



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



138th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Washington, D.C., USA, 19-23 June 2006

Provisional Agenda Item 6.2

CE138/25 (Eng.)
8 June 2006
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PASB STAFF ASSOCIATION

The representative of the Staff Association is pleased to report to the 138th Session of the Executive Committee on the progress of staff-management relations and to address current issues of interest to the Staff.

The issues addressed in this document are related to the strengthening of managerial leadership capacity; the process of the Strategic Assessment and Resource Alignment (SARA) in Headquarters and the Caribbean Program Coordination; the development of a comprehensive legal framework for internal due process, fairness, and staff rights at the Pan American Sanitary Bureau; and the importance of human resources policies and practices that are needed to bring the principles of fairness and gender equity into the Organization.

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

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Introduction

1. The Staff Association (SA) would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the Strategic Assessment and Resource Alignment (SARA) exercise that the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (PASB) is undertaking. The Staff Association is participating, in good faith, to safeguard the interests of the staff and to ensure that the process is conducted in a fair and transparent fashion across all the PASB's organizational areas and units.

2. As we understand it, the SARA exercise has three stated objectives: (a) to ensure that clear strategic directions are in place in all parts of the Organization; (b) to strengthen existing managerial processes, and (c) to ensure the most effective use of the Organization's human and financial resources. Furthermore, we understand that its two expected outcomes are: (a) the alignment of skills and competencies with strategic and operational plans and matching contractual arrangements; and (b) the alignment of strategic and operational plans with existing and expected financial resources.

3. We also wish to acknowledge and reiterate our support for the ongoing efforts to strengthen individual and corporate accountability at the PASB. In particular, the development of a framework of ethical principles for the conduct of the Organization's business and the guidance of staff; and the establishment of clear and transparent procedures for investigating alleged breaches of the Code of Ethical Principles and Conduct or failure to declare conflicts of interest. The PASB has drafted and adopted this Code that specifically addresses both behavior and staff confirmation of understanding and compliance. Additionally, the Ombudsman post was filled in October 2005; the Ethics Officer position has been established, and we are in the process of defining the specific terms of reference for this position; and the Integrity and Conflict Management System has been proposed to address related procedures.

4. The Staff Association wishes to contribute further to this process by bringing the attention of the Executive Committee to the following issues.

Strengthening Managerial Leadership Capacity across the PASB

5. With regard to the second SARA objective of strengthening existing managerial processes, the Staff Association further acknowledges the PASB's efforts to empower staff at all levels and the establishment of an Accountability Framework to define the flow of authority, its purpose, and how managers are accountable and responsible for exercising that authority. However, we believe that focus is also needed in the area of leadership as an important part of strengthening managerial capacity in the Organization.

6. We understand that the PASB managers have completed or are actively participating in WHO's Global Leadership Program, which is now moving into its second phase, where participants are expected to carry out individual development plans to further strengthen their leadership skills. In this regard, we wish to highlight the need to focus the attention of the program on strengthening the day-to-day management of staff; namely, giving performance feedback, dealing with conflicts, developing staff, and leading change. Managers need to demonstrate stronger skills in the "people" aspects of management and, in particular, close the gap between their words and their deeds. Far too often we find that "strong" leadership is mistaken for authoritarian and discretionary use of power, which fosters staff resentment and lack of faith in the organizational changes being implemented.

7. Managerial leadership training also needs to be complemented and supported by a robust system of performance evaluation. In this regard the Staff Association wishes to reiterate its call for the adoption of a 360-Degree Performance Evaluation System at all levels. We understand that during the training staff were exposed to that technique (360 degree) and received feedback in several areas. Such a system, which is in current practice in other international agencies and in the private sector, could provide the type of support needed to strengthen managerial leadership and further guide, on an ongoing basis, the leadership training efforts, in particular the above-mentioned "people" aspects of management.

8. In this regard, the Staff Association wishes to point out that the managers' competence leadership requirements are different for Area or Unit Managers than they are for Country Representatives or Center Directors. For instance, the complex role of the Country Representatives includes facing specific demands, as they manage both national and international staff, and increasingly will also manage subregional staff. The differences and the specific scopes of action and accountability should be reflected in the design of the profiles for both types of managers and should drive the selection process of these positions.

9. We also wish to reiterate our great concern about the practice of hiring retired staff to carry out regular staff duties. In particular, we wish to bring again to your attention that far from being discouraged, this practice has now been extended to include management positions. Besides hampering opportunities for staff development, this practice also affects the pension fund of the current staff; in this case the institutional capacity to develop new managers is also being affected. Extending this practice to fill management positions is contrary to the stated goals of the SARA exercise and also undermines fairness and transparency in the Organization.

Ensuring Transparency and Good Communication during SARA

10. As can be expected, implementation of the SARA exercise across the Organization has already begun to cause anxiety and apprehension among the staff. The Staff Association is actively working with the Administration to ensure fairness across the board and a level playing field for all staff, including the training program to develop certain competencies when they are identified. However, we believe that transparency and the timely flow of information are also critical to the successful implementation of the SARA and, specifically, for the reduction of associated stress for the staff.

11. The Staff Association would like to request that a communications campaign, at both the Organization and Unit levels, be implemented simultaneously with the SARA to keep staff apprised throughout its various stages. The engagement of the managers to respect the principles and the process of the SARA will be critical for the successful completion of this exercise. We further request that ample opportunities be provided, on a regular basis, to discuss progress made in this process and the implications for staff. Lastly, we believe that the implementation of the SARA should be coordinated with and supported by the Staff Assistance Services (SAS) along with other support possibilities such as the ombudsperson, who can provide counseling services to staff, as needed.

12. In another matter, but related to the purpose of ensuring transparency and consistency across the different processes under way at the PAHO Secretariat, the SA insists on the importance for the PAHO Administration to keep the staff informed on a timely basis and to respect the regulatory principles that govern the relationship between the SA and the Administration, concerning any measure and/or activity carried out at the Pan American Centers that may have an impact on the conditions of work of the staff.

Developing a Legal Framework to Guide the Integrity and Conflict Management System

13. The Staff Association also believes that although very important steps have been taken by the PASB to ensure due process, fairness, and staff rights, an overall legal framework is still needed to tie together all of the instruments that have been developed with all participants in a comprehensive fashion.

14. With regard specifically to the proposed Integrity and Conflict Management System (ICMS), we wish to point out the complexity of this mechanism, the number of actors, and instruments involved, and thus the need to develop an overall framework that provides a level playing field for staff and clear “rules of the game” for all involved. The proposed system will bring together formal and informal resources such as: the Ethics Office, Ombudsman, Human Resources Management, Legal Affairs, the Staff Association, ICMS Country Focal Point, PAHO integrity helpline, Internal Audit, and IT

Security; the Grievance Panel, and the Board of Appeal. A legal framework is needed to define the domains and interactions among the various participants, and instruments adopted, and to provide clear guidance on issues such as appeal mechanisms and legal recourse for the staff.

15. Regarding internal justice and due process, the Staff Association wishes to emphasize the importance of establishing clear rules and procedures for the investigation process; in particular, the filing of complaints, the conduct of investigations, and the application of sanctions. This would assure confidentiality and safeguard due process, fairness, and staff rights. The Staff Association stands ready to contribute further to these efforts.

Ensuring That HR Policies and Practices Follow the Principles of Fairness and Gender Equity

16. The main thrust of the SARA exercise is a comprehensive human resources (HR) review across all PASB organizational units. In this regard, the Staff Association believes that overall progress made on issues of fairness by the PASB in the last two years also needs to be reflected in its HR policies and practices in anticipation of the SARA exercise. Three aspects in particular require prompt attention: (a) implementation of the United Nations contractual reform recently adopted by WHO; (b) incorporation of gender equity in HR decisions (e.g. staff selection, distribution of the work force, benefits); and (c) revision of the current national system contracts in PAHO (national, professional, and other types of contracts) to streamline procedures and define a policy as to how PAHO will manage these contracts.

17. As a result of the UN's proposed framework of contractual arrangements (contractual reform), there are now three types of contracts which can be issued to staff on the basis of the length of their employment: continuous, fixed-term, and short-term. In the recent WHO Global Staff/Management Council (GSMC) held in April 2006, the Staff Association and Administration fully supported the guiding principles that should drive the implementation of these three types of contracts in the Organization, as the cornerstone for the contractual framework (see the Annex) and believe that monitoring systems should be established to ensure transparency, management accountability, proper HR planning, and equitable treatment of staff throughout the Organization during the implementation of the proposed contractual reform.

18. We also wish to inform the Executive Committee that an independent panel of experts has been established by the General Assembly to conduct a thorough review of the UN's internal justice system. The panel is in the midst of its assignment and changes in the PASB's personnel policy at this time may be later affected by the Committee's work since they will also be reviewing the adequacy of the rules and regulations across

the UN system. In addition, we wish to bring to your attention that while in agreement with the spirit of the reform and with the adoption of three types of contracts for all UN agencies, the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) has pointed out that no matter what type of contract organizations use, abuse and misuse of contracts, notably temporary ones, is on the increase and is particularly acute in the field, where staff are more vulnerable. The Staff Association also reiterates its call for the use of competitive selection procedures throughout the Organization for temporary assignments, particularly for those appointments of six months or more.

19. On a related issue, the Staff Association wishes to highlight that current HR policies do not reflect organizational commitments to gender equity, within the framework of the 2002 WHO Gender Policy, currently being implemented in all Regions. We believe that there is a need for a comprehensive proposal on how to address gender issues in the Organization's HR policies and practices and actively promote equality not only between women and men, but also between all types of contracts in the Organization. This means all staff, including staff under non-United-Nations contracts (NAPs¹, CLTs², and personnel deployed from ministries of health) who work at the country level. As a public health organization, we have an obligation to implement within the PASB, the same actions we advocate countries to take. Maternity leave, breast-feeding time, and paternity leave, for example are benefits available only to regular staff at Headquarters. Nonregular staff at Headquarters and national staff in the countries do not enjoy these same benefits; therefore, we recommend defining and streamlining specific policies in this matter.

20. In the spirit of building trust and engaging the staff in the PAHO processes, it is important to stress to the managers in our Country Offices the importance of respecting the right of association of the staff and the mission of the Staff Association and its elected delegates. The consultation process also requires being aligned with the good practices that we have at the Headquarter level with the Administration, and accordingly with the UN system. We have cases at the country level where our elected members cannot carry out the activities of the Staff Association because the managers block or do not facilitate their work, which is very regrettable.

¹ National Professional

² Local Contracts of Work

Conclusion

21. The role of the PASB Staff Association is to support the application and enforcement of the principles that regulate the international civil service and the PASB's mission. For that reason we promote internal due process, fairness, and the development of a work environment that encourages good practices and rewards integrity as well as mutual respect.

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

23. We respectfully request the Executive Committee to comment on the issues presented in this document and to provide guidance to the Administration on the following topics:

- Strengthening staff leadership skills and accountability at all levels in the Organization;
- Informing the staff, the Executive Committee, and the Governing Bodies in a transparent and timely fashion on the implementation of the SARA exercise, the implications for the staff, and results;
- Developing a comprehensive legal framework to guide the proposed Integrity and Conflict Management System;
- Updating HR policies and practices to ensure fairness and gender equity in the implementation of the UN's contractual reform.

24. The staff of the PASB recognize and appreciate the trust placed in them by the Governing Bodies, and the SA reiterates its commitment to continue working for international technical cooperation in health and to accomplish the mandates of the Organization. We rely on the Executive Committee to continue guiding our actions for the betterment of the international civil service and the benefit of the populations of the Americas.

Annex

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES PROPOSED
BY THE WHO GLOBAL STAFF/MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

- Equity and fairness in the selection and treatment of staff, resulting in “equal pay and benefits for equal work.”
- Due process ensured at all levels of the management and administration of human resources in the Organization.
- Monitoring of the HR management systems through the establishment of appropriate checks and balances for quality assurance.
- Promotion of managerial competency and accountability.
- Effective management of staff through proper coordination of HR planning and financial resources/systems, resulting in nondiscriminatory personnel practices.
- Streamlined and simplified processes linked to the administration of contracts and conditions of service, while respecting existing policies of the Organization.
- Harmonization of HR practices throughout the Organization.
- Evaluation and certification of performance through effective and credible performance management processes.
- Job security for staff taking into consideration the Organization’s needs for particular functions on a long-term basis.
- The need both to attract and retain talent within the Organization.
- Facilitation and enhancement of staff mobility and rotation.
- Recognition of the contribution of staff to the Organization through incentives and career development.
- Staff Rules’ amendments made with the best interests of both the Organization and the staff.
- Staff Rules’ amendments developed in line with the International Civil Service (ICSC) recommended framework and UN reform initiatives.