



*executive committee of
the directing council*

PAN AMERICAN
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

*working party of
the regional committee*

WORLD
HEALTH
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PRESENTATION OF THE PAHO/WHO STAFF ASSOCIATION

At the request of the PAHO/WHO Staff Association, the Director is transmitting the presentation of the PAHO/WHO Staff Association to the 97th Meeting of the Executive Committee.

PRESENTATION OF THE PAHO/WHO STAFF ASSOCIATION TO THE 97TH MEETING
OF THE PAHO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Thank you for permitting the Staff Association to present its opinions.

1. Hiring Under Local Conditions of Employment for the Mobilization of National Resources (Provisional Agenda Item 5.5)

Over the last two Councils of the Association, the representatives of the staff have expressed two overriding concerns about the program of mobilizing national resources: (1) the uncertainty about the future of the international civil service, and (2) the lack of any sort of guidelines for the hiring of this new category of personnel.

The discussions over the last several weeks with the Administration have greatly alleviated our second concern, as reflected in Document CE97/23 and Addenda I and II. We welcome the Director's initiative to regularize the status of the new category of employee. We recognize, of course, that the proposed changes in the Staff Regulations are only a beginning. Until Staff Rules and Manual Provisions are developed, we will only possess a skeleton of what is needed to completely regularize the status of the new employees. Nevertheless, what is proposed for this session of PAHO's Executive Committee is a necessary and desirable first step.

We still remain concerned with the impact of this policy on the international civil service. The Administration's study of this issue presented in Document CE97/23 shows that it did not study the experience of the U.N. common system with this concept. The examples in the study are of OAS, IDB, and IICA, none of which have experience as extensive as agencies of the U.N. common system. The ICSC (International Civil Service Commission) for example, has done studies on the subject and issued guidelines for agencies to follow. The UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) in particular have developed a very detailed set of rules and regulations and have acquired much experience in hiring this type of personnel.

The Staff Association believes a committee should be established by the Executive Committee in order to develop the guidelines and mechanisms necessary for the implementation of this resolution. The Staff Association should be allowed input into the work of the committee to safeguard the rights of the staff.

2. Medical Insurance

Effective 1 January 1986, the terms of the WHO health insurance plan were changed to the detriment of staff in this Region, especially those located in the United States. The most serious change placed a \$50,000 limit on the costs for major surgery, thus eliminating the provision for catastrophic illness in these cases. This clearly inadequate sum has exposed all PAHO staff to financial ruin. To add insult to injury the reduced benefits were coupled with increased premiums.

Even worse, retirees who are dependent on the plan are very threatened by the new limitation because they are the most likely to need extensive medical care.

Since then, PAHO's Health Surveillance Committee has been investigating means of acquiring additional insurance. It has researched various possibilities and made a recommendation that would cover costs beyond \$50,000 at a price of only \$100,000 per year. Since PAHO had a one million dollar deficit in the health fund last year, accepting the Health Surveillance Committee's recommendation is obviously beneficial to both staff and Organization.

The Staff Association urges the Executive Committee to instruct the Director to acquire the insurance recommended by the Health Surveillance Committee in order to insure all PAHO staff against catastrophic illness.

3. Women's Rights

The Staff Association formed a Women's Group last November to study the progress made over the last ten years in recruiting more women for decision making positions. It has found that, despite a number of resolutions from the Governing Bodies, beginning in 1974, urging more recruitment of women, only 12.1% of the posts graded P.4 and higher are occupied by women. It also notes that none of the resolutions passed by the Governing Bodies gave specific goals with definite timetables. It recommends that the Governing Bodies start doing so. Since the Group found that about 73 posts in the higher grades are vacant or will become vacant in the next three years, it suggests the following goal: that the percentage of such posts occupied by women rise to 30% over the next two years. The Staff Association gives its support to this goal.

4. The U.N. Financial Crisis

We would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate the

concerns we presented last year about the financial crisis. Basically, we recognize the problem and are willing to cooperate fully in solving the problem. However, we strenuously object to being made the scapegoat of the problem through unwarranted attacks on the dedication and commitment of international civil servants. We object equally to being made the sacrificial lambs of all solutions. The arbitrary and illegal cuts made on our pensions and post adjustment are still under appeal, and we expect to appeal all other actions that do not respect acquired rights. It is not insignificant to note, at this stage, that similar appeals were won this month at the U.N. Tribunal level by staff of other international organizations who were equally affected.

International civil servants are not responsible for the crisis of the United Nations system. They are proud of what they have achieved and wish to remind those who are inclined to forget that it is the staff of the organizations who have:

- helped to maintain peace and economic development
- provided assistance to refugees
- fought disease and eradicated smallpox
- led the efforts to eliminate illiteracy
- rendered progress possible in posts and telecommunications
- developed child welfare services
- taken action to conserve the environment, to modernize agriculture, to advance social progress.

Once again on behalf of the PAHO staff, I thank you for the opportunity to bring these concerns to your attention.