



Coordinating Committee for
International Staff Unions and Associations

Report of the
CCISUA mid-term meeting
New York, 16-18 November 2021





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Introduction

From 16 to 18 November 2021, delegates from CCISUA member staff unions and associations met in New York for their 2021 mid-term meeting, hosted by the UNICEF Global Staff Association at UNICEF House.

This was the first in-person meeting of the federation since the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak. It saw a very high level of participation with the vast majority of members present. It proved to be an occasion to renew the links between members, build solidarity and ensure a united front vis-à-vis the many challenges ahead on issues of great importance such as the 'Future of Work', the response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the jurisdictional set-up of the Common System, among others.

The main objective of the mid-term was attained, which was namely for the federation to meet with policy makers, grasp the direction being taken by management on the various issues, and discuss how to continue tackling them. In that sense, no formal decisions were taken. The below account details said meetings and discussions.

CCISUA mid-term meeting discussions of 16 November 2021

I. Internal discussion on UN reform and the 'Future of Work'

The membership recalled the outcome of the recent meeting of the ICSC Working Group on 'Future of Work' which took place in Copenhagen from 11-15 October 2021, whereby the current contractual framework was considered fit for purpose. The concern of organizations mainly resided in the unpredictability of funding, which made them look at agility to administer contracts – however no arguments were given during that meeting linking funding with types of contract. Nonetheless, the introduction of a fourth contractual type was discarded by the Working Group and such recommendation would normally be discussed by the ICSC at its next session.

The following points were raised by different members throughout the discussion that ensued:

1. HLCM's model policy on flexible working remained worrying and the federation should discuss its status and how to fight it back, despite the fact that it had been circulated to federations for comments and was now established.
2. The issue of flexibility should be looked at carefully. If unions were to block any flexibility on the current contractual arrangements it could force management to increase the use of precarious contracts. A point was made to step ahead of the curve and look how unions can allow certain adaptability, which could include Pension Fund issues, job titling, medical insurance, education/training schemes, job stability. The post-Covid-19 environment had reshaped this discussion. Unions should think ahead and be ready to discuss flexibility in a context where the international civil service was to be preserved, and avoid the erosion of benefits.
3. The ICSC's contractual framework was not necessarily of mandatory adoption by organizations which presented a problem of potential application of different contractual modalities.
4. An increase in flexibility should be paired with increased social protection, as was typically the case in national jurisdictions. Advocating for employee benefits, particularly unemployment insurance schemes, was pivotal, regardless of source of funding. So far management did not seem to be offering any added security to counterbalance the agility it was seeking. On the contrary, job security had suffered throughout recent years (e.g. permanent/ indefinite contracts which were discontinued in some organizations) with benefits reduced and precarity on the rise. The IT element of 'Future of Work' would push more staff to work from home and this could lead to further precarity.
5. The Covid-19 pandemic had shown UN staff, and the organizations we work for, could function with remote working, which seemed to be in growing demand amongst the



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youngest generations, some of whom would be willing to accept more precarious contract types. Liaising with the Young UN advocate group may be needed to tap into those ideas. This, however, bearing in mind that in many cases remote working had an often high mental health cost, which the staff unions should always be mindful of.

6. Caution was called for when discussing various elements related to 'Future of Work', e.g. security, insurance, conditions of service, flexible contracts, with attention on not mixing them. Any consultation in that respect should be held exclusively with the staff unions.
7. The implications on benefits and employment security were noted to be important, as well as ensuring proper consultations with staff unions. At the same time there should be a limit to how strongly unions should push.
8. Remote working, and its potential implications on conditions of service, contract types, etc., were part of the questions being asked by Member States. In a context where many staff wanted to continue working remotely (whom the unions also represented), staff unions should be careful in striking a balance between the different demands of their constituencies and the risks they entailed. Whilst it seemed a link had been established between flexible working arrangements (FWA) and contractual arrangements; a red line should be marked when it came to employment stability. More and more posts were being converted from international to national, essentially transforming international civil service into national service. This was deemed even more regrettable in agencies which were already heading into more employment precarity.

II. Internal discussions on Pension Fund

A. *The membership was briefed by participant representatives on recent events concerning the Pension Fund, namely the following:*

1. Reform of the Pension Board: An early OIOS report recommended a reform of the Board (size and composition), which the Board – with the exception of participant representatives – rejected. The GA then requested the newly elected Chief Executive of Pension Administration to hire a consultant to do a review of the Board and compare the findings with the OIOS report, who came back with similar reform suggestions to that of the OIOS report. However, the Board then decided to create its own working group to come out with concrete proposals to change size and composition, which delivered a report with a proposal to request the General Assembly to downsize the Board to 25 members, and this was again rejected by the Board (except participant representatives). The Board finally decided to recommend to the GA to approve a downsizing to 33 members, but also suggested changes detrimental to participant representatives such as establishing an “ethics policy” that would limit the information they could share with their constituency, thus limiting transparency. Participant representatives asked the federation to remain particularly attentive to the discussions of the GA in that regard.
2. UNJSPF Geneva office: for the past three years the Geneva office had remained without top reporting officers after the leadership positions were removed under a strategy of “functional reporting”, making staff in Geneva report directly to management in New York. This generated a great sense of discouragement among staff and weakened the main pension office providing services to retirees in Africa and Europe; not to mention the difficulties added to functional reporting after travel was halted due to Covid-19. Further plans now envisaged to outsource record management of Geneva and disband the financial section, where functions would be gradually transferred to New York, which would have further detrimental effects on services provided to retirees served by the Geneva office.
3. Additionally, without Geneva as a back-up office, pension services could be greatly affected or interrupted in case of urgency in New York as had happened in the past with major floods or emergencies. Participant representatives asked the federation to engage the Pension Fund administration on this issue and take action to prevent or limit any further dismantling of the Geneva office in the interest of participants and beneficiaries.



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4. Investments: In recent years, participant representatives confronted the former Representative of the SG for Investments and following an OIOS report which vindicated their claims, a new SG's Representative was appointed. Participant representatives continued to be in touch with senior investment officers to ensure the Fund's assets are safe and prevent any dramatic change in investment strategies. However, some alarming trends were cause for worry such as the fixed income portfolio underperforming for the past 15 years, on which participant representatives were pushing for accountability, especially when there seems to be plans to hire a consultant firm to manage this portfolio. Participant representatives considered that the underperformance of a portfolio should not be reason to outsource investment management but rather to seek improvement of the internal capabilities, given that passive investment management could entail higher risks. They asked the federation to be mindful of this in its discussions with the Fund's officials.
5. Implementation of a digital certificate: Retirees were being gradually asked to use a digital certificate to access their entitlements. So far a relatively low number (5,000) were using it compared to the population of beneficiaries of 80,000. Participant representatives asked the federation to inquire how this was being implemented and its costing implications for the Fund.
6. Communications: Until recently, participant representatives were able to communicate thoroughly to constituents on the outcome of discussions of Board meetings. However, the aforementioned new "ethics policy" would be used against participant representatives to prevent them from sharing information, thus making the Board less transparent. Participant representatives denounced to the federation the obstacles being put in place to limit their functions and their right to address participants on how the Board acts.

B. The following points were raised by different members throughout the discussion that ensued:

1. Caution was called concerning the composition of the Board, where a decrease in number of seats could entail less representation of specialized agencies, therefore raising the need for a neutral approach.
2. Participant representatives were a caucus of the participants including UN and specialized agencies and agreed to have one spokesperson for all participant representatives, ensuring a united approach vis-à-vis all participants.
3. After several reports on the required change in the composition of the Board, and considering the resources spent to procure those reports, it was not acceptable for the Board to maintain its status quo. Participant representatives suggested asking the GA to establish a redesign panel, similar to the one created to redesign the UN internal justice system.
4. The importance of the Geneva office was highlighted as a key service provider to beneficiaries and should be maintained offering those services at an optimum level.
5. CCISUA called on participant representatives to remain united in protecting the interests of participants before the Board.

III. Internal discussion on ICSC matters

A. Parental leave

The ICSC's working group on parental leave had met some weeks before, where CCISUA expressed its position to move away from "maternity" and "paternity" leave and towards a unified "parental" leave policy, but still without concrete outcome. Different organizations were so far applying different policies. The federation was pushing for a basic package of parental leave in the direction of 16 weeks plus 8 for biological parents, as well as looking at related benefits. The working group was yet to enter into discussions of flexible working arrangements related to parental leave.



B. Contractual arrangements

The ICSC's working group on contractual arrangements finished its work and concluded the current contractual set up was fit for purpose.

C. Cost-of-living surveys

The cycle of surveys was noted to have already started in various duty stations.

D. General Service salary methodology

The ICSC working group was already in the process of reviewing the GS salary methodology, with a preliminary agreement to abolish multiple salary scales in a single duty station. The difficulty of gathering comparative data in many duty stations was also being discussed. The CEB was pushing for the introduction of external data to replace the conventional survey of salaries among local employers. An option could be for local salary committees to decide whether to purchase external data in a particular exercise. Issues raised, however, referred to stark discrepancies between vendors of data. At the same time a proposal to counter any risk brought by external data was to put in place a safeguard measure to keep the previous salary scale if more beneficial (given the removal of multiple salary scales). However, the abolition of multiple salary scales would likely only be accepted if the use of external data was accepted as well.

Concerns were raised about the potential adoption of external data hindering the Fleming principle and the need to ensure salaries were comparable to equivalents in local markets. However, issues with the Fleming principle were also raised, such as its difficulty to ensure a minimum standard of living for UN personnel and the non-availability of comparable data for multiple circumstances.

IV. Meeting with Mr. Larbi Djacta, ICSC Chairman, and Ms. Regina Pawlik, ICSC Executive Secretary, to discuss issues currently before the ICSC

The ICSC Chairman was welcomed by the federation and gave a briefing covering several topics, namely the situation in Geneva with two separate post adjustments in the Professional category following the legal challenges to the 2016 post-adjustment, the change in operational rules/methodology of post-adjustment, the role of the local salary committees in approving the launch of cost-of-living surveys, and ongoing discussions on the education grant. The Chairman highlighted that accuracy, consistency and stability were the key desired outcomes, with involvement of all stakeholders through every step and a collaborative approach.

A. CCISUA members raised the following points with the ICSC leadership:

1. The unsustainability of two post adjustment levels in Geneva and the resulting impairment of the Common System. Staff representatives appreciated efforts made to make the methodology more fair, predictable, and transparent. Whilst the Geneva salary survey was already underway, if issues observed during the 2016 survey were repeated, staff could find themselves again in a position to challenge it legally.
2. The concern over ensuring fairness and correctness in the ongoing cost-of-living surveys in a context of economic distortions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, bearing in mind the surveys' effects would be felt for the next 5 years.
3. ICSC's approach to (a) 'Future of Work' and its impact on job safety, (b) parental leave, (c) remuneration package of national staff.
4. The sentiment of many national and general service staff towards the salary systems in place was that of antipathy and unfairness. How can the ICSC make sure organizations do not use "back door" ways to circumvent the established contractual framework, effectively bypassing the Common System?



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5. 'Future of Work' was considered by many to be a threat to the UN system, being used as cover to be able to hire and fire at will. More clarity was sought from the ICSC as to the role it played vis-à-vis organizations, and how it would make sure a fourth type of contract would not become a reality.
6. Issues with proper classification of field duty stations.
7. What were the views of the ICSC regarding the abolishment of dual salary scales for GS staff and would that be conditioned to the gathering of external data?

B. The ICSC leadership provided the following comments:

1. The outcome of the Geneva cost-of-living survey should not be anticipated, the methodology was reviewed with the view to avoid any possible distortion. The process was fair, all stakeholders had participated, and the elements so far pointed to a fair outcome. The GA asked to resolve the situation by carrying out the survey, and it was the only way possible. Staff had to do their job in filling out the survey and this was the only method to restore the single salary scale in Geneva. Staff had to be trusted to do this.
2. On 'Future of Work' the ICSC was in favour of keeping the current contractual framework but bearing in mind it was a Member State-driven process and up to the GA to decide to discuss and take action on proposals. The ICSC remained open to proposals but had not yet received one. The ICSC took the subject seriously and was actually conservative in its approach to it. The ICSC could not "close its doors" and avoid looking/reacting to any proposals, for which the relevant working group was key. The question was why organizations had to resort to other (more precarious) types of contracts, and that was part of the discussion on 'Future of Work'. So far, the ICSC had validated the current framework and that was how it would be presented to Member States.
3. Concerning the methodologies for general service and professional salaries, there were two working groups in parallel and they were making progress on the review of methodology.
4. On parental leave, the ICSC was still in an information-gathering phase.
5. On national officers, pay concerned a locally-recruited package and this was also under review.
6. The ICSC would convey to the GA the need for review of salary systems.
7. The ICSC was looking into classification of duty stations with the field as a priority.

CCISUA members thanked Mr. Djacta and Ms. Pawlik for meeting with the federation.

V. Internal discussion on safety of staff in the field

CCISUA members recalled recent events in Afghanistan and concerns for the situation in Addis Ababa and Beirut, and made the following remarks:

1. Management should hear from the federation that it was alarmed and not happy with the way the UN was dealing with staff security in those areas and on its handling of its duty of care.
2. During the Afghanistan crisis, members collectively raised the issue repeatedly. It was saddening to see how little attention was paid to assisting national staff in an evacuation situation. It was also disheartening to see the lack of a coordinated approach between different organizations. The importance of close collaboration between staff unions and management was specially highlighted in such scenarios.
3. Confusing situations such as the one in Afghanistan lead to defencelessness of staff members. Often the hands of the UN were tied by circumstances and the relation it wished to maintain with governments.



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4. Lack of clarity remained about the responsibility of organizations vis-à-vis national/locally-based staff, and more attention should be given to them. FAQs or guidelines could be issued to reassure staff, as depending on the situation and category of the staff member, within-country relocations or international evacuations could be initiated. Making distinctions between those who would be relocated or evacuated could lead to discrimination. Staff should be made aware of the risks they faced. The SG had the discretion to authorize an evacuation of a national staff but that did not seem to be the practice.
5. The Afghanistan experience showed a lack of transparency of what the UN was able to deliver, and a lack of empathetic communication by senior management. An honest review should take place as a Common System issue, which could include a structural review of the international civil service without distinguishing between types of staff.

VI. Meeting with USG Catherine Pollard on UN reform, task force on racism, and other related issues

USG Pollard was welcomed by the members and asked to share her views on 'Future of Work' and contractual arrangements – considering the ICSC working group's conclusion that the framework was fit for purpose – as well as on the work tackling racism.

A. USG Pollard briefed the federation on the following points:

1. Progress had been made on management reform with implementation moving positively. Staff concerns were noted on decentralized delegation of authority and management continued to monitor closely any exception granted.
2. On separation and appointment, management was looking into policies for improvement, particularly concerning rules that may not be working as originally intended and cases of deliberate malfeasance.
3. Upsides of an annualized regular budget included having more clarity of results achieved, fewer reductions (recosting) by Member States, and more realistic vacancy rates.
4. A new framework of values and behaviours was recently launched, and policy instruments were being reviewed.
5. A taskforce on racism was put in place which was necessary and important for the Organization because the UN was not immune to racism. The process started with a survey the year before. Various local working groups were also been created. A long-term action plan was being finalized. The project had benefited from close collaboration with the Ombudsman's Office (who ran dialogues that provided feedback from staff to understand how they viewed these issues). For the UN to institute an antiracist culture and a more racially inclusive workplace, time and leadership would be required starting from the top, along with action, empathy, continuously looking in introspect and asking questions about prejudices. Management would need the support of all entities to achieve goals, for which an initial two-year time frame was being set and was mostly based on actions available to the SG.
6. The UN did not collect data on race or ethnicity as it had a system of national representation. In terms of recruitment and selection the Organization had to work within the system mandated by Member States. The staff engagement survey to be launched would (for the first time) include questions on racial ethnicity as well as data on sexual orientation. Management would also address prohibited conduct in the context of racism.
7. The work of the taskforce on racism pertained only to the Secretariat, although the CEB had been briefed on this work. Collaboration with other organizations was expected once the strategy was launched in the UN Secretariat, which would allow other organizations not to start from scratch in tackling the same issues.



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8. Concerning the vision for the future of the SG, key issues included “gender parity” within the Secretariat, a “youth agenda”, “UN 2.0” data analytics and strategic foresight, and the new “values and behaviours” framework. The SG had said the UN needed to attract the younger generations for which we needed to do more outreach and design attractive jobs. The “digital UN” was part of that “UN 2.0”.
9. On contractual reform, an ICSC working group had seized the subject after 11 years of the current framework. Part of the review included revisiting past types of staff contracts such as 200 series, as there was currently no bridge between temporary and fixed-term appointments. Management was not proposing to dispose of the current contractual framework, but some organizations felt complementary contractual instruments were needed – potentially a more modern version to those previous types of contracts. The discussion on social security benefits was also on the table.
10. Concerning the liquidity crisis, whilst the rate of collection in 2021 improved compared to 2020 and management lifted the hiring freeze, caution was still being urged. More significant progress was hoped for over the next 3 years.

B. CCISUA members raised the following points with USG Pollard:

1. The federation regretted there had been little consultation with unions on the subject of racism.
2. On contractual arrangements, some organizations were already transitioning to more precarious contracts. How/when would efforts be coordinated with different departments and organizations? Was there any discussion about a more streamlined way of hiring, benefits, local employment schemes? What was the perceived benefit of going back to 200-300 series contracts?
3. About the “youth agenda”, concerns were raised about the contractual arrangements approach to the matter.
4. What was considered to be an acceptable vacancy rate?
5. On racism, a question was raised: would the HQ taskforce be enlarged? The federation saluted efforts of management to tackle racism, but raised discrimination was also taking place in other forms, e.g. international v. local, G v. P., young v. old. Were there cases being brought under the current framework?
6. What were management’s thoughts about geographical diversity and representation of each Member State being determined by their financial contribution?
7. On UN reform, it was deemed important for managers to look into internal talent. Concerns were raised on how to balance considerations of geographic representation and younger talent with career promotion of active staff and their expectations.
8. Some heads of entities seemed more focused on geographic representation and regional diversity than gender parity; how could due consideration be given to all these elements?
9. Clarifications were asked concerning participation of specialized agencies in US-based medical insurance schemes.
10. Was management planning to revisit special measures on gender parity? Were there any developments concerning the recognition of non-binary gender?
11. Could comments be provided on possible one-off separation payments?

C. USG Pollard provided the following comments:

1. On geographical diversity, a system was in place under a certain formula weighted by contributions, which did have its difficulties. Dialogue at all levels had been very important and insightful and management had done its best to engage with staff and respond on the issues faced by them. The upcoming staff engagement survey would show a clearer picture



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of those concerns. There was no plan to replace the geographic representation framework and it was a politically sensitive issue for Member States. Therefore, the Organization addressed racial diversity in complement to that framework. As for metrics, both geographic representation and regional representation were accounted for.

2. On contractual arrangements, the issue of “staff v. consultants” had been going on for many years. After more than a decade, the current contractual framework needed to be reviewed. Member States pressured for such periodic reviews to take place, especially major voluntary contributors in funds and programmes where management is asked to find ways to make their funding more financially sustainable. Agility was sought to be able to respond to imminent emergencies requiring recruitment. The lack of timeliness was part of the frustration with the current system. The same consultation process with staff unions would take place.
3. On racism, management would be overseeing implementation of the new strategy in the Secretariat. One recommendation was to create a focal point in every department at the senior level with influence over decision making – this would require resources and further discussion with the SG, but smaller initiatives could also be done.
4. On vacancy rates, 9% was right in terms of making sure to fill an acceptable number of positions.
5. On a potential local employment scheme, regardless of new contractual modalities that may be eventually put in place, it would have to be approved by Member States. The best management could explore was a system similar to life insurance, entirely funded by staff.
6. On medical insurance issues, management was willing to look at them.
7. On the “youth agenda”, the Organization needed to bring in younger people, but this would not come at the expense of existing staff. Depending on positions the Organization may need to evaluate the need for new energy.
8. Gender parity remained an important issue and management continued to follow-up on this issue.
9. On HLCM’s model policy on flexible working arrangements, each organization used it individually to develop its own policies.
10. On agreed termination, management considered them on a case-by-case basis.

CCISUA members thanked USG Pollard for meeting with the federation.

VII. Meeting with UNPAD (Hawa Diallo) on their role and advocacy efforts

CCISUA members welcomed Ms. Hawa Diallo, representative of UNPAD, advocate group for peoples of African descent in the UN, established in 2016. Its creation was based on two GA resolutions connected to the UN decade of people of African descent (68/237 and 6/16).

Ms. Diallo gave a presentation on the role and advocacy efforts of UNPAD. Its mission was to promote equal inclusion, recognition and access for all persons in the United Nations system worldwide within GA frameworks and the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

The scope of their activities were mainly circumscribed to (1) eliminating racism in the workplace through proposals, meetings, surveys; (2) equal opportunities in recruitment and geographical representation through policies and advocacy; and (3) building coalitions and partnerships with the African diaspora, e.g. the African Union, Slave Trade contacts.

Following the presentation, a point was made about the scope of UNPAD on whether its members were willing to enlarge it. Ms. Diallo replied that discrimination was mostly focused on people of African descent and their scope would remain with that focus.



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VIII. Meeting with Gurchaten Sandhu and Gabe Scelta on the activities and challenges of UN Globe

The representatives of UN Globe, who attended virtually, were welcomed by the CCISUA members.

A. UN Globe outlined the following points:

1. UN Globe was an advocate group of the LGBTQI+ collective across UN system since first established in 1997, which focuses its work on three pillars: (a) Inclusive and equitable employment conditions (mobility, parental leave, entitlements balances, general policy); (b) Diverse and inclusive workplaces (safety and security, harassment, reporting without fear of retaliation, deployment to certain duty stations, mental health, wellbeing, development, inclusive culture through training); (c) Principle of “nothing about us without us” (having a seat at the table).
2. Key areas of work for UN Globe included: (a) parental leave, especially with the policy being reviewed at SMC level; (b) LGBTQI+ strategy and gender recognition, where there was a group working on the expansion of gender markers in recruitment in the UN Secretariat; (c) seeking of time release for UN Globe coordinators.
3. UN Globe asked CCISUA to ensure entities have a UN Globe coordinator and/or support the call to establish one, as well as to ensure that when in negotiations with management the LGBTQI+ voice had a seat at the table.

B. CCISUA members raised the following points/queries with UN Globe:

1. CCISUA offered to UN Globe its continued commitment for collaboration and cooperation. Unions could help communicate locally UN Globe’s messages.
2. Time release was normally regulated by each of the organizations. In the UN Secretariat the GA established time release and was only granted to elected staff representatives. It was suggested for UN Globe coordinators to join staff unions so they could benefit from available time release. Given the myriad of advocate groups such as UN Globe, seeking time release for one or all of them was very difficult.
3. CCISUA continued to support the call on the ICSC to depart from binary definition of gender and go for recognition of different sexual orientations and genders in the workforce. This could include a wider concept and understanding of gender and gender discrimination beyond gender parity. Clarifications were requested on “gender markers” in recruitment processes.
4. A member inquired whether UN Globe also worked on cultural and social integration of staff members in new duty stations.
5. Other queries: Why did it seem there was an absence of female UN Globe representatives? Would the proposed gender markers in applications exclude reference to sexual orientation? Where did UN Globe stand vis-à-vis the SG’s gender parity strategy? How did UN Globe empower LGBTQI+ staff in difficult locations?

C. UN Globe provided further comments:

1. Concerning time release, UN Globe still waited for the outcome of discussions between OHRM and OLA.
2. It was important to work together and have a joint message.



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3. Social and cultural opportunities varied depending on the duty station. UN Globe coordinators helped create such opportunities.
4. UN Globe had a procedure to establish coordinators through a democratic process aligning with staff unions and UN Globe would be pleased to work with CCISUA on this.
5. On gender markers in recruitment, UN Globe pushed for the Common system to step outside binary genders. At a first level of recruitment, applicants should be allowed to mark other types of gender and it could be a way for organizations to show they are making efforts in that area, making sure diversity was accounted for. Comparing with national jurisdictions, there was a growing trend among countries to include a 3rd gender option.
6. It was true that there should be more diversity in UN Globe coordinators. If more than one person was nominated to be coordinator in one instance, they would be requested to be from different backgrounds and gender orientation. If there could be time release given to UN Globe coordinators there could be more diversity.
7. UN Globe advocated for “parental” (gender-neutral) leave and to level the playing field for same sex couples, single parents, adoptions, foster caring. It would be beneficial if the different entities could unify criteria on this. Despite allegations, UN Globe did not push for “anti-woman” parental leave, but for the right of parents to have full leave in line with international conventions and standards.
8. Empowering LGBTQI+ staff in difficult locations entailed making the work environment a place where they were respected, including gender diversity and sexual orientation. It was not enough to ask about values in an interview to ensure staff were sensitized on, and respectful of, LGBTQI+matters; a technical assessment should be required to prevent homophobes from entering the Organization.
9. On gender parity strategy, UN Globe was not part of consultations. An LGBTQI+ component, through UN Globe’s voice, should be part of consultations; arguments should not be presented on the matter without UN Globe being present. UN Globe had concerns about the gender parity strategy as unrepresentative of LGBTQI+ staff.
10. UN Globe often received requests for training. There was a program in the past but was discontinued due to lack of funding. Organizations should have qualified trainers on LGBTQI+-related issues.

The UN Globe representatives were thanked for their participation, and the continued support of CCISUA was reiterated.

IX. Internal discussion on ICSC matters

CCISUA members continued their earlier discussion on the General Service salary methodology:

1. The views of the CCISUA members were sought concerning the use of external data v. the conventional survey of local employers in the context of the ICSC taskforce looking into the GS salary methodology. The proposal to use external data was driven by the difficulty of procuring data otherwise, but said difficulty varied (or could be very minimal) depending on the duty station.
2. External data was not itself exempt of complications, such as its proprietary nature and the stark differences in the data of different vendors. A proposal in the taskforce was to have at least two vendors in case external data was procured. Conventional surveys also posed many challenges such as being able to reach a threshold of companies to survey, for whom there was no incentive to participate.
3. Caution was called for in agreeing on matters that would shape the way salaries were calculated for at least the following 10 years. The present methodology was not perfect but there it had recourse mechanisms. A query was raised as to the position of other federations on the matter.



4. More details concerning the use of external data were offered:
 - (a) Vendors could not be disclosed.
 - (b) Only a couple of main suppliers of data were found for the majority of duty stations.
 - (c) Local salary committees (LSC) would need to reach out to local vendors available locally. The ICSC could recommend vendors.
 - (d) Vendors had different methodologies and classifications with spiral-down or spiral-up risks.
 - (e) The taskforce believed the inclusion of external data did not violate the Fleming principle and would allow to find the desirable comparators.
 - (f) External data would only be used as replacement of interviews.
 5. A breakthrough in the taskforce was the agreement to abolish multiple GS salary scales in a single duty station, which benefited the argument of 'equal pay for equal work'. However, this would likely only come attached to the inclusion of external data. Notwithstanding this, if external data produced negative results, the previous scale would be maintained without a negative effect on actual staff salaries.
 6. The position of other federations was not yet clear as they were new to the taskforce.
 7. The following approach was proposed:
 - To continue using exclusively the conventional survey as a first stage; if not possible, to allow for the survey criteria to be relaxed; if still not possible, go for full implementation of external data. At any time, avoid blending the conventional survey with external data because they were based on completely different precepts. This, ensuring that LSCs retained discretionary authority on quality checks, with a minimum criteria and vendors.
 8. Given that no formal decision could be taken during the mid-term meeting, options would be circulated by email on the different possible approaches to take vis-à-vis external data and the abolition of the multiple salary scales. CCISUA members expressed their trust in their representative to the taskforce.
 9. As to what defined if the conventional survey worked, it would be the moment the minimum criteria is not met (e.g. number of companies, amount of data collected) – and that's when external data would come in.
 10. The larger debate on the suitability of the current GS system was mentioned. This included whether the federation should begin discussions on an entirely different approach to determine GS salaries such as cost-of-living, without necessarily abandoning the Fleming principle, and considering the difficulties to gather data (be it externally or via surveys). The possibility of harmonized salary scales would enter in such debate. The ICSC Chairman, in his earlier intervention, confirmed however that the current methodology continued to be applied.
 11. Concerns were raised about the discussion on national staff and GS salaries and conditions of service being typically underplayed by the system, and the need for CCISUA for continued follow-up. This tied up with the issue of ensuring appropriate career opportunities and the proper use of the GS category – a discussion to be had under the HLCM framework.
 12. The importance and need to have collective bargaining were highlighted.
- X. Meeting with Rosemarie McClean (Pension Admin), Pedro Guazo (SG's representative for investments) and Jan De Preter (Secretary of the Board) on governance and investment policy at the UNJSPF**

Ms. McClean, Mr. Guazo, and Mr. De Preter were welcomed in the room by the CCISUA membership. Each of them gave a presentation on recent developments in their respective areas (links below).



[Presentation of Ms. McClean on Pension Administration](#)

[Presentation of Mr. Guazo on the Fund's investments](#)

[Presentation of Mr. De Preter on the Board's governance](#)

CCISUA members raised the following points:

A. On pension administration:

1. The online system of the Pension Fund was noted to be non-user-friendly, with a website only in English and French. Some investing entities had mobile apps which kept beneficiaries updated on performance of investments, perhaps this could be looked into.
2. There seemed to be an overall perception that customer support was often unresponsive.
3. There should be greater partnership between Pension Fund officials and HR units to ensure organizations had the tools and knowledge to provide basic explanations to soon-to-be or new retirees.
4. Concerning the Geneva office, many beneficiaries still relied on it as a physical place to go to for service. Concerns were expressed that to prepare for possible future disruptions, said office should remain as a fully functioning service provider of the Fund.
5. A query was raised whether the Fund could set up a scheme to facilitate the provision of after-service health insurance (ASHI) to pensioners.
6. Following a reminder of the financial complications in many duty stations, a call was made to give the option to beneficiaries to be paid in USD or other hard currencies.
7. The Fund's liaison office in Bangkok had been very useful as an in-person point of contact for guidance and clarifications, and it was hoped for said office to be maintained.
8. The Fund may need to adapt swiftly to deal with cases of (partial) disability related to long Covid-19.
9. Question: was the Fund considering a way to let consultants participate?

B. On investments:

1. Clarifications were sought on return on investment, types of investments, whether investments had relation with the economy of staff (such as real estate), the possibility to give loans to staff, and the ethical scope of investments.
2. In light of current employment trends in the organizations, the question was raised whether the Fund expected at some point a reduction in participants and how would that affect its long-term growth.
3. Great caution was urged to the SG's representative on investments when it came to any diversification of investment portfolios to always ensure not to jeopardize the Fund.
4. As much as the Fund could continue to communicate through quarterly emails, it was noted as important for the Fund to make continuing efforts to show its solidity, including setting up meetings in duty stations.
5. Members inquired for more information about underperforming portfolios, and whether the management of such would be outsourced. Private companies were overall not trusted by participants, but they did trust their Pension Fund and keeping the management of investments in-house.
6. Questions: noting the current size of the Fund (90bn dollars), was there any target size or critical mass defined? Would it make sense to increase benefits or reduce contributions after a certain point, or change the way contributions were calculated?



C. Governance of the Board

1. The expected downsizing of the Board was welcome, in the hopes that it would become more responsive and its work more manageable.
2. Concerns were raised about the new ethics policy of the Board that seemed to prevent participant representatives communicate to their constituencies and reduce transparency of the Board's actions.

D. The representatives of the Pension Fund provided the following comments:

1. Granting loans against Fund assets was not possible.
2. Concerning the future workforce, the nature of contracts, and their effect on the Fund, the Fund had to work closely with organizations to understand their employment plans for the foreseeable future. The Fund would need to tap into what their plans were to make more accurate projections. For the time being, the Fund's plans would continue the same pattern.
3. The Fund was in the process of putting greater emphasis on client service as a key element of pension administration, to give people tools, simplify experiences, and increase understanding. This included striking the right balance between self-service and customer service options.
4. The UNJSPF confirmed the Geneva office was important for the overall success of the Fund.
5. To ensure service continuity in case of emergencies, with payroll being the riskiest process, there were measures in place to ensure it, including from offices away from New York.
6. ASHI deductions from benefits was a service the Fund provided and almost all organizations had already asked for it. Any organization interested could get in touch with the Fund.
7. On currencies of benefits, the Fund offered a two-track function where beneficiaries could choose to be paid in local currency or USD.
8. The Fund was not seeing a material number of deaths associated with Covid-19, albeit the collection of such information proved to be difficult. The Fund was not seeing disabilities for Covid-19 come forward but if any, they would be well vetted through medical services.
9. On rates of return, they could be seen for (a) year to date, (b) 1 year, and (c) 3 years. Returns from fixed-term and private equity investments were very good. The Fund was investing in real estate since 1971 and in private equity for 12 years with good track records.
10. Returns from fixed-income investments had underperformed against the benchmark for 15 years. Such investments were limited to up to 30% of our portfolio, however the size of the portfolio could increase nominally and in fact quadrupled in 10 years whilst the number of dedicated investment officers decreased by 2 (for a total of 8), therefore becoming and understaffed portfolio. The Fund asked the GA to remedy this by creating 4 additional posts.
11. The GA approved over the previous year a pilot plan for the use of derivatives with the view of decreasing risks, which mainly concerned interest rates; if they increased, then the value of every asset in the world went down. With the trend showing central banks going for increases in interest rates, protection (at least partial) would be required and was provided through derivatives.
12. Another risk where derivatives helped reduce risk was foreign exchange rates. About 20% of assets were invested in emerging markets, and 35% in different currencies. When developed countries would increase interest rates, investors in emerging markets would move their assets away from emerging and towards those developed countries seeking higher returns, which had an impact on the Fund's investments in emerging markets and their currencies.



13. Weekly updates on the behaviour of UNJSPF portfolios could be found online, as well as the countries where the Fund is investing.
14. Concerning the composition of the Board, it was important for the Board that all stakeholders remained well represented, including by participant representatives.
15. The established ethics policy was part of the report to the GA and could be shared with CCISUA.

The representatives of the UNJSPF were thanked for meeting with the federation. The importance of ensuring continuing communication was highlighted, as there were many issues that could be resolved by it.

XI. Meeting with Therese Fitzpatrick, Global Lead, UN System Workplace Mental Health and Well-being Strategy

Ms. Fitzpatrick was welcomed in the room by the CCISUA membership and gave a presentation on the scope of the UN System Workplace Mental Health and Well-being Strategy ([link below](#)).

[Presentation of Ms. Therese Fitzpatrick](#)

A. CCISUA members raised the following points:

1. Questions: Many staff did not know much about the strategy. What measures/rules had been put in place to respect and deal with mental health in a professional manner without discrimination or favoritism? Which factors contributed to bad mental health numbers? What were the comparators? How did the topic connect with the review of medical insurance plans?
2. The effectiveness of tele-counselling was questioned. Training to deal with mental health should also involve managers and should be mandatory. At the same time, managers also needed support as staff. More counselling capacity was required across duty stations.
3. The Covid-19 situation had exacerbated mental health issues which was also connected to addictions and unhealthy coping habits in the context of lockdowns. Entities should deliver on their duty to help staff when the underlying causes are related to the work.
4. The importance of the role of health committees was highlighted.
5. Problems with reimbursement of mental health medical expenses were noted, which had a negative impact on staff mental health and that of their families.
6. The LGBTQI+ factor played a role as stigma could prevent staff from seeking help or force them outside the system.

B. Ms. Fitzpatrick provided the following comments:

1. Management was working on an education-based approach, building capacity and raising skills among staff and managers.
2. Concerning symptoms of mental health, the recent survey on the matter helped to identify issues and positive indicators. A recurrent issue was unhealthy eating.
3. There were things the organizations could do to support staff, e.g. more communication using the right language; give them more control over their job (flexibility).
4. Sources of mental health problems included: lack of job control, difficult working hours, imposed bureaucracy, difficult conditions in the duty station.
5. Mental health could be perceived differently depending on cultural perspectives, so it was important to look at what system-wide actions as much as at the local level, understanding issues in different countries and so what was required concerning mental health services. Stigmas would also be addressed in that context.



6. The responsibility for mental health at the workplace fell broadly, e.g. medical services, HR and other departments, organizational policy, etc. and it remains important for everyone to be included in the conversations.
7. Communication and clear guidelines on minimum requirements for medical insurance coverage were key to avoid problematic situations.
8. Concerning return-to-office and the “new normal”, giving staff control over their jobs was essential for mental health; management was looking at options within established rules.

CCISUA members thanked Ms. Fitzpatrick for meeting with the federation.

XII. Internal discussions about the response to COVID and the future normal (return-to-office)

CCISUA members discussed the Covid-19 situation:

1. Many organizations were calling on staff to return to the offices (often gradually) despite the health risks and a recent worsening of rates of contagion. The organizations' duty of care was recalled. The use of flexible working arrangements was increasingly important, as well as more communication efforts by organizations and ensuring coherent health/vaccination policies within duty stations and across the Common System. Members noted that national/locally recruited staff were typically the most vulnerable as they would be ready to put themselves in unsafe situations at the office to protect their jobs.
2. The risks to jobs and working conditions (vis-à-vis Member States) were noted considering long absences from offices.
3. On the matter of whether proof of vaccination or Covid certification should be requested at the workplace, the argument was made that maintaining a safe work environment (a responsibility of the employer) should not be linked to being vaccinated or showing whatever proof. A counterargument was also raised perceiving that vaccination would have an inexorable effect on workplace safety and should be taken into account by the employers.
4. Working from home continuously was noted to be a strong source of distress for staff, and their right to disconnect should be upheld.
5. The CEB was refusing to accept adopting a joint policy on Covid-19 and this created chaos between and inside duty stations, making return-to-office more difficult. Inconsistent applications of flexible working arrangements were making matters worse. In some cases, staff were being subject to abusive controls and potential disciplinary actions. The recently broadened delegation of authority in part had led to this. Inconsistencies and irregularities should be flagged to the Chair of HLCM.
6. The UN was requesting staff only to report on their vaccination status to the medical service. In some entities however, cases had been observed where managers requested this information which some CCISUA members considered should remain confidential within the medical service. On mandatory vaccination, the SG had the right to request it and actually was already the case for certain exposed groups of staff.
7. The need for a unified approach by the federation was highlighted, noting each union represented all staff despite the different views among them. However, it was not for unions to take decisions for management who was due to address the issues.
8. CCISUA members agreed to raise with Martha Helena Lopez (Chair of HLCM), during her intervention of the following day, a request to urgently put in place a taskforce at the HLCM level led by management to unify practices among entities and put together harmonized guidelines on return to office.



XIII. Meeting with Shireen Dodson, UN Ombudsman, on the activities of the Ombuds Office and the Taskforce on Racism

Ms. Dodson was welcomed in the room by the CCISUA membership.

A. Ms. Dodson briefed the members on the following points:

1. The Ombudsman felt strongly for unions to be critical in advocating for staff and remained important partners of the Ombudsman in many areas.
2. Visibility campaigns, workshops, increasing understanding of conflict and reducing escalation, capacity building and competency skills have been key in addressing the underlying issue of incivility. On racism, the SG called for awareness and action to address it and the Ombudsman's team had been convening dialogues (1788 staff members and 22 entities had participated).
3. Mediation was an intrinsic part of the services provided as a way to address conflict. The Office was a neutral convener of dialogue and conversation, outside of any administrative or decision-making capacity, and mindful of the principles of neutrality and impartiality. The Ombudsman invited staff unions to prepare townhalls or information sessions with her Office to present to staff the tools and services available.
4. A network of all Ombuds services in different entities affiliated to the CEB was established since before the pandemic, which kept productively meeting on a quarterly basis.

B. CCISUA members raised the following points:

1. Questions: was the approach of each of the different Ombuds Offices independent, or did it respond to a Secretariat-wide approach? Could the regional Ombuds attend to needs of multiple duty stations? What was the role of Member States in these discussions?
2. When it came to racism people tended to be cautious and the role of the Ombuds was important for guidance and dialogue, reassuring staff they could speak freely. Did the Office collaborate with other units or organizations?
3. Concerns were raised and clarifications requested about the scope of mediation between very unequal parties in terms of power, particularly in cases of harassment.
4. A fact remained in many places that staff often refuse to approach the Ombuds Office due to lack of trust on the process and fear of retaliation. Could figures of successful mediations be showcased? How would the Office strategize its action plan in these difficult days when conflict and abuse of authority were on the rise? How could accountability be increased among managers and senior managers who created toxic situations?
5. Staff at large could benefit from more information sessions on the role and work of the Ombudsman. Such occasions were ideal to clarify their concerns.
6. Clarifications were sought concerning a petition that was circulated regarding a particular case in the Office of the Ombudsman where a staff member was dismissed.
7. Would it be helpful to make mediation mandatory before applying to the UNDT, as a sort of imposed informal conflict resolution?

C. Ms. Dodson provided further comments as follows:

1. The SG asked for the Office to take part in the initiative to tackle racism as conveners of dialogue. With a safe space to talk, staff could go about conversations and begin to break down barriers, one conversation at a time. Their issues could be harvested anonymously, and sentiments be considered in the taskforce as data for the action plan.



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2. Ombuds services existed across the UN Secretariat offering the same service in each office. Some details could be slightly tailored, and the Office could try to develop services as needed locally and share across Offices any new approach or technology.
3. It was the responsibility of the Administration to take care and address issues – and the Office of the Ombudsman was a neutral actor as the informal part of the administration of justice system. Part of its mandate was to help have a comfortable workplace to discuss issues. The Office also played a role on determining and uncovering systemic issues and provide that feedback to management so they could address it. Capacity building was also another pillar, identifying possible deficits in skills. An example of this was during the pandemic where many managers had no experience in managing teams remotely and some resorted to micromanagement.
4. The Ombuds Office's role was limited to be a convener of dialogue, not to advocate, which meant there was no collaboration with special interest groups such as UNPAD or UN Globe. The Office's role in the taskforce on racism was narrow, namely to convene dialogue and provide data.
5. Concerning unequal power between parties in a conflict, the reluctance to go for a structured mediation was understandable, but the idea remained to get people to the door for an initial conversation and show them the options, the Ombuds could use different ways to engage in those conversations. Reframing could be a tool to ensure each party understood the other's perspective. More structured mediations would take place when tangible results were sought. Sometimes cases were about simple misunderstandings/miscommunication.
6. In case of abusive managers, the Ombuds may have power of persuasion but not at all to take decisions and could point to things informally.
7. The success rate of cases where the Office mediated was around 84%. This included facilitated conversations. The Ombudsman made a note to put data/statistics on the Office's website.
8. On workplans, the Office learned lessons through the Covid-19 experience and it increased its virtual presence to be able to address some increases in cases. The negative effects of the situation were palpable and there were plenty of mental health issues out there. Ultimately, it was about trying to make people understand the other's perspective.
9. Culture was changed by conversation and raising awareness. The Office was moving forward in doing this, and culture would slowly change.
10. On certain taboo topics, during dialogues the Ombudsman did not facilitate or lead. Colonialism had come up in conversations as one of those issues.
11. The Office would continue promoting 'civility cafés', facilitating dialogue on racism, and training other people to facilitate the dialogues.
12. One of the misconceptions of staff when going to the Ombudsman is they want their problem solved, but that is not the role of the Office. Our role is to empower them to solve it by themselves, helping them look into options and understand the different views – but some get annoyed or frustrated by that and may think mediation is a waste of time because the Office does not do the work for them.
13. Concerning Member States, their positions had to be taken into consideration. There were lots of things the SG was able – or not – to do, but the Office would continue to do everything within its power and mandate, mainly continuing with the dialogues.
14. Participation in mediation was voluntary, including for managers, but the Office tries to encourage them to participate. It was often important that the right party – with the power to make decisions – sat at the mediation table. Otherwise, staff could feel frustrated or abandoned if concrete outcomes failed to be implemented. The Ombuds therefore tried to make adjustments in its internal processes to avoid those kinds of situations and help increase trust.



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15. There were always more than two sides to any story and it was important to gather them, as well as the facts straight.
16. Concerning the case in the Office of the Ombudsman referred to by a petition that was circulated, the Ombudsman refuted any allegations of racism, especially being an African American woman, and would not allow any discrimination in the Office. There were attacks meant to be personal and hurtful without knowledge of the facts. The case was ruled by the UNDT and the judgment was public.

CCISUA members thanked Ms. Dodson for meeting with the federation.

XIV. Report by the CCISUA Bureau

The members were briefed on the meeting of the leadership of the three federations (CCISUA, FICSA, UNISERV) with the SG earlier that day. Other federations mentioned there the need to have a unified staffing table without the G and P distinction, but that was noted to be a prerogative of the GA. The issue of mental health was raised, particularly joining efforts among agencies. Also, the need for social dialogue was put forth – CCISUA would be preparing a paper to bring up social dialogue to the table (the SG seemed particularly receptive of this idea). The issue of Afghanistan was discussed – the SG said it was a miracle it was not a disaster of greater proportions. CCISUA requested for management to put in place a working group to look at what happened and lessons learned.

CCISUA leadership recalled that all members had been receiving ongoing communications and briefings on all the issues at hand, as well as Bureau minutes. The Bureau continued to hold monthly meetings to the extent possible. CCISUA had been represented at different fora including HLCM, ICSC working groups and sessions. A CCISUA newsletter was being prepared and would be circulated on a regular basis to brief members and their constituencies on the various issues.

XV. Discussion on the finances of the federation

Members recalled that an update on contributions had been recently shared.

Concerning the current budget, one of related discussions had been about the recruitment of an assistant for CCISUA. The Bureau, at the beginning of its current tenure, decided to hold off on any recruitment whilst it evaluated the real needs. So far, the Bureau had been able to manage the workload.

Caution was raised on the current absence of an administrative assistant in CCISUA, highlighting its importance and the need to avoid any possible malfunctioning and to ensure timely processing of administrative matters. The Bureau would be monitoring the issue and discuss it with the membership at the next CCISUA GA. All members agreed that if at any point an assistant should be engaged, a proper contract and salary would be offered. The Bureau would welcome at any time any feedback from the membership if ever any shortcoming was noticed.

The situation was raised where staff unions may be prevented from nominating candidates to leadership positions in the federation due to the unavailability of funds to travel. It was clarified that the federation covered travel costs of Bureau members who attended missions representing CCISUA, and that unions covered any travel costs of their staff representatives to the CCISUA GA and mid-term meeting. Emphasis was made on a spirit of solidarity among the members. The matter would be open for discussion during the next CCISUA GA.

On travel, the Bureau was trying as much as possible for the federation to be represented by two persons at official meetings (costs of which were covered by CCISUA).

A member followed up on the previous year budget.



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XVI. Social event

CCISUA members met at Docks Oyster Bar & Seafood (633 Third Avenue, New York) for a social gathering.



CCISUA mid-term meeting discussions of 18 November 2021

XVII. Meeting with ASG Martha Helena Lopez on HLCM-HR Network issues

A. ASG Lopez briefed the members on the following points:

1. The ASG provided an overview of 'Future of Work' and the three streams on which it was based: contractual arrangements, new ways of working, and technology. She provided information on the digital ID, flexible working arrangements, and possible new contractual arrangements.
2. Regarding Covid-19, ASG Lopez highlighted that guidelines were updated on an ongoing basis but that they remained general in nature to be able cover all Secretariat duty stations. Guidelines included the mandatory reporting of staff vaccination status, and mandatory vaccination of certain categories of staff.
3. On recruitment and workforce planning, the ASG's office was looking at how to have a more coordinated approach among all UN Common System regarding rosters, as well as procedures at the local level with respect to national staff.

B. CCISUA members raised the following issues:

1. Various questions and concerns were raised, including the need for management to come out with more detailed guidelines to address inconsistencies in approaches between the Secretariat and entities regarding Covid measures.
2. With respect to digital ID and flexible working arrangements, staff unions raised the issue of protection of data and the right of staff to disconnect.
3. The issue of career stagnation was raised, and whether any thought had been given to increasing steps within grades.
4. Members inquired with the ASG on the Organization's response during the Afghanistan crisis, particularly concerning the (lack of) evacuations of national staff.

C. ASG provided further comments as follows:

1. ASG Lopez raised the difficulty of having a more detailed unified approach than the current general guidelines on Covid-19, considering the many differences between duty stations. Safety of staff remained paramount with respect to return to offices.
2. Data protection is an important part of the project. The need and right of staff to shut off from work was acknowledged, but depending on their functions certain staff could be called upon outside of the normal working hours to respond to or address matters depending on the exigencies of their service.
3. The ICSC looked at steps within grades a few years before. Steps within certain grades were reduced and increased in others, so that all grades would have the same number of steps. It would be unlikely for the matter to be reopened at the present time.
4. On Afghanistan, the security manual provided for evacuation of national staff only in cases where working for the UN puts the staff member at risk. Such situation was verified for each individual case.



XVIII. Meeting with Ms. Phyllis Hwang (UN) and Mr. Georges Politakis (ILO) on the work of the working group on the review of the jurisdictional setup of the common system

Ms. Hwang was welcomed in the room by the CCISUA membership, as well as Mr. Politakis who attended virtually, who were both Co-Chairs of the working group.

A. The Co-Chairs briefed the CCISUA members on the following points:

1. The GA requested in 2019 an initial review of the jurisdictional set up of the UN Common System, which was provided via the SG's report [A/75/690](#). A broad range of possibilities were presented and the GA was asked for guidance, which culminated in the GA resolution [A/RES/75/245](#) where the SG was requested to further report on detailed proposals and practical options at the 2022 session.
2. UN legal counsel launched a working group with the two legal advisors' networks (of the specialized agencies and the funds and programmes) that were tasked to develop the proposals requested by the GA. Terms of reference of the working group were shared to the federations and an initial briefing was provided in September. The working group was co-chaired by the UN Secretariat and the ILO and included representatives from IAEA, WHO, UNHCR and UNDP. Since July 2021 the working group had met ten times and draft proposals were anticipated soon for circulation and discussion.
3. Concerning the timeframe, the GA requested the report by its 77th session (Fall 2022), which meant the report had to be finalized by July 2022 (still 8 months left). Proposals developed by the working group would be submitted to the legal advisors' networks in December for preliminary comments by the end of January, however the organizations would not yet express a position at that point. By early February the draft would go out to staff federations, the ICSC, and the tribunals for comments during a 4-week period. The working group will be able to start carrying out briefings on the draft the moment the drafts were circulated. The timeframe was noted to be on schedule.
4. Preliminarily, it was mentioned that the draft pointed towards recommending the creation of a joint chamber of the ILOAT and UNAT that would discuss cases related to ICSC decisions.

B. CCISUA members raised the following points:

1. A perception was noted whereby the GA seemed to be imposing its will on the whole of the Common System, and that the entire exercise to review the jurisdictional set up, with had far-reaching repercussions, may have been an overreaction to one event in one duty station (the 2016 post adjustment multiplier in Geneva that was legally contested), which was being resolved through the relevant ICSC methodology. SG reports showed the two jurisdictions had coexisted well so far.
2. Staff unions of agencies under the ILOAT would be opposed to being submitted to the UN Tribunals' jurisdiction, especially noting that the UNAT's independence was questioned, being perceived as non-independent.
3. More information was requested on the proposed "joint chamber" of the tribunals, notably on its scope, power, procedures, and its application of case law. Concerns were raised as to whether such chamber would promote better judgments for staff.
4. A 4-week period to provide comments was deemed precarious.
5. Concerning the lack of standing for unions to bring actions to tribunals and class actions, the question was raised whether this could be studied and made possible.



C. The Co-Chairs provided the following comments:

1. The proposals of the working group would be outlined in a simple manner and be easy to understand. A good part of the document would provide historical and institutional background, on which substantive comments will not really be required. The part of the document detailing the joint chamber proposal would be about 10 pages long, with other proposals related to the ICSC of about 1 page. A 4-week period should be sufficient time for comments.
2. Perceptions about the tribunals were acknowledged, but UN management did not consider the UNAT to be partial to them. The number of “wins and loses” at the tribunals were not an indication of partiality, often because judgments would not touch upon the substantive, or cases were found inadmissible due to procedural reasons. In line with case law, their independence should not be questioned.
3. Concerning the proposal of a joint chamber, for it to be successful there had to be an understanding of why the tribunals should not decide separately on ICSC issues, which was mainly because of the impact on the Common System as a whole, hence why greater coordination and coherence between tribunals was needed. Staff unions were urged to keep an open mind on this.
4. Details on how the joint chamber would work would be released with the draft.
5. The scope of the joint chamber was about promoting coherence between the two tribunals on their review of ICSC matters, no other areas besides adjudication of ICSC matters were being considered.
6. About perception, the Common System in Geneva was broken because of the situation of two salary scales. It was no secret that specialized agencies in Geneva had misgivings with the inaction of the ICSC to resolve the issue, but this exercise mandated by the GA did not intend to solve that situation, rather to help avoiding in the future having two conflicting judgments on an ICSC-related Common System matter by the two tribunals.
7. It was not new for the GA to react to an ILOAT judgment, and it had commissioned similar reviews in the past. This should not be characterized as an overreaction; the GA determined the UN Common System, so it acted appropriately. In fact, the GA’s reaction came before the UNAT judgment confirming the ICSC’s decision-making power on post-adjustment was issued.

CCISUA members thanked Ms. Hwang and Mr. Politakis for their participation.

XIX. Discussion on the management of the pandemic in the field and HQ

CCISUA members raised the question of the management of the pandemic by the organizations. A lack of clear indication of the types of issues being faced, as well as driving principles, was noted. Organizations, as well departments within organizations and across duty stations, often had very different approaches and risk mitigating measures. The pandemic had shown that at least in that regard, the Common System was not operating as “ONE UN”.

The UN and other organizations were known to be requesting staff to declare their Covid-19 vaccination status to medical services, however information received pointed to staff also being requested directly by managers to provide this information, which was in principle not correct being (arguably) considered confidential medical information, or a violation of privacy. A question remained whether at some point unvaccinated staff could be considered unfit for duty.

It was argued that in the UN, to request the vaccination status of a staff member was not confidential, but rather the underlying medical causes of not being vaccinated were confidential. A different argument was made that it was not for the employer to request staff their vaccination status, but rather to simply ensure a safe work environment regardless of such status. In that sense, to ensure a safe workplace, managers should consider everyone as unvaccinated and establish minimum standards accordingly. Concerns were raised that employers should not transfer their duty of care



onto staff members. Establishing global standards to be applied in the whole Common System would be most beneficial.

The UN seemed to want to align itself with regulations of host countries to the greatest extent possible, and many countries were already moving towards (semi) mandatory vaccination. Caution was urged concerning upcoming actions of the organizations, not discarding that contractual vaccination mandates could be introduced in new job openings.

On application of vaccines, it was already general policy for staff to take certain vaccines to be able to travel on official mission. An argument could therefore be made to extend such policy to the workplace with regards to Covid-19. A point was made that the UN SG had the power to mandate vaccination on staff and that in fact it was already the case for staff performing certain functions where they were more at risk. Many staff were known to be worried of having to go back to offices and sit next to unvaccinated colleagues. At the same time, many staff were concerned of the violation of their personal freedoms.

The membership also discussed about the (mandatory) application of Covid certificates/passes at premises. The views of staff on the matter were divergent, as was such application between duty stations. Surveys had been carried out in several places showing many staff were in favour of implementing at least some sort of Covid-related control.

It was the common agreement among the members that vaccination information should be restricted to medical service, not given to managers.

XX. Meeting with Dr. Michael Rowell on the management of the pandemic in the field and HQ

CCISUA members welcomed Dr. Rowell in the room.

A. Dr. Rowell briefed the members on the following items:

1. Vaccination was made mandatory in UHQ-NY, following a requirement of the GA, for some groups of staff who were particularly at risk (mostly those supporting GA activities) depending on their tasks, exposure, and the possibility of alternative protective measures. Most staff did not need to be mandatorily vaccinated. Much care was placed on selecting who required to be vaccinated through an individual risk assessment. If in doubt, the obligation fell on the manager to justify why a staff needed to be vaccinated. The key in deciding on the mandatory character of vaccination was whether not doing it would entail an undue burden on the Organization.
2. The mandate to vaccinate was not part of delegated authority; it remained exclusively with the SG.
3. UNHQ-NY management required all staff to report their vaccination status through EarthMed (a portal which most of the 10,000 UN staff in New York had access to). That reporting allowed the medical service to advise the Executive Office.
4. Vaccination status was not a medically confidential issue which meant staff could be asked to declare this to the medical service, but the information itself reported in EarthMed was confidential. 88% of staff in New York reported their status (possibly more as lists get updated); the names of those who did not report were provided to management. In factual terms, vaccination reporting was only mandatory in New York, because other duty stations – despite asking staff to declare it – had not set any deadline or consequence in case of no declaration.
5. Vaccination rate among staff in New York was around 95%. This information was key in determining how the health risk in the workplace was to be managed. Mandatory reporting of the vaccination status was positive and should be extended, because it helped manage the risk.



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6. Any vaccination status or related data should only be declared to the medical service, where the information provided was protected and stayed confidential. The declaration carried consent for the medical service to have the data, not to share it. There could be exceptions in some duty stations without presence or access to medical services where the information would probably have to be reported to HR.
7. It was reasonable for managers to ask their staff to inform about their Covid-19 vaccination status because they had a duty of care, where measures on workplace risks could be determined depending on that information. Direct managers would have to know about their staff vaccination status if the staff were to be employed in a place where Covid-19 was a risk.
8. Managers, however, could not ask the medical service whether someone was vaccinated or not, because the service did not have the right to share the confidential information in the medical record; managers had to ask their staff directly.
9. Many differences between duty stations, including cultural differences, made it difficult for the UN to implement consistent measures all over the Secretariat.
10. Where staff were mandated to be vaccinated, exceptions had not yet been given and would normally not be given; if they were, it would be mainly if the staff member suffered anaphylactic reactions to vaccines. Exceptions were not being considered on any religious or personal beliefs grounds.
11. Concerning workplace accommodations, the medical service was asked to advise on some 240 requests by staff to continue working from home, of which only 7 or 8 were supported. Feeling uncomfortable to come to the office was not reason enough to grant such requests. Concerns about going to the office should be related to health reasons and/or the level of safety in the workplace. If management could provide for a safe workplace, the expectation was for staff to come to the office. Certain cases could be related to sick leave, not flexible working arrangements. However, the opinion of the medical service remained to be only advice, where managers could still allow for such requests if they deemed appropriate.

B. CCISUA members raised the following points:

1. Questions: What were the circumstances of the few requests to work from home which the medical service supported? UN medical services in Vienna were joint to those of the IAEA, how was guidance from UNHQ-NY being taken? What was the criteria to determine an undue burden on the Organization in case of non-vaccination? Was there an established “safe” percentage of vaccinated staff? Were there discussions on the future of mask-wearing mandates? How was risk managed in open office spaces?
2. The SG ordered mandatory vaccination on an individual basis. This was noted to be an administrative decision. Would it be appealable? Had there been any related cases at the UNDT?
3. Concerns were raised that the medical service was interfering in conditions and place of work.
4. An argument was made – and reiterated – that managers were responsible for ensuring a safe workplace without any relation to the vaccination status of staff, therefore they did not have the right to ask staff if they were vaccinated. Such status was related to confidential medical information, and any mechanism to gather such information should be exclusively kept confidential by the medical service. It was difficult to see a reasoning behind managers having the right to ask this from their staff.

C. Dr. Rowell provided the following comments:

1. Concerning the right of managers, they had the right to ask for the vaccination status of their staff in relation to the safety of their workplace. Managers could need to reshape the way of working depending on that. They could also ask for verification of such status. At the same



it was for each organization to set its own approach. The responsibility to keep a safe workplace fell through every manager and asking staff for their vaccination status was consistent with ISO and a workplace set up.

2. Whilst managers had the right to ask their staff about their vaccination status, the staff did not have the obligation to answer their managers on that – for which there would not be any disciplinary action. However, if the staff refused to give that information to the manager, the latter would have to treat the person as unvaccinated in the context of office risk management.
3. A manager could not ask the medical service for a staff member's vaccination status if that individual had not given the right to the medical service to share it in the first place; managers would have to ask the individual.
4. Concerning delegates, management considered them all as if unvaccinated and took measures accordingly.
5. Medical services in Vienna did not report to New York.
6. Defining what an undue burden to the Organization was implied a managerial decision where the medical service was not involved. Such decision would be determined by operational, financial, logistical, reputational reasons. The medical service was watchful of compliance with rights of persons with disabilities and could make suggestions accordingly for the granting (or not) of workplace accommodations such as full teleworking. The main questions asked by the medical service to determine such suggestions were: “did they have the condition they said they had? (e.g. medical report); “did the condition have the impact on them that they said it had?” (evaluation); “would the requested special accommodation deal with the issue?” (suitability of the accommodation). The medical service took an evidenced-based, justifiable approach.
7. A vaccination rate that was safe depended on the context and the circumstances of the duty station; a risk assessment was necessary and could include the number of Covid-19 cases and hospitalizations.
8. Wearing masks was mandated at UNHQ-NY in all public spaces, but not at the desk. Concerning why, if a vast majority of staff were vaccinated, did there have to be a mask mandate, it was because proof of vaccination was not implied, but verified. The only way to remove the mask mandate in a specific context or meeting would be for the Chair to be able to confirm that everyone's vaccination status had been confirmed through verification.
9. Risk assessment in flexible open spaces was complex, but it was not yet an issue as teleworking remained in place to a great extent. Nonetheless, the reality was that if people were vaccinated, with good ventilation, distancing, mask use, limiting physical contact – the risk remained low in open office spaces.

CCISUA members thanked Dr. Rowell for his participation.

XXI. Internal discussion on issues of concern for individual staff unions

Concerns of national staff were raised relating to conditions of service and career prospects. A paper would be prepared on this by interested CCISUA members and would count with the support of the federation.

XXII. Meeting with Bill Miller, Director of Regional Operations (DSS) on security and safety of staff in general, particularly following events in Afghanistan

CCISUA members welcomed Mr. Miller in the room.



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A. *Mr. Miller briefed the members on the following points:*

1. DSS had been seized with different issues over recent months as there remained several 'hotspots' where staff members were assigned in difficult environments.
2. On Afghanistan, the UN was now relying on the Taliban government for staff safety and security, who was de facto carrying out such responsibilities as any other Member State would do. The situation remained complicated. Security-wise, armed clashes continued but under different dynamics. The UN was working to enable programmes to overcome challenges and be able to operate.
3. Currently 16 agencies were operational in Afghanistan, with some 400 international staff and 2800 national staff, plus over 12000 dependents. 593 national personnel and over 1200 dependents had been evacuated. Only very select few national staff were identified for evacuation at the time of the crisis.
4. DSS also continued to follow-up on events in Ethiopia, noting some national staff had been arrested by the government and there were concerns over politicization of security risk management.

B. *CCISUA members raised the following points:*

1. Questions: How did the UN determine and/or prioritize national staff eligible for evacuation? How could staff unions help DSS to avoid politicization of security risk management?
2. Some national staff and their dependents did not have identification documents during the Afghanistan crisis and had difficulties with relocations or evacuations. The organizations should ensure staff and their dependents were aware of the need to be in possession of such documents.
3. The UN was overwhelmed through the Afghanistan crisis and especially national staff could not be protected. What were the lessons learned from Afghanistan and how could they be useful in other complex situations such as Ethiopia's? Several embassies were already pulling their staff out of that country.
4. The federation remained concerned about the 'return-to-country' of the previously evacuated. How was that being managed?
5. Special attention was called for on the situation in Beirut. How could lessons learned be applied there?
6. Concerning the classification of duty stations, DSS played an important role. Knowing it was a nuanced process, how could the Department advise better to have more truthful classifications?

C. *Mr. Miller provided the following comments:*

1. A key lesson from the Afghanistan events was "knowing who is where". The UN had difficulty finding out who was in or out of the country at certain moments. Lists could not be shared to protect the safety of those involved. Constant communication was essential in crisis management, as well as accountability, training, and communication. A lack of unified action slowed down the response.
2. Security drills were very important to help staff be ready in case of emergencies. Staff unions should advocate for this.
3. The matter of identification documents of national staff should be raised to and addressed by HR.
4. On the criteria used to decide on evacuations, DSS looked at what threats had been received. In most instances the UN officially sanctioned an evacuation where there was proof and high credibility of the threat – making sure to separate those with a desire to



migrate from those under a true security risk. Ultimately, each case was handled individually, and the SG always signed off on individual cases of evacuation. We worked with first line managers to identify staff who could be at risk. Nonetheless, the majority of those who left did so before by themselves. Staff unions should forward any possible case they receive or sensible information concerning security to DSS.

5. Currently there were UN staff in Afghanistan delivering programmes and so far the Taliban were helping the UN in that delivery (despite the political reasons they could have). This allowed the UN to continue its operations.
6. The Ethiopia situation posed its own (host-country-imposed) difficulties, which DSS continued to monitor. The profile of the UN was different from that of diplomatic entities and whilst a comparison could be legitimate, the UN would not need to take the same actions in the context of the country situation.
7. The UN had good relations with almost all Member States where it worked, many of whom provide information on the risks for the UN.
8. Security practices had been put into place in Lebanon and other places along with mitigating measures to continue delivering mandates within the overall security context.
9. DSS recognized the challenges in classification of duty stations, and the difference between hardship and danger. There were places where the UN operated that were relatively safe and secure but were still under a difficult context. Mitigating measures were key to improve security for staff in such places, but sometimes it was for staff to make decisions – depending on the personal circumstances – about keeping family away if needed, regardless of the classification of the duty station.
10. Concerning the return to Afghanistan of evacuees, they could return if they had no real personal security issue and would not be concerned over the increased scrutiny upon their return. The USG visited Afghanistan and made clear to the Taliban government they had to continue ensuring conditions for all UN staff, without distinction of national or international. DSS would give staff opportunities to understand how best to react and report in case of difficulty.

CCISUA members thanked Mr. Miller for his participation.

XXIII. Discussion on the federation's priorities and way forward

The review of the CCISUA statutes was noted to be underway. Both substantive and language simplification changes would be looked at. Staff unions were encouraged to share any ideas with the colleagues undertaking the review.

Points on which to continue follow-up included: return to office, 'Future of Work', racism, jurisdictional review, issue of national officers and locally recruited staff, psych-social support and training, mutual recognition of policies among agencies. Achieving true social dialogue and becoming a true social partner vis-à-vis the administration remained as a cross-cutting priority.

XXIV. Date and Place of the next CCISUA GA

The floor was open for members to express interest in hosting the 2022 CCISUA GA, to be tentatively held between May and June. The staff representative from the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council recalled that CCISUA would be celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2022, and since the federation was constituted in Geneva at the time, it would be historically auspicious and an honour for Geneva to host it again on such memorable occasion (to be confirmed by the staff union's Council in Geneva). No other staff union expressed interest. The CCISUA Bureau would discuss further on the location and dates of the next CCISUA GA. Members were still invited to make any proposals in that regard in the coming weeks.



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XXV. Final remarks

The President thanked all the CCISUA members for the high quality of the discussions and noted that the in-person meeting had provided the chance to strengthen solidarity and understanding among the unions.

Very special and warm thanks were expressed by all the membership to the UNICEF Global Staff Association who hosted the mid-term meeting at UNICEF House in New York.