

21 December 2009

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

I address you on behalf of all of the participating staff unions of the Staff Management Coordination Committee and their 43,000 staff, who wish me to express their concern at the non-implementation of continuing appointments in January 2010 and the consequences this will have on other aspects of the United Nations human resources reforms.

We understand that the member states require, and have not received from OHRM, a strategic workforce plan; one that lays out how many staff are required to fulfil core functions. We await further discussion of this item at the extraordinary SMCC scheduled for January. However, we wish to make it clear that the concept of awarding continuing contracts based only on core functions and not on continuing need is very different from the expectation of staff, based on the understanding that we believed we had reached with management.

This outcome is deeply troubling, on many levels. For staff, the inference is clear – the Organization does not see the full contingent of its staff as vital to its needs and believes only a smaller percentage of “core” staff are really valuable enough to be awarded continuing appointments. How many is not clear. It is clear that what is purposed is something that amounts to, in our view, a hidden cap; a cap which we expressly rejected as inherently discriminatory.

It is also troubling because this policy would be fundamentally different from employment legislation for civil servants throughout the world, which is based on acquired rights. Indeed, 91 percent of the United States civil service, our major comparator, is on permanent contracts. Staff of United Nations cannot understand why they should be treated in a manner which would be illegal in most member states; our own countries of origin.

We remind you, Mr. Secretary-General, of the many dedicated United Nations staff who have served the Organization on fixed term contracts. Most have contracts of two years or less. Their expectation that they would have become eligible for continuing contracts as of January 2010 has turned out to be a false hope.

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His Excellency
Mr. Ban Ki-Moon
Secretary-General
United Nations
1 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

cc:

Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro, Deputy Secretary-General
Mr. Vijay Nambiar, Chef de Cabinet, Executive Office of the Secretary-General
Mr. Kim Won Soo, Deputy Chef de Cabinet, Executive Office of the Secretary-General
Ms. Angela Kane, Under Secretary-General for Management
Ms. Catherine Pollard, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management

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Mr. Secretary-General, in good faith, the staff unions and associations on behalf of whom I am writing returned to the staff-management consultative table. In good faith, in June in Nairobi, we came to an agreement on staff selection. Though the selection policy was not expressly linked during the discussions to contractual reform, for us, the continuing contract was a basic and necessary underpinning which did not need restating. We believed this was only one part of the whole human resources reform package and as continuing contracts had already been agreed, and expected as of 1 January 2010, the next logical progression was to ensure that staff were mobile and well placed to serve the organization. Our disappointment is now as deep as our hopes were high.

As we now have neither hope nor certainty that continuing contracts will be awarded anytime in the near future, we demand a suspension of the new staff selection policy until such time as the General Assembly approves the award of continuing contracts. This includes the eligibility requirements for P-5, D-1 and D-2 proposed in the new staff selection system. While we value mobility and recognize the credit due to those of us who have served in the field, we are sure that no-one, including the General Assembly, would expect staff to change duty stations, moving blindly into an unsure future, without the assurance that we are to have a career in the United Nations. A staff member who is not to be regarded as “core” or “essential” should not be required to move from whatever “short-term” or “non-essential” post he or she holds.

We trust that our position on this matter is clear and understood, not as defiance or reversal of our commitment, but as our determination that all staff should be treated fairly and justly by the organization which we serve.

Please accept, Mr. Secretary-General, the assurance of our highest consideration.



Paulina Analena
Vice-President, SMCC

On behalf of the staff unions and associations listed below:

Field Staff Union
Staff Council of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Staff Council of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Africa
Staff Council of the Economic Commission of Africa
Staff Council of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
Staff Union of the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia
Staff Union of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
Staff Council of UNHCR
Staff Union of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS
UNICEF Global Staff Association
UNOG Staff Coordinating Council
UN Staff Union Nairobi
UN Staff Union Vienna
UN University Staff Council