



Open letter to the  
international trade union movement

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Contact Name: [rights@world-psi.org](mailto:rights@world-psi.org)

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**COLLECTIVE BARGAINING & SOCIAL DIALOGUE UNDERMINED BY ILO GOVERNING BODY**

March 22, 2018, was a very disappointing day for the international trade union movement.

On that day, the [ILO Governing Body adopted the pay cut for the ILO's professional staff, as decided by the International Civil Service Commission \(ICSC\)](#), in a move that undermines the trust and credibility of the ILO as an international labour authority.

What is further troubling and unacceptable is that the Chairperson of the Workers' Group supported this decision, when it is widely acknowledged that:

- the methodology implemented by the ICSC to recommend the pay cut was fundamentally flawed,
- the ICSC decision was taken without the participation and/or consultation with the UN staff or the unions representing them,
- the ICSC refused to honour its own commitments to engage in a participative review of its own methods, and
- the ICSC decision and its implementation denies workers the right to social dialogue and collective bargaining, which are fundamental pillars of trade union principles.

It was with dismay and disbelief that we learned after the GB session that the ITUC [stated](#):

“The Governing Body couldn’t prevent the application of the ICSC cut, but called for reform of the methodology, with the full involvement of the unions representing the UN workforce and respect for the basic principles of social dialogue.”

For those who participated in the GB, it was clear that preventing or deferring the implementation of the pay cut was possible. An alternative text was discussed, which did take into consideration the concerns and demands of ILO staff. This better alternative was supported by the Employers’ Group – creating a great public relations opportunity for themselves while undermining the Workers’ Group role as the voice of workers within the ILO.

Text adopted with the support of the Workers' Group	Text supported by the Employers' Group
<p>The Governing Body:</p> <p>(a) took note of the legal issues, risks and serious shortcomings associated with the methodology* consultations on, and the implementation of, the results of the 2016 cost-of-living survey in respect of the duty station Geneva; and</p> <p>(b) requested the Office to continue to actively engage with the ICSC at its 86th Session and beyond, with the objective of reforming the post adjustment and other salary survey methodologies, and ensure that the new methodology is applied for any post adjustments. The reform process should guarantee the full involvement of the UN workers' federations and respect basic principles of social dialogue.</p>	<p>The Governing Body:</p> <p>(a) takes note of the legal issues and risks associated with the implementation of the results of the 2016 cost-of-living survey in respect of the duty station Geneva; and consequently instructs that the proposed changes in the post adjustment index be put on hold until a new and sound methodology is conducted;</p> <p>(b) In the meantime, requests the Office to continue to actively engage with the ICSC at its 86<sup>th</sup> session and beyond with the objective of reforming the post adjustment and other salary survey methodologies, and ensure that a sound methodology is applied for any post adjustments. The reform process should guarantee the full involvement of the UN staff federations and respect basic principles of social dialogue;</p> <p>(c) Requests the Director General to report to the session(s) of the Governing Body on the progress made.</p>
<p>(*) further amended by the US government representative, with the support of the Chairperson of the Workers' Group.</p>	

The Chairperson of the Workers' Group justified this move stating that the Workers' Group decision to support the implementation of unnegotiated and unilateral cuts was due to an "institutional responsibility". We cannot believe that when the Workers' Group is required to choose between an "institutional responsibility" and protecting workers by upholding the values of the labour movement (collective bargaining, social dialogue, freedom of association) they chose the former, offering the Employers' Group the opportunity to appear as the champions of labour rights.

It is well known that the ILO Staff Union is an active affiliate of PSI – however the Chairperson of the Workers' Group did not consult PSI on this decision, which directly affects our affiliate's members, violating fundamental union principles of democracy and consultation upon which our movement is built.

Moreover, it was regrettable how this was handled in the GB – rushing things to reach a quick decision, without a clear majority.

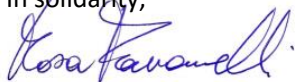
As a result, ILO staff went on strike on 22 and 23 March – PSI and other members of the trade union movement were standing with them. It was unfortunate to note that the leadership of the Workers' Group did not attend the extraordinary ILO Staff Union meeting where the strike was voted nor did they stand with striking workers those days.

The global trade union movement continues to face a series of well-coordinated attacks across the globe and within the ILO itself. Our ability to defend workers' fundamental rights requires inclusion, unity and above all democracy.

The method and content of the actions of the Workers' Group leadership is the latest episode revealing a structural lack of cooperation, solidarity and democracy among the global trade unions. We regret to say that with this action PSI has lost confidence and trust in the Workers' Group leadership.

It is necessary to avoid further accidents with potential dramatic consequences; therefore, we believe that an urgent discussion to address these issues well in advance of the ILC 2018 and the next ILO Governing Body is now required.

In solidarity,



Rosa Pavanelli  
Secretary General  
Public Services International (PSI)