



Statement by representative of the WHO staff associations¹

Mr Chairman, honourable members of the Executive Board, Acting Director-General, colleagues,

1. First of all, on behalf of WHO staff members worldwide, we wish to express our profound sadness and sense of loss we all feel at the untimely passing of the Director-General. We extend our sincere condolences and sympathy to the family and friends of Dr Lee Jong-wook. We also express our appreciation for Dr Lee's many contributions to improve public health of all peoples of the world, through his service as Director-General and as a staff member of WHO for 23 years.
2. We thank the Executive Board for taking the time to listen to the concerns of staff. As representatives of the WHO staff associations worldwide, we are honoured to serve WHO and to further its constitutional mandate. We do not take this privilege lightly. We are aware that it implies responsibilities, particularly at a time when the world is facing many major public health challenges.
3. Within its mandate, the headquarters Staff Association seeks to promote an efficient, fair and rules-based organization which is conducive to productive work. We wish to work in a climate of confidence and mutual respect and in this spirit we urge you to collaborate in seeking solutions to the legitimate concerns and demands of staff.
4. In terms of the current staff/management relations in headquarters, we recognize that there are some positive elements in the proposed contract reforms, and better monitoring in the selection and recruitment of staff. However, there is dissatisfaction because of abuse of rules and procedures and gross inequalities in treatment of staff. In addition we find that productive work is often hampered by repeated restructuring exercises.
5. For the record, and to avoid any misunderstandings, we state categorically that we do not oppose downsizing when this is necessary. However, we strongly object to a process of review and downsizing which is non-transparent, arbitrary and unjust, particularly when the review excludes the functions and competences of senior managers.

¹ This statement does not reflect the views of the staff associations of WHO regional offices.

6. We suggest four concrete measures to the new administration, for your consideration in order to improve staff management relations.

(a) Review the internal justice system and its implementation, including the appointment and reporting lines of the ombudspersons, in order to improve accountability and impartiality. We also propose the implementation of **all** recommendations of the Director-General's advisory group on harassment which Dr Lee convened last year, in accordance with his stand on "zero tolerance" for harassment.

(b) Conduct an independent audit to check the skills, education, training and experience of staff below D1 level directly appointed without a proper selection process during the last three years.

(c) Instigate external investigation of reported allegations of misconduct and unethical behaviour.

(d) Allow representation by the headquarters Staff Association in the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee, as recommended by Board members at the 117th session in January 2006.

7. We look forward to genuine respect and shared responsibility of staff/management relations through a partnership approach which includes communication, consultation and negotiation as appropriate. Finally, we wish to support the administration in this transitional period and remain loyal and committed to further all WHO mandates.

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