



Pan American
Health
Organization



World Health
Organization
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE
Americas

160th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Washington, D.C., USA, 26-30 June 2017

Provisional agenda item 6.3

CE160/27
6 June 2017
Original: Spanish

STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PAHO/WHO STAFF ASSOCIATION

1. The Staff Association would like to thank the members of the Executive Committee for their interest in matters related to current staff working conditions, in accordance with the provisions of the International Civil Service. On behalf of the staff, we reiterate our commitment to the mandates of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (PASB).
 2. In this statement to the Executive Committee, the Staff Association will address the following subjects: *a)* relations between the Association and Executive Management; *b)* gender equity and the creation of professional opportunities; and *c)* attraction and retention of personnel.
 3. **Working relations** between the Association and Executive Management are characterized by cooperation and mutual respect. As has been stated on other occasions, the Staff Association is able to approach the different offices of Executive Management, including the Director's office, make comments concerning specific subjects and cases, and advocate before these offices. In this regard, working relations are positive and dialogue is a daily tool.
 4. In this context, since the last report submitted to the Governing Bodies, some progress has been made with regard to personnel management with the establishment of the telework policy. This modality, in the pilot study stage, is widely recognized in modern institutions as favoring productivity, since it strengthens results-based evaluation of personnel. Staff members have to meet technological standards in order to take advantage of this modality and if the policy is extended beyond the pilot study, we suppose it will have an impact on infrastructure costs, substantially reduce labor absenteeism, and foster better use of work stations.
 5. The administration of justice also falls within the category of activities that have an impact on good personnel management and the work environment. The formal process of administration of justice has two important mechanisms: the Board of Appeal and the workplace investigations conducted by the Ethics Office. After several years of negotiations, the rules of procedure of the Board of Appeal were approved and members
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have been duly selected by the Administration and elected by the staff. For the Organization, having new rules of procedure constitutes a milestone that is expected to provide more effective administration of justice.

6. The second mechanism within the framework of internal justice involves workplace investigations. As was indicated in the 2016 report, it is necessary to more clearly define the functions of the Ethics Office, the Office of Legal Counsel, and the Department of Human Resources Management in each stage of the investigation process: reporting, determining what or whom is being investigated, the scope of the investigation, the investigation and its corresponding time frames, preparing the report, submitting the results, and taking measures resulting from the investigation.

7. Clear definitions of the functions and scope of the aforementioned offices will improve due process, impartiality, levels of responsibility, confidentiality, and compliance with the minimum standards in the course of internal justice. Recently, there has been discussion of the need to review the investigation protocol, which may help to resolve some of the issues mentioned above.

8. In its most recent reports, the Audit Committee has indicated the need to conduct an independent study to determine the relevance of the Ethics Office having the investigative function and to establish the function of the Office of Legal Counsel in this process, with a view to clarifying the functions of these two offices during investigations.

9. Concerning informal processes, the Staff Association reiterates its explicit commitment to staff and to the Director with respect to the Respectful Workplace Initiative. The Staff Association considers that this initiative will contribute positively to individual and institutional responsibility to create and maintain a work environment that promotes trust in the staff, emphasizing prevention and early resolution of disputes before they escalate to higher and more formal levels.

10. With regard to the subject of **gender equity and the creation of professional opportunities**, the World Health Organization (WHO) has been very explicit in putting the promotion and creation of opportunities for women at front and center in the debate on its human resources strategy. As was stated in the final report of the PAHO Executive Committee, held in June 2016, the Association reiterates the need for explicit policies and practices that facilitate the promotion of women working in the Organization.

11. The statistics on human resources show that the percentage of women working at Headquarters in the professional category declined slightly, from 54% in 2015 to 53% in 2016. In the representative offices and centers, the percentage of women in the professional category increased to 50% in 2016, from 47% in 2015. The reality is that these averages hide major disparities, if different segments and areas of the workplace are analyzed.

12. The Staff Association had the opportunity to hold a meeting with several professional women and Executive Management, in which Executive Management was shown these disparities and how to correct them through specific actions. By way of

example, it takes a woman five years longer than a man to rise in professional category in the workplace. It is important to train managers how to detect and avoid partiality when identifying or selecting possible candidates for posts with managerial responsibility.

13. WHO has agreed on a model for working in this direction and, with the adoption of the gender parity policy in January 2017, it would be extremely advantageous for PASB to be aligned with this initiative, since this would promote a common understanding of the issue, using the same parameters that would foster professional growth and create opportunities for female staff. Otherwise, we cannot declare that gender parity exists.

14. The report submitted to the 70th World Health Assembly (Document A70/46) mentions Resolution A/RES/70/244, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, and the report submitted by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) on policies and measures supporting gender equity in order to foster an enabling working environment that promotes gender balance in the organizations of the common system. The report pointed out the need for greater efforts to overcome the informal institutional culture that hinders the progress of women in the organizations of the common system.

15. In this regard, PAHO finds itself in a privileged position to create an enabling institutional culture designed to achieve and maintain gender balance at all levels, promote a healthy working environment for all staff, and adopt specific measures to change attitudes and eliminate prejudices that perpetuate inequality between men and women.

16. In conclusion on this subject, it should be noted that Executive Management was very receptive to the presentation mentioned in paragraph 12, above, and indicated that, as part of the work agenda devoted to learning and career development, the Department of Human Resources Management should undertake specific activities to achieve true equity between the sexes. We hope to be able to report advances at the next session of the PAHO Executive Committee.

17. **The attraction and retention of personnel** is one of the main subjects of joint work with the Administration. The Bureau made the decision to adopt the WHO electronic platform, Stellis, to improve the efficiency of the personnel recruitment and selection process. This platform enables everyone interested in applying for WHO and PAHO positions to provide the same information in their applications.

18. In our opinion, the analysis of information included in applications, as well as the selection process, should be the same in PAHO and WHO since we are aligning ourselves. To this end, a policy and procedures for personnel selection are in place in WHO; this document was reviewed in the Bureau by a select, recognized working group that included technical, administrative, and emergency staff, managers, and a staff representative. The working group's recommendation is that PAHO should be completely aligned with WHO policies and procedures.

19. The Staff Association agrees with this recommendation, since alignment in this area is more than necessary for joining efforts to evaluate personnel with the same parameters, both for selection and performance, which will favor the exchange of personnel.

20. Attracting and retaining personnel should not be understood simply as the use of tools and mechanisms to be implemented within the Pan American Sanitary Bureau alone. Considering that we are also the WHO Regional Office for the Americas, opportunities for personnel could be expanded in the global context of WHO by sharing similar workforce management processes, such as recruitment and selection. This would be consolidated with the application of the same selection criteria for internal candidates, including the equivalence of categories and academic degrees.

21. In light of the changes in the compensation package for professional staff recommended by the ICSC, approved by the United Nations Assembly, and currently in the implementation process—changes that are on the agenda of this session—the capacity to attract staff for technical cooperation in the area of public health and senior management really will be affected if we fail to create or take advantage of opportunities such as the flexible and simplified selection processes offered by Stellis.

22. Finally, with respect to staff retention, implementation of the changes to the compensation package for professional staff has substantial impact at the individual level, but the reality is that there is no clear indication of the impact on attracting and retaining staff, especially in specialized agencies. We understand that the decision of the United Nations is final, but we believe that the Administration should examine and monitor the impact of this decision on the preservation of institutional memory and the specialization of agencies.

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