existing collective agreement which, through neglect, has become a dead letter. This revision, too, is the result of a commitment.

Training is crucial in counteracting a certain sense of discouragement among members of staff facing the lack of competitions that would enable them to obtain promotion. The human resources paper reflects the various attempts to improve the grade imbalance but, with ever fewer new posts (competitions are increasing but not the number of posts, and some posts remain vacant for long periods, especially those involving management responsibilities), the question is: how to provide motivation for career development? There is also a growing tendency to hire retirees for short periods, on the perennially cited grounds that certain skills are needed. No one doubts that experience is in itself a kind of "grade" but if the trend to hire retirees continues, both with G and P staff, will this not be suggestive of a lack of foresight on the part of the Office, which should be taking steps to prepare staff and help them to do a better job? We agree that we must help one another in times of crisis and work more if it is necessary to do so, but we also agree with planning and providing training when it is needed, to encourage and motivate members of staff. This is fundamental.

As to the much-vaunted human element, it appears at times to be watered down and lost in the face of the budget, the need to make savings and the drive for efficiency. We welcome the fact that the Office has bolstered respect for diversity and gender equality. We are proud that the ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality (GB.300/5) submitted to you

gives the Staff Union a certain responsibility in that this plan can be implemented in all the areas of its remit. Such recognition bears witness to our “added value” in the Office’s work and to our commitment to this shared principle. The human element becomes less apparent in the draft knowledge management strategy (GB.300/PFA/9/2), according to which personal contact will become less important as a result of the growth of information technology. We believe this is wide of the mark. Even though communication can indeed be improved by machines, it can only be developed in pursuit of the desired goal if human beings are involved. Or is knowledge the preserve of machines alone? We also note the Office’s endeavours to improve its policy on recruiting persons with disabilities; we hope to participate actively in this process, to which we are fully committed.

Returning to the human resources document, we welcome, first of all, the acknowledgement of the difficulties in achieving the 90-day goal in the recruitment process. I pointed out in March that this appeared unrealistic. Since honesty is the foundation of our work with our colleagues in HRD, I should point out that while we are working together to improve recruitment and selection (negotiations are still under way), some of the processes and new proposals in this document remain unclear.

The target set out in the document is restricted to efficiency and competence in selection, and makes no mention of transparency or respect for certain principles, non-observance of which on occasions has led to a number of staff complaints. We firmly believe in mobility and hope that the much-vaunted RAPS (which in the Staff Union’s opinion remain rather vague) will provide efficiency, while fully respecting our Regulations. We are still, however, waiting for clarification and have some misgivings.

We are pleased to note that greater attention is being paid to avoiding irregular recruitment practices, such as the recent prohibition on the use of service contracts and more stringent controls on precarious employment arrangements (although they still exist), which have arisen particularly as a consequence of delays in opening competition processes. This means that at times, temporary use is still made of the somewhat unsatisfactory “3.5” contract. We must continue our endeavours to ensure that the contract issued is appropriate to the work or service involved. The number of interns (250) has increased, but is there any genuine control to prevent them from becoming a source of cheap labour? Are our external collaborators genuinely external?

Once again, I would like to acknowledge the fact that dialogue with the administration, although slow and at times confused with the mere provision of information, is fluid and direct, and that the doors to the Director-General’s Office have recently reopened. This gesture is further proof of intent which we hope will be translated into action and will make openness and contact easier. Thank you. We firmly believe that the Director-General must feel proud to have a Staff Union, to have bargaining mechanisms, and that these should be promoted as examples of the way in which the processes of reform in the common system are working.

The Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) and the working groups are going about their daily business, but the slowness in taking decisions and in turning these into practical action can sometimes be difficult to accept. The decision to have a nursing room, for example, took more than seven months to become a reality. The working groups move very slowly and we need to analyse the operational problems that cause this.

Allow me to conclude this review by acknowledging that our conflict resolution system works well. I would like to pay a humble tribute to the Mediator and the members of the Joint Advisory Appeals Board (JAAB), which, with all its flaws and virtues, is making strides forward and winning respect and trust, creating more balanced ways of resolving our problems. The Staff Union promotes the prevention of such conflicts and ensures that staff are advised and protected, not only through the work of the Staff Union Committee, but also through its own legal adviser, by drawing on experiences as far as possible in order to promote our general work. We are endeavouring to resolve the contractual situation, not only because we believe that justice requires this and freedom of

association guarantees it, but also because we think that, through a legal adviser's presence and assistance, cases involving members of staff have been sheltered from external influences that might harm the Organization and its staff, saving money and effort.

I cannot end our statement (I would like to stress that I am but a spokesperson) without emphasizing our primary message. The ILO and our Director-General cannot attain their goals without streamlining and improving our human resources. We must invest in the staff and in staff management, without forgetting that those who advocate decent work must set the example.

Thank you for your patience.