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14 July 2016

Dear Leaders of National Staff Associations,

I am writing in reference to your letter dated 1 April 2016, addressed to the Secretary-General regarding the outcome of the leadership meeting of national staff associations in field missions held in UNHQ from 28 March to 1 April 2016.

The Secretary-General places the utmost importance on welfare and concerns of locally-recruited staff members and their contribution in fulfilling the complex and challenging mandates in field missions.

We understand that during the course of your meetings you were able to engage in open and constructive dialogue with various stakeholders on important issues affecting locally-recruited staff members in field missions. Consultations are an important part of staff management relations process.

We have noted the strategic areas indicated in your communication. While some have already been addressed, others may require more time. In addition, some are within the remit of the appropriate legislative organs.

On the selection policy for locally-recruited staff members, we can confirm that selection of General Service and related categories in field missions will be included within the scope of the revised administrative instruction on the staff selection system that is currently being amended. This will provide a unitary and consistent selection policy throughout the entire Secretariat. In the meantime, as a provisional measure pending the promulgation of the revised administrative instruction, DFS in collaboration with OHRM have finalised guidelines that will serve to harmonise selection of locally-recruited staff members in all field missions. The guidelines will be communicated in the coming days and build on the principles of the existing staff selection system.

With regard to nationalisation, each mission is encouraged to continuously review its staffing to ensure that it has the appropriate mix of staff taking into account mandate

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and other relevant factors. DFS has recently issued clarification on supervisory roles in a facsimile to all missions dated 5 July 2016.

A Staff Management Committee (SMC) working group (WG) on downsizing was established to work towards reaching agreements on key issues for the planned administrative instruction relating to staff affected by downsizing, closing of offices, restructuring, retrenchment, and abolition of post or reduction of staff. Staff are represented in this working group, including through the NY Staff Union (which represents all national staff), and representatives from the Field Staff Union, National Staff Associations (NASA) members are encouraged to share their views with the NYSU as their staff representative body.

The current conditions of service do not provide for an end-of-service payment and it is not within the purview of the Secretariat to approve payments not foreseen in the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules. Such a package would represent a significant change to the conditions of service and would have an impact on staff members in all missions and offices who have been and would be affected by downsizing or closing of a mission. As a UN common system issue, the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) is considering an end-of-service severance pay for fixed-term staff separating from the Organization upon expiry of appointments and continuous service of 10 years or more. The issue will be discussed in the 83rd session of the ICSC to be held from 25 July to 5 August 2016. After this session, we expect to be in a better position to advise on the prospect of such a future entitlement.

ST/AI/2010/3 already provides in section 1(x) that the fullest regard shall be given to staff serving in secretariat entities undergoing downsizing and/or liquidation. The issue of priority consideration and placement (for internationally recruited staff) has been discussed in the SMC working group and is being considered there.

Concerning a capacity building program for national staff, I can confirm that DFS encourages all missions to carry out ongoing skills development of their staff, providing support as required, with a view to the eventual downsizing that will occur during the lifecycle of a typical mission.

We encourage locally-recruited staff members to continue to communicate any difficulties encountered in services received regarding the medical insurance plan to their local Human Resources Officer with copy to the Health and Life Insurance Section in New York (ids@un.org).

The issue of timely payment of pension benefits is extremely important to the Secretary-General. In that vein, the Pension Fund has committed to a series of measures to eliminate the backlog, including regular meetings with DFS to individual cases. Progress is being made towards that goal and UN leadership remains actively engaged in the outcome. Simultaneously, the Secretariat is undertaking a comprehensive review of the separation process with the main goals of streamlining, efficiency and timeliness.

DFS has also initiated efforts to improve quality of submissions to the Pension Fund and has established focal points to better facilitate the process. In addition, the pre-retirement learning programmes and tools have been revised in order to increase awareness about the administrative steps and associated timelines that come with retirement. We can confirm that the Pension Fund provides information and material in English, French, Spanish and Arabic which are readily available on their website. The availability of these four languages provides linguistic coverage for staff in all current mission areas.

The Department of Field Support has reminded field missions on the requirements pertaining to provision of facilities and agreed time-off to duly elected staff representatives by facsimile dated 19 April 2016.

With regard to an annual meeting of national staff associations, such arrangements, including funding and organisation are fully within the purview of staff associations/unions. The administration supports through the provision of time-off for duly elected staff representatives to attend such meetings.

Yours sincerely,



- Yukio Takasu
Under-Secretary-General
Department of Management

cc: Mr. Edmond Mulet
Mr. Atul Khare
Ms. Carole Wamuyu Wainaina
Ms. Chhaya Kapilashrami
Ms. Barbara Tavora-Jainchill