



UNAIDS PROGRAMME COORDINATING BOARD

UNAIDS/PCB (32)/13.11

Issue date: 28 May 2013

THIRTY-SECOND MEETING

Date: 25-27 June 2013

Venue: Executive Board Room, WHO, Geneva

Agenda item 6

Statement by the representative of the UNAIDS Staff Association

Additional documents for this item: *none*

Action required at this meeting - the Programme Coordinating Board is invited to:

Take note of the statement by the representative of the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association.

Cost implications for decisions: **none**

INTRODUCTION

1. Since June 2004, the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association (USSA) has reported annually to the Programme Coordinating Board.
2. Following a request made at the 28th Programme Coordinating Board meeting, the USSA presented an additional report and statement to the Board at its 29th meeting in connection with the human resources-related recommendations of the Second Independent Evaluation, the workforce functional review, and ongoing change processes taking place within UNAIDS. At the time of writing the present report, the USSA Executive Committee has just completed its annual, five-day face-to-face meeting. During this meeting, findings of the recently concluded USSA Staff Survey, with responses from approximately 55% of UNAIDS field and headquarters staff, were reviewed and discussed with senior management and the Executive Director.
3. This report highlights key developments since June 2012, including staff priorities resulting from the survey, and will be complemented by an oral presentation to the Board by the USSA Chair.

CONTINUED IMPLEMENTING OF THE UNAIDS WORKFORCE FUNCTIONAL REVIEW – “Shaping our Destiny”

4. In our last report to the Board, we indicated that the implementation phase of the UNAIDS transformation and strategic realignment process was “on track”. Since the presentation of this last report, the realignment process has continued, including through the finalization of the 2012 mobility and reassignment exercise and start of the 2013 exercise.
5. The USSA participates in key advisory committees involved in the realignment process, including the Mobility and Reassignment Committee, and the information technology (IT) review committee. We also meet on a regular basis with senior management. In these forums, the USSA has advocated for change that enables UNAIDS to be “fit for purpose”, guided by clear criteria, and transparent and participatory processes, that minimize negative impacts on staff.
6. In the context of the realignment, we were pleased to see exceptional measures implemented that sought to maximize opportunities for staff, including retention of current staff members, reflecting a “human face” approach to change. Eligible staff members affected by office closures and post abolition, as well as volunteers among Headquarters staff in 2012 were included in the mobility and reassignment process. Qualified General Service staff members and National Officers had the opportunity to be considered for International Professional positions. Career support is being offered to staff members separating from UNAIDS. The USSA has expressed its appreciation for the strong commitment from management to implement this approach, which we see as highly beneficial to both staff and the Organization – significantly reducing transaction costs, retaining institutional memory, and strengthening staff roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis focused results. While no change is easy, we are confident that the overall approach is strengthening our flexibility and capacity to adapt to evolving needs in the AIDS response.

7. The 2012 mobility and reassignment exercise involved over 10 per cent of the Secretariat's workforce. Results of the USSA Staff Survey indicate that the majority of staff participating in this exercise believe it is enabling them to evolve in their career; however, nearly 1 in 4 respondents noted the need for greater technical guidance and support in order to maximize their effectiveness in their new roles. Relocations related to the decisions of the 2013 mobility and reassignment exercise are expected to take place in the next two to three months. The USSA has already had fruitful discussions with management on ways of strengthening opportunities for learning and development in this context and beyond.
8. The USSA recognizes that some individuals have been adversely affected through this organizational change process. We continue to advocate that colleagues avail themselves of the special measures that have been put in place to enable staff separating from UNAIDS to leave the Organization with the tools necessary to be in the best position possible to pursue opportunities outside of the Organization.

ADDRESSING CONCERNS ABOUT WHO STAFF HEALTH INSURANCE

9. Last year we reported that staff, particularly country-based colleagues who transferred to UNAIDS contracts in the context of the move to a Single Administrative System, were expressing serious concerns about the poor quality of service offered by WHO Staff Health Insurance (SHI) in terms of the lack of recognition at local level (and as a result, high out-of-pocket expenditures or complicated pre-payment negotiation), long delays in reimbursement, and outdated, paper-based claim procedures. In this year's USSA Staff Survey, there were some indications of improvement in the overall rating of staff health insurance services, including a slight reduction in reimbursement time. These improvements are most likely attributable to specific measures put in place by UNAIDS Department of Human Resources Management (HRM), notably the possibility of submitting claims from the field via courier. However, the average claim still takes approximately 2 months to be reimbursed. Approximately one in five country-based staff reported that they have had to delay needed treatment due to delays in reimbursement of an SHI claim. The impact on national staff, especially among General Service staff, is particularly severe.
10. We are pleased that a joint staff-management Task Force on staff health insurance reform, co-chaired by UNAIDS HRM and the USSA, has started its work. We continue to be encouraged by the Executive Director's strong commitment to finding a durable solution to the serious concerns reported by staff. The Executive Director has also expressed his full support to implementing temporary measures to alleviate adverse effects on staff and their families. We look forward to our continuing discussions with senior management and presenting recommendations to the Executive Director in the coming months on possible ways to address the concerns.

HEALTHY STAFF, HEALTHY UNAIDS

11. In 2012, USSA Staff Survey results showed progress in addressing harassment, ill-treatment, discrimination and abuse of authority within UNAIDS. In the 2013 USSA Staff Survey results, a significant number of staff members perceive progress in addressing these issues, particularly in those regions where the most focused action has taken place to open dialogue and implement actions

supporting prevention. However, despite progress, we are not yet at “zero”. Although the majority of staff indicate they are aware of procedures to follow in case they feel they are suffering from a situation of harassment, ill-treatment, discrimination or abuse of authority, very few staff report that in these situations they have taken formal action to address the issue. There is still work to do towards the prevention of harassment, ill-treatment, discrimination and abuse of authority within UNAIDS, including strengthening staff skills for communication and managing conflict, while fostering strong teamwork and a respectful work environment in all UNAIDS offices.

12. In the context of the organizational realignment, the USSA Staff Survey results also reflect the need to explore signs of work-related stress and anxiety among some staff, and increasing reports of repeated requests to work outside usual working hours. We are looking forward to reviewing a new flexible working arrangements policy which we feel could enable staff to better manage high professional demands together with their personal and family responsibilities. During the USSA annual face-to-face meeting, a joint half-day staff-management dialogue was held on promoting staff health and wellness to maximize our collective contribution to the HIV response. We look forward to following-up this dialogue. The USSA advocates on the importance of using all available entry-points for providing support to staff and fostering an environment in UNAIDS that is conducive to personal and organizational development, making it a workplace of choice, attracting and retaining staff with the strongest capacity to deliver results.
13. Among the other priority issues identified by staff were the following: transparency and fairness of selection and promotion processes, career advancement and opportunities, and safety and security. Further analysis of survey findings will take place in the coming months and be discussed with senior management.

CONCLUSION

14. The USSA continues to enjoy a constructive and proactive dialogue with senior management and the Executive Director. In the past year we have seen some key results of our staff-management collaboration, notably on issues of harassment and ill-treatment in the workplace, reducing reimbursement delays for Staff Health Insurance claims, and supporting organizational change with a human face. We look forward to continuing to engage with senior management to address key priorities raised by staff, and supporting the vision of countries and the Executive Director for the AIDS response in the post-2015. A strong workforce is key for a strong organization that can best support national responses to HIV and the vision of “Getting to Zero”.

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