

ICSC Chairman 's message on the ICSC's New Parental Leave Framework

Dear Colleagues,

It is my great pleasure to inform you that the United Nations common system has a new parental leave framework, established by the ICSC (A/77/30) and welcomed by the General Assembly in its resolution 77/256.

This new parental leave policy provides extended paid time off to parents, regardless of gender, as they welcome a child into their lives. At its 2022 summer session, the Commission decided to:

- a) replace the current maternity, paternity and adoption leave provisions with a parental leave provision of 16 weeks for all parents; and
- b) provide an additional period of 10 weeks to birth mothers to meet the specific pre- and post-natal needs.

The last adjustment of maternity leave was made in 1979 (maternity leave of 16 weeks) and paternity leave was first introduced in 2004 (paternity leave of 4 weeks at family duty stations and 8 weeks at non-family duty stations). Our goal is to invest in family-friendly policies that benefit both organizations and families, as these policies ensure that staff with child-care responsibilities are supported and valued.

Considering that parental leave entitlements are an important part of a compensation package that helps organizations attract and retain the best talent, it was crucial for the United Nations common system to formally adopt the best practices, as an employer of choice.

It is envisaged that the new policy will allow women to have more equitable career opportunities with men because they are not forced to suspend or abandon their careers to provide childcare. Moreover, if men are also provided a significant length of paid time off in the form of parental leave, they are more likely to take on shared parenting responsibilities, thus relieving some of the heavy load of infant caregiving that women have traditionally carried on their own.

In the broader context of the Sustainable Development goals and in the long term, an enhanced parental leave will not only serve the UN staff members and UN organizations but will also generally contribute to the improvement of public health by allowing parents to care for their children and themselves, reducing the likelihood of physical illness and improving mental health. The enhancement of the current provisions further demonstrates the values of the United Nations common system.

I wish you and your families a happy, healthy and successful New Year!

Sincerely,

Larbi Djacta

9 January 2023