



First regular session of the UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS Executive Board

Statement by Michael Lund

Chair of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/UN WOMEN 47th Staff Council

30 January 2023

Mr. President,

Distinguished Members of the Executive Board,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure, as the Chair of the UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS and UN WOMEN Staff Council to address the Board today.

As COVID-19 is ending as a public health emergency and we learn and adapt to manage COVID-19 as a routine health challenge, I want to start my address today by expressing a deep note of gratitude to Members States and our organizations' leadership for their steadfast support to staff and personnel during these challenging years of the pandemic. Your dedication and commitment to keeping us safe and informed is greatly appreciated.

I also want to highlight the flexibility, dedication, and commitment that staff and personnel showed during the pandemic, and their unwavering devotion to improving the lives of the people we serve.

Distinguished Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS,

The newly elected members of the 47th Staff Council are deeply honored to represent the staff and personnel of our organizations who work tirelessly to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We are dedicated to work with management to ensure that our rights and interests are protected and promoted. We are committed to working together across the more than 90 country and regional level staff associations to help our organizations improve and harmonize the terms and conditions of employment across the board and at all levels. We will continue the collaborative approach adopted by the previous Councils in our relations with the administrations' senior management and their human resources offices.

Mr. President,

Since the announcement of the 47th Staff Council in November, we have had intensive rounds of consultations, which has enabled us to develop our ambitious Programme of Work for 2023–2024, which is our mandated period in office.

Given the interconnected nature of challenges affecting our personnel at all levels, the 47th Staff Council will focus on an integrated approach around the following four strategic outcomes:

First, revitalizing our Staff Association globally

In line with our Constitution, we recognize the important role of the local staff associations and committees. We are committed to support and strengthen them through creating participatory mechanisms for interaction amongst the staff representatives globally. We will establish and manage thematic working groups of staff representatives, thereby ensuring a global voice on important policy issues. We will organize five in-person or virtual regional consultations and hold our inaugural Global Forum in September this year.

Second, strengthening and harmonizing the representation of staff and personnel at all levels.

The Staff Council will monitor policy development in our organizations and will advocate for personnel and staff interest through several mechanisms, including our regular meetings with the Administration. We will engage actively in organizational change processes and work to ensure that mobility policies are implemented in a fair and equitable manner. We will engage in discussions on improving and standardizing contractual modalities and in promoting career planning, including for national staff and staff in the General Service category. We will also work on establishing standardized flexible working arrangements, harmonizing parental leave policy implementation and advocate for protection of staff and personnel against economic turmoil. Our overarching goal is to use staff and personnel's participation in decision-making processes effectively to advance harmonization of policies and practices across the four organizations to safeguard the highest standards for all staff and personnel.

We will strive to fully actualize our cornerstone principle of equal conditions for equal work. We continue to have too many colleagues on non-staff contracts performing similar tasks but enjoying less benefits and limited job security compared to staff members. This is especially prevalent at the country level. Service agreements and similar arrangements, while beneficial for certain time limited assignments, must not be used as a replacement for proper staff contracts.

The Staff Council very much welcomes the establishment of the new parental leave framework which provides staff more time to bond with their child and fulfill their parental responsibilities. We trust that our organizations will ensure that the measures in the new policy will benefit all staff eligible to utilize some type of parental leave on 1 January 2023.

Third, enhancing engagement with the UN Common System.

A key priority for the Staff Council is our engagement at the UN Common System level. At this level we will promote the harmonization of practices and regulations across the system related to contract conditions, health, wellbeing, safety and security of UN personnel globally. Our engagement will mainly be in and through our federation UNISERV and in close collaboration with others UN Federations, Unions and Associations.

Fourth, securing bold progress in making our workplace a better place to work.

We must all work to ensure a high level of productivity and attract future talent. In order to do so our organizations must create a flexible, safe and inspiring work environment where staff and personnel feel that they can meaningfully contribute to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

The experience with remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic not only proved that the hybrid work model is not only possible, but also desirable both from an organizational effectiveness and staff satisfaction perspective. The Staff Council will work with the four administrations to establish a fully functioning hybrid work model that increases flexibility and productivity for our personnel, while also reducing costs for our organizations. We will pay special attention to the risk of burn-out and unfair impact across groups.

The Staff Council will promote a positive leadership model that empowers personnel and that attracts and retains hardworking, talented people. We are committed to advance adaptive leadership-skills trainings for staff at all levels and support initiatives that improve psychological safety.

The Council intends to partner with the administrations in the roll-out of staff engagement surveys and ensure meaningful action-based outcomes of the listening activities.

We will collect testimonials from a staff perspective to facilitate learning between UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS and UN Women, with regards to promoting an inclusive and enabling workplace, aligned with the wider Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives across the UN System.

We recognize that our organizations' ability to implement their complex mandates will be significantly strengthened if our workforce is gender-balanced and recruited from a wider geographical base, including from under-represented countries. In this regard, we stand with the different ad-hoc and formal working groups that are elevating the voices of our organization's youth, parents, women and LGTBQ+ groups as well as black caucus and others, and align with the aspirations of the UN diversity, equity and inclusion agenda.

We are also committed to strengthen the work on and hold managers accountable to the effective enforcement of our organization's zero-tolerance policies against

harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse of authority so as to grant a safe, secure and enabling workplace for all personnel.

Together with senior management we will work to enhance a culture of trust, psychological safety, accountability and growth that will drive our organization to new heights.

Mr. President,

We recognize the leadership of the Secretary-General in advancing gender parity in the United Nations. Indeed, in the Staff Council two of our three chairs are women. We must, however, redouble our efforts as a system to attract more women from all backgrounds to work at the UN. We are also committed to work with the administration to ensure that our organizations are encouraging youth to join our workforce, and that we are inclusive of people with disabilities.

Distinguished Executive Board,

With the COVID pandemic slowly fading in the rear-view mirror, we had all hoped for a brighter road ahead, but instead we are witnessing a conflation of crises. UN staff and personnel are – as they have shown time and time again in the past – ready to face the challenges. Our organizations, with the necessary support from Member States, have an unwavering obligation to protect its staff and personnel – whether from security or health threats or from the emerging economic recession and cost-of-living crisis. Together with our sister unions and UNISERV, the Staff Council will work with the administrations to mitigate the negative impact of these growing challenges on our conditions of service.

The Staff Council will particularly support local staff associations as they advocate for, and engage in, local salary surveys. In this regard the Council will also facilitate learning across the Global Staff Association, facilitating peer-to-peer support of experienced local staff associations, as well as advocate with the ICSC and other critical inter-governmental bodies.

We appeal to you members of our Executive Board, to stand by our organizations and its staff and personnel. Work with us to implement collective solutions to collective global challenges.

Mr. President,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Executive Board.

As the Staff Council of UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS and UN Women, we count on your leadership to ensure that all personnel are treated with respect and dignity, as a basic benchmark to take our organizations to the highest standards of performance, ethics and accountability, as we serve the people of the world.

Thank you.