



27th August 2025

Statement on Roster Membership Retroactivity to SMC **Presented by Milan Victor Dawoh: President-UNFSU**

This opening statement today at the ad hoc SMC on the topic of roster management is not only on behalf of Field Staff, but also on behalf of the thousands of UN staff around the world who have worked diligently over many years to obtain career satisfaction and acquire roster memberships in their areas of expertise, including through dutifully engaging in competitive staff selection processes.

All union representatives here today reject the unlawful retroactive application of the new staff selection policy (ST/AI/2025/2) to unfairly, non-transparently, and in a discriminatory manner discontinue the current rosters of staff across the Secretariat.

Based on the overwhelming number of complaints that have come to all the unions here, and the burden now being placed on our time and on our formal system of justice, we repeat our call that the retroactive expiration of current rosters under the new staff selection policy (ST/AI/2025/2) should be suspended and revised immediately. We highlight today the following compelling reasons:

1. Violation of Legitimate Expectations:

Staff who were placed on rosters without a time limit did so under the existing rules at the time of roster placement. Retroactively altering those terms or the advice of central review bodies undermines the principle of legal certainty and legitimate expectation, which is a cornerstone of UN administrative law. Staff cannot be penalized by new rules applied to decisions made years before those rules existed.

2. Disproportionate Harm to Staff Serving in Missions or Away from Headquarters:

For field staff particularly, roster membership is not an abstract entitlement but an essential safeguard for future employment. Retroactive, unlawful roster removal denies colleagues in missions the certainty they need to take up posts in hardship, including on TJOs. There are direct and adverse impacts and harm on staff who had expected to be able to apply to recruit from roster only positions. When contracts have become extremely vulnerable to mandate volatility, there was

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at least assurance that their managers and the organization recognized their qualifications, skills and experience through their continued roster memberships.

3. Unequal Treatment and Legal Risk:

Applying different expiration periods to men (four years) and women (six years) without explicitly framing this as a temporary, narrowly tailored parity measure, introduces legal inconsistencies that actually go against the policy on temporary special measures. Retroactive application magnifies this risk of gender discrimination, exposing the Organization to widespread contestations through OSLA and other legal avenues.

4. Contradiction with Ongoing Reform Context:

At a time when UN80 reforms and liquidity constraints are already destabilizing staff employment and career prospects, removing colleagues from existing rosters retroactively deepens insecurity and harms morale, rather than providing mitigation in the current crisis. This contradicts management's stated commitment to supporting staff through transition.

5. Undermining Trust in Staff–Management Relations:

Staff worked hard for and received indefinite roster placements in good faith. Changing the terms retroactively erodes trust in the Organization's fairness and damages the credibility of future HR reforms.

In light of these points, we strongly urge Management to suspend the implementation of the new staff selection policy to revise the final provision 12.2 that unlawfully orders the retroactive application of the new AI to previous decisions of central review bodies and rostering decisions that were made lawfully under the staff selection and CRB policies in force at that time.

We call on management to engage in constructive dialogue with the staff unions of SMC, to ensure that promulgated policies respect legal principles and staff well-being, while ensuring the need for stability during a period of systemic uncertainty and heightened stress.