



154th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Washington, D.C., USA, 16-20 June 2014

Provisional Agenda Item 6.3

CE154/30
29 May 2014
Original: Spanish

STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PAHO/WHO STAFF ASSOCIATION

1. The Staff Association would like to thank the Members of the Executive Committee for their attention and interest regarding issues related to current staff working conditions, in accordance with the provisions of the International Civil Service. The staff members of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (PASB) appreciate the confidence the Governing Bodies of the Organization have placed in them. Moreover, they reiterate their commitment to continue providing international cooperation in health and fulfilling the mandates of the Organization, in accordance with its mission, vision, and values.
2. At this 154th session of the Executive Committee, the Staff Association would like to refer to the relations between staff and Administration and highlight the main topics currently of interest to staff members. The following paragraphs present some of the most strategic issues that the Staff Association has been working on in close collaboration with the Bureau's Administration.
3. The Staff Association wishes to express its satisfaction with the agreement signed between the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, represented by its Director, and the Staff Association. This agreement is a historical milestone, showing how executive management can support the volunteer work done by staff members in official representation of the staff. This agreement updates the agreement signed in 1979 and more clearly reflects the principles that guide the dialogue between the Administration and the staff members represented by the Association. The entire discussion process was crucial to building confidence and achieving transparency and integrity in all aspects of relations between staff and management.
4. The Staff Association also wishes to recognize and express its gratitude for the contributions made by the staff representatives to the Organization's institutional efforts, and specifically mention the value added in the framework of the joint staff/Administration working committees, including the selection committees, the Staff Health Insurance Surveillance Committee, the WHO Staff Pension Committee, which participates in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board, and the WHO Global Staff/Management Council, among others.

5. With regard to the administration of justice in the Bureau, the Staff Association welcomes the new Ombudsman and hopes that she will make a substantive contribution to building staff confidence that conflicts can be resolved without having to raise them to higher levels. This position plays a substantive role in leading the global initiative for a respectful work environment.

6. We reiterate our position on the importance of conducting an independent review of the different elements that make up the Integrity and Conflict Management System (ICMS) established at the Bureau almost 10 years ago. The Association believes that a starting point could be the parameters identified by the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) in its reports on the role of ethics offices¹ and the investigations function in the United Nations system².

7. It is especially relevant to adopt measures in light of the new PAHO Strategic Plan 2014-2019 and Program and Budget 2014-2015, which specifically mentions the output (OPT 6.2.3) that calls for “improved ethical behavior, respect within the workplace, and due process throughout the Organization,” and whose indicator describes the “level of staff satisfaction with the ethical climate and internal recourse procedures of the Organization.” In this context, it is more than justified to have an external review that offers recommendations on how to improve the performance of certain services, such as the Ethics Office, the Office of the Ombudsman, and the Board of Appeal.

8. We are convinced that PAHO would benefit substantially from a review of the services that make up the internal justice system, with a view to making its operation more effective and efficient, and reducing the risks for the Organization. It is necessary to close certain gaps that pose risks for the Organization and to gain the staff’s confidence that they are working in an environment where conflicts are prevented and appropriately managed.

9. These offices play an important role in what it is known as the internal justice system. A justice system should have certain principle, including independence and separation of functions, the right of the parties to defend themselves, the right to examine any relevant evidence, the right to have justice administered quickly, and the right to appeal. We continue to be concerned about the lack of clarity in the administration of the Board of Appeal, and it is clear that the President of the Board—who is external to PAHO—is not performing his duties and does not meet the deadlines for processing appeals.

10. With respect to the management and administration of human resources at the Office, a major effort was made to establish an integrated planning framework as part of operational planning that started in 2013 for the approval of the biennial work plans (2014-2015). This exercise included mapping human resources for each planning entity.

¹ JIU/REP/2010/3. Ethics in the United Nations System. 2010.

² A/67/140. The investigations function in the United Nations system. 13 July 2012.

11. This subject was discussed in 2013 both in the Subcommittee on Program, Budget, and Administration and in the PAHO Executive Committee,³ which pointed out the following: The Director of PASB noted that human resources are particularly crucial for an Organization that provides technical cooperation and that the Bureau was going to formulate a strategy and a human resources plan in response to the PAHO Strategic Plan 2014-2019, offering the context to determine human resources needs. The human resources planning process would begin immediately after the 152nd session of the Committee and would be broad-based, and all staff members would participate fully in the process in order to ensure that they took ownership of the plan.

12. The PAHO Executive Management will have the Association's support and participation for this important exercise when it begins.

13. The Staff Association would like to suggest that a desirable component of this strategic framework for human resources would be to offer staff members professional development opportunities, including training. It is of special interest to the Association that clear guidelines be established to promote constant updating and learning within the Office, especially in light of the imminent implementation of the new Pan American Sanitary Bureau Management Information System (PMIS). This system is an opportunity to make changes in ways of operating and in organizational culture, and it will have a direct impact both on staff morale and the work environment.

14. Finally, the Staff Association recognizes that the work/life balance and staff well-being are key human resources issues that currently bridge the gap between public and private sector organizations, and considers that these issues deserve the greatest attention and consideration by the Bureau's Administration. There are several PAHO policies and programs that seek to facilitate and improve the work/life balance and staff well-being. However, such policies and programs are largely fragmented and poorly coordinated. The Association reiterates its willingness to collaborate closely with the Administration to adopt a more systematic approach within the Organization.

Action by the Executive Committee

15. The Staff Association submits this report to the Executive Committee for comment and in order for the Committee to promote the proposals and recommendations contained herein.

- - -

³ See the Final Report of the 152nd Session of the Executive Committee (Document CE152/FR), paragraphs 161 and following.