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**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
STATEMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, PRISCA CHAOUI
UNOG STAFF COORDINATING COUNCIL
23 March 2018**

Mr. President,
Excellencies and distinguished Delegates,

I would like to start by expressing our appreciation for allowing us to speak at this august body. It is inspiring to be here at the very Human Rights Council, which on many occasions has supported trade unions around the world and has vocally reaffirmed the related fundamental freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

It is in that spirit of celebrating and exercising those rights, UN staff in Geneva has been on strike today. Our industrial action, which took place concurrently with some other UN agencies in Geneva, is a measure of last resort.

In recognition of the Council's today programme to adopt critical resolutions, which aim to address gross violations and alleviate the suffering of the vulnerable populations around the world, we have worked with the Secretariat to minimize the impact of the strike in this connection.

Dear Mr President,

Allow me to briefly explain why we are on strike.

UN staff in Geneva and in the field have suffered serious and ongoing deterioration in employment conditions due to decisions of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC). Those decisions were arbitrarily made, based on flawed calculations and conditioned by extraneous justifications. There was little transparency in the process, and no meaningful consultation with staff.

The ICSC has even breached an understanding carefully reached last year, which would have cushioned the impact and reviewed its approach in the future.

Staff has therefore no confidence in the ICSC's technical independence and expertise. Regrettably, there is no independent review nor appeal mechanism. We have no choice but to resort to strike. Our industrial action is not about just a pay cut. It is rather a principled battle against the unfair, arbitrary and inconsiderate way of treating UN staff.

Distinguished delegates,

We share your vision for a more effective and efficient organization. We have accepted and implemented many hardship and austerity measures for this purpose.

We are proud of our Organization and committed to its core values and objectives.

We appeal to our Member States, represented here and at the General Assembly, to support our basic demands, which would be naturally supported in national contexts. We only request that our employment conditions be determined in a more balanced, accountable, transparent and participatory manner by a truly professional and independent institution.

We also count on your support for the efforts to defend our fundamental rights and employment conditions. I am very hopeful these demands would be warmly received and echoed by you.

Thank you.
