Human resources: annual report

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

1. The Secretariat presented the human resources annual report, providing an update on initiatives currently being carried out as part of WHO’s transformation agenda.

2. The Committee welcomed the report, laying emphasis on the high quality of the statistics it contained. It noted the improvements made in gender parity up to P.5 level, and the alignment with policy and indicators in the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) framework and commended the Secretariat for the progress made. At the same time, it noted with concern that issues still existed relating to the overall equitable geographical representation of staff and in attaining gender parity for positions at P.6, D.1 and D.2 levels.

3. With regards to recruitment, the Committee noted that PAHO/AMRO had begun implementing external background checks and encouraged the Secretariat to consider following a similar model. Also, it noted that the average time to recruit remains high, although an improvement has been observed. The Secretariat responded by assuring the Committee that comprehensive background checks on candidates were being run through the United Nations One Human Resources hub in Bonn, noting that it would also draw lessons from PAHO/AMRO’s experiences.

4. The Committee welcomed the efforts made to reinforce the Young Professionals Programme, focusing on candidates from low- and middle-income countries, and encouraged the Secretariat to increase the number of opportunities offered through the Programme. It further welcomed the commitment to improve staff well-being and the efforts made by the Secretariat to address sexual misconduct and other forms of abusive conduct as well as fraud and corruption, and to ensure an inclusive and supportive working environment.

5. In relation to concerns raised by the Committee, the Secretariat highlighted that more sustainable funding would help address the issues highlighted in the report.

6. The Committee appreciated the increased investment in human resources at country level, but noted with concern that the number of staff at grades D.1 and D.2 had increased in headquarters. It was concerned at the increased costs entailed, including travel costs, and requested the Secretariat to monitor and evaluate the impact of increased staffing levels at regional and country level. The Secretariat responded that, under the action plan of the Action for Results Group for country impact, managerial indicators had been put in place to assess the impact of measures taken at country level and additional indicators were being developed on the programmatic side.

1 Document A77/25.
RECOMMENDATION TO THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

7. The Committee, on behalf of the Executive Board, recommended that the Health Assembly should note the report, and proposed, as guidance for the Secretariat’s implementation of existing mandates, that the Secretariat should:

(a) continue to make every effort to improve geographical representation;

(b) accelerate the implementation of the mandatory phase of the mobility policy;

(c) take practical steps to ensure that the internship programme is accessible to applicants from all regions;

(d) continue its efforts to improve the efficiency of the recruitment process;

(e) continue working towards gender parity at all levels of the Organization, especially among WHO Representatives in country offices and in higher graded positions;

(f) give due attention to all relevant recommendations in the 2023 review by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of the United Nations system of non-staff personnel and related contract modalities, while creating the new affiliate contractual modality.