

Supplementary Information to the Booklet “A Guide to the Mobility and Hardship Scheme and Related Arrangements”

I. PROCESS FOR HARDSHIP CLASSIFICATION

Process

Resident Coordinators, in consultation with staff at field duty stations, complete an ICSC questionnaire which surveys seven discrete factors: health, security, local conditions, isolation, climate and housing. A rating is assigned to each of these factors by the ICSC secretariat via a standard marking/scoring process which results in an overall rating that determines the hardship category. This is the initial classification. The next stage is a review by the Tripartite Working Group for the review of conditions of life and work in field duty stations (hereinafter the TWG).

The Tripartite Working Group is composed of members of the ICSC secretariat and representatives of both the organizations and the staff. It examines in an objective and detailed manner the classification assigned by the ICSC secretariat. At every stage, care is taken to draw on all available sources of specialized information. The Department of Safety and Security and the United Nations Medical Service participate actively in the process by providing expert advice for the assessment of the security and health factors, respectively. The TWG may also seek eye-witness accounts and views of its members and others who have recently traveled to or served in a location/region under review. A final recommendation on classification is arrived at by consensus. The TWG recommendations are presented to the ICSC Chairman, who under delegated authority of the Commission, has the final decision in the process.

The Tripartite Working Group for the review of conditions of life and work in field duty stations (hereinafter the Tripartite Working Group)

Timing

Mandatory regional reviews take place every three years. The regions reviewed are i) Africa, ii) Asia and the Pacific and iii) Latin America, the Middle East and Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The regional review system enables the TWG to look at duty stations in terms of regional relativities, although global relativities are also taken into account. Duty stations where security conditions pose risks are reviewed annually. If conditions have changed significantly in the period between mandatory reviews, a duty station may submit a request to the Chairman of the ICSC for an out-of-cycle review. ICSC may also request an out-of-cycle review for a duty station that it is monitoring closely. The TWG meets towards the end of each year, to consider the questionnaires from the region under review. A limited mid-year review is undertaken by a reduced number of members of the TWG, of newly established duty stations and those that have received temporary entitlements. Duty stations to

be reviewed must submit completed questionnaires by the requested deadline, usually by 31 March for the mid-year review or by 1 October for the end of year review.

Temporary classification

An organization fielding staff to a new duty station may ask ICSC to assign a temporary classification. A temporary classification is subject to a subsequent formal review by the TWG, based on the submission of a questionnaire.

Transitional classification

A transitional classification indicates that a duty station is being carefully monitored by the TWG for potential reclassification and is required to submit a questionnaire for the next review. Organizations are informed of those duty stations which have been assigned transitional classifications.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

International Civil Service Commission

The Commission is responsible for establishing the criteria for the scheme. It periodically reviews the operation of the scheme. The Chairman, Vice-Chairman and, from time to time, other members of the Commission may also visit hardship locations to gain a first-hand perspective of the field experience. The ICSC Chairman, by authority delegated to him by the Commission, promulgates all hardship entitlements with effect from 1 January of a given year; classifications for new duty stations reviewed at the mid-year review have an effective date of 1 July. ICSC issues on a bi-annual basis a consolidated list containing the classifications for all active duty stations.

ICSC secretariat

The ICSC secretariat is responsible for the operational aspects of the scheme. It ensures that duty stations are reviewed in a timely manner. It determines the preliminary classifications for duty stations based on the questionnaires that are submitted. It assesses on an ongoing basis the continuing relevance of the criteria on which the scheme is based and proposes policy guidelines to the TWG and the Commission. It provides on the Commission's behalf a rapid response to the sometimes dramatic fluctuations in various duty stations due to sudden changes in the political, economic or security situation. It monitors the classifications for continuing validity and stays abreast of changes by site visits to various parts of the world, normally undertaking an annual mission to the region under review. It provides policy advice and guidance to human resources management staff at the organizations' headquarters locations and to Resident Coordinator/Resident Representatives regarding the scheme and the completion of the questionnaires.

Organizations

Headquarters

Human resources management staff at the organizations' headquarters locations administer the entitlements of the hardship and mobility scheme. Representatives of organizations with a large field presence participate with the ICSC secretariat in the TWG. They liaise with the secretariat on an ad hoc basis to discuss, as needed, the classifications of individual duty stations. In cooperation with the Resident Coordinator/Resident Representative they instruct staff how to fill out the ICSC questionnaire. Headquarters staff provide field staff with the latest versions of questionnaires and reply to any queries regarding the scheme. They are also directly responsible for ensuring that questionnaires are submitted to them on time and are properly completed and certified by the Resident Coordinator/Resident Representative.

Resident Coordinator/Field staff

Every country is represented by a lead agency whose Resident Coordinator or Resident Representative serves as the official representative to the country on behalf of all agencies. Field staff, guided by the Resident Coordinator/Resident Representative, play a key role in ensuring that the classification is an accurate reflection of conditions at the duty station; the preparation of the questionnaire is an interagency exercise. The hardship questionnaire is the main source of information for determining the classification. The Resident Coordinator/Resident Representative has a major responsibility in the process, by coordinating the completion of the questionnaire, ensuring that questionnaires are submitted from all active duty stations in the country, and verifying that the replies are complete and accurate and that ICSC is informed when a duty station no longer has staff assigned to it.

Staff

Internationally recruited staff on assignment of one year or more at the reporting duty station who are eligible for hardship payments¹ should acquaint themselves with the purpose of the hardship scheme. They should ensure that they provide accurate input concerning the conditions of life and work for the completion of the questionnaire. However only one questionnaire will be accepted by ICSC for each duty station and a consensus should therefore be reached prior to onward submission. If agreement cannot be reached, the Resident Coordinator/Resident Representative takes the final decision as to the information to be submitted to ICSC. The Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA), the Coordinating Committee of Independent Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System (CCISUA) and the United Nations International Civil Servants Federation (UNISERV) ensure representation of staff at the meetings of the TWG.

¹ To determine eligibility please refer to the booklet "*A Guide to the Mobility and Hardship Scheme and related arrangements*".