



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



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### **STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PASB STAFF ASSOCIATION**

This presentation of the Staff Association to the 126th Session of the Executive Committee has the objective of conveying to the Executive Committee Members, the opinion of the Staff Association on matters of concern to the staff and therefore to the Organization. The issues contained in this document were discussed during the XIX Council Meeting of the Staff Association, which took place in San Salvador, El Salvador, on 8-12 November 1999. The issues raised relate to the management of human resources, staff salaries, collective bargaining, and general concerns of the staff.

The Staff Association would like to request the support of the Executive Committee Members for its proposals. This request is made in the conviction that the Association, in safeguarding the well-being of the staff, is also a participant in the continuous improvement of the quality of the Organization's services and cooperation to Member States.

## **1. Introduction**

The PASB/WHO Staff Association would like to express its appreciation to the PAHO Executive Committee Members for the opportunity to present the issues of concern to the staff. We have had this privilege and responsibility since 1978, thanks to a decision taken by the Executive Committee at its 80th Session. The purpose of these presentations has been to share with the Executive Committee the aspirations and concerns of our membership, and to report on the status of staff-management relations from the perspective of the Staff Association.

The latest wave of demonstrations, from Seattle to Washington, D.C., is a reflection of the changes in the concept of accountability of international organizations. Monitoring the work of our organizations is moving from an intersectoral, multigovernmental oversight towards an issue-oriented, grassroots popular movement. It is true that up to now most popular concerns have addressed the World Trade Organization and the lending practices of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, but our technical cooperation activities should not be considered beyond the scope of such scrutiny.

The scrutiny becomes particularly important because what we have to offer to the community of nations is the knowledge, the skills, and the abilities of our staff. Our staff delivers our contribution on a daily basis and our commitment to those nations is to provide them with the best available assistance in a sustainable and continuous manner. The issue is then whether we are prepared to face such scrutiny with a firm commitment to be able to deliver such technical assistance by being ready to say and prove, without the slightest hesitation and with the greatest transparency, that we recruit and retain the best human resources available to meet the health challenges facing our societies. Do we actually know what those challenges are, at least for the next decade? How fit is our overall staff profile to meet such challenges? If it is not on a par, what are we prepared to do about it?

The Staff Association maintains that the human capital developed by the Organization at a high cost is the only guarantee that PAHO will be able to meet the challenges of the future and provide the assistance sought by Member States on behalf of their peoples. Right now, the United Nations Common System is reviewing proposals to reform the human resources management program both from the standpoint of its individual organizations, such as PAHO and WHO, and from the viewpoint of the technical bodies advising the United Nations General Assembly, such as the International Civil Service Commission, because the current system seems to no longer serve the needs of the organizations. On this issue, the Staff Association would like to see in its place a comprehensive human resource management and development system that meets the

challenges of a new millennium, considering not only the legitimate needs and interests of the Member States but also those that are basically equitable to the staff. Equity in this sense means that the compensation provided reflects the principle of equal compensation for equal responsibilities and that the overall treatment of staff is fair and just.

The proposed new human resources management systems are geared towards flexibility in hiring and allow for negotiation of conditions down to the individual level. In this sense, the PASB/WHO Staff Association requests consideration of the idea of a rather structured, institutionalized level of negotiation that takes into account both the needs and wishes of the staff as well as the needs and interests of the Organization. The new trend towards a more decentralized system favoring negotiations between the staff and the Organization would be a great achievement for both the staff and the Organization if these negotiations could be held in a structured setting such as the collective bargaining system established at the International Labor Organization (ILO).

## **2. Human Resources Management**

Management and development of the PASB/WHO workforce should be the focus in the establishment of a human resources best practices center and discussion group that identifies models to create a world-class, competitive, creative, highly-motivated, team-driven, state-of-the-art, and principle-centered staff complement at PAHO. The design of a more simplified, open, and transparent system of human resources management with common personnel standards, methods and arrangements designed to avoid serious discrepancies in terms of conditions of employment for this staff is a long-standing aspiration of the PASB/WHO Staff Association.

The structure of the Personnel Department should focus on career development and the streamlining of personnel administration. This would bring the Department closer to the operational management of PAHO.

## **3. Recruitment and Selection**

Recruitment and selection should be consistent with the objective of bringing the necessary expertise as well as developing in-house capabilities to face the renewed challenges of health technical cooperation. A "staff first" approach should be adopted, and the Staff Association advocates this approach through the use of the following: (a) a new personnel data bank to identify qualified internal candidates not immediately apparent in the unit that is requesting the selection, who may have the required experience and education and who could appropriately perform the work and add experience at PAHO as an advantage; (b) internal staff cross-training and rotation, to fill in for vacationing or absent staff and develop the expertise that would qualify them for

positions later on; (c) nurturing of staff through mentoring, continuing education, and field experience programs that can help with succession planning and updating of technical skills; (d) creation of career paths through the post system so that when employees acquire the academic credentials, years of service, and field experience they can be promoted onto the next level of responsibilities and be recognized for their efforts.

The number and variety of contracts should be streamlined, as a complicated contracting system does not allow for an open and transparent system of conditions of employment. Under the current system, each different type of contract has its own system of entitlements including salary, benefits, pension contribution, medical and life insurance, and education and housing benefits. Current employees often find it nearly impossible to find out the real terms of their employment since each of the various types of contracts may or may not be covered under the current PASB Staff Rules and Regulations or the WHO Manual. It is also expensive as it entails the hiring of additional legal, financial, and personnel officers to manage the large number and variety of unwieldy and complicated contracts.

#### **4. Staff Training and Career Development**

The development of an open and transparent training and human resources development plan should be carried out, on the basis of the PAHO corporate strategy and the regional Strategic and Programmatic Orientations. The training plan should include strategies to keep PASB staff at the cutting edge of our technical cooperation areas and in health leadership and management. The human resources part of the plan should include the concepts of gender equity, career development, and succession planning for the large number of staff that will retire over the next five years.

We propose the creation of a career path with performance standards and specific competencies in which staff can enter and rise in the Organization as they gain new skills, experience, and education. This should include: (a) development of an in-house mentoring program so that senior staff share their experience with junior colleagues; (b) establishment of an in-house training and consultation program that identifies existing staff who can act as internal consultants on special projects or train other staff in desired skill areas, thus saving money on consultants' work and providing professional development opportunities to staff; and (c) development of a more efficient and fair system to select staff for working committees, work assignments, promotion, or reassignment.

## **5. Compensation and Benefits**

The International Civil Service Commission has started a review of the salary and post adjustment system at the United Nations. The Commission has established a working group on the general principles to be applied to human resources management. The highest priority of the working group is the examination of the salary and post adjustment system, along with the corresponding job classification system. Only professional and higher-grade categories are considered and no immediate budgetary impact is foreseen.

Most salary systems rest on two basic principles: the classification system and the salary evolution mode. It seems that the combined effect of these two elements has led to a weakened competitiveness. A complex post adjustment system (PAI), along with the base salary, represents in most cases between 30% and 40% of the total remuneration. The system does not reflect individual expertise or merits.

During its Fifty-first Session, the Commission identified the main compensation and human resources management issues, and the participating organizations believe that the key is to improve cost efficiency and streamline human resources management. Among the issues referred to most often are salary levels, career development, consideration for individual competencies, and the use of different types of contracts. After examining the human resources management systems from national civil services from the United States, Denmark, Korea, the United Kingdom, and the World Bank Group, the Commission designed three scenarios for possible future action on the compensation issue. These remedies, of course, have to take into account the budgetary aspect of reforms.

The compensation system is the tool to ensure equity and allow for appropriate recruitment and retention. The impact of globalization, new salary systems, and the need for flexibility being made more acute by extremely diversified situations, compel the organizations to review their human resources management as a whole. The Staff Association requests the support of the Executive Committee for the reform of the classification system, the implementation of salary bands, and replacing the PAI with a global compensation adjustable to individual and organizational needs.

## **6. Collective Bargaining**

The Recognition and Procedural Agreement was signed between the International Labor Office and the ILO Staff Union on 27 March 2000. This constitutes a first agreement of this nature between a staff association/union and an international organization. The agreement sets out the principle of mutual recognition and the procedures defining collective bargaining between staff and management within the ILO.

The Director-General of ILO, Mr. Juan Somavía, spoke on the importance of an effective partnership between staff and management to advance the aims and work of the organization, and said that a satisfied labor force is a motivated labor force. Mr. David Dror, President of the ILO Staff Union Committee, called the agreement "a true reflection of ILO values" and said that it was up to all parties involved to ensure that it served the ILO and the staff. The Staff Association requests that a recognition agreement for PASB staff along the lines of what was signed at the ILO be implemented in the Organization.

## **7. Code of Conduct**

The review of the Standard Code of Conduct should be continued so that it reflects the best human qualities for high motivation and performance, productivity, accountability, state-of-the-art technical knowledge, expertise and management information, excellent presentation and writing skills, organizational solidarity, mutual respect, cooperation, teamwork, equity, and open and transparent communication. This should be done under the framework of an equitable system where staff is not made to pay for someone else's mistakes or bear the responsibility of actions originated outside of his/her scope of influence. The Standard Code of Conduct should not be implemented in the Staff Rules and Regulations with a punitive intent but rather as an educational tool designed to promote the setting of examples. Basic standards of conduct that are included in the Staff Rules and Regulations with the intention to punish those that violate them should be clearly typified so as not to leave the true meaning of the letter or the spirit of the regulation to individual interpretations.

## **8. Conclusion**

In closing, the Staff Association expresses its wish to develop a staff/management partner relationship so that the Administration can work with the staff to create the highest performing and most productive work force possible. The Staff Association wants to wipe away forever the notion of an adversarial relationship where input and suggestions from staff are perceived as trouble making rather than a total quality management solution. In the world of technical cooperation, your human resource talent base is your greatest asset.