



# 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

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

1. As you know, we believe it is important for us to inform you on a regular basis of the main issues concerning personnel matters. Good functioning of WHO relies on dialogue between Member States, administration and staff. Over the past years, progress has been made in communication and dialogue between administration and staff. However, a dialogue between staff and Member States has been more difficult to set up. With the current procedures, there might be a perception by the members of the Executive Board that staff matters have been discussed in the Administration, Budget and Finance Committee and thus do not need to be further discussed. However, in its recommendations to the Executive Board, that Committee cannot take due consideration of staff opinion as it cannot be duly and directly informed of staff views. This is why we have requested that representatives of the staff associations participate in the meetings of the Committee when it examines matters of staff policy. Unfortunately, as our Global Staff/Management Council planned for March 2003 had to be postponed to October 2003, the entire process has been delayed but we are confident that the communication between staff and Member States can be improved. Once more, we would like to bring to your attention some issues that we consider important to follow up.

### ISSUES FOR FOLLOW UP

2. **Security.** In these times of insecurity and uncertainty, the situation of staff in the field is of great concern to the staff associations. We want to emphasize the responsibility of the Organization to members of staff, especially those recruited locally, in offices where safety and security are particularly difficult to assure. We urge the administration to take the utmost care to ensure these staff members are supported in the most comprehensive way and that they and their families' needs are made as high a priority as those of internationally recruited staff.

3. **Salaries.** We are requesting that the Organization contacts the United Nations regarding the timely reclassification of the official duty station in those cases where insecurity and violence prevail, affecting the living and working conditions of the staff members. Measures should be taken to provide security and procedures for all staff at such duty stations.

4. **Staff/management relations: towards partnership.** The staff associations are proposing to the Global Staff/Management Council a partnership approach to staff/management relations. This would

bring benefits not only to decision-making, based on openness, and transparency, but also to the strengthening of relationships between staff at all levels. More communication in a spirit of genuine respect and shared responsibilities would allow a climate of confidence to be re-established. It would also be a quicker and more effective way to reach solutions that are acceptable to all for having been worked out together. In the end, the whole Organization would benefit.

5. **Joint Disciplinary Committee.** The staff associations have also proposed a general framework for a reliable conflict-resolution system with the introduction of a Joint Disciplinary Committee which should allow basic requirements of due process to be afforded a staff member against whom misconduct is alleged. As this proposal, if accepted, would imply changes in the staff rules, we believe that it is important that you be informed now, in case you wish to request more information.

6. **Human resources reform.** Contractual reform is under way throughout the Organization and we are interested in two specific issues: the fair treatment of long-term short-term staff within the transitional arrangements now being implemented, and the medium- and long-term implementation. We are hopeful that the reform is being undertaken within the spirit of the consultation at the Global Staff/Management Council and that long-term short-term staff will not have their loyalty to the Organization abused by unfair treatment in their continued employment in roles they have been undertaking as temporary staff for many years. In the medium and long term the staff associations would like to see improved planning and resourcing to ensure that employment of staff follows the spirit of the reform and that staff are recruited fairly to undertake roles that are well defined, are remunerated fairly and provided with contracts appropriate to function.

7. Among the several other elements of the reform, the one most closely associated with good employment practice is performance appraisal. The new performance management and development system has been introduced but the introductory phase has been “bumpy”. The staff associations have supported its implementation in the hope that it will be a fairer and more constructive means of measuring, improving and evaluating staff members’ work. We look forward to a more efficient and effective implementation of the system in the coming year.

8. **Staff career development and salaries.** We have noted with satisfaction that at the next meeting of the Global Staff/Management Council we shall discuss proposals from the administration for staff development, including personal promotions for staff members in certain circumstances. We also appreciate the pilot establishment of the grade of National Professional Officer in one regional office, as an exclusive career-development measure for the general service staff. Moreover, we look forward to the implementation of what the Director-General elect has described in his vision for WHO, when he said: “As Director-General [he] will establish a staff career development programme, enabling us to attract the best staff and provide an environment within which they can grow and develop, ensuring that as an Organization we are able to provide the highest quality service to our Member States.”

9. The gradual and systematic deterioration of the salaries of the general service staff and National Professional Officers since the year 2000 is due to several reasons, including political and economic situations. The most devastating occurrence has been the devaluation of local currencies and ensuing inflation, reflected in the variation of the consumer price index. We request that the Organization develop an internal mechanism to deal with this type of situation that would compensate the general service staff and National Professional Officers for the loss of the purchasing power of their salaries in countries that are in economic crisis. We would appreciate consideration of salaries being paid in United States dollars in order to avoid the decline in value of pension contributions and future pension benefit.

10. The professional staff salary scales should also be adapted in accordance with, and in the true spirit of, the Noblemaire principle.

11. **Equitable and transparent recruitment policy.** The staff associations hope and trust that the Director-General elect will place particular emphasis on ensuring that the rules and policies in relation to staff recruitment, including geographical distribution and gender equity, are adhered to by all in the Organization, through a transparent process that gives full recognition to professional qualifications and competence.

## CONCLUSION

12. The staff associations restate the deep commitment of staff members to the principles and objectives of WHO, within the United Nations system. The staff associations are happy to make available to the Director-General and the administration their collective experience and analytical capability regarding standards of conduct, conditions of work and their impact on the Organization's performance. To get the best possible results, the administration should involve the staff associations as fully-fledged partners when it considers new strategic orientations with human resources implications, for which the staff associations can contribute valuable support. This would facilitate forward planning in a realistic way, harmonizing the strategies required for human resources development and making carefully considered investments for the development and updating of skills and expertise.

13. The staff associations and all the staff members they represent assure the Director-General elect of their warm support and goodwill, as he leads the Organization in its work towards health for all peoples in the world.

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