



## Governing Body

316th Session, Geneva, 1–16 November 2012

GB.316/PFA/9

**Programme, Financial and Administrative Section**  
*Personnel Segment*

**PFA**

**Date:** 24 September 2012

**Original:** English

### NINTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

## Other personnel questions

#### Purpose of the document

This document is submitted as a follow-up to the Governing Body's decision in March 2012 to defer consideration of a set of interim arrangements on recruitment and selection procedures, pending an overall review of those procedures (see the draft decision in paragraph 20).

**Relevant strategic objective:** Governance, support and management.

**Policy implications:** The interim arrangements on recruitment and selection procedures, as well as the direction of the overall review of those procedures are subject to collective bargaining between the Office and the Staff Union in accordance with the Recognition and Procedural Agreement of 27 March 2000, noted by the Governing Body at its 277th Session (March 2000).

**Legal implications:** Subject to the Governing Body's decision.

**Financial implications:** None.

**Follow-up action required:** Submission to the Governing Body in March 2013 of draft amendments to the Staff Regulations concerning recruitment and selection procedures.

**Author unit:** Human Resources Development Department (HRD).

**Related documents:** GB.313/PFA/10/1;GB.313/PFA/INF/7.



1. In March 2012, the Director-General submitted to the Governing Body, through its Officers,<sup>1</sup> a set of interim amendments and adjustments to the Staff Regulations in the area of recruitment and selection.<sup>2</sup> These interim amendments and adjustments had been agreed upon between the Administration and the Staff Union in the context of the mediation process initiated in 2011, as a first step in the comprehensive review of the 2000 Collective Agreement on a Procedure for Recruitment and Selection.
2. The interim amendments and adjustments related to several aspects of existing selection and recruitment procedures, including the composition of the Assessment Centres referred to in article 10 of the Staff Regulations, and the role of the Staff Union under Annex I of the Staff Regulations.
3. The question specifically submitted to the Governing Body, by its Officers, was whether the interim amendments could be adopted by the Director-General under the delegated authority conferred on him under article 14.7 of the Staff Regulations “in respect of non-controversial issues with no significant financial and policy implications”.<sup>3</sup> In the event that the Governing Body considered that the interim amendments did not fall under such delegated authority, it was invited to approve the amendments on an interim basis pending consideration of an overall review of recruitment and selection procedures in March 2013.
4. The Governing Body decided to defer its decision to the present session, on the Director-General’s understanding that the Office had the authority to implement, in the interim, the agreement reached with the Staff Union Committee.<sup>4</sup>
5. In April 2012 the Office issued an Office Procedure to announce the corresponding interim arrangements including changes to the Staff Regulations to be applied to the recruitment procedure for the 50 vacancies announced in the first Recruitment, Assignment and Placement System (RAPS) in 2012, as well as for some dozen General Service competitions organized at headquarters between April and July 2012.
6. The Administration and the Staff Union have jointly reviewed the operation of these interim adjustments and are satisfied that, despite some additional workload for the main actors in recruitment and selection (especially the Human Resources Development Department, the Staff Union and the observers designated by the Staff Union), there has been a positive impact on the transparency, quality and efficiency of recruitment and selection procedures:
  - The use of a limited number of professional external assessors, jointly nominated by the Staff Union and HRD, has contributed to a smoother and more timely organization of the RAPS by providing for the reliance on assessors who are immediately available, while also ensuring quality and consistency.
  - The involvement of Staff Union representatives as observers in the different steps of the competition process, instead of their role to review and comment on the competition files a posteriori, has contributed to increase the transparency of the process and to dissipate concerns expressed about the objectivity and soundness of

<sup>1</sup> GB.313/PFA/10/1.

<sup>2</sup> GB.313/PFA/INF/7.

<sup>3</sup> GB.312/PFA/13 and GB.312/PV, paras 749–751.

<sup>4</sup> GB.313/PV, paras 654–664.

the recommendations of technical interviewing panels as to the most qualified candidates. Furthermore, the time frame for the processing of selection decisions has been shortened, as the ten-day period previously required for Staff Union representatives to comment on each competition file is not foreseen in the interim arrangements.

7. In light of this positive experience, the Office proposes to support the use of these interim adjustments during the second RAPS in 2012 and the first RAPS in 2013, pending the presentation of an overall review of recruitment and selection procedures to the Governing Body at its 317th Session (March 2013).
8. The key elements of the overall revision of recruitment and selection procedures established under the Collective Agreement on Recruitment and Selection signed in 2000, in respect of which the Director-General hopes to finalize an agreement with the Staff Union by the end of the year, touch on internal administrative, procedural or logistical aspects of recruitment and selection, with the aim of ensuring uniform administration of criteria and procedures and more rigorous merit-based recruitment standards:
  - development of more rigorous and uniform criteria for the screening of eligible applicants in a competition;
  - adjustments to the Assessment Centre, in particular the use of external assessors and limiting the use of the Assessment Centre to the recruitment of external candidates or to officials seeking to move to a higher-level category, while allowing the use of the Assessment Centre for developmental purposes;
  - definition of stricter and more uniform steps in the technical assessment of candidates;
  - modifications to the appeals procedure available to staff members dissatisfied with recruitment and selection decisions.
9. Two elements of the proposed revision of recruitment and selection procedures would appear to have broader policy implications, as well as potential implications with regard to staff-management relations within the Office: the role of the Staff Union and that of HRD in selection panels and the scope of possible exceptions to recruitment through competition.

## **Role of the Staff Union and HRD in selection panels**

10. Under the arrangements approved in 2000 as a result of the Collective Agreement on Recruitment and Selection, the Staff Union is consulted at the beginning and at the end of each competition process, namely in the determination of whether or not a competition should be open to external candidates where there is a sufficient pool of qualified internal candidates; the verification that the minimum requirements for each vacancy announcement are in line with agreed generic job descriptions; and the review of competition files for comment before they are sent to the Director-General for a final decision. The Staff Union is also informed of all decisions to fill a vacancy without competition.
11. With respect to the Staff Union's role before a competition is organized, it is intended to revise the current consultation mechanism under paragraphs 7 to 9 of Annex I of the Staff Regulations in respect of each individual vacancy announcement, by adopting a more

comprehensive consultation. The process envisaged would facilitate consultation on upcoming vacancies and assist in identifying the appropriate means of selection (competition, within-grade transfers, geographical or functional mobility) while taking into account career development aspirations of existing staff, targets regarding geographical diversity and gender balance and the operational needs of the Office with regard to mobility, succession planning, redeployment, knowledge transfer, etc.

12. As regards the Staff Union's role at the end of the competition process, its initial objective was to provide basic guarantees of transparency in decisions relating to the filling of vacancies. However, the retroactive nature of the verification process had a limited impact in securing such guarantees. The inclusion of staff representatives as observers in selection panels provides an opportunity to raise concerns relating to the objectivity of merit-based competitions, during rather than after the process. Experience obtained from the current interim arrangements has demonstrated value added in this regard.
13. While the involvement of staff representatives is unusual in private sector undertakings, in the majority of organizations of the United Nations system, staff associations are invited to designate a member in recruitment and selection panels. The presence of staff representatives, either as a member or as an observer in such panels is also common in some national civil services. In light of the experience of the interim amendments introduced in April as highlighted above, and drawing on previous experience with the recruitment system existing prior to the 2000 Collective Agreement, the Office believes that the possibility for staff representatives to observe the competition process could enhance the transparency, legitimacy and objectivity of selection and recruitment processes in the Organization, and will lead to greater confidence of the staff in the process.
14. Concerning the role of HRD in technical panels, experience in recent years has shown the advantage of systematically including a representative from HRD in each technical panel and it is envisaged to formalize such participation in the revised procedure.

## Exceptions to recruitment through competition

15. Article 4 of the Staff Regulations defines competition as being the normal method for the filling of vacancies, except in respect of certain defined categories of staff (staff in senior managerial positions, positions of confidence in the Director-General's office, staff in technical cooperation projects, and locally recruited field positions) or in special circumstances (jobs of a very specialized nature, filling vacancies in urgency, in the case of the reclassification of jobs to a higher grade or where a competition has proved unsuccessful).
16. It is considered that the current scope of this provision may no longer be appropriate and, in practice, competition has also become the normal method to fill vacancies in some of those categories, such as locally recruited field positions in most regions. The current composition and grade structure of the ILO is very different from that prevailing at the time the provision on direct selection was included in the Staff Regulations, and the Director-General intends to review this, with the intention of further limiting the circumstances and categories of staff to which direct selection is applied. The objective of this review will be to enhance the principles of merit, equity and opportunity.
17. With regard to technical cooperation staff, the Office believes that some degree of flexibility in the means of appointment continues to be necessary in view of the specialized profiles often required and the frequent need to rapidly deploy staff to time-bound projects. There are, however, a number of support functions linked to technical cooperation activities or positions of a less specialized or urgent nature, where the Office has

traditionally undertaken an alternative form of competitive process (for example, calls for expression of interest), and would propose to consider further changes in this direction.

18. The Office and Staff Union have discussed some of the circumstances in which the authority of appointment without competition might exceptionally be exercised by the Director-General. These circumstances could include the use of within-grade transfers to facilitate geographical or functional mobility, or to attract expertise from unrepresented parts of the world, or as per existing practice, to resolve personal situations of serious conflict or humanitarian need.
19. It is anticipated that enlarging the scope of positions filled through competition while simultaneously simplifying certain aspects of ILO recruitment and selection procedures will help to expand career opportunities for serving staff by increasing internal mobility, improve workforce and succession planning, and attract external talent in certain areas where the Office has a deficit.

### **Draft decision**

**20. *The Governing Body endorses:***

- (a) *the Director-General's intention to revise Office recruitment and selection policies and procedures and submit proposals and draft amendments to the Staff Regulations to the Governing Body in March 2013; and*
- (b) *the interim arrangements to implement the provisional adjustments to the recruitment and selection procedures presented at its 313th Session, until its overall review of the matter in March 2013.*