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Human resources: annual report

Report by the Secretariat

1.   This report presents information relating to priorities respected and activities undertaken during 2006 in the area of human resources management. A preview of the Secretariat's staffing profile as at 30 September 2006 is being issued separately.[1] A detailed overview of initiatives undertaken in the management of WHO's human resources, information on progress achieved and challenges ahead was provided to the Executive Board at its 117th session.[2]

PRIORITIES AND ACTIVITIES DURING 2006 AND PLANS FOR 2007

2.   Priorities and activities during 2006 concerned the following: recruitment and outreach; the strategic direction and competency review; human resources planning; job classification; staff development and learning; performance management; reform and implementation of the framework of contractual arrangements; providing a supportive work environment; improving delivery of human resources; promoting ethical conduct and strengthening mechanisms for the management of staff misconduct; and furthering the dialogue between staff and management on the development of human resources policies and initiatives. Efforts were concentrated on identifying additional steps for ensuring that initiatives in these areas achieve their objectives in 2007 and beyond, and on consolidating gains already made.

Recruitment and outreach

3.   As part of the outreach process, a further mission to China was undertaken to provide potential candidates with briefings and training on WHO's recruitment and selection procedures. Similar workshops have been offered to other unrepresented or greatly underrepresented countries. A well-planned workshop can be of great help to potential applicants, enabling them to identify more effectively employment opportunities for which they are qualified, to improve the quality of documentation they submit and to perform better in tests and competency-based interviews.

4.   A detailed outreach strategy has been prepared for internal consultation. The aim is to identify the widest possible range of sources of staff to fill vacancies in WHO, thereby assisting managers to achieve the goals set by WHO's governing bodies and raising awareness of best practices, both within the Organization and beyond. Human resources staff at all levels of the Organization already invest

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[1] Document EB120/24 Add.1.

[2] Document EB117/21.

considerable time and energy in trying to broaden the recruitment base and renewed emphasis has been placed on recruiting candidates from developing countries, particularly women. The Annex to this document sets out the record of appointments to posts in the professional category at WHO during the period to 30 September 2006. It should be noted that 47% of the candidates recruited by the regional offices were from developing countries – a better rate than that achieved at headquarters. However, headquarters recruited a higher percentage of women (45%).

5.   Between January and 30 September 2006, there were 133 appointments to fixed-term professional posts, 39 of which concerned nationals of developing countries. A total of 45 appointments (32%) involved nationals from unrepresented or underrepresented countries, or countries within their range of representation but below the midpoint (see Annex).

6.   Training in staff selection using competency-based interviews is progressively being introduced for the benefit of members of selection panels. The consultants who are assisting in coaching staff to be trainers in this approach have yet to visit the regional offices for Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Western Pacific. It is hoped that the whole Organization will be covered by the end of the first quarter of 2007.

7.   A comparative analysis of recruitment and selection practices identified a number of areas that would benefit from streamlining and simplification. A working group representing a cross-section of the Organization has been established to pursue this study and make recommendations.

8.   In the report of its third meeting,[1] the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee asked that future human resources annual reports should provide information on the number of direct appointments made by the Director-General under Staff Rule 410.4. During the period under review, there were 22 such appointments, three involved ungraded officials, three were at grade D.2, three at Grade D.1, one at grade P.6, four at grade P.5 and eight at grade P.4. Six of these appointments involved nationals of underrepresented countries, two of whom were women. During the same period, 27.2% of all direct appointments concerned women.

Strategic direction and competency review

9.   The strategic direction and competency review is almost complete for headquarters. Although it was initially hoped to conclude the first phase for all departments by the end of 2005, it quickly became apparent that some departments would require more time. Where it was possible to complete the second phase matching exercise, the delays that occurred were mainly due to the heavy workload associated with developing detailed functional organigrams, rewriting job descriptions, and preparing for the matching exercises. Recruitment to newly established or revised posts is still under way.

10.   Centrally, the main source of support has been the Department of human resources. Two additional short-term staff were recruited to assist in redesigning organizational structure and to help with the elaboration of job descriptions. An external outplacement service was contracted to provide career transition support for those staff whose jobs were affected and who met certain criteria. Improvements that were already under consideration in respect of a number of critical human resources processes and measures were realized as a priority in anticipation of the outcome of the review. As part of the support measures for the review, a scheme to permit separation by mutual agreement was introduced, proving attractive to a number of staff in posts due to be abolished. It is

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[1] Document EB117/3.

hoped that these measures will also be made available in the coming year to staff working in regional and country offices.

11.   Exercises similar to those of the strategic direction and competency review have been undertaken in the regions, including at country level in the African Region. The intention is to ensure that such programmatic, policy and resource reviews are undertaken on a cyclical basis as part of operational planning.

12.   Experience with the strategic direction and competency review has shown that career development and support need to be systematized at all levels of the Organization. In response to this, a global framework for career development has been created to cover the period from 2006 to 2015 (in line with the Eleventh General Programme of Work) as discussed at the WHO Global Staff/Management Council in November 2006. The Council endorsed the proposal to develop and put in place during 2007 and 2008, a number of elements of the career development framework, including the following: a pilot scheme to encourage mobility among internationally recruited staff working in posts in administration (the criteria for selection being the existence of a number of broadly similar jobs, a tradition of mobility and strong functional networks to facilitate moves); a revision of the reassignment process for eligible staff whose posts have been abolished; a comprehensive communication strategy incorporating workshops, presentations and career support to individuals; the creation of model career paths and the design and construction of a global interactive web site so that staff can inform themselves of possible career paths, and of the skills and learning they need to enhance in order to move to different parts of the Organization; and the creation of a career development centre with branches in each regional office. The design and implementation of these products will, of course, depend on level of resources made available in 2007 and 2008.

Human resources planning

13.   As an outcome of the strategic direction and competency review undertaken across headquarters, an estimated 235 short-term functions, in both the professional and general service categories, have been converted to fixed-term functions. To date, some 470 fixed-term posts have been created. The large number of selections planned to the end of 2006 as a consequence of the review has called for stringent human resources planning. In order to speed up the process of recruitment to specific types of posts for which the use of generic post descriptions was appropriate, it was agreed that rosters of pre-qualified candidates would be set up. The testing and initial interviewing was performed centrally and it is anticipated that the rosters will run for a maximum period of 12 months. It is hoped that the lessons learnt in this exercise can be applied to other groups of identical jobs.

14.   In the regional and country offices a similar trend can be observed. Functions that have been carried out for a number of years by staff on temporary contracts, and for which a continuing need has been identified, are being assigned to newly established posts.

Job classification

15.   2005 saw the successful launch at headquarters of ePOD, the electronic writing tool for job descriptions that also permits the effective online tracking of newly submitted descriptions as they proceed through processing. The system is currently being deployed in a number of regional offices. Benefiting from support in the form of workshops on job classification, writing job descriptions and ePOD management, the regional offices for Africa and South-East Asia have started to use this tool for processing local classifications (for general service and local project posts), as well as for submitting details of professional positions to headquarters. The Regional Office for Europe will

follow shortly, and cross-cutting, integrated training workshops that include not only human resources professionals but also administrative staff and technical programme managers, are planned to be held in the near future for the regional offices for the Eastern Mediterranean and the Western Pacific.

16.   ePOD's monitoring and reporting features are being constantly updated to make it more user-friendly. Major revisions were made in the course of 2006 and the latest version, released in September, represents a significant improvement over the initial model.

17.   In the third quarter of 2006, in order to permit faster processing and ensure more coherent job profiles throughout WHO, pre-classified generic job descriptions were introduced for types of work in the general service category that involve large numbers of posts (e.g., clerks, secretaries and assistants). It is planned to generate more such descriptions, particularly for the professional category of posts, beginning with the job types that are the most numerous within the Organization. It is expected that generic job descriptions will also greatly facilitate mobility and rotation in the longer term.

18.   The new Master Standard for posts in the professional and higher categories has been implemented by most of the United Nations organizations (including WHO, since May 2005). However, the accompanying reform initiative in respect of posts in the general service category is advancing more slowly. Despite WHO's active participation in the relevant interagency working group on behalf of the Geneva-based organizations, a new unified global standard for classifying posts subject to local recruitment is not expected to be operational before the end of 2007.

Staff development and learning

19.   During 2006, work in support of a more strategic, sustainable and systematic approach to learning has continued. With the oversight of the global learning committee, the strategic framework for learning issued in 2005 has been used as a vehicle for engaging staff at all levels of the Organization in a process of aligning their learning activities with the needs of WHO. The global learning committee has set six priority areas for learning and agreed a series of indicators to measure outcomes for the end of this biennium; efforts have also been made to strengthen links between staff development, performance management and other aspects of human resource management. This clear guidance from senior management regarding the desired return on the investment of staff time and resources in learning is a significant development for WHO.

20.   **Priority area 1: developing leadership.** The next phase of leadership development will build on these foundations, and will focus on ensuring that senior managers take more responsibility for their actions and that accountability is improved. The principal activities in this area concern the Global Leadership Programme, which commenced in 2004, and which involves 440 senior managers. The first phase of the Programme has now ended, with all participants completing a diagnostic tool, in the form of a 360 degree questionnaire, and attending two global workshops. More than one third of those concerned are currently engaged in "action learning" groups aimed at making the changes in management behaviour that are now required of WHO's most senior personnel. The Programme has already highlighted the critical importance of senior managers striking the appropriate balance between, on the one hand, maintaining their technical excellence and, on the other hand, developing their competencies as managers of people, resources and programmes.

21.   **Priority area 2: building core competencies.** The delivery of learning activities to build core competencies has now been mapped across all parts of the Organization. This has revealed gaps in the provision of programmes, particularly at country level. During 2007, new programmes will be

provided, and the overall quality of what is offered will be improved. The aim is to improve staff members' access to learning opportunities, particularly in country offices.

22.   **Priority area 3: developing technical skills.** Technical excellence is essential for the work of WHO. During 2006, the global learning committee oversaw the development of a strategic framework for the maintenance and enhancement of technical skills for staff. The framework, which will guide investment in 2007, responds to the need to ensure the following essential results: the maintenance of WHO staff's technical skills in specific areas of public health; and the building of competencies in new areas, particularly those that cut across existing circumscriptions, and in areas that will consolidate WHO's position as a leader in global health.

23.   **Priority area 4: enhancing administrative skills.** This area focuses on ensuring that all WHO's staff make effective use of WHO's internal ways of working and that they keep abreast of changes, including the streamlining of procedures and the introduction of new technologies. Learning in this area, too, has been mapped and evaluated. In 2007 the focus will be on ensuring that the relevant courses proposed are consistent globally and easily accessible to all staff; and that all staff who are responsible for administrative functions upgrade their competencies in a systematic manner.

24.   **Priority areas 5 and 6: improving induction of new staff and quality of learning.** The programmes concerned have also been mapped and reviewed for global consistency and quality. Resources will be invested to ensure that the gaps identified in programme delivery are filled and that these new programmes are being followed by the appropriate staff. This will ensure that by the end of 2007 there will have been a noticeable impact in terms of programme results.

25.   In all the priority areas there has been a shift away from merely offering traditional training courses towards, in addition, providing improved mechanisms for knowledge sharing, together with both self-directed and distance learning. With the evidence obtained from the staff survey conducted in 2005, baselines have been established regarding participation in learning and the extent to which work-related learning is discussed by staff with their supervisors. Improvement will be measured against these baselines in 2007.

Performance management

26.   Increasing numbers of staff and supervisors in WHO are engaging in constructive discussions on ways to enhance performance and improve results. The Global Leadership Programme mentioned above has as one of its five key themes that of addressing individual and team performance. The impact of the 360 degree diagnostic tool for senior managers is beginning to be seen in the way staff perceive performance feedback.

27.   The introduction of an electronic system at headquarters and in several regions during 2005 and 2006 is making it possible to move away from focusing solely on compliance with the system, towards taking account of the quality of dialogue and feedback as well. Despite these gains, much work remains to be done in this area in order to ensure open and constructive communication between managers and their teams or individual staff members about performance goals for the review period concerned.

28.   The above-mentioned changes in the area of staff development are closely related to improving performance: making achievement of work objectives and development of skills and knowledge part of the same discussions, encourages performance-related results that are better aligned to organizational strategic objectives.

29.   Thanks to the achievement of the past two years in the area of performance management, it will now be possible to tackle two vital issues, namely: differentiating, in a clear, transparent and consistent manner, different levels of job performance; and ensuring broad recognition of what the notion of "satisfactory performance" entails in WHO's current work environment.

Reform and implementation of the framework of contractual arrangements

30.   In May 2006, the Executive Board at its 118th session discussed the Organization's strategy on the reform of contractual arrangements, considering its main features, together with related amendments to the Staff Rules.[1] Since then, there have been extensive consultations across the Organization, including at the Global Staff/Management Council, on the measures required for implementing the contract reform policies. Once finalized, these policies will be reflected in the human resources e-Guide. Further details of developments on this subject within the United Nations common system and of internal implementation efforts and their cost implications are being provided separately.[2]

Providing a supportive work environment

31.   During 2006 WHO has continued to work on several areas in respect of the supportive work environment. The headquarters and regional committees on promoting a healthy and safe workplace have stepped up their efforts to identify areas of common action, particularly with regard to the development of a global policy on a healthy and safe workplace. Discussions and consultation are continuing and a policy is expected to be put in place in 2007. The headquarters committee was also active elsewhere in support of staff well-being, organizing seminars, promoting the use of healthy means of transportation, and upgrading fitness facilities.

32.   In addition, under the auspices of the United Nations Learning Strategy on HIV/AIDS, staff have continued to increase their knowledge and awareness of HIV/AIDS in the workplace through interactive orientation sessions. These sessions provide basic facts about preventing sexually transmitted infections and HIV transmission and providing care following infection; they also reinforce application of the WHO's policy on HIV/AIDS in the workplace in support of a more tolerant and compassionate work environment.

33.   Progress has been made in expanding WHO's programme on HIV/AIDS in the workplace. The Organization's HIV/AIDS task force, working closely with relevant colleagues at headquarters and in the regions, has been engaged in elaborating core principles, minimum standards and implementation parameters in respect of HIV//AIDS in the workplace. These are intended to serve as the foundation for broadening the programme and developing a comprehensive policy in this area. WHO will ensure that its expanded programme and related policy initiatives remain in harmony with those being developed at the United Nations common system level.

34.   As part of the enhancement of human resources management, contractual reform has been complemented by, inter alia, proposals for improving conditions of service for all staff, and the focus on staff well-being and work-life together with family-friendly policies in respect of staff members continued throughout 2006. The Secretariat's efforts have been aimed at adopting best practices both

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[1] Document EBSS-EB118/2006/REC/1, summary record of the fifth meeting, section 2.

[2] Documents EB120/26 and EB120/INF.DOC./1.

at the normative and implementation levels as well as bringing policies and practices into greater alignment with those of other organizations in the United Nations common system. Accordingly, an in-depth review has been made of the Organization's policies and procedures for leave in respect of maternity, paternity and adoption, and of those concerning, inter alia, family and home leave, and education grant travel. The related proposals and amendments to the Staff Rules have been submitted separately to the Executive Board.[1]

35.   Emphasis has also been placed on adopting policies that are sensitive to the challenges faced by staff members serving in hardship locations. Following the issuance and implementation of the special operations approach, WHO staff in hardship locations are enjoying conditions of service equal to those of staff in similar situations in other field organizations. Working closely with partners in the United Nations common system, the Secretariat is reviewing other human resources policies affecting staff in hardship locations, including those for rest and recuperation and evacuation allowances. Option are also being examined for streamlining these policies through, for example, lump-sum payments, which are less costly and administratively burdensome. Discussion on these initiatives is continuing within the United Nations common system.

36.   As part of the strategy on staff rotation and mobility, the impact of mobility on staff and families continued to be reviewed. The Organization was an active member of the United Nations Development Group's initiative in support of the employment of expatriate spouses, which focused on institution building through approaches that included the following: expanding the number of United Nations Local Expatriate Spouse Associations around the world; promoting the initiative to additional agencies in the United Nations common system; conducting research into the possibility that work permits may represent the second essential strategy for increasing employment opportunities for spouses in the private sector; updating the Development Group's web site; and providing training and employing communication in order to increase awareness of the initiative.

Improving delivery of human resources

37.   The Organization's efforts to simplify and streamline its rules, policies and procedures in respect of staff have been greatly facilitated and enhanced since the launch of the human resources e-Guide in September 2005.

38.   The e-Guide provides a constantly growing worldwide user database, which has been receiving an average of 8000 visits per month. The user feedback tool has proved to be worthwhile on both substantive and technical issues.

39.   Great efforts continue to be made to streamline policies and procedures in the e-Guide. In line with the commitment to improving communication throughout the Organization, human resources policies are now being issued under the newly developed human resources branding, in the form of a comprehensive package sent to all staff in an information note. Downloadable versions of new and revised policies are available in the appropriate section of the e-Guide, together with flow charts for procedures, relevant forms and answers to frequently asked questions.

40.   Work is under way to ensure synergy between the e-Guide and the global management system. The objective is to facilitate staff members' online requests by providing links that give easy access to relevant information in the self-service module of the global management system.

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[1] Document EB120/29.

41.   In addition, the e-Guide format has been adopted as the basis for the future WHO e-Manual, which will allow the Organization to present a common web-based system for all policies and procedures.

42.   During 2007 the Department of human resources management will continue to expand and improve the e-Guide in response to the Organization's desire for an integrated information system that is readily available to all staff.

Promoting ethical conduct and strengthening mechanisms for the management of staff misconduct

43.   As part of the Organization's efforts to promote ethical conduct and managerial accountability and to strengthen existing mechanisms for handling staff grievances and staff misconduct, a "whistleblower protection policy" has been put in place. Existing policies and procedures on staff misconduct are being examined with the aim of streamlining the review of disciplinary cases by establishing the appropriate committees at headquarters and regional levels. The final proposals and related amendments to the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules will be submitted to the Executive Board at its 121st session.

Staff and management consultations on policy development

44.   An extraordinary meeting of the Global Staff/Management Council was held from 3 to 4 April 2006 to discuss the proposals on contract reform and related amendments to the Staff Rules, which were subsequently submitted to the Executive Board for confirmation in May 2006.[1] The eighth meeting of the Global Staff/Management Council took place in Washington, DC, from 30 October to 3 November 2006. Council members reviewed the measures for implementing contract reform policies and discussed issues such as career development, managing performance, rotation and mobility, and administration of justice, as well as harmonization, simplification and streamlining of leave and travel entitlements.

CONCLUSION

45.   Considerable progress has been achieved in consolidating reform of human resources management within the Organization. These efforts will continue into 2007, and will include using the human resources function as a strategic tool for driving organizational change and creating the necessary institutional results-based culture. The strategies, priorities, initiatives, policies and related programmes concerned in this work are all based on the fundamental principles of responsibility and accountability, transparency, equity and fairness, and efficiency and effectiveness. This will continue to be the practice in 2007 and beyond.

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

46.   The Executive Board is invited to take note of progress achieved as set out in this report.

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[1] Document EB118/11.

ANNEX

APPOINTMENTS TO PROFESSIONAL POSTS SUBJECT TO GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION
(1 JANUARY TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2006)[a]

	A	Developing countries	B1	Developing countries	B2	Developing countries	C	Developing countries	Total	M	F
Regional offices											
Africa	1	1	2	1	7	7	5	3	15	13	2
The Americas	1	0	4	4	1	0	1	0	7	7	0
South-East Asia	2	1	5	5	5	2	3	0	15	10	5
Europe	2	1	3	1	3	1	3	0	11	5	6
Eastern Mediterranean	1	0	2	2	1	0	2	1	6	4	2
Western Pacific	4	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	10	6	4
Regional office subtotal	11	3	16	13	20	10	17	4	64	45	19
Headquarters											
Office of the Director-General and external relations	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	3	2	1
Communicable diseases	3	0	1	1	2	0	3	0	9	8	1
Governing bodies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Evidence and information for policy	1	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	6	2	4
Family and community health	0	0	3	1	4	0	5	0	12	4	8
General management	1	0	1	0	5	0	9	1	16	6	10
HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria	0	0	0	0	2	1	7	1	9	6	3
Health technology and pharmaceuticals	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	3	2	1
Noncommunicable diseases and mental health	2	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	5	3	2
Sustainable development and healthy environments	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	5	1
Headquarters subtotal	13	0	5	2	21	3	30	4	69	38	31
WHO total	**24**	**3**	**21**	**15**	**41**	**13**	**47**	**8**	**133[b]**	**83**	**50**

M = male, F = female.

Recruitment priority lists area valid as at 30 September 2006

A   = unrepresented and underrepresented countries

B1 = countries within their range but below midpoint

B2 = countries at or above midpoint of range, including those at the maximum of their range

C   = countries above the maximum of their range

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[a] Excludes selection of staff previously geographically counted.

[b] Excludes selections in IARC (7).