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Reports of the Board of the International Training Centre of the ILO

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Report of the 84th Session of the Board (24 May 2021)

1. The 84th Session of the Board of the International Training Centre of the ILO (the Centre) was held through videoconference on 24 May 2021.
2. The report of this meeting is submitted to the 85th Session of the Board (October 2021).
3. **The Chairperson, Mr Guy Ryder,** Director-General of the ILO, welcomed the members of the Board.

Introductory remarks

4. **The Chairperson** gave the floor to the representatives of the City of Turin and the Unione Industriale di Torino.
5. **The representative of the City of Turin, Mr Iaria,** reiterated the importance of the Centre and its campus for Turin. He welcomed the important future developments that would be allowed thanks to the recovery plan adopted by the Italian Government. He mentioned the support of the local authorities, among others in the field of artificial intelligence, in which synergies with the Centre were possible.
6. **The representative of the Union Industriale di Torino, Mr Rosi,** thanked the Centre's management for the good cooperation. He expressed the continuing interest of the Unione Industriale to work in close collaboration with the Centre.

Adoption of the agenda

7. **The Chairperson** proposed to adopt the agenda [1] and to proceed with the only item.
8. *The Board adopted the agenda.*

The Centre's proposed operational model

9. **The Chairperson** asked Mr Greg Vines, ILO's Deputy Director-General for Management and Reform, to introduce the document [2] and reminded that this document was submitted for information and guidance and would inform the drafting on the Strategic Plan of the Centre for 2022–25 and the Programme and Budget proposals for 2022–23.
10. **Mr Vines** introduced the document. This document was divided in four sections. The first part described the future service portfolio of the Centre; the second one looked at the implications of the proposed new operational model on the campus infrastructures; the third one depicted the possible impact of the three resizing scenarios on the Centre's staffing structure; and the fourth one described the financial implications of those scenarios.
11. The speaker underlined that the fundamental change the Centre was going through was not the direct result of the pandemic but had been accelerated by it, and praised the very positive results registered in 2020, particularly in terms of participants reached by the online activities. The Centre faced of course many challenges but had also great opportunities to seize in a near future. It should now capitalize on its world-wide

[1] CC 84.

[2] CC 84/1.

reputation as a centre of excellence, as a learning and innovation leader in the United Nations system, and make all possible efforts to meet the massive demand for training from the constituents on the general background of the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

12. He briefly mentioned the different tables and figures shown in the document, emphasizing the increase of the outreach resulting from the shift to online activities and illustrated the three scenarios, in all of which the ongoing commitment of the host government and local authorities to cover costs as set out in the initial agreements would be essential to ensure the viability of maintaining the Centre and a reasonable level of activities in Turin. He privileged scenario 3 though, because it maintained the campus in its current configuration, but did not exclude the possibility of reverting to scenario 2 within two or three years if the situation imposed it.

13. About the human resources of the Centre, he ensured that there would be very limited impact, if any, on the current staff. A reprofiling and reskilling exercise would be needed, and the current and forthcoming vacancies provided opportunities to accelerate the implementation of changes in support of the new model and to maintain agility to adapt expertise and profiles to meet evolving needs. Generally, these changes would involve a redefinition of roles and responsibilities rather than a fundamental change to any job description, with an increased focus on digital competencies and the new delivery modalities.

14. The speaker referred to the institutional investments proposed in the document, which would be required to meet refurbishment needs not covered by ordinary maintenance, promote innovation in learning and knowledge-sharing tools and techniques, finance information technology (IT) infrastructure and software renewal, and establish a reserve for fellowships.

15. He concluded by saying that the proposed new operational model, once fully implemented on a renovated and resized campus, would significantly increase the outreach of the Centre in delivering its mandate, reaching many more constituents with a wider and more accessible offering of training services. As this model evolves, the Board would have the opportunity to review all of the proposed measures to ensure they remain appropriate.

16. **The Employer Vice-Chairperson, Mr Kyriazis,** thanked the Office for making the arrangements for this extraordinary meeting, which had been requested at the end of last year to help facilitate the Board discussions on the operational model of the Centre. It would not be possible to make everyone happy, but the common goal was to ensure the business sustainability and resilience of the Centre.

17. Before entering into specific comments, he recognized the positive elements of the proposal, among which: growing scope of online learning; making the Centre a learning and innovation hub; moving closer face-to-face activities to the field and to constituents, in partnership with local agents; foreseeing special events on the campus; focusing also on non-training services; and providing information on the different resizing scenarios and implications on human resources.

18. On the issue of principles being fit for the 2020’s, the document referred to a rights-based approach, but this should be balanced, and nuanced, with a principles-based one. This is because ratified international labour standards could only be effectively promoted when there is an enabling environment for implementation. The need to transfer ownership of knowledge and expertise to local partners and leverage digital technology to increase outreach and ensure financial sustainability was of the utmost importance. Those local partners should be either constituents or entities directly related to constituents.

19. The shift in the service portfolio would deserve more amplitude. The group's understanding was that constituents would be prioritized as recipients of non-training services such advisory services, as a concrete way of contributing to the institutional strengthening of tripartite vocational and technical training institutes, and to the training programmes or services that employers' and workers' organizations offer to their affiliates.

20. The Centre's management should develop a more refined participant tracking system in order to count on reliable information that could be of high value in strategic decisions. If non-training advisory services, as well as institutional capacity building were a growing trend as mentioned many times in the document, these activities needed to be clearly classified and tracked.

21. On the institutional investments, the group recommended to set up an emergency reserve funded from the budget surpluses. This would provide the Centre with a safety net to face any operational crisis in the future.

22. The Employer Vice-Chairperson urged to start taking action immediately on fundamental elements all members of the Board agree on, instead of waiting until the end of October, and raised two main concerns. Firstly, on the resizing scenarios, he was of the view that in practice, the Centre was already operating under scenario 2. In terms of delivery of training activities, the Centre had already fully converted into an online training institution, and it was highly unlikely that it would return to the levels of face-to-face activities seen in the past. Therefore, precise plans with a timeline, milestones and responsible units to gradually reduce campus occupation should be approved. Negotiations with the City of Turin to return excess facilities space, as well as negotiations with possible organizations that might be interested to move into the campus should start soon. Secondly, on the human resources, it was obvious that with the reduction in campus occupancy and the full conversion to online training, an important number of posts in the service units might need to be reviewed. In parallel with the Training Department's need of additional staff due to the changes in the delivery modalities, an opportunity to be reskilled and reassigned should be given to those colleagues. However, a clear message should be sent that the objective is not to reduce staff costs per se, but to reduce overhead by transferring much needed professional capacity to the Training Department. The human resources strategy should be completely redrafted and a real and meaningful performance management system should be put in place. Finally, the Employer Vice-Chairperson strongly recommended the Board to urgently set up an Implementation Task Force (ITF) which should include the Officers of the Board and the Centre's management. This ITF should oversee the implementation plan with a detailed timeline, with indicative milestones, anticipating bottlenecks and setting indicators of achievement. The Implementation Plan should be presented to the Officers of the Board before the regular meeting in October, and be convened roughly every three months for the necessary adjustments. We should not risk remaining "business as usual". The Employers' group expect the next version of the operational model to address these concerns.

23. **The Worker Vice-Chairperson, Ms Cappuccio,** thanked the management for sharing this proposal for a new operational model for the Centre and shared some thoughts about the context in which the discussion was taking place. She then turned to the document itself, starting with an important remark on the introduction: the Board had never requested the Centre to reduce face-to-face learning. Shifting to the "all online" was a short-term solution, not for the long run. The Workers' group had insisted in each of its interventions that face-to-face should remain at the heart of the Centre's training offer.

24. On exploring the market for capacity development services, she reminded that through the ILO, the Centre was a UN agency, that is a public institution mandated to serve constituents and not the market, although it might of course and to a certain extent offer services outside this mandate. As the members knew, the Centre depended on public funding, mainly from the Italian Government and from the ILO. She recalled that the Centre's statute explicitly stipulated that "its teaching shall be objective and independent of any political or commercial considerations". Its public nature should be reflected in future discussions.

25. On the strengthening the focus on the aspects of the Centenary Declaration related to capacity development, the Worker Vice-Chairperson agreed on the further collaboration with other UN agencies in order to export the ILO mandate, especially its overarching goal of social justice and decent work for all.

26. On positioning the Centre as a learning innovation hub, she thought this was a way to increase its visibility in the international community but underlined that this depended on the continuous investment from the Italian Government. Therefore, the Centre should also explore which interactions could be held with other Italian education organizations to guarantee a long-term funding and positive collaboration with the host country and the City of Turin.

27. She welcomed the proposal to model the new service mix of the Centre on the UN common capacity development approach and to take guidance from the ILO capacity development strategy adopted in 2019, but the ILO agenda should of course have priority. With regard to beneficiaries, she feared that partnering with local institutions might mean a decentralization of the Centre in the practice and hinder the quality of learning. The Workers' group was not opposed to this option, as a way to bringing the Centre to the field, but it required further thoughts on how it would be put in practice and regulated or on the partnership conditions.

28. In relation to access to training, she agreed on the fact that digital learning is more flexible. However, this could also lead to excessive working hours. For years, the group had fought to make sure that training takes place during the normal working hours. The Worker Vice-Chairperson referred to a recent joint WHO/ILO report warning about the health consequences of overwork. About digital transformation, her opinion was that it should go hand in hand with the pedagogical methodology, and above all leave no one behind. The digital divide should not be minimized.

29. On the scenarios, the Workers' group preferred scenario 3 because it was the most convenient and most flexible. This was also the only scenario that leaves space for a possible return to face-to-face meetings and to transform the Centre into an international learning innovation hub.

30. In relation to the human resources, as the document did not provide sufficient information, the group would like to hear from the management what steps were being taken to have a proper consultation and social dialogue. Public Services International should participate in the social dialogue process.

31. Finally, about the financial implications, the Worker Vice-Chairperson thought that further financial analysis might be required, once the decision on the operational model would be made, which should be based on the mandate of the Centre as a public institution. She recalled the strong dependence of the Centre upon the support of the host country and stressed that any decrease in face-to-face training would reduce not only expenditure, but also revenue. Pointing on online learning only was therefore not a sustainable solution. About the liabilities linked to separation entitlements and after-service health insurance, the Workers' group had always understood that these expenditures were supported by the ILO, as clearly stated in the financial statements. As to the Terminal Benefits Fund, it might be better to stick to the current practice, that is a periodic payment done as a defined contribution, calculated in percentage of the salary and paid by those who would benefit from this Fund, as provided by the ILO Conference in 1980. Until now, nobody had called for a revision of this system that had worked fairly well all these years. The Workers' group would also like to hear the Legal Adviser's opinion on this matter.

32. **The Government Vice-Chairperson, Mr Brizuela,** commended the efforts made to consolidate the Centre as an ILO learning innovation hub and saluted the synergies resulting out of the engagement with ILO headquarters and other UN agencies. The group also endorsed the implementation of learning services aimed at the realization of the Centenary Declaration.

33. Since the beginning of the informal consultations on this topic, the Government group had said that the Centre should adapt to ongoing changes, changes that were being accelerated by the pandemic. The Government group had understood from the beginning that the status quo was not sustainable in the long term. The Centre had indeed taken some steps, for instance by decreasing face-to-face training and increasing online training, but a holistic approach was needed to implement a successful new operational model. The group would like a clear picture of the short- and long-term implications of the implementation of a new model on critical aspects such as human resources and finances, as well as the future role of the campus.

34. In the area of human resources, the Government Vice-Chairperson took note that the document anticipated that the proposed operational model would require new ways of working and changes in the structure, job profiling and the skills set of the Centre's work force and that the total number of full-time equivalent staff would remain at a similar level. He asked further information in order to fully understand how the staff would be affected by the reform.

35. The current financial model of the Centre should be changed, and the speaker urged management to develop a plan for securing additional contributions by other donors to guarantee the Centre's financial sustainability in the long term and to seek more actively partnerships with the private sector and other members of the civil society. He expressed the group's appreciation to the Government of Italy for providing financial assistance to build a learning innovation laboratory that would expose participants to the next generation of learning technologies.

36. The campus should adapt, its staff should be retrained, and its financial model refitted. On this issue, he invited the management of the Centre to submit to the consideration of the Board reasonable measures to further increase savings that might arise out of the reduction of the size of the campus. On the other hand, it would be good to get some more insights in how the future size of the campus would be handled, especially if its full size was to be retained as described in scenario 3.

37. The Government Vice-Chairperson concluded by reiterating the group's willingness to engage in as many informal consultations as necessary to take a decision on this matter in October 2021, a decision that would lead to a Centre maintaining its prestige in the academic sector, dedicated to ILO constituents and financially stable. The Government group expresses its conviction that the 2022–25 Strategic Plan and the Programme and Budget proposals for 2022–23 should reflect real consensus among the three constituents.

38. **The representative of the Government of Italy, Mr Mari,** aligned himself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Government group. Italy had been, and continued to be, a staunch supporter of a reform that could reinforce the status of the Centre as a leading training and innovation body for the United Nations. This commitment was a consequence of the fact that Italy can be considered to be the main stakeholder in the Centre, as it was the main contributor, the host country, the country of origin of more than half of the staff, and an active member of the Board.

39. On the service portfolio, the Government of Italy believed in the need to make the Centre leaner, faster at reacting to challenges, continuously up-to-date. More technology was welcome, in the wake of what had been done in the last years. More beneficiaries needed to be reached, and in more countries than before. The use of digital technologies could be a viable option to do that. Digital training and online services could be the answer, but face-to-face courses should remain an important asset for the Centre, although to a lower degree.

40. On the implications on the infrastructure, the reform would obviously affect the campus as a result of using space more efficiently. The document showed alarming figures, from €7 million for scenario 2 to €18 million for scenario 3, and it seemed that the ILO expected Italy to pay for the needed works. The Government of Italy believed that the campus is a unique asset to the Centre and that it should be maintained as is, similarly to what is described in scenario 3. However, the predicted cost was too high for Italy alone to bear. Serious financial support from the ILO and other donors would be indispensable. Furthermore, the search for new partners for the unused premises might take long and would require a joint effort for a successful outcome. If scenario 3 was not viable in that sense, then a strategic fallback towards scenario 2 would be needed in order to preserve a fully functioning Centre in Turin. However, for both scenarios Italy would request the ILO to review its estimates in order to truly extract all the savings from the size reduction: reducing the physical footprint and splitting the campus should yield a substantial return for everyone involved, much more than that was suggested in the document.

41. On the human resources, Italy would stick to the request made since the beginning of the talks on a potential reform that staff be protected in all possible ways. This meant no lay-offs. This meant that all rights should be guaranteed, that everyone should be properly reskilled and retrained. The speaker appreciated that the ILO was committed to doing that. Nevertheless, the document was worryingly vague. If human resources are the most important asset for a knowledge-based and training institution such as the Centre, then two pages were hardly enough to grasp the full implications on the staff that this reform might have and what the actual plans of the management were in that regard.

42. On the financial implications, he understood that the two main achievements would be the reduction of campus-related expenditure and a €2 million surplus per year. Many more details would have been necessary in order to have a solid basis for discussion. In particular, the speaker drew attention to the lack of the much-needed strategy for fundraising that Italy had been long requesting. This meant that the backbone of the Centre’s budget would continue to be the Italian contribution which, proportionally, would become even more important to a reduced budget. During the session of the Board in October 2020, several members had called on the ILO’s and the Centre’s management to find ways to bring in additional donors and resources. It was something that all UN organizations around the world do, and Italy would expect no less from the ILO and its Training Centre. It was quite difficult for his Government to understand how an institution that owes its own existence only to voluntary contributions had not managed to develop, in nearly 60 years, a reliable, diverse and stable pool of donors. A detailed proposal for a

fundraising strategy would be most welcome in a near future. In addition, Italy recommended that other creative proposals that acknowledge the role played by the Centre in the interest of the ILO and all its Member States be submitted by the ILO management: for instance, one for absorbing part of the administrative costs of the Centre into the ILO regular budget.

43. On a separate note, the Government of Italy had been surprised to find in the document a suggestion to change the way the separation entitlements were being paid by the ILO. It had been like that since 1980, and there was no reason to change. Moving that expenditure into the Centre's budget would mean that a cost fairly shared by all ILO Member States would be suddenly paid mostly by Italy alone. The only way Italy could agree with something like that would be if the ILO decided to provide an additional matching contribution, exactly as proposed for the healthcare premiums.

44. Finally, a discussion on the proposed institutional investments could only take place in parallel with a discussion on the use of the Italian financial contribution and in connection with the projected budget surplus. In the speaker's view, the surplus and the Italian contribution were tightly linked to each other.

45. The representative of the Government of Italy concluded by saying that Italy was ready to support any well-thought, carefully planned, ambitious and innovative reform. There was still a lot of ground to cover before the Board could get a full picture of all the implications of what the ILO was proposing. Despite the early 2020 predictions, the Centre seemed to be at ease in this new digital and post-pandemic environment, so much that all the stakeholders could take their time to develop a really meaningful reform. Italy would continue to lend its fundamental financial support to the Centre. It would honour its obligations as the host country and bear part of the costs of the reform. Italy's annual contribution had remained at the same high level for almost 20 years. Not even the worst crises, including that financial one of 2007, had managed to reduce this commitment.

46. However, that contribution was somehow proportionate to a certain business model of the Centre at that time. The reform proposed now was instead based on a different model, that is on a downsized campus, on a more efficient use of resources, on savings – and all of this would need to be accompanied by the long overdue fundraising strategy. In this light, it seemed fair that the Italian contribution be adjusted to a more reasonable level according to the outcome of the reform, to the savings arising from it and to the renovation costs that Italy would be required to pay for. Italy was ready to keep contributing to the discussion in the next months, provided that all the Italian well-known priorities are met and that the burden of the reform is fairly shared among all stakeholders.

47. **The representative of the Government of China** thanked Italy for its support to the Centre and noted that although some parties had different concerns or positions on the reform, their common aspiration was a brighter future for the Centre. He expressed his conviction that wisdom and joint efforts from all the members of the Board would allow to reach a sound consensus on this important matter.

48. **The representative of the Government of Japan** agreed with the previous speakers of the Government group. She believed that the proposed new service mix would meet the demands of trainees and match the long-term trends accelerated by the pandemic. She reiterated her Government's support to the Centre's activities, including through the dispatch of two Japanese experts to Turin.

49. **The representative of the Government of India** mentioned the challenging phase the world of work was passing through. The repercussions included job and income losses,

especially in labour-intensive sectors, and disruption in economic activities. Scaling up the potential to generate jobs and to provide income and social security, particularly to the disadvantaged categories of workers, would be pivotal for stimulating the rejuvenation of national economies. Collective action was thus needed, and in this context the speaker recalled the collaboration between the apex training institution of the Ministry of Labour and Employment of India and the Centre.

50. **The Chairperson** thanked all speakers and invited the management of the Centre to reply to the members' questions and comments.

51. **The Director of the Centre, Mr Liu,** took note of the comments made by members which, he ensured, would be incorporated into the Strategic Plan for 2022–25 and the Programme and Budget proposals for 2022–23.

52. **The Director of Training, Mr Klemmer,** thanked the Board for its unanimous position on the future role of the Centre as a learning innovation hub. He acknowledged that the place of face-to-face training in the future service mix needed to be discussed further and wanted to make sure the management had understood properly the messages sent by the members, in order to reflect them in the strategic documents that would submitted to the Board in October. In response to the Employers' request on service quality, he confirmed that monitoring and evaluation system would be refined to ensure the strongest impact possible of the activities. About digital inclusion, an important point raised by the Workers' group that should be reflected in the forthcoming strategic documents, he informed the Board that work had already started in this field and that a Digital Inclusion Summit would be convened in July to consult with constituents on this subject. About the right mix of training and non-training services and the balance between face-to-face and distance learning, he agreed that this should be discussed further. On the learning innovation hub, in particular the learning laboratory that would soon open its doors on the campus, the Director of Training hoped it would be an incentive for constituents from all over the world to come to Turin in order to experience cutting-edge digital learning and collaboration technologies.

53. **The Employer Vice-Chairperson** clarified the position of his group. He expressed the opinion that due to the unpredictability of the situation, the Centre should not adopt a "normative" agenda and that some flexibility would be necessary. The group's vision for the future should not be seen as "either/or" because face-to-face and distance learning are two different products serving different audiences. On the point made by the Italian Government, he hoped that the management of the Centre would be able to respond and to reflect this reaction in the eventual document to be submitted to the Board in October.

54. **The Worker Vice-Chairperson** confirmed that the main points did indeed remain open and that there was enough time for discussion and consultation until October. She reiterated her group's willingness to collaborate to find the best solution possible for the Centre. She insisted on the need to improve relations between the management of the Centre and the Staff Union Committee, especially to integrate the impressions and feelings of staff into the reprofiling and reskilling exercise.

55. **The Government Vice-Chairperson** restated that his group was ready to engage in consultations.

56. **The Chairperson** thanked the members of the Board for their valuable contributions and assured them that both the Chair of the Board and the management of the Turin Centre would continue to operate on the basis of strong and inclusive consultation and constructive engagements with the staff representatives.

Concluding remarks

57. **The Chairperson** informed the members of the Board that the report of this meeting of the Board would be considered in the Institutional Section of the 343rd Session of the Governing Body, together with the report of the 85th Session of the Board. He proposed that, in order to facilitate the preparation and finalization of the report, the Board should delegate the task of approving the draft report to the Officers of the Board.

58. *The Board approved the Chairperson's proposal.*

59. *The Chairperson closed the meeting.*

July 2021

Appendix

Statement by the representative of the Staff Union Committee to the Board of the Centre

84th Session of the Board of the Turin Centre, 24 May 2021

Director General, distinguished members of the board, colleagues, it is with regret that today I must share with you the Staff Union's disappointment that we the Staff Union Committee, as the elected representatives of the Staff of the Centre, continue to be excluded from the ongoing HR decisions ensuing from the reform of the Centre.

Of the four meetings of the JNC held in 2021 there was no information on which it was possible for the Staff and Management representatives to discuss: no possible future organization chart was shared, no information has been provided regarding what kind of staff retraining is envisaged, no financial information. Nothing at all.

The management has also recently excluded the Staff Union from the decision making process on two important matters:

- The decision to limit the number of staff that may opt for a voluntary departure should they be unable or unwilling to be reskilled and/or accept changes to their current tasks, as required by the new operational model of the Centre, introducing new criteria;
- Changing the current ratio of GS to Professional and Higher Categories decreasing the number of GS positions devoted to support functions. More on this point shortly.

We also note with dismay that the Management and the Staff Union continue to have very different approaches regarding the way social dialogue principles are understood and applied within our institution. This includes in regards to the recent communications of the Director of the Centre in regards to the application of the ILO's own Guidelines on Managing Change and Restructuring Processes.

On the implementation of the new business model, we would like to make the following comments and suggestions.

Concerning table 4 on page 7 of the documents – Number of Participants we note the lack of sex disaggregated data. This has been an ongoing request. We do not understand why the data in table 4 is not disaggregated by sex. This was in the past requested by the Director General of the ILO, asking to see differentiation across different levels and categories of staff in the section on gender equality within the Centre (GB.337/INS/11).

On the issue of staff, we recently saw some estimates released by the ILO on its own intranet showing the gender balance at each grade. We would encourage the management of the Centre to report in a similar manner.

The document on the new business model talks about digital inclusion but does not consider how this will be ensured according to the different profile of participants attending our courses.

The data under tables 7 and 8 under human resources implications should be disaggregated because the impact of the Centre's new operational model may penalize more women than men.

The staff needing to be reskilled seems to be GS staff (in training as well as in administration), and this category is mainly composed of women. The resulting negative impact of the reform on participants and on female staff is concerning to us because these two consequences of the reform could be classified as forms of indirect discrimination.

With regards to the reduction of GS staff according to our estimates we would go from 38 per cent GS and 62 per cent Professional/Higher Category to 34 per cent GS and 66 per cent Professional/Higher Category. We would like to know what the corresponding shifts would be in terms of female vs male.

In regards to Professional and Higher category while there is the possibility for voluntary departures we are concerned that this may not be taking place on the basis of equal opportunity as the newly introduced HR criteria does not foresee, it would seem, the same possibility for colleagues in lower grades or with less tenure.

While indeed, it is worth mentioning that the early departure of colleagues on early retirement or on the basis of agreed termination will create opportunities for more mid-level technical roles, past hiring practices in similar attrition cases resulted very often in the opening of positions at the more junior P2 level.

This has in fact been the practice in recent years leading to a de facto situation where these more junior officials are expected to perform and deliver at a level commensurate to that of their more senior peers. Yet they are not remunerated at the same level. These inequities, in our view, should be avoided in the future.

A key emphasis of the document is on financial sustainability. But, the human dimension must also be taken into account. Firstly, we are concerned about increased workload levels and the ensuing stress resulting from the shift to digital learning.

Digital learning is more labour intensive than we may have thought. This needs to be objectively assessed. In the meantime, we have anecdotal information from colleagues regarding the impact on working time. Many of them have told us that they are required to conduct webinars in the middle of the night, early in the morning and late into the evening.

The core work hours, principally in tune with the face-to-face training modality, have been suspended; yet no commensurate measures have been put into place to address the changes which have taken place to the working time of staff.

Regarding paragraphs 3, 4 and 11 in the document which speaks about the need for the "diversification of the service portfolio and for the capacity development strategy of the Centre needs to further evolve", it is our strong view that a commensurate investment in the people of the Centre, namely its staff is needed to ensure this.

In the recent joint Management - Staff survey on the reform of the Centre, five (5) pages of inputs were provided in reply to the question on new staff skills.

We are disappointed that table 10 on page 24 (Institutional Investments) does not foresee any institutional investments to secure the human dimension of the Centre's sustainability.

We therefore request that the modalities of the current staff development fund be strengthened. Firstly, to substantially increase the allocation, at least as a transitional measure for the period 2022–25. This through an appropriate funding allocation – higher than the current one.

We propose the establishment of a fixed percentage of the staff payroll to ensure its replenishment.

This increase to the staff development fund should also be guaranteed through the establishment of a binding indicator in the strategic framework document.

Lastly, the fund should be managed on a paritarian basis that is jointly by the Management and the Staff Union.

Regarding, mobility and career development for staff , these are acknowledged as important, but, are seemingly hollow words, as there are no concrete proposals in the document in contrast to the extensive details provided in the document on the reduction of staff.

Thank you.