



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

EXECUTIVE BOARD
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Statement by the representative of the WHO staff associations

Mr. Chairman, honourable members of the Executive Board, Director-General, Regional Directors, colleagues,

1. On behalf of the staff associations of WHO and IARC, I have pleasure in submitting this statement to the Executive Board. We appreciate this opportunity to address the Board on matters concerning the Organization's human resources policy and practice, and also to place on record some of the concerns of the staff associations in this regard. However, please allow me first to join the other speakers in expressing our sympathy for the victims of the tsunami that has affected so many nations and people and let me reassure the Board that the staff of this Organization will do their utmost through their work to help those left behind.
2. A number of matters were brought to your attention a year ago but require highlighting again.

ISSUES FOR FOLLOW-UP

3. **Salaries and pensions.** As mentioned last year, as a matter of principle, we believe that the impact on staff of devaluations in currencies or increases in the cost of living should be minimized. Some of our colleagues have experienced difficulties because a rapid change in the exchange rate is both negatively affecting the purchasing power of their salaries and leading to a very drastic drop in their pension entitlements. Serious consideration should be given to establishing a remuneration system that avoids such shortfalls.
4. **Implications of the decentralization process for staff.** The staff of the Organization welcome the further decentralization that the Director-General has committed himself to implementing. While we look forward to further progress on this issue, we also recognize the potential impact that its implementation may have for staff. We would propose that, to the extent possible, use should be made of voluntary rotation and natural fluctuation in staff. The decentralization process comes alongside the initiative for staff mobility and rotation, the first phase of which is a voluntary one. The implications and outcomes of this first phase have not been fully documented and the staff associations would like to be fully informed about the process, its implementation and its implications for staff. For both processes, we would ask that the impact on staff and their families, be given due consideration.
5. **Occupational health and safety policy.** The staff associations have taken note of the recent actions by the Organization to increase staff security in the field, especially in emergencies. In the workplace, we feel that much remains to be done and WHO should set an example in this area. Special efforts are needed to set up global and regional corporate occupational health and safety policies and

to establish appropriate mechanisms for ensuring the highest level of health and safety for all staff at all workplaces of the Organization.

6. **Prevention of long-term, short-term employment.** Following the conversion of a considerable number of long-term, short-term positions into fixed-term contracts, it is now important to look into the issue of prevention. Also, for staff working on consecutive short-term contracts who after four years have to leave for at least one year, there is still an issue to be addressed; otherwise the Organization will face a severe brain drain. Increasing the number of posts might be the solution. At the time the contract reform was introduced, it was hoped that improved human resource planning and reinforced accountability of managers, would reduce the incidence of short-term staff performing long-term work.

7. We welcome the initiatives taken to improve management practices and train managers across the Organization and look forward to the further sharing and promotion of good practice globally. Managers are expected to use contracts appropriately, including assessing in a timely manner their work programme in relation to available financing and planning their staffing needs in advance. In this sense, we fully endorse the discussions that took place at the recent Global Staff/Management Council, during which staff and management representatives looked together into ways of improving human resource planning and controlling the use of temporary contracts. We look forward to the envisaged establishment of a staff/management working group, involving participation from the regions. The working group should initiate a review of good practices and prepare a report for consideration by the Council in 2005.

CONCLUSION

8. In conclusion, while we should not be complacent, we recognize that during this last year some significant issues of concern to staff have been tackled. We are pleased with the progress that has been made globally, for example, regarding contractual reform. We welcome the constructive spirit of the recent Council and its strengthening of a partnership approach with staff and management working towards common goals. We also look forward to the timely implementation of outcomes from the Council. We continue our common efforts to bring out the best in staff by providing a healthy and safe working environment, career development opportunities and job security where possible. Achieving standards of good employment and management practice underpins the work of the staff of the Organization and allows them to flourish.

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