



# WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

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## Statement by the representative of the WHO staff associations on matters concerning personnel policy and conditions of service

1. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Executive Board on behalf of all WHO staff. The objective of this statement is to recognize progress made since the last Executive Board in January of this year, to highlight key areas of concern to staff and to stress the importance of a continued and meaningful consultative process to help ONE WHO implement its organizational vision.

### PROGRESS MADE

2. **Recruitment and selection.** Mechanisms have been put into place to ensure a fair and equitable recruitment process. This has been made possible primarily through candidate interviews by selection panels in which the Staff Committee at headquarters, and some regional offices, have actively participated.

3. **Interaction between staff and Administration (both locally and globally).** Substantive consultation has taken place at headquarters between the Staff Committee and the Administration at several levels. To assure conformity and equal and fair treatment of all staff, however, we would also suggest staff representation at the operational level, for example, meetings of the managers of Management Support Units. Staff presence at those Cabinet meetings which address human resource issues; attendance at working meetings with various managers of Human resource services on reform; and videoconferencing with regional offices (prior to meetings of ACC, Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions, and the International Civil Service Commission) have proved most positive. In the effort to improve the consultative process at the level of the common system, we urge the Member States to give their full support to the Commission's Review Group called for by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to examine the Commission's mandate, composition and functioning. Both staff and Administration feel that the Commission is no longer responsive to the needs of the United Nations organizations.

4. The Global Staff Management Council, which meets once a year to discuss global personnel policy issues, and to which representatives of all staff associations and administrative counterparts are invited, is yet another positive example of the intensified consultative process which Dr Brundtland has initiated. It is at this meeting that proposed policy changes will be discussed, covering WHO contractual arrangements (including those for

short-term staff); reform of the WHO post system; performance management, work/family related matters; rotation and mobility; senior executive service; staff ethics; and harassment/mobbing issues.

5. As was pointed out in January, these new policy changes, when fully implemented, will modify the manner in which staff are recruited, deployed and managed.<sup>1</sup> At the writing of this statement, no policy papers have been presented to us; we therefore reserve comment. At this time, we can only stress the importance of a continued and improved consultative process.

6. **Restructuring.** The process of restructuring, recruiting Directors and designating many new WHO Representatives is almost complete, and for this we should like to congratulate the new Administration. One notable area of progress has been the increased opportunity of mobility for staff, as the process of recruitment of staff to the position of team coordinators has been made accessible to a larger number of people.

7. **Long-term/short-term employment.** The Administration has recognized that the long-term/short-term staffing system is in urgent need of reform and, consequently, has made it a priority to have a plan in place for implementation for the year 2000. The reform will be based on a broader, integrated human resources management perspective. We welcome the efforts being made in this area, and will continue to work actively with the Administration in creating a plan that is beneficial to all staff, long- and short-term alike.

## KEY CONCERNS

8. **Inconsistent or unimplemented policies, and inequities.** We are concerned about the lack of uniformity and consistency in the application of new policies throughout the Organization. Although headquarters and some regions have already benefited from the changes, other regions have yet to implement policies of reform. Headquarters needs to provide the required support for this to actually happen. Such inconsistency is contradictory with the fundamental concept of the new WHO and creates inequitable working conditions for staff, thereby affecting morale, productivity, and organizational cohesiveness. Key inequities observed at the regional level are:

- C lack of proper staff/management dialogue
- C nonapplication of Dr Brundtland's policy on retired staff
- C nonparticipation of staff representatives on selection panels
- C impossibility of staff addressing their regional governing bodies
- C application of salary surveys which may adversely affect staff
- C nonimplementation of rotation/mobility policy

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<sup>1</sup> See document EB103/9.

C freezing of general service posts, thereby sealing all avenues of promotion.

We must emphasize the benefits it provides and good managerial sense it makes to involve staff representatives from the onset on task forces and working groups dealing with important issues such as relocation, security and displacement of staff.

9. **Security of staff.** This continues to be a matter of global concern, and no one region can consider itself beyond risk. We strongly urge all WHO Member States to ensure that measures taken in any security crisis regarding the security of locally-recruited staff are equivalent to those taken with respect to their internationally-recruited colleagues.

10. **Organizational behaviour.** Although the Director-General and her Administration are committed to improved dialogue with representatives of staff and are working towards building up a team and a team spirit, the same cannot be said of all her managers, some of whom do not possess the required management skills. They tend to micromanage and attempt to run a “one-man show”. There is a great need for managers to be sensitive to their staff within the context of modern management principles and the Rules and Regulations of this Organization. Any training courses and other measures taken to address the problem of lack of managerial skills would be welcome.

## CONCLUSION

11. We are most appreciative of the efforts of our Administration to involve and encourage staff representation in contributing towards reform - so vital to the good health of our Organization. We thank Dr Brundtland personally for her support to this substantive “breakthrough”. The inclusion and active participation of staff in the reform process is in line with Kofi Annan’s vision of an organizational culture that “fosters greater adherence to such fundamental principles as respect for diversity, due process, transparency and equal and fair treatment, as well as for geographical and gender balance.”

Thank you.

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