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PROGRAMME COORDINATING BOARD

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Information Note PCB June 2005
UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association (USSA)

It is with pleasure that the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association submits the following Information Note to the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board.

Introduction

The most significant event of the first semester of 2005 is the transition from the UNAIDS Staff Association Steering Committee (USASC) to the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association. As was agreed by the WHO Staff Association (WHOSA) General Assembly, the UNAIDS Staff Association Steering Committee became an independent staff association for the UNAIDS Secretariat on 2 April 2005 while remaining an Associate Member of the WHO Staff Association. This move is based on differences in the way rules are implemented in the two organizations, and both staff associations agreed UNAIDS staff would be best represented by its own association. The UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association continues to have an elected representative to the WHO Staff Association.

January–June 2005

Since our Information Note of December 2004, a number of developments have taken place both within the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association and in the UNAIDS Secretariat workplace.

1. A policy dealing with harassment in the workplace has been drafted and disseminated Secretariat-wide to all UNAIDS staff both in Geneva and country offices. It adopts a ‘zero-tolerance’ approach to harassment and applies to all staff, regardless of level.
2. One issue the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association will be looking at more closely is that of contract divergences. Because UNAIDS is a joint and cosponsored programme, administrative arrangements differ between Geneva and the field. Contract types vary, and contracts may be administered by other agencies, such as UNDP. This raises the issue of entitlements, which also vary depending on the agency. As an example, under one agency’s rules, dependents may be evacuated because of a medical emergency, whereas this entitlement does not exist under another. In an effort to provide the best possible standards for all employees, the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association will work with the administration of the UNAIDS Secretariat to unify entitlements across all agencies for staff employed by the Secretariat.
3. The new mobility and rotation policy is now in place and rotations have begun. The policy was developed by UNAIDS Human Resources Management in partnership with a working group of the then UNAIDS Staff Association Steering Committee and calls for a structured process to ensure staff and UNAIDS benefit from well-planned and informed rotation of staff among duty stations, including Geneva.
4. The UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association continues to participate in the Human Resources Pilot Project (HRPP) focus group. The Human Resources Pilot Project tests a reward-for-contribution system linked to a broad-banded salary structure—its ultimate objective is to link job design, development of competencies and performance management. UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association has been

encouraging staff to take part in Geneva-based unit briefings in order to promote open and transparent debate on the issue. One result was the inclusion of general service staff in the Human Resources Pilot Project. UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association has also been advocating for more involvement of non-Geneva staff in the Human Resources Pilot Project and as a result they will also join the focus group. The UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association has consistently stressed that its participation in the Human Resources Pilot Project in no way represents endorsement of the project's content but a commitment to a participatory approach in determining policy changes that affect staff conditions and remuneration.

UNAIDS Positive Staff Group

The UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association has offered its full support to the newly-formed Positive Staff Group of UNAIDS. The Group was set up by HIV-positive staff, independently of the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association, to meet regularly with Peter Piot to track progress on a number of issues affecting HIV-positive staff in all UN agencies. Issues identified so far include the need to develop a comprehensive workplace policy to build on the generic UN policy, the need to develop guidelines on international travel and movement for HIV-positive staff, and a review of recruitment processes and health insurance cover. In addition to regular meetings with the Executive Director the group has set up its own electronic workspace for HIV-positive staff of all UN agencies. Following the first meeting with Dr Piot there is now interest from the United Nations Secretary-General's Office to hold a similar meeting between HIV-positive staff and the Secretary-General in New York.

Final Remarks

The UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association is slowly expanding its work to fill the void some staff members perceive when wanting to discuss issues of concern to them outside the usual administrative structure. UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association members field daily phone calls and emails from staff on issues ranging from promotions to salary scales to working conditions (often referring cases to Human Resources Management); advocate for greater job security for staff members, especially those at lower grades; provide a 'bridge' between Human Resources Management and the rest of Secretariat staff by keeping abreast of concerns and issues that may affect the way staff members respond to their workplace; and ensure that anyone with a problem or question has a place to go or a person with whom to talk.

As the new UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association begins to take shape, the number of issues coming to its attention are bound to rise and for this reason, ongoing collegial dialogue with the UNAIDS Secretariat management continues to be of utmost importance.

Leyla Alyanak
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