



# WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

**EXECUTIVE BOARD**  
**109th Session**  
**Provisional agenda item 6.1**

**EB109/25**  
**27 December 2001**

---

## **Reform of human resources management**

### **Note by the Secretariat**

1. The purpose of this note is to provide an update on human resource issues in WHO, further to the information provided to the Board at its 107th session.<sup>1</sup> During 2001, progress has been made in a number of key areas. The initiatives outlined below form part of an integrated strategic framework for reform of human resources management in WHO.
2. The Director-General, in order to underscore the importance she attaches to human resources and to carry the reform process forward, has created within General management a Cabinet-level position of Managing Director, Human Resources and Staff Development.
3. The actions described in this note are also consistent with work under way at the level of the common system, notably the Framework for Human Resources Management developed by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC),<sup>2</sup> and the current review of the pay and benefits system by the Commission.

### **CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS AND RELATED MATTERS**

4. The drive for an improved and streamlined set of contractual arrangements for WHO, aligned with the Organization's strategic objectives and operational requirements, has been a centrepiece of the Organization's reform of human resources management since 1998. Experience has highlighted the difficulty of balancing optimum programme responsiveness, administrative and financial considerations, and the need to be not only an attractive, but also a good, employer in terms of social policies. The contractual arrangements set out below aim to achieve this balance, by providing improved conditions of service for staff on time-limited assignments while recognizing the volatile financing realities that increasingly characterize WHO's programme activities. Managers will be obliged to assess in a timely manner their work requirements in relation to available financing, and to plan accordingly.
5. These new arrangements were arrived at after extensive discussion in the Global Staff/Management Council and have received the endorsement of executive management.

---

<sup>1</sup> See document EB107/15.

<sup>2</sup> Report of ICSC for the year 2000. Document A/55/30, Annex II.

Subject to confirmation by the Executive Board of the corresponding changes to the WHO Staff Rules,<sup>1</sup> the new arrangements should take effect from 1 July 2002.

6. It is recognized that better control and monitoring of processes, sound workforce planning and, especially, stronger accountability of managers are all critical to the success of these new arrangements. The critical features are set out below.

### **Temporary appointments for project activities limited in time and/or funding**

7. Under the new arrangements temporary appointments will include two employment options: short-term appointments and term-limited appointments. The former are similar to current short-term appointments. The term-limited appointment is a modality new to WHO, but modelled closely on existing appointment of limited duration arrangements in use in the United Nations and other organizations and bodies of the common system.<sup>2</sup> It provides more than the short-term appointment does, including adequate social-security coverage, in line with the need for WHO to be a socially responsible employer. Salary is established at step III of the corresponding level on the relevant salary scale (general services or professional). It is complemented by a lump-sum service allowance which is computed as a percentage of the base salary.

8. Both types of temporary appointments will offer contracts for a maximum of 11 months, and there will be a limit to the total period of service of any individual working under these contracts of four consecutive 11-month appointments.

### **Regular appointments for ongoing activities with more stable funding**

9. There will be two types of appointments: fixed-term appointments, essentially as at present, and service appointments. A service appointment has no specified time limit; it may, however, be brought to an end by either party subject to conditions specified therein. An overall limitation will be placed on the total number of staff with service appointments, the granting of which is subject to a minimum of five years satisfactory service on fixed-term appointments. A process will be established, in consultation with staff, to ensure that the granting of service appointments is handled in a transparent and equitable manner. Career service appointments on which there has been a moratorium since 1994 will be discontinued, although staff holding such appointments as at 1 July 2002 will retain them until they separate from the Organization.

### **Revised separation procedures**

10. In the event that a post occupied by a staff member is abolished,<sup>3</sup> a reassignment process, coordinated by a reassignment committee, will make reasonable efforts to reassign the staff member. If these efforts prove unsuccessful, at the end of a prescribed period the staff member's appointment will be terminated with three months' notice. The staff member will be paid an enhanced termination indemnity, by which the established scale is increased by 50%. These arrangements replace the former reduction in force procedures, consisting of a reassignment phase, followed by a competition phase.

---

<sup>1</sup> See document EB109/27 Add.1.

<sup>2</sup> See Report of ICSC for the year 1997 (document A/52/30, Annex XX).

<sup>3</sup> Applicable to fixed-term staff on posts of indefinite duration and service appointment holders (which, under this rule, is interpreted to include holders of career-service appointments), irrespective of type of post.

### **Post management**

11. Temporary appointments will not require the creation of a post. For fixed-term and service appointments, it is intended to streamline the processes for establishing, abolishing, or extending posts or positions before introduction of the new contractual arrangements.

### **Transitional arrangements and review of long-term short-term staff**

12. Priority is being given to the transition of “long-term short-term staff” into other contractual arrangements, more particularly those with four or more years of continuing service. As the situation in this respect varies in different regions, specific mechanisms are being discussed at headquarters and in each regional office. In all cases, the process will start with a review of staffing needs and availability of funding to determine requirements for the creation of new posts.

## **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT**

13. The new system for performance management and development will go into effect on 1 January 2002. It is intended to link the work objectives of individual staff with the wider objectives of the Organization encompassed in the strategic budgeting process. Its introduction is a key step in strengthening accountability for results, as performance will be measured in relation to attainment of objectives. To support the new system, an Organization-wide training programme was launched in the second half of 2001, aimed at providing briefing for all staff on the features and objectives of the system, and incorporating the development of managerial and supervisory skills for those with such responsibilities. These training opportunities will continue to be provided into 2002 in support of the system. All staff will be covered by the system, apart from those on initial short-term or very short appointments for whom a streamlined process has been developed.

14. The goal of this new system is to have the entire Organization governed by performance management principles. A series of workshops in mediation and communication skills will provide further support to the system (see paragraph 16, below). In parallel, by early 2002, recognition and reward systems should be in place in major offices where they do not currently exist, based on the guidelines set out in the strategic framework for reform of human resources management. Monetary awards are being looked into by the Global Staff/Management Council to assess the appropriateness of implementing such measures at a later date.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

15. During 2001, work has focused on application of the policy on harassment in the workplace, through the newly established grievance panels. Further improvements to mediation and conflict-resolution procedures will be explored in 2002 in consultation with staff representatives.

## **STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER MANAGEMENT**

16. Work has continued on the staff development component of the strategic framework for reform of human resources management, with a focus on three objectives:

- enhancing communication and negotiation or mediation skills;
- improving access to developmental and training opportunities across the Organization, particularly in country and regional offices, through the use of new learning technologies;
- broadening the concept of training to include learning, with emphasis on self-development, on-the-job developmental opportunities, mentoring, and so forth (a mentoring pilot project was undertaken during 2001).

17. A number of parameters of a rotation and mobility programme have been elaborated and discussion has started with constituent partners. Because of priority requirements of contractual reform (see section above), the timing for the possible introduction of such a programme has been readjusted to early 2003, with further consultations and preparatory work to continue in 2002.

### **STAFFING, INCLUDING GENDER AND GEOGRAPHICAL BALANCE**

18. A programme is in the process of being finalized to strengthen efforts to improve markedly the gender and geographical balance of the WHO workforce. Its focus is both on introducing measurable targets, thus enhancing the accountability of senior managers, and on roster building, prospection, and the introduction of a series of recruitment tools. The tools include guidelines for personnel officers, aids for workforce planning, a targeted recruitment network to improve outreach to specialized institutions in under-represented and unrepresented countries, and a WHO briefing package to be used by certain staff in promoting WHO as a potential employer.<sup>1</sup> A collaborative pilot project has been initiated with *l'Association internationale d'Etudiants en Sciences économiques et commerciales*, aimed at developing country capacity by offering short-term traineeships for young professionals, focusing on un- and under-represented countries and on improving gender balance.

### **SAFETY AND SECURITY OF WHO STAFF**

19. In response to an increasing number of serious incidents involving staff of the United Nations system, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 55/175 in December 2000 which *inter alia* "Recognizes the need for a strengthened and comprehensive security management system for the United Nations system, both at headquarter and field level, and requests the United Nations system ... to take all appropriate measures needed to that end". Taking account of this resolution, the Director-General established a full-time post of Director, Security Coordination with effect from August 2001. The Director, Security Coordination is the designated Security Coordinator for the Organization and acts as the WHO global focal point to ensure the necessary liaison with the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD). UNSECOORD ensures a coherent response by the United Nations system to any emergency situation and is responsible for all policy and procedural matters related to security in the United Nations system as a whole. Within WHO, security management involves the WHO Representatives (who participate in security management teams at country level), and the Directors of Administration and Finance in the regional offices.

---

<sup>1</sup> For example WHO Representatives, staff on missions, and staff attending scientific and technical advisory groups and expert committees.

20. Security issues have now moved to the forefront of virtually all activities, in particular those undertaken in countries affected by complex emergencies. There are currently 83 countries for which security clearance must be obtained before staff undertake a mission there. In addition to assessing the evolving security situation in these countries and ensuring that information is conveyed to staff, a staff training programme in security awareness is being implemented. Training will be available at country level, in regional offices and at headquarters.

## **STAFF ETHICS FRAMEWORK**

21. Work is continuing on a WHO staff ethics framework which will take into account the revised standards of conduct for the international civil service approved by the International Civil Service Commission.<sup>1</sup> The framework is expected to be ready for introduction in the second half of 2002.

## **REORGANIZATION OF HUMAN RESOURCE FUNCTIONS, INCLUDING A NEW INFORMATION SYSTEM**

22. Work is progressing on the introduction of improved management information systems. In the area of human resources, priority is being given to the introduction of a web-based recruitment system. A process re-engineering exercise, to be initiated in the first half of 2002, will lead to a complete overhaul of the current systems and the implementation of a unified system for regional offices and headquarters.

23. The role of and responsibilities in human resources management are under review, with a focus on establishing, in particular at headquarters, the right balance between matters which should remain within the remit of clusters or regional offices and those which it would be more opportune to deal with centrally, such as classification, monitoring of gender and geographical representation, and related recruitment issues. This in turn may require some reorganization in human resources management. As a first step in that direction, staff development functions will shortly be reintegrated into human resources management.

## **WORKFORCE PLANNING**

24. Advanced planning of workforce needs is a key ingredient of the strategy for reform of human resources. The indispensable tool for such planning is a competency framework which is being developed for WHO. Core and managerial competencies will be designed and tested across the Organization in 2002, and it is intended to apply the model progressively, starting in January 2003, to support human resources functions (recruitment, performance management, etc.). In parallel, comprehensive planning guidelines for human resources will be prepared as from the second quarter of 2002 to support operational planning in the context of implementation of the programme budget 2004-2005.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Report of ICSC for the year 2001 (document A/56/30) and document EB109/27.

**ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

25. The Executive Board is invited to take cognizance of the note.

= = =