



## Governing Body

310th Session, Geneva, March 2011

GB.310/10/2(Rev.2)

---

### TENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

## Reports of the Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee

### Second report: Personnel questions

#### *Contents*

	<i>Page</i>
I. Statement by the staff representative .....	1
II. Other issues: Progress report on the proposals contained in the Director-General's letter of 17 November 2010 to the Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee .....	1
III. Composition and structure of the staff .....	2
IV. Decisions of the United Nations General Assembly on the report of the International Civil Service Commission .....	5
V. Pensions questions .....	6
(a) Decisions of the United Nations General Assembly on the report of the Board of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund .....	6
(b) Report of the Board of the Special Payments Fund .....	6
VI. Matters relating to the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO .....	7
(a) Composition of the Tribunal .....	7
(b) Statute of the Tribunal .....	7

#### *Appendix*

Statement by the Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee to the Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee of the ILO Governing Body .....	9
--	---



**I. Statement by the staff representative**  
(Tenth item on the agenda)

1. The statement by the staff representative is reproduced in the appendix to the present report.

**II. Other issues: Progress report on the proposals contained in the Director-General's letter of 17 November 2010 to the Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee**

2. The Chairperson, recalling the difficulties that had arisen in November 2010 surrounding relations between ILO management and the Staff Union, and the commitment of the Director-General to engage in a constructive approach, requested the Director of the Human Resources Development Department (HRD) to provide a brief update on the steps taken and progress made with regard to the issues raised in the Director-General's letter of 17 November 2010 to the Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee.
3. The representative of the Director-General (Ms Viale, Director of HRD) recalled that a number of proposals had been made to overcome the situation, which had been accepted by the Staff Union and supported by the Governing Body. These involved: recourse to a process of external, independent mediation as a way forward on major areas of disagreement, and solutions to three specific issues concerning the use of external assessors; an understanding on the conditions for the use by the Staff Union of the ILO email system to disseminate its messages; and the establishment of a special contract for the Staff Union's Legal Adviser.
4. The search for a suitable institution to provide mediation services had started on 18 November 2010 in joint collaboration with the Staff Union. On 8 December 2010, it had been agreed that the Directorate-General for Collective Labour Relations of the Ministry of Labour of Belgium would be called on to conduct the mediation process. The process was being led by Mr Vansintjan. The Mediator had held initial discussions with each of the parties in January 2011 and had come to Geneva to meet with the parties on 25 and 28 February 2011. A further meeting had been scheduled for 11 March to continue the process with a view to agreeing on a common agenda of priority issues to be addressed through the mediation process.
5. Immediate action had been taken after the November 2010 session of the Governing Body concerning the use of external assessors in the second cycle of the Recruitment, Assignment and Placement System (RAPS) in 2010: the work carried out by external assessors had been reviewed by internal assessors, who concurred with the findings of the external assessors. The outcome had been shared with the Staff Union.
6. With respect to the establishment of a dedicated communication channel for the Staff Union similar to the Office's broadcast tool, an agreement had been reached by way of an exchange of letters on the responsibilities and liabilities of both parties. A dedicated communication tool was now fully operational and already in use by the Staff Union.

7. Lastly, concerning the establishment of a staff member contract for the position of Staff Union Legal Adviser, several elements had to be considered, including respect for the Staff Regulations, the source of funding of the job, the specificity of the function, the need to ensure proper selection procedures and any guidance to be drawn from relevant decisions of the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO. Work had begun in December 2010. A preliminary framework had been prepared and discussed by the end of January 2011. Further concerns, related to the legal framework within which the contract would be established, had been identified and subsequently addressed. Of the two options identified by the Office (a modification to the Staff Regulations or exceptions to them in accordance with article 14.6 of the Staff Regulations), the Staff Union preferred the second one. Accordingly, an agreement covering the specificity of the exceptions to the Staff Regulations, ensuring the independence of the Staff Union and defining the respective responsibilities and liabilities of the Administration and the Staff Union, had been signed in early March. The next step for the Staff Union was to initiate the process of recruiting a Legal Adviser.
8. She expressed her confidence that the mediation process would strengthen the atmosphere of renewed dialogue and mutual respect. She reiterated her commitment and that of her team to work with the Staff Union towards constructive results, which she looked forward to sharing with the Committee by November 2011.
9. The representative of the Government of Germany welcomed the mediation process as a very positive development. He noted that the ILO had a role-model function in social dialogue. In addition, he thanked the Office, the Staff Union and the staff for their dedicated work in that regard, which he encouraged them all to continue.
10. Sir Roy Trotman, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group, expressed his satisfaction at the reports of the Office and Staff Union concerning progress in addressing their previous difficulties. Noting that there could still be moments of hesitation in the coming process of mediation, he urged all concerned to bear in mind the importance of showing that the ILO was, at all levels, the centre of excellence in industrial relations. There was a need for the United Nations to be aware of the significant work being done by the ILO in respecting human dignity in work and in ensuring that the workplace was home to freedom of association, collective bargaining and freedom of expression.

### **III. Composition and structure of the staff** (Eleventh item on the agenda)

11. The Committee had before it a paper<sup>1</sup> for information on the composition and structure of the staff.
12. Sir Roy highlighted the importance attached by the Workers' group to the continued need for the Office to ensure recruitment from under-represented countries and to improve the gender balance within the staff. Commenting on the number of temporary staff employed by the Office, he suggested that creative ways might be found to offer more stable employment to staff members working for time-bound or temporary projects subject to external funding. Greater employment security for workers often resulted in greater productivity and job satisfaction, and in turn improved the provision of services to the ILO constituency and the world at large.

<sup>1</sup> GB.310/PFA/11.

13. Mr Julien, speaking on behalf of the Employers' group, reiterated his group's position on two points: the need for the Office to recruit more staff with business experience and the need to recruit people in the regions who were not from the region in question.
14. The representative of the Government of Japan, speaking on behalf of the Asia and Pacific group (ASPAG), emphasized the importance of geographical and gender balance, as well as of linguistic and cultural diversity, in order for the ILO to operate effectively at the global level, including in the vast Asian region. He noted with concern the non-representation and under-representation of staff from the region, pointing in particular to the decrease among non-linguistic staff, as well as to the low levels of recruitment from non- or under-represented Asian States over the previous five years. The percentage of staff from the region had declined from 19 to 17 per cent while the staff from the over-represented European region had continued to increase from 39 to 43 per cent.
15. He noted that such imbalance required clear explanations and referred to earlier requests from the group for an analysis of the causes of the problem, and proposals and timelines to address it. The group expected the Office to provide an update on the issue, including data on overall regional representation as contained in the November 2009 Human Resources Strategy. ASPAG was also of the view that nationals of the member States of the region should be better represented at the senior management level.
16. Furthermore, he said that ASPAG considered that the need for a variety of linguistic skills was not reflected in the minimum requirements of the majority of vacancy announcements advertised through RAPS. In addition, he urged the Office to ensure a reduction of staff costs through timely recruitment.
17. ASPAG's position was supported by the representatives of the Governments of China, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Jordan and the Republic of Korea.
18. The representative of the Government of South Africa, speaking on behalf of the Africa group, expressed concern at the declining number of Africans among the staff of the ILO. He noted that there were currently no Africans among the linguistic staff. Moreover, he noted that there was a need for greater gender balance at the Office.
19. The representative of the Government of India also expressed concern at the wide variations of staff representation between the regions and countries. She recalled in that respect that around 66 member States were not represented at all. She also noted that there was a continued gender disparity. With regard to ILO field offices, she was of the view that there was a need for increased recruitment of local staff in the regions in order to increase efficiency, in particular in dealing with local institutions and government mechanisms.
20. The representative of the Government of the United States noted a disparity since 2008 in recruitment figures in that fewer officials had been recruited from non- and under-represented countries despite departures of nationals from those countries and, at the same time, the number of officials recruited from adequately and over-represented countries had increased. She urged the ILO to monitor closely the recruitment of officials from non- and under-represented countries, noting that a strategy was required to address that issue.
21. The representative of the Government of Japan highlighted that the situation of under-represented countries had not improved, and stressed the need for an increase in the number of staff from his country, particularly senior staff. He also emphasized the need for a closer examination of staff costs, which could be reduced through the regrading of positions at senior levels upon the retirement of the incumbents. Similar savings could be

achieved through the regrading of general service positions, and more detailed information was requested with regard to that category.

22. The representative of the Government of China stated that his country had been under-represented over the past six years, and noted with concern that there were currently no Chinese nationals in positions at the “D” grade. There were, however, many well-qualified Chinese nationals, and the Government of China was willing to work closely with the ILO to identify suitable measures to improve representation of Chinese nationals among ILO staff.
23. The representative of the Government of Jordan, referring to the situation of the Arab States, noted with regret that, of the 11 Arab States, nine were not represented at all, while of the two States of the subregion with a national in the ILO staff, one was under-represented. He urged the Office to address the situation, noting that his Government stood ready to engage in dialogue and assist the Office.
24. The representative of the Government of the Republic of Korea recalled the importance of increasing diversity at all levels, not only with respect to geographical distribution. He suggested that strategies should be developed to utilize staff more effectively and to promote creativity in the Office.
25. The representative of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran called for more flexibility in ILO policies and practices, which were at the source of the geographical imbalances in question. As an example, requiring knowledge of the three ILO working languages was a clear disadvantage for most of the population from the Asian region, thus depriving 2 billion people from potentially being considered for employment with the ILO.
26. In response to the comments and questions raised, the representative of the Director-General (Ms Viale) reassured the Committee that all suggestions and concerns expressed concerning recruitment policies and practices had been noted and would be addressed in the context of the Office’s commitment in the Human Resources Strategy to improve diversity at various levels, including geographical diversity. Of the over 25,000 applications received since the introduction of RAPS, only 10 per cent had come from non-represented States. She recognized that more efforts needed to be made, in particular with respect to countries or subregions where inadequate representation was a recurrent problem, and referred to targeted prospective missions to increase participation in ILO recruitment.
27. She recalled that the report had been presented in its current form for the last time. Data would henceforth be presented differently, in order to concentrate on strategic issues. In March 2012, the Office would present information on the composition and structure of the staff around the priority areas and the indicators included in the Human Resources Strategy. However, the Office would continue to provide relevant information, either on demand, by posting annually on the website or by including ILO data in the comprehensive annual reports of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on the composition and structure of the staff of all United Nations programmes and organizations, with details on contract types, gender, regional diversity, age, grade distribution, and so on.
28. The Committee took note of the report.

#### IV. Decisions of the United Nations General Assembly on the report of the International Civil Service Commission (Twelfth item on the agenda)

29. The Committee had before it a paper<sup>2</sup> on the decisions of the United Nations General Assembly on the report of the International Civil Service Commission for 2010, which had recommended in particular revised levels in the education grant and a proposed harmonized entitlement in respect of officials assigned to non-family duty stations.
30. Sir Roy questioned whether the issues raised in the paper or the point for decision fell within the scope of ILO staff–management relations or whether the Office was bound to follow the UN General Assembly in that instance. In the view of the Workers’ group, it was a matter that should be the subject of consultation and negotiation between ILO management and the Staff Union. He noted that the associated costs of providing for family dependants did not go away simply because an official had been assigned to a non-family duty station and questioned the wisdom of agreeing to a reduced allowance in that context. Finally, he recalled that the ILO had a responsibility to defend its values when considering General Assembly decisions; the discussions over a One UN had faltered on the realization that not everything should be harmonized, as each agency had differing advantages and needs. In as much as the Office suggested a certain approach under the 13th item on the agenda with regard to a General Assembly resolution on pensions, he did not understand why the Governing Body should be asked to follow blindly the General Assembly in that instance.
31. The representative of the Director-General (Ms Viale) proposed an addition to the point for decision aimed at clarifying the scope of the approval sought from the Governing Body in respect of the harmonized entitlement for staff serving in non-family duty stations. While a decision had been made about the methodology and amount of the entitlement, details about its implementation and transitional measures for serving staff had not yet been defined. The Office’s proposal was to obtain the endorsement of the Governing Body to introduce as of 1 July 2011 the new allowance for staff recruited after that date. The corresponding amendment would be reported at a later stage, as would the outcome of discussions on the implementation and transitional measures both at the United Nations common system level and internally with the Staff Union. The discussions were also to cover another benefit linked to service in non-family duty stations, namely rest and recuperation.
32. Mr Julien said that he supported the point for decision, with the amendment proposed by Ms Viale.
33. Following consultations, Sir Roy, speaking on behalf of the Workers’ group, indicated that he supported the amended point for decision.
34. *The Committee recommends to the Governing Body that it approve the amendment to the Staff Regulations contained in the appendix to the Office paper, as well as the introduction, with effect from 1 July 2011, of the new allowance mentioned in paragraph 9 of the Office paper, and that it note the action taken or to be taken by the Director-General to give effect to other measures adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.*

<sup>2</sup> GB.310/PFA/12.

**V. Pensions questions**  
(Thirteenth item on the agenda)

**(a) Decisions of the United Nations General Assembly on the report of the Board of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund**

35. The Committee had before it a paper<sup>3</sup> concerning the decisions of the United Nations General Assembly on the report of the 57th Session of the tripartite Board of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, comprising representatives from the governing bodies, the administrations and the staff of all member organizations. Paragraph 15 of the document contained a proposal to request the Director-General to express concern to the UN Secretary-General about the General Assembly's rejection of one of the Board's recommendations concerning the possibility for officials on part-time arrangements to supplement their contributions to the Fund.
36. Mr Julien, noting that the Governments represented in the Governing Body had also been represented in the UN General Assembly when the latter had rejected the proposal by the Board concerning the contributions of part-time staff members, said that he would like to know the views of the Governments before expressing an opinion.
37. Sir Roy supported the request of the Employers' group to hear from the Governments. He recalled that the Office and the Staff Union had a common position on the issue. The Workers' group felt that it would be proper not only to raise concerns but to request a reconsideration of the issue. As the mandate of the ILO was to provide expertise on conditions of work and to recommend labour standards, the decision of the General Assembly could be seen as compromising the role of the ILO and undermining its effectiveness.
38. In the absence of interventions from Government representatives, the Chairperson suggested that the letter of the Director-General to the Secretary-General of the United Nations should express the concerns of the Workers' group, unless the Government group was ready to endorse the same concerns after having seen them expressed in a draft letter to be circulated.
39. *The Committee took note of the report as well as of the concerns expressed by the Workers' group and recommends to the Governing Body that it request the Director-General to express such concerns in a formal communication to the UN Secretary-General.*

**(b) Report of the Board of the Special Payments Fund**

40. The Committee took note of the report of the Board of the Special Payments Fund for 2010.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> GB.310/PFA/13/1.

<sup>4</sup> GB.310/PFA/13/2.



## VI. Matters relating to the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO (Fourteenth item on the agenda)

### (a) Composition of the Tribunal

41. The Committee had before it a paper<sup>5</sup> on the composition of the Tribunal.
42. Mr Godoy, speaking on behalf of the Employers' group, supported the point for decision.
43. Mr Ahmed, speaking on behalf of the Workers' group, supported the point for decision.

44. *The Committee recommends through the resolution below:*

- (a) *that the Governing Body, and through it the Conference, convey their appreciation to Mr Gordillo for the services he has rendered as judge of the Tribunal; and*
- (b) *that the Governing Body propose to the 100th Session of the International Labour Conference:*
- (i) *the renewal of the term of office of Ms Gaudron for three years; and*
- (ii) *the appointment of Ms d'Auvergne for a term of office of three years.*

The General Conference of the International Labour Organization,

*Decides*, in accordance with article III of the Statute of the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization,

- (a) to express to Mr Agustín Gordillo its appreciation for the services he has rendered to the work of the Administrative Tribunal as judge;
- (b) to renew the appointment of Ms Mary G. Gaudron (Australia) for a term of three years; and
- (c) to appoint Ms Suzie d'Auvergne (Saint Lucia) for a term of three years.

### (b) Statute of the Tribunal

45. The Committee had before it a paper<sup>6</sup> proposing that the Governing Body should be kept informed of any relevant developments concerning the question of the locus standi of staff unions and associations before the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO, including decisions of the UN General Assembly on the subject in relation to its Dispute Tribunal.
46. The representative of the Director-General (Mr Derepas, Legal Adviser) explained that the proposal in the paper was motivated by three factors: the absence of consensus in the Governing Body for almost ten years; the difficulty of achieving consensus among the

<sup>5</sup> GB.310/PFA/14/1.

<sup>6</sup> GB.310/PFA/14/2.

member organizations; and the very open nature of the Administrative Tribunal's jurisprudence with regard to the capacity of unions to bring action.

47. The Employers' group supported the point for decision.
48. The Workers' group considered that the ILO should be a leader in the matter and rejected the point for the decision in so far as it proposed waiting for the General Assembly decision before acting. The Staff Union ought to have the right to bring matters to the Tribunal, and the rest of the UN system might then be persuaded to follow suit. Accordingly, the group suggested that the question of locus standi for the ILO Staff Union should be included in the current mediation process.
49. ***The Committee recommends to the Governing Body that it request to be kept informed in good time of any relevant developments.***

Geneva, 14 March 2011

(Signed) E. Julien

(Reporter)

*Points for decision:* Paragraph 34  
Paragraph 39  
Paragraph 44  
Paragraph 49

## Appendix

### **Statement by the Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee to the Programme, Financial and Administrative Committee of the ILO Governing Body** (310th Session – March 2011)

Mr Chairperson, Director-General, members of the Governing Body, dear colleagues here today, and those following via the Intranet from our duty stations around the world.

Mr Chairperson, it is with great pleasure that I sit here before you this morning and convey the message I bring with me today. It is a message of hope. It is a message of optimism – cautious optimism – but optimism. And it is a message reflecting the commitment of our Union to sit down and negotiate over a list of priorities that has unfortunately grown considerably during a time when both parties seemed to spend more energy on disputes over principles, rather than on negotiating policies that balance the needs of the Office with the interests of the staff.

I cannot say that the negotiations since last November have been easy. Negotiations rarely are. Nor can I say that our members have not expressed some frustration at the pace of the discussions. I suppose to look at this positively, not a day goes by when someone does not email, call or stop me in the hallway for an update.

Today, we are very pleased to note that each item for which immediate solutions were agreed back in November has been finalized.

We have also begun a mediation process, with the assistance of an external mediator who enjoys the confidence of both parties. This process continues here tomorrow.

The list of items submitted to the mediation process is long, with the Union seeking concrete results on fair, transparent and objective recruitment and selection procedures, measures to combat precarious work in the Office, including for staff working on technical cooperation, and an approach to reviewing the classification of positions in the light of the field structure review and cuts to General Service work-years in the programme and budget proposals.

No less important is that the mediation process must result in concrete improvements to the collective bargaining process itself, particularly in terms of establishing mechanisms to resolve disputes without bringing progress to a grinding halt.

A colleague reminded me yesterday that the agreements reached thus far were only the “beginning of the beginning”. I prefer to take a more positive view, and consider this to be – to misquote Churchill – “the end of the beginning”.

It may come as a surprise to you, and it is a refreshing change for the Union, but I would like actually to take a few moments now to address the agenda items you have before you today, as well as some important items you have already begun to discuss, and others your subcommittee will consider in the coming days.

The document entitled “Decisions of the United Nations General Assembly on the report of the International Civil Service Commission” contains a section on the harmonization of the conditions of service for staff serving in non-family duty stations. While we fully recognize the financial crises facing our member States, and the need to realize savings, we implore you: this is not the place to cut. These are staff working in

some of the most difficult and dangerous duty stations – from Baghdad to Kabul, in Haiti, and Kinshasa.

This is a so-called harmonization motivated not by good policy. It is not even motivated by budgetary considerations here in the ILO. Instead, it is a forced harmonization intended to provide a much reduced – though long overdue – entitlement to those working in peacekeeping operations, while cutting from every other organization.

As our Organization seems to have a growing role to play in supporting our constituents, including in those countries which are now going through, or are recently emerging from, social conflict, this is not an area where we should harmonize just for harmonization's sake.

With regard to the document entitled “Matters relating to the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO”, and in particular with regard to the Statute of the Tribunal, we note that this issue has come before you again and again for nearly ten years. This is surprising, as this is not an issue of contention between the ILO Staff Union and the ILO Administration. We have already reached agreement, as reflected in the collective bargaining agreement currently in force, on the fact that the Union *should* have the ability to bring cases before the Tribunal, and that it was just a matter for the Governing Body, and then the Conference, to make the necessary adjustments to the Statute of the Tribunal. This was later complicated by some combination of other organizations not wanting to extend similar rights to their own union, and the wish to “ensure coherence” with the new UN system of justice.

Interestingly, these same organizations do not want *total* coherence with the UN – that is to say the introduction of a two-tier system of judges, and the establishment of an Office of Staff Legal Assistance, which are both enjoyed by the UN internal justice system, and which would cost you millions of dollars annually. But they want to “ensure coherence” only to avoid adopting something that has already been agreed here in the ILO.

If the ILO wants to lead in the social dimensions of globalization, why should it depend on the General Assembly of the United Nations to realize the rights of its own Staff Union? The ILO advises you at a national level that there should be the possibility of a judicial review of any administrative decisions. Why then is the same right not given to our own Union? Why take a decision here today which could adversely affect what has been an improving atmosphere between the Staff Union and management? Why tie the hands of the parties in the mediation at a time when we need to look at *all* options available for collective dispute resolution?

We ask for your support, to ensure that the standing of the Staff Union before the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO is a matter of ongoing mediation with the Office. I believe this to be an area of common interest for both the Union and the Administration.

Another point of common interest with the Administration is document GB.310/PFA/13/1. Here, the UN General Assembly has decided to reject a unanimous recommendation from the Board of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund to allow part-time workers the possibility to “top up” their pension contributions, paying the *full* contribution themselves, at no cost to the member States. Here, the staff member would pay both the employee's contribution *and that of the employer* in order to improve their pension at the time of retirement. Again, this has *zero cost* to you.

This is reflective of a more fundamental and long-standing problem: the recommendations of a democratic, tripartite technical body, the Board, with full participation by members of the UN General Assembly itself, being rejected with little or no justification by a supervisory and political body, the General Assembly.

And here, the rejected proposal violates the spirit and the principles enshrined in our own international labour standards, such as the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) and the Part-Time Work Convention, 1994 (No. 175), which states:

*“Statutory social security schemes which are based on occupational activity shall be adapted so that part-time workers enjoy conditions equivalent to those of comparable full-time workers;”*

We celebrated the 100th Anniversary of International Women’s Day only two days ago, and whether this were the case or not, it would be remiss of me if I did not point to the glaring gender element involved in withdrawing this right from part-time staff, the vast majority of whom are working women with family responsibilities. We ask for your support in empowering the Office – which we must recognize has a certain moral authority and technical expertise on matters of social security – to counter this policy that disproportionately targets the women working for the ILO.

We have been following closely the discussions on the programme and budget.

And I want to pause here, to sincerely thank our Director-General for the impassioned and sincere statement he made in defence of the staff yesterday evening. I was in the process of drafting this speech when I heard you speak, and I thought to myself, “With a statement like that from the Director-General, I almost don’t need to speak on this at all.”

But let me just reiterate and support the words of the Director-General: You have here in the ILO – in Geneva and around the world – some of the most committed and driven public servants anywhere. Anyone having any question about this – and I am being sincere here – would be welcome to join me on a walk around the Office at eight or nine o’clock at night, or on mission to visit some projects in the region. You would be surprised to see not only the staff working furiously to draft the report of this meeting, but staff members working on research projects under tight deadlines, preparing missions late into the night because the “normal” working hours were taken up in meetings to get a technical cooperation project off the ground.

We choose to work here because we believe in the ILO. The vast majority of us have chosen to work for the ILO because we believe in its values, we believe in a rights-based approach to development. Many of us have chosen to follow a “calling” because we believe in what the ILO stands for.

Are the staff prepared to do more? Of course they are. But to a point. We are open to discuss ways of working differently, but at the same time there is only so much water you can fit into a vase. The growth in precarious work in the ILO is in direct proportion with the growing workload, under increasing budgetary pressures.

As the ILO staff are themselves directly involved in helping constituents face the financial crisis, we see what is happening in the member States, and we recognize that sacrifice is needed. Let me reiterate here what I have already mentioned to people at many levels of this Administration: The Union stands ready to negotiate – to play an active role in helping identify ways to realize savings, to organize work differently and to come up with concrete measures to help the Office and the Organization weather this crisis.

Finally, and while this is not on your agenda here today, it will be taken up in the Building Subcommittee, allow me to say just one or two words on the headquarters renovation. And let me put this in positive terms – because for us, this renovation is an opportunity not to be missed!

First of all, I want to thank our colleagues in FACILITIES for the constructive contacts which began earlier this year. As we said at that time, and raised with the Administration last year, communication with the staff is critical to the success of the renovation project. We therefore welcome the reference to a communication strategy in the document providing an update on the renovation, and we want again to emphasize that communication cannot happen soon enough.

In the document on the long-term strategy for the financing of future refurbishments, the Union notes estimates of renting out between one and three floors of the headquarters building. Can we realistically expect to be able to rent out a third of our building without it having an impact on the staff? And is that the business we want to be in?

The expectation of the staff is that the designs, and in particular any designs which may have an impact on the organization of our working space, will be discussed with the Union well in advance. We would welcome the opportunity to sit on the project steering committee, not because we want to co-manage the project, but rather to provide assurances to the staff that any changes impacting on their working conditions will be carried out in full consultation with their representatives.

Again, it is important to recognize the new beginnings which seem to have taken hold here in the Office. As we have said in the past, we never expected anything else.

If social dialogue – and if balanced change introduced through good faith collective bargaining – cannot flourish here in the ILO, what chance does it have around the world? We remain convinced that it can. We remain committed to making it work.

Thank you.