

*executive committee of
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PAN AMERICAN
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*working party of
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STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PAHO/WHO STAFF ASSOCIATION

Attached is the Staff Association presentation to the Executive Committee made in connection with staff matters. Issues discussed include:

- The Organization and International Commitments
- New Headquarters Building
- Insurance
- Contracts
- Staff Management Relations
- CEPANZO
- Field Duty Stations
- Women's Issues
- Tripartite Participation
- Classification System
- Selection Process
- Professional Salaries
- Annual Meetings of the Federation of International Civil Servants Associations (FICSA) and WHO Staff Associations

STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PAHO/WHO STAFF ASSOCIATION

1. The Organization and International Commitments

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is the oldest and most well-established international health organization working in the Americas. PAHO has established an enviable reputation for its leadership and technical capacity in the years since its foundation. In 1948, with the establishment of the World Health Organization, and the acceptance of the role of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau as the Regional Office of the World Health Organization for the Americas, PAHO assumed an additional role within the world community for the provision of technical assistance in a collaborative leadership in health.

With these added responsibilities, PAHO entered through the World Health Organization into the UN System. This System, while providing the Organization access to world activities, participation in the resolution of health problems and the contribution of knowledge on a world-wide basis, also required the Organization to participate in the organs of the UN System, and to abide by the decisions taken by the Governing Bodies of that Organization.

The UN System subsequently established a series of mechanisms and committees for dealing with staff matters and staff rights. The establishment of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) provided a mechanism through which the administrations and staff could determine various situations related to conditions of employment of personnel in the UN System and have these presented effectively to the appropriate decision-making committees of the UN General Assembly. The ICSC in turn established various working committees, with representation from administrations and staff representatives to discuss and define technical matters and problems associated with the employment and deployment of personnel within the system. The resulting decisions of the work of the ICSC and the respective approval of the appropriate committee of the UN General Assembly have normally resulted in the promotion and adjustment of the staff rules. These rules are presented to the Executive Board of WHO in January of each year and, subsequently, to the Executive Committee of PAHO the following July.

The methodologies and the decisions taken with the approval of the UN General Assembly, based in the presentations of the ICSC, are normally applied in the organizations of the UN System without modification and form the basis for the staff rules and manual provisions of the respective organizations. These procedures have usually been followed faithfully by the Administration of the Pan American Health Organization in its participation through WHO in the various organs of the ICSC and the UN System. However, it is of concern to note that, recently, it would appear that the Administration of PAHO has decided to implement its own variations of the methodologies proposed by the ICSC and the procedures applying to these methodologies. Of particular concern are the recent actions taken with

respect to the General Services Salary Survey conducted in Washington, D.C. in 1990, and in the implementation of RIF procedures in the case of the CEPANZO Center in Buenos Aires and in the case of the proposed abolition of certain posts in the Washington Office and in Mexico.

Staff understand the financial situations facing our Administration and the fact that certain results of the application of methodologies may not always be attractive and may even cause problems at a certain point in time. However, membership in the UN System should mean participation and acceptance of the System. This participation provides both protection to the Organization and its staff, as well as demanding responsibility and accountability among all parties.

Staff understand that the Executive Committee of the Pan American Health Organization is responsible for approving the Rules and Procedures governing staff conditions of employment and hope that the Executive Committee remains committed to these rules and procedures as defined within the UN System.

2. New Headquarters Building

In 1988 at the meeting of the PAHO Executive Committee, the Staff Association raised the issue of the interest of the Director of PAHO to obtain additional space for the Pan American Health Organization in view of existing space limitations, particularly at the Washington Headquarters. At this meeting the Director indicated that such a discussion was premature and should be taken into consideration in the future. However, in the intervening period, it has become evident that there have been considerable advances in the consideration of space for the Washington area and the construction of a new HQS building, but with no consultation with the majority of staff who would be very seriously affected by such a move. In the document presented to the Pan American Sanitary Conference in September 1990, estimates of the costs of such a building were presented together with considerations on how such an activity could be funded.

At a time in which the Administration is concerned about costs to the extent that it would withhold legitimate salary increases to staff and make other cuts, it is hard to understand that apparently excessive expenditures might be permitted in expensive real estate, with heavy maintenance costs, to achieve expanded space in the Washington area, while at the same time contributing to increased travel and meeting costs. We also suggest that the Executive Committee of PAHO study fully the figures associated with the costs involved in the building at 2121 Virginia Avenue, where PAHO now has very limited space and ownership rights as well as a negative cash flow. PAHO once owned and occupied nearly the entire building, the Governor Shepherd. It is also recalled that at the Pan American Sanitary Conference in 1990 the U.S. delegates insisted that an in-depth review of all other alternatives and sites be considered, to assure maximum savings and preservation of funds for the conduct of programs.

3. Insurance

The insurance programs of the Organization have been established basically on the principle of accident insurance, staff health insurance, and life insurance. These programs were initiated in conjunction with similar programs which were created in WHO and were adopted in the Americas for PAHO. However, recently considerable concern has been expressed with respect to staff rights and redress under such policies, particularly in view of the potential impact of the compensation available under such policies and the potential impact on programs of the Organization.

Particular attention is drawn to accident insurance, where it is considered that a thorough review of the insurance policy and related financial procedures is necessary in view of alternative insurances available and the situation created over the past year where a claim of \$463,000 was charged against program funds with subsequent impact on an important program of the Organization. Staff believe that program funds should not be jeopardized due to on-the-job accidents.

Likewise, it would appear appropriate that the pertinent rights of the staff to make claims for injuries sustained in connection with their work on PAHO premises within PAHO responsibility be made clear. Staff should feel assured that they can be provided with adequate and just compensation without unnecessarily affecting PAHO programs and without the necessity of litigation.

We request that the Executive Committee, in the light of the changes which have occurred in insurance policies and insurance procedures, and in view of increasing compensation costs, arrange to conduct a study of the current PAHO procedures and methodologies, to assure that accident claims in the future can be met without impact on PAHO program delivery. The Staff Association has created its own working group and would be very pleased to pass on its ideas to the Subcommittee on Planning and Programming if it is so desired.

In the case of life insurance, the Staff Association has already taken actions, with the collaboration of the Administration, to institute an alternative life insurance program which can remedy certain deficiencies existing in the current voluntary life insurance programs available to staff members of the Organization.

4. Contracts

Since 1986 the Staff Association has advised against an increasing proportion of ad hoc temporary contracts and agency contracts used by PAHO particularly in field duty stations. In addition, the Association has pointed out that an Organization dedicated to "Health for All" cannot justify entering into contracts which do not guarantee proper accident coverage, health insurance, or social security. Similarly, a prestigious Organization should not place itself in a position where it pays different salaries for the same work performed.

The UN System, which is a good and well-tested system in spite of certain weaknesses, aims to eliminate discrimination. It would appear, however, that PAHO management practices, by introducing contractual arrangements and contracting procedures outside the normal UN System, has not adhered to these high standards and that the problems, against which the Association repeatedly warned in its presentations to the Executive Committee are now more apparent than ever. For example, in 1991 the ILO Tribunal in judgements has criticized PAHO for bringing in temporary staff, whose ultimate selection in a prejudicial manner abused the rights of regular staff who had served it long and well.

Such contractual practices have also undermined PAHO's political neutrality, particularly in connection with hiring, even at low level posts. The use of contracts where the immunity of the Organization is waived by PAHO may well jeopardize the immunity of UN staff.

Recent contractual practices have threatened the intent of the Noblemaire Principle which encourages UN agencies to strive toward remuneration of staff at the best prevailing rates.

The Staff Association is particularly concerned at the alleged wrongful interpretation of UN contracts by PAHO officials, leading to the apparent politically motivated use of PAHO staff in non-health roles. Such involvement in areas of political conflict involved unnecessary endangerment, in our opinion, of these staff, who were required to carry out functions for which they had little or no training or background and, to the best of our knowledge, without full and proper advisement as to their benefits, rights and obligations under the conditions in which they were required to serve. In spite of Administration statements to the contrary, we believe that adequate, valid insurance protection and coverage was not or could not have been guaranteed.

In view of the existing concerns on hiring practices, but mindful of the need to expand the capability to provide technical assistance with limited funds, the Staff Association has joined with the FICSA Subcommittee on General Service Questions to survey all UN duty stations throughout the world. It is necessary to enumerate the types of temporary contracts being employed and the conditions of employment of staff with particular emphasis on so-called short term staff who have worked with UN agencies for years. In this endeavor, we request the Administration's support and trust that Member Governments will support a study on this subject.

The Staff Association is pleased that the PAHO Administration has taken action to curb the use of some short term contracts. PAHO General Information Bulletin NO. HQ/F-91-19 reads: "It is pointed out that temporary personnel should not normally be assigned continuously by way of repeated extensions, constituting de facto permanency."

5. Staff Management Relations

Staff view current Staff-Management relations with mixed feelings. Staff have always appreciated the opportunity to dialogue with the Administration on issues in the past. However, the recent exclusion of staff representatives from discussions on important staff-related issues and the holding of "closed" sessions is a matter of extreme concern. The GS salary discussions held with the Subcommittee on Planning and Programming in which staff presence was excluded, is a case in point. Despite assurances that staff would be involved on the HQ building move, which may negatively affect the majority of Washington based staff, no dialogue has been initiated. PAHO staff have been utilized outside the definition of their contractual status without consultation with the Staff Association as to the necessity of such actions or the rights and responsibilities of staff involved. The current unnecessarily-slow appeals process, and no ombudsman are additional problems. The introduction of subjects such as the closing of CEPANZO into the "other matters" sector of the Executive Committee agenda, prohibiting the Staff Association from addressing this issue, reflect current Staff-Management trends.

It would appear that since the Administration is not giving staff an opportunity to express its opinion on some very important issues on a timely basis necessary to influence decisions, staff will keep looking for other means to solve unresolved disputes. Thus, by the end of 1991 or 1992 the number of appeals from PAHO staff to the ILO Tribunal may be overwhelming. These appeals will treat unfair classification, violation of salary scales procedures, harrassment, wrongful application of reduction-in-force procedures, appointments without selection, failure to respect contractual obligations, biased selections, and the wrongful application of short-term contracts.

6. CEPANZO

CEPANZO may well be a historic case in law, despite the Staff Association's attempts to find alternate solutions--ones the Association believes an ombudsman would have suggested at the outset.

Staff do not question the right of the Administration to close a facility, even if its functions are still needed. In fact, CEPANZO staff are concerned that every month of delay in the decision has reduced their pensionable remuneration. The Executive Committee must be aware that UN pension benefits are currently based on the last three years of service. Thus, with double digit inflation, staff at CEPANZO can count on nothing but loss of pension benefits as each month passes. With their termination, or likely termination, CEPANZO staff will not benefit from adjustments to this unfair pension problem which surely must be corrected in 1991. In addition, it should be noted that the short-term contracts given to CEPANZO staff in January 1991 were invalid according to a staff legal advisor. While the Staff Association, FICSA and Public Service International will stand up for the legal rights of staff, we believe that Member Government representatives have not authorized the violation of the staff contractual rights. In this connection, it is of concern to

learn that apparently the PAHO legal office has not yet given an opinion on the validity of the CEPANZO contracts. We find it disturbing that legal matters of such importance are not handled by the Legal Office. The result may be a long and costly legal dispute jeopardizing PAHO's image and the rights of staff who served PAHO well for over 20 years on the average.

7. Field Duty Stations

Staff in field duty stations have suffered for many years with little or inadequate attention paid to their needs. Member Governments should understand that field staff are dependent on lead agencies, usually UNDP, to assure that the salaries of PAHO employees are updated on a timely basis. Failure to achieve this updating costs staff large amounts of money, as retroactive payments are not pensionable.

Although we have brought these problems to the attention of our Administration many times over the last few years, no solution has been found. However, we believe that a more active role of PAHO in assuring the rights of PAHO staff among other UN agencies is needed. Better communication and better liaison with the UNDP, for example, is required. We believe that the employer should acknowledge these problems and make suggestions for solving these problems through the proper channels within the UN System.

As we have in previous years, we ask Member Governments to give special attention to the GS pensionable remuneration system now under review by the UN Pension tripartite working group. Staff should neither be punished nor rewarded because of inflation or currency devaluations. Obvious solutions have been delayed too long.

8. Women's Issues

During the last four years, PAHO has made moderate improvements in selecting women to professional positions. PAHO is one of the first UN Agencies to approximate the goal of women occupying 30% of the professional positions. Nevertheless, concern is expressed that in 1989 and 1990, men were predominantly recruited for high-level decision making positions.

A policy paper on "Accountability: Selection and Recruitment of Women to PAHO, "First Phase" suggested four policy statements to be implemented by the Organization. These policy statements were accepted and endorsed by the Administration.

However, as of 28 February 1991, only one of the 27 Country Representatives is a woman, only two of the nine Center Directors are women, only one of the 11 Technical Program Coordinators is a woman. Of the 18 high-level directive and administrative positions, not one is a woman. Of the 65 high level decision-makers (posts P5 and above) in the Organization, only 4 are women.

Resolution 45/239 of the United Nations General Assembly (21 December 1990) calls for the attainment, by 1995, of 35% women in professional posts and 25% women in posts at levels P6 and above. The Staff Association suggests that a goal of at least 25% women at each professional level, by 1995 should be considered.

9. Tripartite Participation

In June 1990 the Staff Association suggested that it would be in the mutual interest of Staff, Member Government representatives and Administration officials to discuss, in a less formal forum, issues which directly affect staff. Subsequently, the Director agreed that staff might participate in meetings of the Subcommittee on Planning and Programming. The staff consider that this is an excellent idea, which would give staff representatives a better appreciation for the concerns of Member Government representatives, and at the same time provide such representatives with the perspectives of staff. The staff would appreciate the formal endorsement of the Executive Committee of this approach.

10. Classification System

At the X Council Meeting of the Staff Association, the members asked the Executive Committee of the Association to request the Administration of PAHO to comply with the decision of the General Assembly of the UN to adopt the Standard Post Classification Procedure for General Service in Field Offices in use by UNDP. Staff have serious reservations about the PAHO classification system. The Association has suggested that a harmonization of posts study would reveal many discrepancies among PAHO offices and between the WHO Regional offices. It was also suggested that an expert on UN classification system be utilized to monitor the implementation of the UN seven grade GS system in PAHO duty stations.

Staff would like to reestablish in PAHO the Joint Administration/Staff Committee on Classification which is used in WHO/HQ. We believe that this joint committee could address staff queries and prevent unnecessary litigation.

11. Selection Process

A joint Administration and Staff Committee on selection procedures is working to improve guidelines for selection committee members. There is concern that personnel are being appointed to posts without selection procedures; some posts are not being advertised or circulated and do not pass through the selection process; and that short-term staff are given preference over qualified internal staff who have served PAHO long and well. There is also concern that many so-called "short-term staff," who have worked many years for the Organization have never gone through a formal selection process.

12. Professional Salaries

The X Council of the Staff Association requested that all efforts be made to improve the comparability of professional salaries, as well as mechanisms necessary to assure fair remuneration and benefits. It is emphasized that this is particularly true in areas of high inflation and currency devaluation. Most importantly, it was emphasized that staff cannot afford to have salaries frozen again.

13. Annual Meetings of the Federation of International Civil Servants Associations (FICSA) and WHO Staff Associations

At both the FICSA and WHO meetings grave concern was expressed at the proliferation of short-term contracts of an irregular nature and their concomitant negative effects on the UN pension system. Concern was also expressed in the lack of a selection process for some posts and the ineffectiveness of using non-regular short term staff who require training and then leave. Concern was expressed about General Service pensions; the possibility of a freeze on professional salaries, as well as the continued break down of the credibility of the ICSC as an independent commission. The failure to respect the ICSC methodology in the PAHO General Salary Survey in Washington, D.C. was a testimony to the weakness of the ICSC, as the ICSC failed to reject invalid actions proposed by the PAHO Administration to the ICSC methodology.

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Staff are worried about health insurance and the WHO action resulting in the lack of a reinsurance policy to protect the high cost items in the health insurance system. Staff are very concerned at the ever increasing number of proposed appeals and that the appeal process is being slowed down, particularly at the regional office level. The staff in PAHO have repeatedly requested an ombudsman to improve this situation, but their requests have been denied. This year, we ask once again for your support for the ombudsman concept. Only through such a mechanism do we have any chance to prevent numerous expected appeals over the coming years.