

Over the next few months, we will complete our study of these issues assisted by representatives drawn from geographic and functional bureaux. We will recommend a departmental policy on LES staff, which will articulate the role of LES and the conditions attached to the creation of LES positions.

5.1.3 PROGRESS TO DATE

5.1.3.1 Classification Conversion

A new ten-level standard for LES was introduced in the early '90s, for the consistent evaluation of all missions against a common standard, thereby ensuring internal equity both within a mission and among missions. It is the key compensation tool that allows us to attract the labour we require in each of our local labour markets abroad. For LES this universal standard is their UCS, applying to all office LES positions in all 159 missions abroad.

Since last year's HR strategy, the outstanding missions (all US missions and three others) have either been converted or are now being converted to the standard, as promised. It is important to finish this conversion, both to ensure that all missions are using the same standard and because movement to the new compensation system depends upon conversion.

5.1.3.2 Compensation Policy

We needed to reduce the current burden placed on missions to do salary surveys on an annual basis and to improve the quantity and quality of data captured to reflect the local market. Accordingly, in 1997 we evaluated three separate sources of information (UNDP, Hay Management Consultants, and benchmarking against the US) as options to support the 1998 round of compensation adjustments.

We have selected both Hay Management Consultants and UNDP for all our operations around the world. While each source has its strengths and weaknesses, together they cover most of the required ground. We are now using data from these sources to support compensation setting in our missions.

To minimise the expense of data collection and analysis, we may move to a cyclical benefits review in missions, with exceptional interim reporting as required. In many parts of the world, we still have difficulty getting benefits information, as do other countries such as the US. We are exploring the possibility of partnering with such countries in the purchase of benefits data from consulting firms, or in the conduct of our own surveys with jointly-designed questionnaires.

We also continue to have difficulty in finding reliable market data for non-office staff, such as cooks, gardeners and drivers. Again we are exploring alternatives for obtaining the information we require. In the meantime, missions will have to continue doing such surveys using the existing methodology.