

## INFORMATION NOTE No.6

### FOREIGN SERVICE DELEGATE TABLE MEETING – APPLICATION OF THE CRITERIA FOR EASING CONFINEMENT AND ALLOW PROGRESSIVE RETURN TO ON-SITE WORK - GLOBAL COVID-19 CRISIS

On Thursday, May 14, the Foreign Service Delegate Table held a videoconference meeting with two main items on the agenda: **“Contingency Plan for Risk Prevention”** and **“Application of the Resolution issued by the State Secretariat for Territorial Policies and Public Service on 4 May to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation”**. The Directorate General of the Foreign Service, the Sub-directorate General of Personnel and the Ministry’s Risk Prevention Service attended the meeting in representation of the Administration. All Labor Union were part of the meeting as well, and we addressed the implementation of the two items on the agenda at the Ministry’s Central Services in Madrid.

It is worth mentioning that we were unable to debate the application of the above-mentioned matters regarding our personnel overseas **as a result of a recent report issued by the Ministry’s State Attorney**, which limits these issues to the application of the Risk Prevention Regulations of each country:

- “... Diplomatic Missions and Consular Offices **must firstly apply local regulations regarding Occupational Risk Prevention...**”
- “... at these Missions and Offices, **an appropriate Risk Prevention Policy must be implemented**. It must include occupational health actions aimed at achieving a normal and efficient application of the generic principles contained in the Spanish Occupational Risk Prevention Law and its effects as per Royal Decree 67/2010”.
- “When applying these principles, **the particularities of the different workplaces, the geographical dispersion and the regime applicable to personnel overseas** must be taken into account”.

In this regard, CCOO-Foreign Service reminded those present that, at the beginning of this global health emergency, **the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation’s decision was to treat all General State Administration staff as one block and not to discriminate any employee on grounds of the location of their workplace**. This would have meant applying the same criteria that were established in the several Resolutions issued by the State Secretariat for Territorial Policies and Public Service. In addition, the statements sent by the Sub-secretariat for Foreign Affairs to the network of Embassies, Consulates and all Spanish Representations abroad **have always acknowledged the need to adapt these guidelines to the specific circumstances of each country and insisted on following the health protocols and public policy rules established by authorities at each State, Region or City**.

For approximately two months, these consistent and uniform criteria allowed us to carry out a comprehensive assessment of all the measures which were being implemented in our field, demanding the Administration to comply and observe them. Also, this allowed all Labor Unions to act and report all irregular or abnormal situations identified throughout this operation before the Directorate General for Foreign Security. Given the historic legal gap which our workers have always had to suffer, aggravated by the different circumstances of each particular case and region, these unified criteria had given us hope that things were finally changing and that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation was finally treating us exactly the same way as the Ministry’s Central Services staff in Madrid, thus not leaving our overseas personnel behind for the first time.



However, almost overnight, we have suddenly experienced an **unjustified change of course which irresponsibly excludes our overseas personnel when applying Risk Prevention and Organizational measures issued for the rest of the State General Administration.** Furthermore, these guidelines have now been downgraded to the status of “general framework” instead of considering them as an **unavoidable minimum.** As a result, the responsibility of implementing confinement easing measures has been given to the Heads of Mission, who must consider the local regulations on Occupational Risk Prevention, **a decision that will lead to improvisation right in the middle of this unprecedented health crisis. Additionally, the new criteria puts our personnel’s health at risk and leaves our Heads of Mission in an extremely complicated situation, as none of them have been able to familiarize with this kind of local regulations.**

In view of the above and in agreement with the rest of the Labor Unions that were part of this meeting, CCOO-Foreign Service **strongly rejects these new criteria established by the Administration.** We can confirm that we have informed our Legal Department of this situation and that they are now assessing all legal actions and path in order to correct this situation. In addition, to ensure transparency, **we have demanded that the Ministry informs workers about the local regulations which justify the action criteria that may be adopted at each workplace.** We will not allow the Ministry to leave our overseas personnel abandoned, and that means we must know exactly how “the rules of the game” are going to work.

Our commitment is strong, as we have stated since the beginning of this health emergency: **at CCOO we will stay vigilant and will report all arbitrariness, lack of transparency or any situation that may put the health of our colleagues and that of their families at risk.** Therefore, CCOO-Foreign Service will continue to monitor the measures which are being implemented far and wide in our field overseas and will employ all our available resources to protect our personnel, **including reporting to the National Labour and Social Security Inspection Body with regard to all workplaces imposing criteria which go against the health guidelines and protocols established by local and Spanish authorities and which may violate Covid-19 high-risk groups’ protection policies:**

- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Immunodeficiency
- Pregnancy
- Heart diseases
- Chronic lung diseases
- Cancer in an active treatment phase
- Over 60 years old, etc.

As we have already highlighted in previous statements and visibility campaigns, this crisis has once again brought to light the **urgent need to provide the Foreign Service with the Collective Representation tools which we are entitled to.** This is particularly important in this case due to the direct consequences that the circumstances could have on individuals’ health and safety because of a possible violation of the Occupational Risk Prevention Law and the Instructions issued by the Administration.

Additionally, we have once again condemned the lack of a **Social Action Plan** for our overseas personnel, a subject that has been at the top of our agenda for the last eight years. In this regard, it is important to point out that, during the negotiation of the 2019 Social Action Plan for Central Services, this union section brought forward for the need to reactivate this instrument for our personnel abroad. At the time, the Ministry committed to carrying out all necessary actions to secure the required funds to reactivate this measure. CCOO has reminded the Administration of this commitment on several occasions in 2019, but after eight years of insensitivity and neglect, we are still waiting for the Foreign Affairs Ministry (the only Ministry lacking a Social Action Plan for the overseas personnel) to fulfil their promises and to confirm the implementation of a Social Action Plan in 2020.



In this regard, we would like to say that the General Directorate of the Foreign Service expressed their will to hold a second Foreign Service Delegate Table Meeting in the following days, in order to continue assessing these matters and to address other pending issues. At the next meeting, CCOO-Foreign Service will defend the implementation of a Teleworking plan for Foreign Service workers, **an instrument which has already proved to be very effective throughout this health emergency and which any modern, flexible and healthy Organisation is obliged to implement** not only under the current unprecedented circumstances, but also as a regular mechanism and as a tool to balance family and working lives in optimum conditions.

Finally, considering our Ministry's recent change of criteria, we would again like to confirm that CCOO-Foreign Service is using all the resources at our disposal to help return to the previous criteria. We will also stay vigilant throughout the easing of the confinement measures and we will remain at your service, to assist you with any doubts or queries. Moreover, as we have already told you in previous information notes, we would like to ask you not to hesitate in contacting our section with your concerns or to report any arbitrariness or abuse that may be taking place at your workplaces overseas and which may put your health and that of your families at risk. To this effect, we would like to remind you once again of our contact channels:

- Mobile phone / WhatsApp: +34 689 31 54 89
- Email: [cco-servicioexterior@fsc.ccoo.es](mailto:cco-servicioexterior@fsc.ccoo.es)
- Landline: +34 91 535 52 31
- Website: <http://www.exterior.fsc.ccoo.es/>

**WE WILL KEEP YOU INFORMED!**

