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26th Meeting of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board
Geneva, Switzerland
22-24 June 2010

Statement by the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association

Document prepared by the USSA

Additional documents for this item: *none*

Action required at this meeting - the Programme Coordinating Board is invited to: note the content of the document

Cost implications for decisions: *none*

INTRODUCTION

1. Since June 2004 the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association (USSA) has reported annually to the Programme Coordinating Board. This document serves as additional information to the oral presentation that will be made to the Board by the USSA Chair. The USSA functions as an independent staff association for the UNAIDS Secretariat, while remaining an Associate Member of the WHO Staff Association, and, since 2008, a full member of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA).

INSTITUTIONAL, POLICY AND ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

2. Throughout 2009 the Executive Committee of the USSA has worked closely with the UNAIDS Administration to review critical institutional, policy and administrative issues affecting UNAIDS staff, including support for the development and enhancement of several UNAIDS policies. Regular, institutionalized meetings with senior management, including Human Resources, have been successful in strengthening mechanisms for dialogue and partnership between UNAIDS Administration and the USSA. These meetings also served as an effective early-warning system to identify and mitigate potential issues of concern to UNAIDS staff, and have been essential in highlighting urgent issues where staff have been affected by the process of the implementation of the recommendations of the UNAIDS Second Independent Evaluation (SIE) and related initiatives (including the McKinsey report on the UNAIDS Secretariat Headquarters Assessment, as well as the Global Report of the Review of UNAIDS Secretariat human and financial resources and their link to core functions and management structures in seven regions carried out by PricewaterhouseCoopers).
3. The USSA has recently strengthened the dialogue within the regions by initiating regular meetings with each Regional Support Team Director, the relevant USSA elected (regional) representative and the USSA Chair. As the number and complexity of issues and staff cases reported to the Staff Association during the last twelve months continues to increase (mainly due to the restructuring introduced by the management in order to meet expectations related to the implementation of the SIE recommendations), the USSA will continue to pursue its mandate to address these issues with the UNAIDS Administration through prompt and honest dialogue during the meetings mentioned above as well as through future attendance at Senior Management Team meetings.
4. Highlights and results from last 12 months can be summarized as follows:
 - a. **UNAIDS Second Independent Evaluation:** Although the detailed plan for the implementation of the SIE recommendations has been shared with all staff it is still unclear how this will be operationalized. The lack of clear implications for the future of UNAIDS, and therefore for UNAIDS staff, has raised concerns about job security and conditions of employment and have impacted on staff morale. This has resulted in a noticeable increase in the number of staff members coming to the USSA for advice. The USSA has engaged proactively with the UNAIDS

Administration in calling for meaningful staff participation in the reform of UNAIDS as well as full transparency throughout the process. The Administration acknowledged the importance of including staff views in organizational reforms by making the USSA a key stakeholder in the implementation of the SIE recommendations. As the full implementation will last for several months, we will report on its implications for staff at the 28th PCB meeting. In the meantime, the USSA effort will concentrate on providing input to the relevant processes, and ensuring that all steps affecting staff are in conformity with existing staff rules and regulations.

- b. **Mobility and Career Development:** The USSA was actively involved in the implementation of the UNAIDS Mobility and Rotation Exercise both in 2009 and 2010 as an observer of due process on the Mobility Review Committee. The USSA's membership of the Appointments and Promotions Committee has also allowed the Association to advocate for staff promotion, assignment, reassignment and career development issues to be treated in a transparent and equitable manner, and has enabled the USSA to raise issues of due process in individual cases. While the USSA fully supports the idea of staff career and development behind the Mobility Policy, staff (both in headquarters and in the field) have noted that there is still a lack of certain basic elements in content (e.g. training) as well as in process (e.g. serious delays, equity questions). This has created resistance to the policy among staff, as well as some senior management (concerned about losing quality team members) and could impact on the ability of UNAIDS to retain experienced and highly qualified staff.
- c. **Holistic HR Strategy:** Progress was made on the Competencies and Values Framework and the USSA was happy to be included in the development of the Framework and notes with appreciation that its comments were included in the final document. However, progress on the production of an overall Human Resources Strategy has been slow and the USSA would like to re-iterate its willingness to work as a partner in the production of the pillars populating this strategy to ensure that the interests of staff are protected at each stage.
- d. **Diversity Issues:** In 2009, the USSA continued to advocate for the rights and benefits for same sex and domestic partnerships for UNAIDS staff and their partners as a way to promote Universal Access within UNAIDS and enhance the credibility of UNAIDS as "walking the talk". A Diversity and Inclusion Policy, was agreed by senior management early in 2009 and was rolled-out throughout the year with provisions for mandatory training for all staff. Four USSA representatives have been trained as trainers on this policy and have been active in developing the training to fit the specific needs of UNAIDS. The aim of the policy is to expand current standards within the broader UN system and promulgate an enhanced policy on diversity and inclusion, specifically addressing the issues of HIV status and same sex partnership. In this regard, the USSA highly recommends the recognition of same-sex and domestic partnerships within UNAIDS to ensure that UANIDS is perceived as "best practice" on this issue within the UN system and is "walking the talk" of its own Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- e. **Contractual Issues:** As part of the overall UN contract reform agenda and in follow-up to the SIE recommendations, UNAIDS senior management committed

- to move to a “one administration system” which would hopefully result in one contracting system in order to simplify human resource management and promote fair and equal treatment of staff. The USSA will monitor and remain closely engaged in this process to ensure that staff are not negatively impacted by any changes made in Human Resource systems.
- f. **Environmental Working Group:** The USSA continued its close involvement with the Environmental Working Group (EWG), which aims to help make UNAIDS more energy efficient and environmentally friendly. The goal of the Group is for UNAIDS to become carbon neutral. Progress was slow during the reporting period. A significant culture change is required at all levels of UNAIDS, including regional and country offices.
- g. **New structure of the UNAIDS Secretariat:** Published in early 2010, the McKinsey Report assessing the UNAIDS Headquarters resulted in many structural and policy changes which were communicated to staff after the fact. The introduction of an updated organigram – subsequent to the restructuring - of UNAIDS Headquarters highlighted staff anxieties for the future. This issue ties in with the long, and seemingly ongoing, process of change-management and continues to create unease on a daily basis within the Programme particularly in relation to the further clarifying of roles and responsibilities, as well as necessary Information Technology and Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system updates, to name but a few.

UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES SINCE THE 24TH PROGRAMME COORDINATING BOARD

5. In addition to its activities related directly to the UNAIDS Administration the USSA was able to extend its outreach to staff through its participation in a number of UNAIDS Regional Management Meetings (RMMs), Social Mobilization Officers meetings and New Staff Orientations. Participation in the RMMs in particular enabled the USSA to update field-based staff on policy and work-place developments and to run clinics to address staff concerns on an individual and confidential basis. Issues arising from these meetings included: training and capacity building for national staff; the possibility for national professional staff to be included in Mobility and Rotation; communication; the need to improve motivation; issues around leadership; lack of understanding of Human Resources issues; and, ongoing reforms. The USSA also participated in a number of FICSA meetings during the reporting period to ensure that the rights and interests of UNAIDS staff are represented at the highest level of the UN common system.
6. In 2009 the USSA continued its collaboration with the UN System HIV Positive Staff Group, known as UN Plus, which ensures that the specific needs and voice of staff members living with HIV are raised, heard and addressed in the broader UN workplace. Key focus areas included stigma and discrimination, 100% health insurance coverage, mobility and travel restrictions for HIV-positive staff, and confidentiality in the workplace. It is worth noting that a research project is being carried out with a view to influencing policy on health insurance coverage, which will once again ensure that the credibility of UNAIDS is enhanced as we “walk the talk” on Universal Access.

LOOKING FORWARD

7. The USSA will continue working closely with the UNAIDS Administration on the implementation of the UNAIDS Second Independent Evaluation recommendations, particularly in relation to the one administration system and the holistic Human Resources Strategy.
8. We recognize the high degree of continued collaboration and mutual respect in our partnership with the UNAIDS Administration. This partnership has contributed to an improved work environment for all UNAIDS staff, which in turn helps UNAIDS to better achieve its goals, especially in this transition period. We highly value our regular face-to-face meetings with the Executive Director, which demonstrate, along with his regular meetings with all departments of the Secretariat, the commitment of our administration to keep staffing issues a priority for UNAIDS. USSA would like to reiterate its commitment to continue working as a partner in dialogue with the UNAIDS Administration based on the existing Agreement on Cooperation and hopes that the administration values the USSA work in ensuring UNAIDS as an employer of choice and fully implements this instrument for a productive partnership.
9. The USSA would like to thank the Programme Coordinating Board for its continuing support to the work of UNAIDS staff worldwide, and looks forward to its future collaboration with the Board.

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