



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



## 128th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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

The Staff Association presentation to the 128th Session of the Executive Committee is geared towards the views of the Staff Association on matters that concern the staff, and, therefore, the Organization. The issues contained in this document were discussed during the XX Council Meeting of the Staff Association, held in Caracas, Venezuela, on 13-17 November 2000.

The issues covered in this document relate to the Mission and Vision of the Staff Association, human resources reform, and amendments to the Staff Rules and Regulations.

The Staff Association respectfully asks for the support of the Executive Committee members for its proposals. It makes this request in the conviction that the Association, through safeguarding the well being of the staff, is also a participant in the constant improvement of the quality of the Organization's services and cooperation to Member States.

## **1. Introduction**

The PAHO/WHO Staff Association would like to express its appreciation to the PAHO Executive Committee Members for the opportunity to present current 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 Committee the hopes and concerns of the membership and to report on the status of staff-management relations from the perspective of the Staff Association.

## **2. Staff Association Mission**

To represent the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization staff, that constitutes the most important organizational asset representing nearly 80% of Organizational costs. At the same time, in a knowledge-based organization, staff competencies are the key means to attain institutional objectives. To work together with PAHO Administration in the enforcement and application of current regulations, in motivating staff members and helping them increase their productivity and efficiency. As an institutional body recognized by virtue of Staff Rules 910 and 920, the Association's goal is to strengthen PAHO/WHO staff representation within an institutional framework and at the same time cooperate with the Administration in advancing the common objective of enhancing the health and well-being of the population of the Region and to follow up new rules and procedures.

## **3. Vision of the Staff Association**

The Association intends to work together with the PAHO/WHO Administration to enhance the conditions of service of staff, so that they can pursue the ultimate goal of technical excellence relying on the assurance that no effort will be spared in the protection of their rights. To this end, the necessary technical capabilities within staff ranks should be developed to enhance its representation and work towards a greater participation in the organizational life.

The Staff Association wants to represent all individuals working for the Organization, no matter their status of contract. Currently, it is very difficult for individuals holding certain types of contracts to be able to be represented by the Staff Association, as they are subject to a great diversity of rules and regulations and are under the jurisdiction of different laws and living in diverse venues.

The Staff Association recognizes equity and Pan-Americanism as the guiding principles that should be applied to personnel policies such as compensation and

recruitment, granting equal rights and providing to the staff the possibility of being represented. This makes the organizational basic principles a reality within the Organization itself.

“This universality of coverage, pervasiveness of concern and comprehensive conception of goals is a well-chosen alternative to acting only in the interest of *some* groups of workers, such as those in the organized sector, or those already in employment, or those already covered by explicit rules and regulations. Of course, universality implies facing many difficult questions which need not arise if the domain of concern is restricted to narrower groups, such as workers in the organized sector (leaving out the unorganized sector), or even all wage workers (leaving out homework's), or even all people actively in work (leaving out the unemployed).”

Amartya Sen: Work and Rights, *International Labor Review*. Vol. 139 (2000), No. 2

#### **4. Human Resources**

The Association holds as guiding principles equity and Pan-Americanism, equal compensation for equal work, equal rights, and the ability to be represented. These are also the guiding principles of the Organization.

The Association seeks a reform process which is fair and equitable while achieving operational and cost efficiency.

For this process to be effective, it agrees with WHO Executive Board 107/15 that the functionality of the human resources component of the current system needs to be improved urgently. The Association's view is that a human resources unit needs to be created to modernize the treatment of human resources and promote staff training and development consistent with ever-evolving organizational needs and ensuring an ongoing review and analysis of job profiles so that they are continuously adapted to the key functions of the Organization. This profile should be consistent with the stated objective of setting up an overall, integrated management information system of which human resources would be an important component. This will enhance the typical administrative role of a personnel unit by delivering true management of human resources.

#### **5. Proposals**

- Analyzing jointly with the Administration whether personnel management, understood as setting up methods of work agreed upon by consensus, could substitute personnel administration, which entails only the administrative process;

- Discussing ways to make modern office technology available to all staff in an effective manner;
- Modernizing working conditions of staff. Some of these trends, currently being jointly reviewed and updated by the Staff Association and the Administration, include: part-time employment and flexible work hours, and a future proposal to include a compressed work schedule, job-sharing, telecommuting, and possibly an enhanced retirement system. All these innovations should be available as an incentive for the recruitment and retention of the most capable individuals and to maintain their high-level performance by providing forward-looking human resources policies and processes, and a commitment to excellence;
- Negotiating by way of collective bargaining agreements the adaptation of conditions of employment that are of mutual benefit to the staff and to the Organization; and
- Establishing external technical management audits to ensure enforcement and efficiency of these structural changes that need to be consistent with the basic values of the Organization, i.e., equity, solidarity, and Pan-Americanism.

## **6. Human Resources Management Reform**

The Association believes that any individual employed by the Organization is fully involved in its life with the same responsibilities as all other staff, and should also enjoy the same rights under the principle of equity; and therefore, this individual is fully entitled to have access to career development on an equal footing with all other staff members. With this in mind, it is necessary that our contracting systems follow the same principles and apply the same compensation methodologies. This will be the only way to ensure that the Organization not only hires but also retains and develops the most able individuals with the most capabilities to deliver the service required.

PAHO/WHO wants all individuals employed by it to act as members of an Organization following the same set of principles and committed to the same values. Thus, the Organization will want to encourage equal opportunity at all levels of employment, to help develop and implement organizational policies, procedures, training and internal reporting structures to ensure commitment to values and competencies as developed throughout our Organization. The Association believes that the application of the principle of partnership with the staff will achieve greater credibility, accountability, tolerance, and better understanding among PAHO/WHO staff and advance the culture of trust and cooperation.

The Association believes that the move towards the development of a comprehensive human resource system as a management tool to link the management and development of human resources to WHO's strategic plan, goals, and objectives is highly positive. This includes the reorganization of human resource functions including a new human resource development data/information system. This is a positive development as it promotes better recognition and use of staff talent. Effective human resource management through knowledge and acknowledgment of staff capacity should help employees find meaningful work and career. The recognition of the need for staff rotation, mentoring and cross-training as options for the training that the Organization would like to develop is also commended. Additional areas such as encouraging innovation and changes management, total quality management, staff participation and peer review processing of WHO products are felt to be desirable inclusions.

As PAHO advances the concept of health care reform, the Association also believes that there should be management and decision-making reform within the Organization. If the Organization advocates decentralization in its technical cooperation, then it makes sense to apply it within PAHO. The Association seeks enhanced staff/management relations through transparency and participatory organizational governance through the vehicle of collective bargaining. That is, more openness of budgetary and decision-making processes through more opportunities for presentation of policy alternatives and more points of access on policy analysis is envisioned.

The Association sees collective bargaining as the process of negotiating contracts between labor and management concerning conditions of employment. Labor and management are each represented by their own Negotiating Committee. Each side is free to submit proposals and counter proposals. The process goes back and forth until an agreement is reached that will form the basis for the contract. On topics where an agreement cannot be reached, management can impose its view and staff can accept it or appeal against it. An agreement does not become binding on either side until each side has approved the negotiated agreement in keeping with its own policy of ratification. For employers, ratification usually requires approval by an executive head or a governing body. For employees, ratification usually means a referendum approving the agreement, but other means are possible, e.g., approval by a governing body of the Staff Association such as its Staff Council in the case of PAHO employees. Sometimes the two sides agree that the negotiators themselves can make binding agreements. In any case, each side decides on its own ratification policy.

Negotiations are done in good faith, the objective being that each side will reach a compromise they can live with. Negotiations have to be carried out by persons who are knowledgeable about the issues and acknowledge the ability of the other side to represent capably its constituency.

## **7. Amendments to the Staff Rules and Regulations**

### *Education Grant*

As to Part II, Section 2, 370, the Association believes that a modification is needed to establish that the grant should be payable until the award of the first recognized degree or one reaches the age of 25, whichever occurs first. A similar change would also be required in Staff Rule 350.1.2. This is needed because the staff is subject to duty station transfers that affect the continuity of studies of children of university age, and this should be reflected in a fair rule that allows staff members to defray the cost of basic university studies, as they would in their countries of origin.

### *Vacancy Notices*

As to Manual Provision II.3.60.2, the Staff Association is pleased to see that a limitation on reassignments has been lifted. The Staff Association believes that a rotation policy would be beneficial to both the staff and to the Organization, as it will serve as a developmental tool to enhance knowledge and increase international exposure.

### *Family Obligations*

As to Manual Provision II.2.1380, the Staff Association wants to ensure that court orders be issued by a judge duly qualified to rule on the domestic matter at hand. Given the fact that staff members are sometimes far from their countries of origin, and that due process should be upheld, the Staff Association believes that the rule should not be applied unless the decree is final and issued by a competent judge after the staff member has been duly heard on the matter. Without these assurances, we believe that no action should be taken.

### *Special Leave*

The Association sees with great satisfaction that a longstanding request from staff to have the right to bereavement leave has been granted. This allows staff to pay the last respects to loved ones and provides for time off under those special circumstances. The Staff Association is requesting that travel time be granted to internationally recruited staff members so that this entitlement can be effectively extended to all those who suffer these losses at a time when they are away from home and usually separated from their families. The Association appeals to the sense of justice and equality of the Administration to extend this provision to internationally recruited staff members.

The extension of the use of uncertified sick leave to attend serious family-related emergencies is also commended. This is a provision that is especially welcomed within the framework of a work environment that is friendly to families. Along the same lines, the granting of paternity leave has been a longstanding request of staff that will allow our members to have a successful family life. Also, the new text of Staff Rule 820 allows the Organization to defray the expenses of family accompanying staff members in special circumstances.

## **8. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Staff Association stresses the following:

- that the mission of the Association is to represent the most important asset of that Organization, that is, its staff;
- that the vision of the Staff Association is to enhance the condition of service of the PAHO staff;
- that the post classification and compensation systems be applied evenly to all levels of employment according to the rule of law;
- that PAHO accept collective bargaining as the process of negotiating contracts in good faith;
- that the education grant be payable at least until the award of the first recognized degree or one reaches the age of 25, whichever occurs first;
- that the rule on family obligations should not be applied unless the decree is final and issued by a competent judge after the staff member has been duly heard on the matter; and
- that travel time be added to the special leave for bereavement to internationally recruited staff members.

The Staff Association expresses its wish to nurture a staff/management partnership so that the Administration can work with the staff to create the most productive work force possible.