

Executive Council

Ninetieth session
Mombasa, Kenya, 19-21 June 2011
Provisional agenda item 5(g)

CE/90/5(g)
Madrid, April 2011
Original: English

Administrative, financial and statutory matters

(g) Report of the Staff Association

1. Two years ago in Mali—six years after the World Tourism Organization became a UN Specialized Agency—the UNWTO Staff Association¹ was invited for the first time to submit a report to the Executive Council. The Secretariat was already facing new challenges. One of those was the task of completing the harmonization of its rules and procedures to align them with those of the United Nations Common System, as prescribed by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC).
2. With an interim Management and a new Administration at the helm of the Secretariat, a process of reform had been initiated. Transition from a department-based organizational structure to a programme-based one was announced. A renewed ethical approach to international public service was perceived. Expectations were raised high.
3. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) had just issued its *Review of Management and Administration in the World Tourism Organization*. In its report to the eighty-fifth session of the Council, the Association expressed its support and called for the implementation of JIU recommendations related to human resources management.
4. Today, under a new Management Team, the Staff Association has come again to share with the distinguished members of the Council some ideas and a few concerns. This chance to communicate directly with the Council members is much appreciated.
5. Some JIU recommendations have been implemented. Others are still pending, such as:
 - (a) the establishment of an ethics instrument to address ethical issues,
 - (b) the systematic description and classification of all existing posts, and
 - (c) the introduction of an improved system for the assessment of staff performance.
6. The staff is well aware of the pressure of a long-lasting global economic crisis and the declared intention of Member States—throughout the UN System—not to commit additional funds. Zero nominal growth policies have their implications. Human resources are being stretched to the limit. Staff has been doing more and more with less and less. Disinvestment in human resources carries the implicit risk of undermining efforts at reform, thus jeopardizing the quality of services provided to members.

¹ The UNWTO Staff Association was established in 1977. It represents about 80% of the staff. It is a member of the International Federation of International Civil Servants' Association (FICSA) since 1989.

7. However, despite the strain on resources, good and effective interaction between staff and Management has been critical in the process of reform and restructuring. It has been crucial for achieving important savings while delivering high-performance services. Joint working groups were established to address issues such as:

- (a) **Post definition within the new organizational structure:** an issue of major concern, since it relates to problems of job description and reclassification, especially when reporting lines have been blurred or are confusing;
- (b) **Training:** resources and opportunities should be offered for career growth and development;
- (c) **Greening:** to do as we preach and minimize our impact on the environment;
- (d) **Evaluation reports:** for better, timely assessment of staff performance;
- (e) **Flexitime:** to offer a chance to achieve work-life balance;
- (f) **Compensation for overtime:** to ensure compliance with Staff Rules.

8. The Staff Association has been trying to address these questions with the Administration, which has its priorities and limited resources. Staff representatives also have their limitations in terms of time² and expertise. Delay in the progress of the Working Groups has become a source of frustration to many staff members. In addition, these are not the only issues that need to be addressed. The Organization is lagging behind on other tracks, such as:

- (a) **Gender balance:** the aim is not even the 50/50 goal recommended by the ICSC in 1995; there are still no women at the senior management level;
- (b) **External collaborators:** reliance on non-staff employees should be better regulated to avoid abuse and negative implications on staff and labour relations; core functions should not be outsourced;
- (c) **Updating Staff Rules and Regulations:** to incorporate entitlements such as mobility, paternity leave and recognition of domestic partnerships for dependency purposes.

9. The Staff Association has also been trying with the Administration to address problems at a headquarters building that is becoming obsolete. Recent assessment by authorities of the host country point to failure in complying with basic safety and security requirements. For example, file storage in staircases presents potential risks in case of fire or other emergencies. The Association hopes that efforts at moving to a new building (UN House!) will be successful.

10. Against the background of high expectations, the staff has had to adapt to a scenario of diminishing resources. A deep commitment to United Nations ideals and principles, coupled with a strong vocation for international public service, has led to combining the ethic of conviction with the ethic of responsibility.

² None of the staff representatives is released, fully or partially.