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Decisions of the United Nations General Assembly on the report of the International Civil Service Commission for 2018

Summary: This report covers the decisions made by the United Nations General Assembly on the report of the International Civil Service Commission for 2018.

Author unit: Human Resources Development Department (HRD).

Related documents: GB.335/PFA/10; GB.312/PV.

1. Every autumn, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly considers the annual report of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) and, by December, takes decisions on the recommendations of the Commission that fall under its authority in accordance with article 10 of the ICSC Statute, so that such decisions can be implemented as of 1 January of the following year.
2. Every March, the Office provides the Governing Body with a summary of those decisions and highlights other aspects of the annual report of the ICSC that are relevant to the ILO and its staff, including with regard to any changes to the conditions of employment decided by the Commission under its own authority.
3. This paper provides information on the report of the ICSC for 2018 ¹ and the decisions taken by the UN General Assembly at its 65th plenary meeting of its 73rd session in December 2018 ² in relation to the recommendations contained in the report. Decisions of the Commission and of the General Assembly are normally implemented in the ILO under the Director-General's delegated authority concerning common system conditions of employment. ³
4. The General Assembly reaffirmed the central role of the ICSC in regulating and coordinating conditions of service and entitlements for all staff serving the organizations of the United Nations common system. It reminded executive heads and governing bodies of the UN common system that failure to fully respect the decisions of the General Assembly on the Commission's recommendations could prejudice claims to enjoy the benefits of participation in the common system. It reiterated its request to the Commission to recommend appropriate measures that would deal with those organizations not in compliance with the Commission's decisions and recommendations and to report thereon at its 74th session. It invited the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, to ensure that decisions of the General Assembly are implemented in full and without undue delay across the common system.

I. Conditions of service applicable to both categories of staff

A. Review of pensionable remuneration

5. Following the review of pensionable remuneration by the Commission, the General Assembly approved the Commission's recommendation of a revised scale of pensionable remuneration for all categories of staff, based on single rates of the common scale of staff assessment (used in conjunction with pensionable remuneration), which has also been revised. ⁴

¹ General Assembly, Official records, 73rd session (A/73/30), available on the ICSC website at <https://icsc.un.org/Resources/General/AnnualReports/AR2018.pdf>.

² Draft resolution [A/C.5/73/L.18](#) which became resolution 73/273.

³ See [GB.312/PV](#), para. 751(b).

⁴ The new scale of pensionable remuneration for the Professional and higher categories can be found in document GB.335/PFA/10.

B. Framework for human resources management

6. The General Assembly welcomed the work undertaken by the Commission regarding the updated human resources management framework and its decision to approve the inclusion of the workforce diversity component in the human resources management framework.
7. The General Assembly requested the Commission to continue to provide information on the progress made by the organizations of the United Nations common system in the implementation of existing gender policies and measures towards achieving the goal of 50/50 gender balance and strengthening geographical diversity within the common system, including at senior levels. In addition, the General Assembly encouraged the organizations of the United Nations common system to regularly measure and monitor key workforce diversity metrics, such as geographical distribution and gender parity, and to report thereon to their governing bodies.

II. Conditions of service of staff in the Professional and higher categories

A. Base/floor salary scale

8. The base/floor salary scale for the Professional and higher categories is set with reference to the General Schedule salary scale of the federal civil service of the United States of America. Periodic adjustments are made on the basis of a comparison of net base salaries of UN officials at the midpoint of the scale (P-4, step VI) with the corresponding base salaries of their counterparts in the United States federal civil service.
9. The Commission noted that a 1.4 per cent increase in the comparator's base General Schedule scale was implemented effective 1 January 2018. In addition, tax changes were introduced in 2018, expanding the majority of tax brackets in the federal tax system while most marginal taxes were lowered. At the same time, standard deductions were increased and personal exemption was eliminated.
10. In order to reflect the salary increase in the General Schedule and the impact of the above-mentioned tax changes, the Commission recommended an adjustment of 1.83 per cent over the revised unified base/floor salary scale, as well as the updated pay protection points for the Professional and higher categories. The General Assembly approved this adjustment with effect from 1 January 2019, which, as per established practice, is to be implemented by increasing the base salary and commensurately decreasing post adjustment multiplier points, resulting in no-loss/no-gain in net take-home pay.
11. The resulting changes in the base/floor salary scale for the Professional and higher categories will be implemented with effect from 1 January 2019 through amendments to article 3.1 of the Staff Regulations.⁵ Slight increases in separation payments will result from this salary adjustment. The cost of implementing the General Assembly's Resolution is covered in the provisions made for that purpose in the Programme and Budget for 2018–19.

⁵ GB.335/PFA/10.

B. Evolution of the United Nations/United States net remuneration margin

12. Under a standing mandate from the General Assembly, the Commission monitors the relationship between the net remuneration of UN officials in the Professional and higher categories in New York and that of the United States federal civil service officials in comparable positions in Washington, DC. For that purpose, the Commission annually tracks changes occurring in the remuneration levels of both civil services. It is recalled that if the margin trigger levels of 113 or 117 were reached, the Commission should take appropriate action through the operation of the post adjustment system to bring the margin to around the desirable midpoint of 115.
13. As at 1 January 2018, the comparator civil service had implemented a 2.29 per cent increase in the General Schedule in the Washington, DC locality. Other developments relevant to the comparison included US tax changes; an increase of the post adjustment multiplier for the duty station New York from 64.5 to 66.9 as of February 2018, owing to the evolution of the cost of living at the duty station; and an update of the cost-of-living ratio between New York and Washington, DC.
14. On the basis of the above, the Commission reported to the General Assembly that the margin between the net remuneration of officials in the Professional and higher categories of the United Nations in New York and officials in comparable positions in the United States federal civil service in Washington, DC, for the calendar year 2018 was estimated at 114.4 for the calendar year 2018.
15. The General Assembly reaffirmed its understanding that the margin would be maintained at a level around the desirable midpoint of 115 over a period of time and recalled its decision that the Commission should take appropriate action through the operation of the post adjustment system if the margin trigger levels of 113 or 117 were breached.

C. Post adjustment issues

16. The General Assembly requested the Commission to continue its efforts to improve the post adjustment system in order to minimize any gap between the pay indices and the post adjustment indices, and in this context welcomed the review of the post adjustment system methodology and operational rules governing the determination of post adjustment multipliers so as to enhance the accuracy, stability and predictability of salary adjustments. It welcomed the establishment of a working group to consider the feasibility of more frequent reviews of post adjustment classifications of duty stations, and requested the Commission to report thereon to the General Assembly at its 74th session.

D. Conditions of service in the field: duty stations with extreme hardship conditions

17. The Commission at its 87th session decided that the option of whether to install eligible dependants in duty stations classified at hardship levels D or E that were not designated as non-family duty stations should be left to the staff member. The Commission recommended that a reduced amount of the non-family service allowance, corresponding to US\$15,000 per year, should be granted to staff members with eligible dependants to help to defray the costs of maintaining those dependants elsewhere. This amount would be granted to a staff member who requested such an allowance at the time of taking up an assignment in a D or E duty station not designated as non-family, in lieu of the option to install the eligible dependants at the duty station.

18. The Commission's recommendation followed a proposal submitted by the Human Resources Network to offer more flexibility to staff members assigned to duty stations with a hardship classification of D or E that were not designated as non-family duty stations, by allowing them to choose to either take their families with them and receive installation related allowances, or not take their families and receive the non-family service allowance instead.
19. The General Assembly decided to grant, on a pilot basis, an amount of US\$15,000 for staff with eligible dependants, as per the aforementioned parameters. However, only in respect of staff members assigned to duty stations with hardship classification E. It requested the Commission to submit to it, for its 75th session, a recommendation on this payment, including on its continuation, based on a review of related impact, cost and workforce planning considerations.
20. As no internationally recruited ILO officials are currently assigned to hardship category E duty stations that are not designated as non-family duty stations, this pilot arrangement is currently of no operational relevance to the Office.

Other recommendations by the Commission

21. The General Assembly did not take any decision on the Commission's proposal to introduce an end-of-service grant. It did not take any decision on the increase of the children's and secondary dependant's allowances for the Professional and higher categories of staff, which had been proposed by the Commission.