



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



148th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PAHO/WHO STAFF ASSOCIATION

1. The Staff Association would like to express its appreciation to the members of the Executive Committee for their attention and interest to issues related to current staff working conditions, in accordance with the regulations of the international public administration. The staff members of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (PASB) appreciate the confidence the Governing Bodies of the Organization has placed in them. Moreover, they reiterate their commitment to continuing to provide international cooperation in health and fulfilling the mandates of the Organization in accordance with its mission, vision, and values.

2. At this 148th session of the Executive Committee, the Staff Association would like to review the scope of the relations between the staff and the Administration, particularly with regard to the internal administration of justice and specific actions that will lead to a better organizational climate and staff motivation.

3. The world is once again going through a period of crises: financial, political stability and environmental crises. This situation, which magnifies the negative effects of globalization, creates tension in an international system that is already questionable in terms of perceived effectiveness and has problems of governance. Our mission as an Organization is now more relevant than ever. Our mandates are still valid, and we must ensure the level of effort required to be able to fulfill them.

4. As a result of the high level of interdependence in which we currently live, our Hemisphere and our Pan American Health Organization are not immune to these forces and pressures. It is at times like these in which we must demonstrate that the Organization is all of us, the Member States and the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, the health authorities, Executive Management, and staff—we are all public servants. At times like these, there is a need not only for charismatic leaders and well-defined priorities, but also

for a shared vision and a profound commitment constructed through dialogue and participation.

5. PAHO will soon celebrate 110 years of existence. The first decade of the 21st century was represented by major advances and changes that have different implications.

6. With regard to relations between staff and management, a cordial, proactive, and professional work relationship has been maintained. One of the major joint achievements has been the creation and consolidation of the different components of the Integrity and Conflict Management System. In recent months there has been extensive discussion about options for simplifying processes and making them more efficient. These changes are included in the proposed amendments to the Pan American Sanitary Bureau Staff Rules and Regulations. In principle, we consider it important to strive to build confidence in the internal system for the administration of justice. Since the PAHO Board of Appeal is one of the key elements in this confidence-building process, we would like to express our concern about upholding the decision to appoint a person from outside of the Organization as Chair of the Board. We are particularly concerned that the lack of knowledge about the Organization and the contractual relationship as a PAHO employee would undermine any real independence. Although the previous model in which a PAHO staff member acted as Chair of the Board did not necessarily make it more efficient, we believe that in both cases the models require a surveillance and monitoring mechanism that can ensure the exercise of rights and due process. We hope that the model that is being considered works and, with this objective, we will be awaiting sufficient information for evaluating the relevance of the amendments.

7. The Executive Committee of the Staff Association is committed to working with the Administration on improving the organizational climate. We need to seek ways to motivate the staff and believe that a more participatory management style and increased internal dialogue can contribute to this end we have taken the initiative of working with the Administration on a new system for staff recognition and awards that contributes to greater uniformity and standardization of criteria and practices. It is important to recognize that the purpose is to prevent the discretionary authority of management from prevailing, since it has a negative impact on staff. Special attention will be given to the Representative Offices, because staff in these offices have different types of employment agreements.

8. Another joint effort is the new initiative to review the recruitment and selection processes in order to improve their effectiveness and efficiency. We are certain that the Organization needs a staff recruitment process that ensures that the most competent staff are hired through a competitive and expeditious process. If we manage to conclude this initiative we are certain that it will have a positive impact on the workload of staff

members. The staff was recently informed that there will be a moratorium on filling vacant post at the Pan American Sanitary Bureau. We understand that the moratorium is an unavoidable managerial decision of a preventive nature in view of the current situation, and we hope that it is temporary. We cannot expect the Organization to operate with the same intensity and in all areas and at the same time demand that it be more relevant and effective with less capacity and fewer human resources.

9. It is important to point out that it is good practice for the Organization's entities to review their human resources plan when the biennial work plans are reviewed to align the work plan with human/financial resources to achieve the results. The Staff Association believes that just as the design and review of the work plans is a broad and participatory process, the human resources plan should be as well; its review should be transparent and should include different points of view. Thus, it is important that the representatives of the Staff Association participate in the final review with Executive Management and Human Resources Management.

10. Improving strategic planning for our work force and the opportunities for staff development is now more relevant than ever. The Organization has a unique opportunity to establish effective mechanisms for timely replenishment of staff with the competencies required for technical cooperation, and investment in human resources development. Such planning will allow staff, both general services and professional, to advance their careers based on their merits and will limit the hiring of retired staff.

11. We wish to work with the Organization on improving the health and well-being of staff and preventing health problems related to stress and lifestyle. The Organization has a formal structure that should attend to the health and well-being of its staff. It also has a staff support service. However, we do not know whether it has managed to have an effect on risk factors and the perception of overall well-being.

Conclusions

12. The Staff Association respectfully requests that the PAHO Executive Committee consider, endorse, and promote proposals and recommendations related to the matters addressed in this document.

13. As an Association, we are certain that we contribute to the improvement of the working conditions of PAHO/WHO staff and, consequently, to the quality of technical cooperation. In this regard, our dialogue with the PAHO Management is in the framework of the guiding principles that govern staff relations. The Staff Association will fully support reforms that lead to the strengthening and improved performance of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau in its support for the Member States. We furthermore reaffirm our commitment to contributing to the achievement of our Organization's mission.