



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



146th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PAHO/WHO STAFF ASSOCIATION

1. The Staff Association thanks the Members of the Executive Committee for their attention and interest to matters pertaining to the staff's current working conditions that are pursuant to the provisions of the international civil service. PAHO staff appreciates the trust placed in them by the Organization's Governing Bodies. They reiterate their commitment to continue to provide international cooperation in health and to fulfill the Organization's mandates in keeping with its Mission, Vision, and Values.

2. At this 146th Session of the Executive Committee, the Staff Association reports on the relations between the staff and the Administration and highlights core issues currently of interest to staff. While much progress has been made over time in the Organization and in its work conditions, many of these advances were achieved with the active support and contribution of staff representatives. In this regard, we wish to emphasize the need for the Administration and the Staff Association to maintain a proactive, professional working relation, in order to advance our agendas.

3. The Staff Association thanks the Governing Bodies for their contribution and encourages their continued participation in guiding PAHO's actions for improving the international public service and benefitting the people of our Member States.

4. The following paragraphs highlight some of the most strategic issues that the Staff Association has been working on in close collaboration with PAHO's Administration.

Contractual arrangements

5. The implementation of a new contractual framework has begun at PAHO. The new framework contemplates only three contract types: fixed term, continuing, and temporary. The proposed Staff Rule amendments are expected to fully align the benefits

and entitlements of PAHO temporary staff with those of the UN common system. The Staff Association considers that the Organization should fulfill the mandate issued by the 144th Session of the Executive Committee to implement continuing appointments and align PAHO's policy with WHO's.

6. The Staff Association also wishes to encourage the Organization to continue to provide staff with opportunities for professional development, including training. The Association is particularly concerned with the practice of having 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.

Staff well-being

7. The Staff Association recognizes that work/life balance (WLB) and staff well-being are key human resource themes that currently cut across public and private sector organizations, and considers that they merit PAHO Administration's highest attention and consideration. There are several policies and programs within PAHO which are geared to facilitating and improving work/life balance and staff well-being. However, these are largely fragmented and uncoordinated. The Association reiterates its willingness to work closely with PAHO's Management to have a more systematic approach within the Organization.

Staff development and training

8. The Learning Board is an essential mechanism for aligning the Organization's learning opportunities with the strategic objectives included in PAHO's Strategic Plan. The Staff Association actively participates on this Board and fulfills an advisory role to the Director and Executive Management. It also plays an oversight role in the selection of projects and corporate learning programs to be funded by WHO Staff Development funds. It is important that the Staff Association continue to actively participate in the Learning Board to ensure that the needs of all staff are reflected in the projects and corporate learning programs. It is also important to promote awareness of the existence and timely access to these funds.

Performance management

9. The electronic Performance Appraisal System (ePPES) that will be linked to the Biennial Workplan is now being implemented in all PAHO offices. The Association participated in testing this new system and suggests that the Administration undertake an

evaluation of the system at the end of its first year, as a way to correct any problems that might have occurred in the implementation process.

Role of staff representatives

10. The Staff Association believes that its active participation, as well as that of staff in general, throughout the process is crucial to building trust between the Administration and staff and ensuring transparency and integrity in all aspects of staff/management relations. Our definition of integrity is based on the premise that all parties have a role to play in ensuring that appropriate checks and balances are in place and being used, and that there are adequate levels of staff participation in achieving meaningful and sustainable institutional goals.

11. The Staff Association is pleased to acknowledge the contributions to organizational corporate efforts by staff representatives in the joint Staff-Administration committees. However, the Association continues to feel that management needs to more fully recognize the staff representative's role and to strengthen the level of communication between the Administration and the Staff Association in order to achieve a more meaningful participation.

12. The Staff Association puts forward the following suggestions: (a) As a way to foster trust among staff and encourage staff members to participate in PAHO/WHO's internal processes, Staff Association representatives should be increasingly involved in consultation processes; (b) the Administration should regularly distribute information advising managers to support Staff Association activities and to avoid interfering in its activities; (c) the Staff Association proposes that an award for voluntary service be issued to staff members that actively participate in the Association's activities, in recognition of their many hours of voluntary service and to provide an incentive to other staff members to become so involved; (d) elected staff representatives should be given sufficient time and resources to carry out their mandate fully and meaningfully; (e) the establishment of open and regular communication and dialogue between the Staff Association and management; (f) the development of skills necessary to achieve effective staff-management relations.

Integrity and Conflict Management System

13. The Staff Association has extensively reviewed and discussed the operations of the Integrity and Conflict Management System (ICMS), and considers that its complexity and the number of actors and instruments involved could affect its performance and effectiveness. The Association agrees with some of the changes because they will improve conflict resolution as well as promote a better understanding of resolution processes. It is important to highlight the role of the Ombudsman in the informal process

of conflict resolution in the workplace. There is still room for improvement, and there is a clear need for the current System to guarantee more transparency through the systematic and timely presentation of reports of the different bodies that are part of the System; independence of certain functions by the definition of clear terms of reference of each body, checks and balances; monitoring system that includes the opinion or perception of the users of the services; and the provision of facilities to access these services at the different levels within the Organization. These improvements in the Organization's internal judicial system are required to ensure, among other issues: (a) the principle of trial defense, (b) the right to a due process, (c) an abbreviated means of access to the system, and (d) the reaching of decisions within a reasonable time and timely responses.

14. The Staff Association also considers it necessary to optimize the internal justice system, specifically the operations of the PAHO/WHO Board of Appeals, by amending and updating the norms that govern it, defining clear terms of references for the members and the chairman as and a timeline. The Association is convinced that the Board of Appeals can operate more efficiently and make a substantial contribution to improving the quality of internal processes. The Association does not believe in a hybrid solution for the Board's structure and nor does it want the Board to get more legalistic that necessary.

Action by the Executive Committee

15. The Staff Association requests the Executive Committee to consider, endorse, and promote the proposals and recommendations contained in this report and welcomes its greater involvement in the measures to protect the staff and staff working conditions.

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