

**Speech on behalf of the members of the Bureau at the reception for retirees (16 October 2025) to honour François Kientzler, Executive Secretary, for his 15 years of service to the Section.**

Deputy Director, Director of Human Resources, Chair of the Staff Union, dear former colleagues here today.

For several years now, François Kientzler has addressed you annually as Executive Secretary of the Section to inform you of the Section's activities, its achievements and the challenges it has faced.

In fact, François, you have been at the helm of the Section for exactly 15 years, since 2010.

Last August, you informed the Bureau that you wished to hand over the reins in 2026. 'Make way for the younger generation!' you said.

Today, as we members of the Bureau watched you at work and heard you speak for the last time at this meeting, it was unthinkable for us not to summarise your 15 years as Executive Secretary.

It must be said that your long career in social security, first in Alsace, your beloved homeland, then in Paris and finally in Geneva at the ISSA, and your many past and present trade union commitments (CFDT, ILO Staff Union) made you ideally suited to take on the role.

But experience and qualifications are rarely enough to make a good leader; more is needed: interpersonal skills, the ability to delegate, empathy, determination and vision.

You possess all these qualities and have put them to good use, ensuring that our Section has always been there when needed and has been able to navigate the last fifteen years, which have been turbulent and full of upheaval.

Among your achievements, we can mention:

A successful transition from the Gutenberg era to the computer age, where you managed to swap typewriters and large handwritten registers for PCs, create web pages and Facebook pages, get us working online, etc. But you have always made it a point of honour, in many instances such as CAPS or the Pension Fund, to defend the most senior among us so that they can still have access to information without all these digital tools.

The now annual publication of the magazine 'Message', which is very important to you and which we are sure will continue to keep you busy for years to come.

Your memorable contribution to the celebration of the ILO's 100th anniversary, where you highlighted valuable and memorable moments in a special issue dedicated to the occasion. You also organised an event specifically for retirees, attended by former colleagues who had made their mark at the ILO, in the presence of the then Director-General, Guy Ryder, who, incidentally,

attached great importance to the Organisation's former officials and almost always honoured the receptions dedicated to them.

The maintenance, at all costs, of communication links between retirees and members of the Bureau during the long COVID crisis in 2020-2021, when, as you will recall, former employees were banned from the building, admittedly to protect and preserve them, but what loneliness and depression among retirees during that period. We will long remember those moments when, with your fighting spirit, you insisted that we, the members of the Bureau, meet outside the ILO in unlikely places, at the foot of the Jura mountains.

Then there was your unfailing energy to resume activities, recruit new members and involve them once a year in organising seminars that were always interesting, sometimes turning into real gas factories given the work involved, but which you considered 'necessary' as you liked to hammer home to us to give us courage.

Finally, this year, you decided that it was time to move with the times and that the Section's statutes needed a good overhaul, particularly in light of new communication tools, so that the field could be better represented within our Section. This has now been done, as the amended statutes have just been adopted at the ILO Staff Union's General Assembly.

And, of course, under your leadership, the Section has been very active alongside the Staff Union and active colleagues in showing solidarity with former staff in these difficult times of financial restrictions and sweeping reforms.

There are, of course, many other initiatives to your credit, always in the best interests of ILO retirees, which the members of the Section will remember collectively or individually.

So, François, you have decided to step down, even though you will still be present on the Bureau. This is entirely legitimate and well deserved after all these years of service to others.

On behalf of everyone here today and on behalf of all the members of the Section, we would like to thank you for your inspiring leadership, your ability to bring out the best in everyone on the Bureau, and your quiet and calm determination to ensure that the Section continues to play a full role within the ILO institutions.

I propose a toast to François to thank him for his commitment and wish him many more happy moments with his partner Angela, his partner, and his children.