



# WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

**EXECUTIVE BOARD**  
**106th Session**  
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## **Statement by the representative of the WHO staff associations on matters concerning personnel policy and conditions of service**

1. The staff associations of WHO, IARC and the Onchocerciasis Control Programme appreciate the opportunity to address the Executive Board in order to describe the progress made since the 105th session of the Executive Board (January 2000) and to bring to its attention some of the key areas of concern to staff.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES REFORM**

2. The staff associations are pleased that the Director-General has taken concrete steps to promote human resources management reform. Staff associations have been actively involved in this process which resulted in agreed recommendations on issues such as long-serving short-term staff and the contractual policy of commitment to excellence through the retention, recruitment or motivation of high-calibre staff.

3. Since the last meeting of the Global Staff/Management Council, in Geneva in June 1999, recommendations have been made to streamline the recruitment of staff on short-term contracts strictly for assignments of up to 11 months. The staff associations have contributed extensively to this process through the Task Force on Human Resources Management Reform set up by the Director-General in August 1999. The working group resolved that concrete steps should be taken to improve the position of long-serving short-term staff, and that managers should be made more accountable for the recruitment of short-term staff. One move to reduce inequity that received strong support was the assimilation of current long-serving short-term staff into fixed-term positions through internal competitive selection, if the performed functions are still required after 11 months.

### **PENDING ISSUES**

4. Despite the achievements under the leadership of Dr Brundtland, the staff associations still share serious concerns about some pending issues, such as the re-hiring of retirees, harassment of staff representatives, the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) policy on employment conditions, and the inconsistent implementation of rules throughout the Organization.

5. The staff associations understand that the Organization may re-hire long-serving staff after their retirement in order to benefit from their skills and expertise. Nevertheless, the continued violation of the policy decisions taken by the Cabinet in December 1998 has a negative impact on the Organization, human resources development and, above all, staff morale, especially as some contracts

lack clear terms of reference, duplicate the responsibilities of serving staff and deny the latter the opportunity to have the same executive capacity. Staff associations have already suggested that this issue can be addressed by raising the age of retirement for all staff who so wish to 62 years but imposing greater restrictions on the re-employment of retired staff.

6. The staff associations are strongly concerned that their rights are not practised uniformly throughout the Organization. The staff association in the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean still confronts many difficulties in trying to perform the basic duties required by the mandate of the Organization and is not consulted on staff issues. On several occasions, even requests for the staff representative to attend the meetings of the Federation of International Civil Servants Associations were not supported or facilitated by the Regional Office. The harassment of staff representatives has reached an unacceptable level in that Regional Office, to the extent that the career of staff representatives is jeopardized and threatened.

7. In accordance with the recommendations made by the Global Staff/Management Council in June 1999 on harassment and bullying, the staff association in the Regional Office for Europe organized a course on conflict resolution (Copenhagen, 6 and 7 April 2000), at the end of which the participants drew up a draft document for the development of a WHO policy on harassment. This document should benefit headquarters and other regional offices as well.

8. There is also an understanding that, in the past, far too little time and money were spent on staff development and training, and that it is essential for the Organization to invest in its staff in order to achieve the goals set by the Director-General.

9. The recent structural and organizational changes under the reform process have demonstrated the importance of promoting mutual trust between the staff and administration. Regular consultation and allocation of adequate resources for staff representation are essential to enhancing the staff/administration partnership. This process of consultation and dialogue has gradually evolved in headquarters and we are pleased to see that it is rapidly maturing. The staff associations are committed to close collaboration, through improving their image and contributing to the WHO reforms, thereby enhancing the consultatory process and building a relationship of trust and confidence.

## **FEDERATION OF INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS ASSOCIATIONS**

10. While the United Nations system recommends application of the Noblemaire and Flemming principles<sup>1</sup> on employment conditions and remuneration, ICSC persists in ignoring the basis of this principle and the views of staff expressed through the Federation.

11. Furthermore, the ICSC method for calculating the cost of living in some duty stations, such as Copenhagen, has made it difficult to recruit professional staff of the highest calibre expected of United Nations personnel. There have been several examples of potential candidates turning down posts in the Regional Office for Europe as soon as they realized the financial implications. Staff associations have already expressed their disapproval by boycotting ICSC. They are also deeply concerned that the

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<sup>1</sup> The Noblemaire and Flemming principles underpin salary setting for professional and higher category staff and general service staff respectively. They both aim to ensure competitiveness. The Noblemaire principle states that the international civil service should be able to recruit staff, including the highest paid, from all United Nations Member States. Its application is set by reference to the highest-paying national civil service. Under the Flemming principle, general service salaries are set by periodic surveys of best prevailing local conditions.

current ICSC policy may hinder WHO efforts to reform its human resources management policy. Staff associations urge the Director-General to intervene by relaying the Federation's concerns to the appropriate governing bodies of the United Nations.

12. At the fifty-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly, in December 1999, the Secretary-General proposed a re-examination of the mandate and functions of ICSC. In resolution 54/238, the General Assembly accepted the principle of re-examination, but it did not accept the terms and conditions proposed by the Secretary-General and requested from him a report presenting relevant facts to support this re-examination.

13. The staff associations of WHO request Member States to support the proposal submitted by the United Nations Secretary-General and administrations to reform ICSC. The reform will allow the Commission, after 25 years of existence, to be better prepared to face new challenges.

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14. The staff associations reiterate that they will continue to promote best practices, protect staff rights and ensure that staff rules and regulations are applied consistently throughout the Organization. They also stress the importance of continuing the process of consultation initiated by the Director-General and assure Member States that they are committed to achieving the organizational goals and vision.

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