

## **Human resources: annual report**

### **Report of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board to the Seventy-second World Health Assembly**

1. The Committee broadly welcomed the report<sup>1</sup> and discussed several issues. However, it expressed concerns at the late delivery of documents.
2. The Committee welcomed the increasing geographical diversity and progress towards gender parity. It noted that the important work towards improving gender balance was less successful at country level in particular and urged the Secretariat to make greater efforts at both regional and country levels. The Secretariat pointed out that the proportion of female appointees to WHO Representative positions had increased by 3% since December 2017 to stand at 36% at the end of 2018. It also underlined that, recognizing the crucial function of WHO Representatives, senior management had initiated a recruitment process to expand the roster of potential candidates and three assessment centres would be organized in 2019.
3. Concern was expressed that mobility would not necessarily address geographical representation, and cautioned that the geographical mobility policy should not be viewed as an end in itself. In response to questions seeking more information about the implementation of the policy, the Secretariat explained that the Director-General's recently constituted task force would provide practical guidance on introducing the policy, which would enhance geographical diversity across offices. Its introduction would be staggered and managed as part of career development.
4. Given the high expectations for the human resources function, the Committee asked for information on actions to strengthen it, and to achieve alignment across the Organization. The Secretariat confirmed that enhancing the recruitment process, including by enhancing transparency, is a priority area for business process improvement through the transformation agenda. The current recruitment pilot initiative focuses on the screening and evaluation of candidates. The next phase will address vacancy publications, targeted sourcing and proactive outreach to identify highly qualified candidates, while also contributing to improving gender balance, geographical diversity and distribution.
5. The Secretariat also highlighted the existence of a robust internal network of human resources managers across the Organization who facilitate the harmonized use of human resources systems and application of policies and practices.
6. Responding to questions about career development, the Secretariat highlighted the ongoing work to define career pathways, with the objective of cultivating technical expertise as well as enhancing other competencies, including managerial and leadership skills where applicable.

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<sup>1</sup> Document A72/43.

7. Flexible working arrangements will be considered through the development of a strong team-oriented culture under the transformation agenda. Ad hoc arrangements are currently possible and can be extended under specific circumstances. In this regard, the Committee urged the Secretariat to explore less bureaucratic and more modern methods to allow for more flexible working arrangements, including mobile options, throughout the Organization in the spirit of ensuring a modern workplace.

8. The Committee also encouraged the Secretariat to continue the ongoing work to fully implement resolution WHA71.13 (2018) on reform of the global internship programme. The Committee sought clarity about the financial resources needed to implement that programme.

9. The Committee asked that the previous practice of posting accountability compacts on the WHO website be restored. The Secretariat explained that delegations of authority were being finalized in the context of the transformation agenda, after which they would be published in June 2019.

10. The Committee expressed satisfaction at the work done to enhance the culture of respect in the workplace, including training, and the actions taken to prevent sexual harassment. The Committee discussed the United Nations Safe Space survey. The Committee commended the revision of the policy on the prevention of sexual harassment in light of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination reference model policy.

11. The Committee urged the Secretariat to adhere to United Nations best practices with regard to the establishment of higher professional grades, the exceptional use of direct appointments as well as the overall size of the senior management.

12. In response to a question on the WHO Academy, the Secretariat explained that it was at the stage of defining the Academy's nature and resource requirements, and undertook to keep Member States informed.

13. The Committee supported the proposal to amend the Director-General's contract.

## **RECOMMENDATION TO THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY**

14. The Committee, on behalf of the Executive Board, recommended that the Health Assembly note the report contained in document A72/43 and adopt the draft decision contained in paragraph 28 of that document.

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