

Message from Larbi Djacta, Chair of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC)

World Mental Health Day – 10 October 2020

On the occasion of the **World Mental Health Day** I would like to share a few thoughts on this subject which is not only an important, but an essential part of our world today. I am ready to support the efforts of those who, like me, strive for measures that ensure and attain the mental health of all our people, as a norm and not a special accommodation.

Over the course of the last decades and as Chair of ICSC, I have met with many colleagues working throughout the world, from headquarters to the field, including in extremely dangerous situations.

I wish to express my heart felt appreciation to you all for your service, for your hard work, dedication and your willingness to embrace change in our Organization as we had to transition to the virtual way of working while ensuring the delivery of our goals and mandate. I also wish to recognize the sacrifices you make.

The ICSC adopted a revised [Framework for Human Resources Management](#) in 2017 to facilitate effective personnel management and promote common values of the international civil service. The framework recognizes that the most valuable resource of the United Nations common system is its staff.

Duty of care and staff well-being are integral parts of this framework whose broad principles include an enabling work environment that contributes to staff well-being, physical and psychological safety and protection of staff at all duty stations.

We must continue to work together to ensure that the overall protection and the physical and psychological well-being of our workforce are safeguarded through occupational, safety and medical programmes with special mitigation measures for high risk environments.

In these difficult times of the COVID-19 pandemic we must not lose sight of the importance of organizations' duty of care towards its personnel and of mental health and well-being. We must also reflect on our own self-care.

During these particularly challenging times, taking care of our mental health is even more critical. To ensure that we never lose focus on that, this year's [WHO World Mental Health Campaign](#) is an important reminder that highlights the need to increase investment in mental health.

The impacts of COVID-19 are placing an even greater strain on our mental health. The pandemic has disrupted our daily lives, threatened our safety and isolated us from our regular support networks. Many people are left feeling isolated, anxious, and afraid for the future. We must invest in expanded mental health services to support the increase in psychological suffering caused by this disease, from grief and depression to anxiety.

As the [United Nations System Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy](#) outlines, “doing our work well in the United Nations requires all of us to be giving the best of ourselves, while taking the best care we can of our colleagues, our families, the Organization and ourselves”.

This is a period of unprecedented change. How we work, where we work, and what we expect from work is shifting before our eyes. It is time for our workplace and for all of us to adapt. The workforce of the future needs to remain adaptable and resilient but also healthy and productive.

We can achieve this if we take care of ourselves and one another. There is no challenge that we cannot overcome if we work together.