



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



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STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PASB STAFF ASSOCIATION

1. The Staff Association (SA) is pleased to report on the progress made in improving relations between staff and Administration to the 142nd Session of the Executive Committee and to address current issues of interest to staff. In this regard, the Staff Association wishes to bring to the attention of the Executive Committee issues mentioned hereunder.

Contractual Reform

2. PAHO has invested considerable time and effort in its alignment with WHO. The decision made by the Governing Bodies last year to delay application of WHO's contractual reform at PAHO, pending approval by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), has placed the Organization significantly behind WHO on this issue. PAHO's contractual reform process is a joint effort with its Administration to improve the internal contractual system and its delayed implementation creates an unnecessary administrative burden on the Human Resources Management Area and distracts it from its true mission which is to implement the planning and management of human resources within the Organization to achieve the objectives set in PAHO's Strategic Plan.

3. One of the main goals of the proposed contractual reform process is to reduce the number of Human Resource (HR) administrative processes. The SA believes that meeting the goals of PAHO's Strategic Plan will require greater effort by all staff and the Administration needs to support the use of appropriate tools that would ensure more efficient administrative procedures. The SA respectfully requests that PAHO Staff Rules be aligned with the terms of the Contractual Reform proposal presented last year and that suitable monitoring and control systems be studied, identified, and incorporated into these modifications to guarantee the appropriate issuance of the three types of contracts proposed, thereby ensuring transparency, administrative responsibility, human resources

planning, and equitable treatment of PAHO staff. The SA wishes to point out that the current misalignment with WHO in terms of the implementation of the contractual reform is adversely impacting staff.

PAHO Reorganization and Consultative Processes with the Staff Association

4. At PAHO it has long been an established principle that a good partnership between staff and the Administration is central to the development of the Organization and the fulfillment of its mission. In fact, the guiding principles that regulate the relationship between staff and management which is endorsed by PAHO, clearly state that: *“Management should accept that, in the process of change, the Staff Association is an active player whose views should be respected and who should be brought into the picture from the beginning.”*¹

5. Since 2003, there have been at least three substantive reorganization processes that resulted in important changes to the PAHO structure namely, the closing or consolidation of organizational units; the reorganization of country offices and revision of the Collaborating Centers; the creation of sub regional posts; and the strategic assessment and resource allocation (SARA) initiative among others). These, in turn, have generated a stressful work environment and anxiety among the staff. Therefore, the SA respectfully requests that its representatives participate in ongoing and future reorganization processes in accordance with the spirit and the content of PAHO’s Staff Rules and Staff Regulations and WHO Manual on Staff Rules.

6. PAHO and WHO are currently implementing actions that will impact the conditions of service of some staff along with the Organization’s HR policies and practice. Moreover, the UN System as a whole is presently undertaking a reform of benefits and contractual and evaluation modalities for professional and general services staff and this will have significant implications. Staff participation in the planning stages and during the process of reorganization can be very valuable as illustrated by the experience of Peru. In 2007, the Country Office and the Pan American Center for Sanitary Engineering and Environmental Sciences (CEPIS) underwent an administrative merger and the Administration and the local SA body worked jointly on this exercise. This experience was fruitful, enabled the sharing and saving of resources, and the SA reported that the openness of the PAHO/WHO Representative (PWR) and the CEPIS Director to its participation facilitated constructive dialogue with the staff. Given this experience, the SA respectfully requests that its representatives be allowed to participate in all stages of organizational changes that include human resources (HR), especially during the current restructuring process. Such participation will provide the SA with an

¹ PAHO: Staff Rules and Staff Regulations, Section 9, July 2007.

opportunity to convey feedback to the Administration and foster ongoing dialogue with staff who will in turn help to build trust during the process.

Integrity and Conflict Management System

7. One of the most significant achievements in recent history of the SA is its contribution to PAHO's important step to help protect its staff through the establishment of the Integrity and Conflict Management System. This system provides a procedural framework for linking the different entities and instruments that the Organization's staff members can avail themselves of to settle labor disputes which may arise. It is therefore incumbent on both the Organization and the SA to ensure the good functioning and quality of the work environment since morale and staff productivity are closely related to this issue.

8. The creation of the Ethics Office was also an important step toward implementing the Code of Ethics and its different components will indeed help to optimize the management and daily work of the Organization, enabling it to effectively carry out its mission. We appreciate the effort made by this office to keep track of the different concerns and investigations, as well as, their confidentiality. The SA wishes to congratulate the Ethics Office for its first annual report of activities.

9. The Office of the Ombudsperson is one of the components of the Integrity and Conflict Management System, that is making a valuable and high quality contribution to conflict management within the Bureau and it is essential that the independence of both budget and programming be guaranteed. We wish to congratulate the Ombudsperson for his first annual report of activities..

10. In this context, a request is made to the Board of Appeals to present a report on the cases solved and pending, along with an explanation of why it takes a prolonged period to review a case. Many staff members have complained about the protracted period for verdicts to be given. The Grievance Panel should also prepare annual reports. Therefore, the SA requests that all components of the Integrity and Conflict Management System adopt a mandatory reporting time frame in the future.

11. The SA also considers it of utmost importance for staff to make optimal use of the internal justice system. In this regard, the SA wishes to emphasize the importance of establishing clear-cut operating standards and procedures for the investigation of complaints and grievances, as well as transparency in the punitive sanctions to be applied. The adoption of protocols that ensure confidentiality and due process with the ultimate goal of achieving a fair decision are considered to be essential. The SA stands prepared to assist in this task.

12. In the case of harassment and considering the stress those staff members who have complaints of harassment have suffered before making the complaint, we encourage PAHO's Administration to take the necessary measures to temporarily remove staff from a situation that is under investigation.

13. The SA has supported the Integrity and Conflict Resolution Management System and is desirous of continuing its contribution to the introduction of improvements needed to achieve its objective. In this respect, the SA respectfully proposes the establishment of a surveillance committee to monitor the processes underway and to ensure transparency, equity, respect and timeliness in order to adhere to and reinforcing the core values of the Organization.

Strengthening of Recruitment and Selection Procedures and the Promotion and Award System to Ensure High Quality Staff

14. The SA is of the opinion that the PAHO hiring process should be, at all times, transparent, objective, and geared to attracting and retaining the highest quality human resources available on the labor market. Once this is adhered to, the Organization will be endowed with a high quality of staff members that will enable it to efficiently carry out its mission. The SA urges the Administration to pay particular attention to staff recruitment and selection processes. The SA reiterates its call for the use of competitive selection procedures throughout PAHO/WHO for all contracts but more so temporary contracts, and for staff recruited for six months duration or more.

15. With respect to the selection of managerial staff, the SA considers it important to harmonize the recruitment and selection procedures for managerial posts at PAHO in order for them to be consistent with the specific requirements of the post. Based on a revision of the report prepared by the Area of Human Resources² on staffing profiles, it is evident that a significant number of senior staff will retire over the next five years. Simultaneously, there will be a decrease in the number of regular posts. This situation presents a challenge to the Organization both in terms of human resources planning and the training of new managers. Adequate planning to fill the upcoming vacancies will ensure that the Organization is equipped with staff that capable of carrying out its core function and are cognizant of its institutional values. One of the options for these managerial posts is through rotation and the other is via lateral transfers. Administrative actions for these two options are contained in the Staff Rules and Staff Regulations. The SA remains disposed to follow up on the agreement made with Administration to draft a policy that outlines the different methods for gaining access to these posts.

² See document CE142/INF/8, Pan American Sanitary Bureau Human Resources: Staffing Profile.

16. The SA also wishes to encourage the Organization to continue to provide staff with opportunities for professional development, including training. The SA is particularly concerned as it observes several retired staff members being recalled to temporarily occupy regular managerial positions. This practice robs the Organization of the opportunity to develop its staff component, prevents staff members under regular contract from developing a higher level of skill and competency through a temporary acting assignment, and, as a consequence, negatively impacts on staff morale and the work environment.

17. The SA reiterates its call for the implementation of a more transparent and participatory system for Personal Promotion and Awards and in harmony with the practice of other organizations of the UN System and respectfully requests that representatives of the SA be included in the review committee for personal promotions.

18. In an effort to give recognition for the many hours of voluntary service that staff members dedicate to staff -related issues, and also to provide an incentive for additional staff members to become active in the Staff Association, a proposal for an award for voluntary service to staff that actively participate in the activities of the SA is hereby put forward by the SA.

Work/Life Balance in the Organizations of the United Nations System

19. Work/life balance (WLB) is a key human resources theme across public and private sector organizations today. A report presented at the Meeting of the Human Resources Network of the United Nations in Rome last February highlighted UN organizations ongoing efforts in this regard.³ Though there are many policies and programs geared to facilitating work/life balance and staff well-being, widely different approaches are adopted within the UN system. In turn, the lack of coordinated and harmonized action across the system results in widely varying benefits packages for staff members which in turn produces discontent and unsatisfactory performance. Work/life balance and staff well-being merit the highest attention and consideration of PAHO's Administration. The SA wishes to congratulate the Administration on the implementation of a project within HR to deal with this issue and the SA would like to extend an invitation to initiate dialogue on a set of standards that could be adopted for PAHO staff.

Staff/Management Relations

20. The SA wishes to recognize the importance of the Organization's support for materials provided and time off for the Staff Association representatives to execute their duties and functions. The facilitation of resources pertinent to training on mandatory

³ CEB/2008/HLCM/HR/11, Agenda Item II.G(c).

topics and to ensure a more productive dialogue between staff and the Administration is also greatly appreciated. Last year, with the support of the Administration the SA was able to send a SA representative to the WHO training session on the Board of Appeals and another to participate in a comprehensive training course on human resources and the remuneration scale for local staff. The SA respectfully requests the continuance of this ongoing support.

21. Finally, the SA wishes to thank the Members of the Executive Committee for their attention and interest in matters pertaining to the current working conditions for staff that are pursuant to the provisions of the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service. PAHO staff recognizes and appreciates the trust placed in them by the Governing Bodies of the Organization and reiterates their commitment to continue working to provide international technical cooperation in health to fulfill the mandates of the Organization. The SA is confident that the Executive Committee will continue to guide its actions and support its efforts to improve the International Civil Service.

Action by the Executive Committee

22. The SA requests the Executive Committee to consider, endorse, and promote the ideas, proposals, and recommendations contained in this report.

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