



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



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STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PASB STAFF ASSOCIATION

The representative of the Staff Association to the 136th Session of the Executive Committee is pleased to take this opportunity to report on the progress of staff-management relations and to address the leading issues of interest to the staff.

The issues addressed in this document are related to the strengthening of an institutional framework for internal due process, fairness, and staff rights at PAHO/WHO.

The Staff Association requests the attention and support of the Executive Committee on the issues addressed in this report.

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Introduction

1. By virtue of Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, and by the will of the Governing Bodies of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) as contained in Staff Rules 910, 920, and 930, the Staff Association (SA) of the Pan American Health Organization was constituted as an international public civil service. Its main purposes are to:

- (a) Ensure that the conditions of employment of the staff conform with the principles established in the Constitution of the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization (WHO) and in those established in the PAHO/WHO Staff Rules and Regulations and the provisions of the PAHO/WHO Manual;
- (b) Promote the welfare and development of the staff, as well as safeguard their interests;
- (c) Cooperate in furthering the objectives established in the United Nations Charter and in the Constitution of PAHO and WHO;
- (d) Promote the exchange of information among the local organizations and their members on all matters of common interest, keeping the Executive Committee informed;
- (e) Contribute to the reinforcement of the bonds of solidarity among members; and
- (f) Work in collaboration with the Organization's Administration in order to achieve its objectives.

2. Within its mandate the PAHO/WHO Staff Association seeks to be an active partner and contributor in the ongoing process to establish an institutional framework for due process and staff rights at PAHO that is fair and equitable, and that is in keeping with the standards and practices of the United Nations system and other international agencies. Since the signing of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the agencies of the U.N. system have increasingly adopted a human rights approach as the foundation for their work. Within the framework of the United Nations Reform, in May of 2003, the agencies signed a Declaration of Collective Understanding, which outlines the use of a common human rights approach both for their development work and the institutional governance of the system.

3. The Declaration reaffirms the human rights standards and principles contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent documents, and incorporates other international instruments for the safeguard and monitoring of human rights in the development work carried out by the agencies of the U.N. system.

4. On the basis of this human rights approach, the PAHO/WHO Staff Association maintains that staff rights like human rights are also universal, inalienable, indivisible, interrelated, and interdependent in nature, and that staff and management actions must be governed by the principles of equality, nondiscrimination, equity, participation, and inclusion.

5. The PAHO/WHO Staff Association believes that the same standards and principles should also govern the actions of the staff that work for the U.N. agencies, including PAHO. Through the present document the PAHO/WHO Staff Association wishes to apprise our Governing Bodies of the main issues of interest to the staff, of the progress made in staff-management relations, and of the follow-up on requests made by the Staff Association in previous sessions of the Executive Committee.

6. At the same time, we wish to request the support of the Executive Committee for the proposals put forth heretofore. We present these requests with the firm conviction that by advocating appropriate working conditions for PAHO/WHO staff, the Staff Association contributes to the strengthening of the Organization, as a whole, and to its technical cooperation, in particular, for the benefit of our Member States.

Strengthening Internal Due Process, Fairness, and Staff Rights

7. Over the last few years, within PAHO/WHO steps have been taken to move staff-management relations towards a partnership approach, in line with good practices in modern organizations elsewhere. A set of guiding principles for this approach were agreed upon in 2003 at the Global Staff Management Council (GSMC), an annual event where representatives of all WHO Staff Associations and Administrations come together to discuss issues of common concern. In 2004, the GSMC reaffirmed the guiding principle of partnership between staff and management and recommended that this approach be extended beyond the GSMC into the mainstream of the Organization, as far as conditions of service are concerned.

8. The *Staff-Management Relations – Guiding Principles* are already part of WHO's staff manual amended in 2004. Furthermore, we believe that PAHO, as the Americas Regional Office for WHO, and in line with the GSMC recommendations approved by the Director-General, should formally adopt and include these principles in the PAHO Staff Rules. These principles have served effectively to regulate the dialogue between the Administration and the staff and have fostered collaborative work (a complete list of principles is presented in the Annex).

9. Consistent with the application of these principles and of best practices in the application of Human Rights and the Right to Free Association enjoyed by the staff, our main role is to strengthen the institutional framework for due process, fairness, and staff rights. In this regard, the PAHO/WHO Staff Association has identified several key elements on which we wish to share our views. Among them are the following:

- The ***Policy of Prevention and Resolution of Harassment in the Workplace*** has been in effect since 1 May 2004. The Administration and the Staff Association have worked jointly and continuously to implement a mechanism available to all staff regardless of their type of contract, rank within the Organization, age, or gender. It has been a year since the policy was approved, and we are pleased to inform that the joint grievance panels have been formed, and that a Panel Chairperson responsible for its leadership and administration has been appointed. The members of the panel as well the Chairperson are making a great deal of effort to institutionalize this process and develop clear procedures to handle complaints. These panels are composed of volunteer staff who responded to the call of the Administration and the Staff Association to rise up to the challenge of implementing such an important policy for the welfare of our work environment. The SA expresses its appreciation for their work and commitment.
- With regard to the position of Ombudsperson, once it was reclassified to a level that could be considered appropriate and in conformance with the minimum standards comparable to similar posts in the United Nations system, the position was temporarily filled pending the completion of a competitive selection process, in which the Staff Association will participate. Previous to the selection process, specific terms of reference should be defined to complete the post description of this position.

10. In general, the PAHO/WHO Staff Association is supporting this process and making contributions along the way to institutionalize due process and recognize that progress has been made in several areas.

11. The PAHO/WHO Staff Association also welcomes the initiatives in the framework of the Road Map for PASB's Institutional Change and is committed to contributing to this effort by sharing our experience and knowledge. Among the proposals we view with interest are the following and we will monitor their evolution:

- ***Standards for Accountability and Transparency*** for the Organization. While we wish to emphasize that, in addition to our interest in enhancing and fostering a culture of strong ethics with clear and formal standards of conduct, we also consider that there is a need to establish processes for detecting and addressing lapses in ethics and venues to channel these complaints and investigate them.

- ***Human Resources Strategy Initiative.*** After we reviewed this proposal, we concluded that this initiative recognizes that PAHO's human capital is its greatest resource and that the Initiative will tackle the critical topics for the administration and management of the human resources within PAHO. In that sense, efforts should focus on developing a more comprehensive policy and procedures in the framework of the international civil servant concept. One of the critical issues is how the competencies of the staff link to the program goals of the Organization (currently the 2003-2007 Strategic Plan), which has functions that are regional, subregional, and country specific and are integrated in the organizational structure. This project should serve to align organizational structure, recruitment, rotation, retention, staff development, and staff separation activities with PAHO's vision, mission, programmatic priorities, and managerial strategy.

Some time ago we learned that WHO is developing their Strategic Direction and Competency Review Plan, and we concluded that it is perfectly tailored for the WHO-specific conditions of employment where the staff are primarily under temporary contracts. WHO is facing a dilemma in how they will manage the decentralization of their budget and the allocations of the staff to implement WHO's mobility and rotation program. The SA does not want to see the WHO initiative overlap or eclipse PAHO's Human Resources Strategy Initiative/Road Map.

12. Despite progress made to improve governance and due process in-house, the implementation of the recommendations of the Special Report of the External Auditor 2002-2003 is still lagging in significant areas, as follows:

- In reference to the **Code of Conduct**, the Staff Association has actively promoted the development and adoption of this instrument, which will both highlight and complement the universal behavior and standards of ethics in the workplace that an international organization such as PAHO ought to have. Several efforts have been made by the Administration but will require more focus on this task in order to accomplish the goal defined by the PAHO Executive Committee to come up with a reliable outcome before the PAHO Directing Council.
- **Recruitment of Employees and Consultants.** The PAHO/WHO Staff Association supports the principle that the PAHO Administration should define and implement competitive selection processes in all cases (at least for those directly financed by the United Nations system). Short-term Consultants (STCs) and Short-term Professionals (STPs) are still being recruited without a formal competitive selection process, although many of them become the *internal candidate* when a regular position is available. The SA believes that this practice hampers the Organization's renewal efforts in competitive selection and

- recruitment by restricting access to candidates outside the Organization, while at the same time limiting the promotion opportunities for current staff. Furthermore, it opens up the possibility for potential abuse and lack of transparency and fairness in the recruitment process. Therefore, the SA requests that: (i) all STP and STC contracts (for more than six months) be selected through the competitive process and be chosen by a selection committee where the SA has representation. This procedure should be done before they start to work in PAHO and become considered *internal candidates* to apply for a regular position when it is opened; (ii) a specific policy be implemented in the Organization that streamlines the process of recruitment, selection, hiring, and salaries and benefits for STCs and STPs, thereby contributing to the accountability of the individual and regulation of their scope of action within the Organization.
- Also we are particularly concerned about the importance of streamlining PAHO practice with WHO policy for the **selection and recruitment of senior-level staff (P5 and above)** and fully endorse the recommendation of the Sixth Meeting of the Global Staff Management Council (GSMC) of November 2004, which states: *The GSMC considers that participation of staff representatives in the selection processes should be strongly encouraged and Regional Directors should be advised accordingly. Furthermore, within the context of the global mobility program, a review of selection procedures should be made during 2005 with a view to their standardization.* The PAHO/WHO Staff Association currently has no representation on selection panels for senior staff. Therefore we would like to request that in accordance with WHO's policy, the PAHO/WHO Staff Association be represented on all selection panels. This will guarantee in-house due process, fairness, and impartiality.

Incorporating a Gender Approach towards Equality

13. The Staff Association expresses its full support for the PAHO Gender Equality Policy discussed by the 21st Session of the Subcommittee on Women, Health, and Development of the Executive Committee; and we commit ourselves to participate in the ongoing efforts to implement that policy in-house and improve our work environment.

14. The goal of this policy is to contribute to the achievement of gender equality through research, policies, and programs, which give due attention to gender differences in health and its determinants, and actively promote equality and equity between women and men. It is framed within the 2002 WHO Gender Policy, currently being adopted by all Regions. It is also in harmony with the decision now being implemented across the United Nations system that integration of gender considerations, i.e. gender mainstreaming, must become standard practice in all policies and programs.

15. PAHO/WHO is committed to advancing gender equality in its own work force, as well as in scientific and technical advisory bodies, and among temporary advisers and consultants. This commitment is in line with World Health Assembly Resolution WHA50.16 on the “Employment and Participation of Women in the Work of WHO” and other resolutions of the World Health Assembly and the United Nations General Assembly. In this regard, the Staff Association wishes to acknowledge that the PAHO/WHO commitment initially has translated into some specific actions, such as the recent inauguration of the nursing room at Headquarters and the approval of paternity leave.

16. However, the Staff Association also considers that the equitable treatment of staff domestic partners should be placed under the umbrella of this policy focus. The PAHO/WHO Staff Association pledges its commitment to assist the Administration in the development of an equitable and fair policy for domestic partners.

Expanding Opportunities for Staff Development

17. The PAHO/WHO Staff Association believes that it is imperative to generate an in-depth discussion between management and staff on career development and career development paths, which should include the expansion of opportunities for PAHO staff. Part of this discussion will take place as part of the framework of the Human Resources Strategy Project (Road Map), but, in the meantime, we should take the opportunity to identify and incorporate best practices now that the Organization is in the process of transformation and committed to change it. We share some of our concerns and recommendations:

- (a) The PAHO/WHO Staff Association recognizes the value of all staff in the Organization and appreciates the contribution made by former staff. However, we consider that the practice of systematically **rehiring retired staff** is not a best practice, and we advocate for PAHO to develop a policy on this matter. The PAHO/WHO Staff Association has always insisted that retired staff must not systematically be rehired upon retirement. This practice hampers opportunities for the development of the current staff. We restate our deep concern about the consistent hiring of retired staff to carry out tasks within the Organization that may be considered regular activities in the unit or area, primarily because that practice tends to lead to long-term contracts. We urge our Administration and Governing Bodies to take action on this issue of great importance to the overall management of the Organization. The rehiring of retired staff can interrupt or delay knowledge transfer to current junior staff, and the new generation deserves a fair chance to develop. The rehiring of retired staff can also be conducive to unclear roles and responsibilities. Even though these services take place within

the framework of specific contracts, the dynamics generated internally by them are not beneficial in terms of performance, accountability, and due process.

Finally, this practice also undermines PAHO/WHO's pension system and staff benefits. It is important to remember that the pension benefits that our retired colleagues currently enjoy come from the contributions made by the current staff. Undermining the employment opportunities of current staff potentially reduces the pool from which to draw future pension benefits, since retirees do not contribute to the Pension Fund when they are under contract in PAHO/WHO.

- (b) ***Staff and Management Performance Evaluation.*** There is a current practice in other international agencies to evaluate staff and management performance in a manner that reflects the professional interactions of an individual not only with his or her supervisor, but also with subordinates and with his or her peers. This is often referred to as *360-Degree Performance Evaluation*. The PAHO/WHO Staff Association believes that within the framework of PAHO's institutional transformation there is room for improvement in this area of performance evaluation, and that the implementation of a 360-Degree Performance Evaluation system, including staff and management training, would complement the map of competencies and skills recently developed. At the same time this would lead to a more open and fair process of performance review. It would also contribute to strengthening teamwork and client orientation internally, as well as the development of social skills and abilities to handle complex situations both internally and with external parties.

18. **Other issues** that require your attention in order to improve the internal consistency in the application of rules and policies are:

- ***Reciprocity among Agencies.*** WHO must make changes in their rules which presently do not recognize time served under PAHO contracts, and restrict or delay PAHO staff from being immediately eligible for service appointments when transferred to WHO. We are the only Region that suffers from this disadvantage. Additionally, when PAHO staff are transferred to WHO positions, they should not have to undergo a probationary period. PAHO immediately recognizes WHO staff as eligible as internal candidates, and we also recognize time of service in WHO when staff are moved to positions in PAHO.

- ***Service Appointments.*** WHO sees the award of service appointments, which are considered to be the most favorable type of contracts that WHO can offer fixed-term staff members, as part of its human resources reform strategy to strengthen the internal recognition process within the Organization. In December 2004, 771 Service Appointments were granted for the year 2003 in all parts of the global WHO with the exception of the EURO Regional Office and AMRO/PAHO. The PAHO/WHO Staff Association has long supported the creation of these types of appointments and urges the Administration to institute them as soon as possible, so that the staff at PAHO/WHO may benefit in the same way as other Regional Offices. The SA stands ready to participate with the Administration in establishing criteria and procedures to ensure a fair and transparent system of appointments, in line with the globally accepted procedures.
- ***The panels and criteria for the revision of classification of posts*** have not been implemented yet, despite the fact that they had been approved and announced by the Administration last year in General Information Bulletin HQ/FO-04-04. The objective of this new procedure is to provide a more expeditious way of processing reclassification requests for occupied posts and to allow for a role by the Staff Association in the review process. This remains a very important unfinished item on the agenda for strengthening staff promotion and career development with fairness and equity for all.
- Finally we would like to refer to the ***National Professional Contracts*** initiated 18 years ago, as a pilot plan and which, to this day, have not been streamlined into the Organization's hiring practices. We recognize that it is both a delicate and risky situation for the Organization since it could lead to conflicting labor practices at the local level. In this regard we believe it is important to consolidate all current procedures for the hiring of local professionals in Country Offices and Centers and that a policy with appropriate guidelines be developed to govern these processes. The Staff Association is fully committed to contributing to this process in response to the needs of our members who currently labor under this type of contract, in our ongoing mission to safeguard the fair and equitable working conditions for all staff.
- ***Information and communication*** during the transformation process in the Organization. The staff requested that efforts be devoted to keep them informed by all means about changes in-house, which will facilitate the understanding of the process and avoid undermining staff morale. This is especially important in the case of the Pan American Centers, because the decisions taken during the discussion about the Centers could have implications for and generate anxiety among the staff concerning with their future.

Conclusions

19. The role of the PAHO/WHO Staff Association is conducive to the application and enforcement of internal due process and fairness and the development of a work environment where the encouragement of good practices is promoted and rewarded, the integrity throughout the process is respected, and staff may exercise their right of association and be informed and properly trained.

20. We believe that the active participation of the Staff Association and the staff in general throughout this process is crucial in building trust between management and staff and in ensuring transparency and integrity in all aspects of the process. Our definition of integrity is based on the premise that all parties involved have a role to play to ensure appropriate checks and balances, and that adequate levels of participation of the staff are critical to achieving meaningful and sustainable goals.

21. In that sense, we request that the Executive Committee comment on the issues presented in this document and provide guidance to the Administration on the following topics:

- Defining a policy with clear procedures for recruitment, selection, hiring, determination of salaries and benefits for STCs and STPs, similar to the one PAHO has for other professional positions (from P1 to P4);
- Defining selection and recruitment of senior-level staff (P5 and above) in accordance with WHO's policy;
- Defining a clear policy to avoid systematically rehiring retired staff in PAHO;
- Streamlining the regulations and procedures for National Professional Contracts.

22. The staff of the Pan American Health Organization recognizes and appreciates the trust placed in us by our Governing Bodies and reiterates our commitment to continue working for the international technical cooperation in health to accomplish the mandates given by you to PAHO/WHO. We thank you for your contributions and encourage you to continue guiding our actions for the betterment of the international public service and the benefit of the people of our Member States.

Annex

STAFF-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Staff and management have a shared commitment to the success of the Organization.
2. The two parties may, however, at times have different priorities and perspectives. These are legitimate and should be recognized and respected by both parties. Any differences should be addressed in an atmosphere of cooperation and conciliation.
3. Mutual trust and respect should be the hallmarks of staff-management relations in WHO. Confidentiality is an important element in the building of such trust.
4. All parties should keep an open mind and be forward-looking and receptive to change.
5. There should be a positive and effective relationship between WHO offices and their staff associations at the country, regional, Headquarters, and global levels, designed to facilitate the solving of problems and decision-making.

Within this context:

- Both parties will work together, within the framework of the U.N. common system to promote WHO as an employer of choice. The keynotes should be an ethical and supportive work environment, socially responsible employment conditions, the development of staff capacity, and fair, consistent, and accountable processes.
- Elected staff representatives should be given sufficient time and resources to carry out their mandate fully.
- There should be open and regular communication and dialogue between the staff associations and management and vice versa.
- Development of skills necessary to achieve effective staff-management relations should be encouraged.

- Management should accept that, in the process of change, staff associations are active players whose views should be respected and who should be brought into the picture from the beginning.
- A jointly agreed-upon mechanism should be put into place to ensure the proper implementation of these guiding principles, their monitoring, and their evaluation.

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