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Report of the Secretary-General

Part III: Administrative and statutory matters

(f) Report of the Staff Association

I. Introduction

1. The main objectives of the UNWTO Staff Association¹ are to protect and defend the individual and collective rights of its members, as well as to submit proposals to the UNWTO governing bodies and the Secretary-General on policies relative to staff and their welfare.
2. This report summarizes the main issues addressed by the Staff Association in the period since its last report to the Executive Council in September 2015 (CE/101/3) and the follow-up given to decision 8(CI).

II. Progress and priorities

3. The UNWTO staff members represented by the Staff Association are aware of the responsibility that comes with working for the United Nations system in general and for the UNWTO in particular. Being able to contribute with our work in order to put into practice the ideals of the United Nations, to participate in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and to help tourists around the world to realize that they too, as individuals, can contribute to a better world makes our daily work highly meaningful.
4. In the decisions that the Executive Council adopted in 2015, the following issues, among others, were addressed: (a) the development of a more diversified training programme for staff; (b) the formulation of a comprehensive policy on flexible working arrangements (with a view to improving work-life balance); (c) the issue of gender equality and the empowerment of women; (d) the implementation of the professional growth plan; and (e) an examination of the growing number of non-staff performing core

¹The UNWTO Staff Association was established in 1977 and has been a member of the Federation of International Civil Service Associations (FICSA) since 1989. Currently, it represents about 80% of the staff.



functions.

5. In the area of training, the Staff Association has continued to collaborate with the Human Resources Programme. It has provided the Human Resources Programme with the catalogue of courses offered by FICSA and has helped to organize a course on systems for assessing professional performance (together With the Human Resources Programme) as well as a presentation on the measurement of environmental sustainability (together with the Statistics and Tourism Satellite Account Programme). In addition, the demands of the Staff Association have been taken into account in the preparation by the Human Resources Programme of a new leave regime, which includes staff development leave of up to ten days a year (with or without pay) to attend training activities related to the work of the officials. However, still lacking are an in-depth study of the training needs, a plan to address them and the allocation of the corresponding budget.

6. In the area of work-life balance (which in 2014 had been identified by the Joint Inspection Unit as one of the areas in which UNWTO needed to improve), we are pleased to report that advances in this regard—starting in 2011 with the extension of paternity leave, and the subsequent inclusion of adoption leave—have continued this year with the adoption of a new “family leave” that allows officials to absent themselves from work in situations where they are obliged to care for a family member (due to illness or non-availability of the educational centre, child care centre or care provider) and charge those days against sick leave without medical certificate. In addition, the lunch break has been made more flexible and can now be reduced to half an hour, which makes it possible to leave earlier. Furthermore, human resources policy now allows for the possibility of working remotely in special circumstances. We believe that the sum of these measures will lead to a fuller life, greater parity between men and women and better morale among the officials, who can attend to their various obligations and concentrate on each at the appropriate moments.

7. With regard to gender equality, the situation at the UNWTO has been improving over the years. Currently, more than half of the posts in the Professional category are held by women and two of the five Regional Programmes are led by women. However, the Senior Management Team remains almost exclusively male. With the arrival of the new management team, it is possible that the situation may change and, for the Staff Association, it would be a good sign to see a team with greater parity and, therefore, more representative of the social reality, always with the understanding that the highest standards of competition, performance and integrity must be maintained. A more balanced management team would not only be a better reflection of society, but could also encourage a more balanced and inclusive way of managing and exercising authority.

8. In relation to professional growth, the Association appreciates the efforts made to improve the clarity of procedures. In addition, it has received with interest and satisfaction the proposal for a new staff assessment system. It is hoped that the new system, which is considered as a development tool, will also allow greater comparability between the evaluation reports prepared by different programmes and a clearer distribution of the functions of each official, which will result in greater objectivity in appointment and promotion or reclassification processes, and provide a more solid basis for decisions on transfers or restructurings. In this regard, the Staff Association has witnessed, during the last eight years, numerous changes in the organigramme of the UNWTO; and it is likely that further changes will occur in the future when a new Secretary-General is appointed. While aware of the flexibility required by these times of constant change and evolution, the Association is concerned that such processes of transformation, if carried out without sufficient consultation with the staff concerned, may lead to the downgrading of important functions or not fully harnessing the Organization’s human capital. The UNWTO’s staff is composed of professionals from more than 40 different countries--committed, well-prepared professionals with long experience and extraordinary capacity for work--and there is no reason

why they should be mere passive subjects, when they can become a vector for any change that must be undertaken.

9. Another issue of concern already mentioned in the previous report of 2015 is the increasing and expanded recruitment of non-staff workers, who are now known as “service contract holders”, whose number has grown and who now represent more than 40% of the total workforce of the UNWTO. Although service contracts should serve to cover fixed-term projects or activities, contracts of this kind are sometimes used to cover functions of a permanent.

10. It should nevertheless be noted that in the reference period of this report, the contracting procedures and the conditions of work of these service contract holders have been systematized. It should also be noted that their conditions of work have improved significantly and these workers now have similar rights to those of staff members in terms of maternity leave, paternity leave, etc., in addition to receiving a contribution to the pension plan of their choice. There are many reasons to congratulate the Management very sincerely for this, as it has shown highly commendable generosity and vision. However, the issue that remains unresolved is the distinction between specific time-bound projects for which it is reasonable to resort to service contracts, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the core functions of the Organization for which officials should be recruited. In this context, the coexistence of workers with similar functions, but very different conditions of employment, should be avoided, not only in terms of wages but above all in terms of the prospects of permanence and the stability necessary for developing a life plan.

11. On another front, construction work has been carried out over the past year at the Organization’s headquarters, which has caused considerable inconvenience in the workplace, and the Association would like to emphasize that, for future construction and renovation work, greater coordination with the affected personnel would be advisable in order to minimize risks to health and inconveniences.

12. The Staff Association wishes to recall the excellent relations maintained with the current Secretary-General during his two terms of office, as well as with the Administration and Human Resources programmes, and informs the Council that, at the date of this report, it is preparing a memorandum of understanding on cooperation between Management and the Staff Association. We should not forget that the Organization’s ability to provide quality services to its Members depends on the competence of its staff. For this reason, the Association will do everything in its power to establish a relationship with the new Management that is equally fruitful as that maintained with the current Management and will strive to collaborate in all processes that arise, ensuring that the transition occurs smoothly, so that the Organization can continue to carry out its important work and fulfil the mandate given by its Members with the utmost rigour and enthusiasm.

III. Actions to be taken by the Executive Council

13. The Executive Council is invited:

- (a) To congratulate the Secretary-General, the Administration and the Human Resources programmes and the UNWTO Staff Association on the progress achieved in the area of work-life balance;
- (b) To encourage the establishment of a management team in which there is a more balanced representation of men and women;
- (c) To support the exchange of information, dialogue and consultations with staff and their

Association in order to foster a smooth transition that will enable the Organization to continue to carry out its important work and to fulfil with the utmost rigour and enthusiasm the mandate given by its Members;

(d) To recommend that the Secretary-General draw a clearer distinction between time-bound projects and the core tasks of the Organization; and

(e) To request the Secretary-General to undertake a concrete and viable plan to improve the training and skills development of the staff.