



SIXTEENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Other personnel questions**Special operations approach**

1. Several organizations of the United Nations common system (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNHCR) are paying a Special Operations Living Allowance (SOLA),¹ which is applicable to internationally recruited staff members assigned to designated duty stations – normally among those classified as non-family, duty stations by the United Nations Security Coordinator, and where such non-family status is expected to prevail for at least one year. Duty stations classified as non-family are those covered by Phases III (Relocation), IV (Programme Suspension) and V (Evacuation) of the United Nations security management system.
2. The allowance is a monthly lump sum paid to the staff member and represents the organization's contribution towards the staff member's living expenses at the designated location. It replaces other existing allowances such as the Extended Monthly Evacuation Allowance (EMEA),² and is calculated on the basis of mission subsistence allowance (MSA).³
3. The SOLA has been developed to meet the specific needs of the organizations mentioned above, in view of their peace-keeping and other emergency-related technical activities. The administrative modalities established by these organizations are complex, and touch on all aspects of the staff member's conditions of service (designation of an administrative place of assignment with consequential adjustment of the post-adjustment rate, travel entitlements (periodicity of home leave and family visit travel, additional shipping and storage entitlements) and additional authorized absence not charged to annual leave, etc.).

¹ It is understood that the UN secretariat is also examining implementation of SOLA.

² Payable under the United Nations field security provisions when a staff member is authorized to return to his/her duty station after evacuation, but unaccompanied by the family members. Also payable when a staff member is assigned to a non-family duty station and cannot install the family at the duty station.

³ The purpose of the MSA is to reimburse staff for subsistence costs during periods of mission service away from the parent duty station.

4. The ILO's operational activities outside headquarters do not fall within the notion of peace-keeping or emergency-related activities in the same context as the organizations mentioned above. However, ILO staff are sometimes called upon to serve at a duty station where SOLA is payable to counterparts from other organizations. In other words, ILO staff endure the same physical, security, etc. conditions as other United Nations staff, their families are unable to accompany them to a particular duty station, yet they receive different conditions of service from those other United Nations staff. This situation is not compatible with one of the basic tenets of the United Nations common system, namely, equity and fairness. In this respect, the International Civil Service Commission has said morale can be jeopardized when staff working side by side have different conditions of service – a uniform approach lessens such dissatisfaction⁴.
5. UNDP is the lead United Nations agency in the majority of duty stations and ILO activities in the field resemble most closely those of that organization. Based on the criteria applied by UNDP, the ILO currently has one duty station with one international position where SOLA would be applicable. However, the schemes established by UNDP and other organizations to administer SOLA are very complex and in view of the very small number of ILO officials concerned (currently one) it is proposed to implement SOLA in the Office through a simplified formula. This would result in a similar financial benefit to the official, but without the attendant administrative difficulties of other schemes. Finally, it might be noted that the World Health Organization is currently planning a similar approach to that proposed by the Office.
6. The financial implications of the above proposal for the 2002-03 biennium would be some US\$75,000 which could be financed from provisions made in the programme and budget for staff costs.
7. *The Committee may wish to recommend to the Governing Body that the Director-General be authorized to implement the above proposal for those officials who may be eligible to receive the Special Operations Living Allowance according to UNDP criteria.*

Geneva, 1 February 2002.

Point for decision: Paragraph 7.

⁴ Extract from the International Civil Service Commission note entitled "What is the common system?".