

# STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNAIDS SECRETARIAT STAFF ASSOCIATION

**Additional documents for this item:**

**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 the implementation of the decisions:** *none*

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## Introduction

1. On behalf of the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association (USSA), I thank you for the opportunity to share this short report on issues affecting UNAIDS staff. The report is informed by data collected by the USSA, staff town halls, regional outreach and direct communication from staff. It also provides an update on implementation of recommendations which USSA presented in the previous PCB.

## Background on the UNAIDS Staff Association

2. The USSA was established in April 2005 as an independent staff association, representing all staff in the UNAIDS Secretariat. By virtue of our constitution, the purposes of the USSA are to:
  - ensure the conditions of employment of all staff conform to generally accepted labour standards, particularly those recommended by the ILO, the principles of the Staff Rules and Regulations, and other provisions of law applicable to all staff;
  - safeguard the rights and interests of all staff and promote their welfare; and
  - cooperate in achieving the objectives of UNAIDS.
3. In addition, to enable the work of the Staff Association, the 2010 Agreement of Cooperation between the UNAIDS management and the USSA stipulates collaboration in good faith for consultation on policies, procedures and practices relating to conditions of employment, as well as issues affecting staff arising from day-to-day management and administration of the organization. That agreement also commits management to contribute operational resources to the Staff Association.
4. We are one of the few UN staff associations that manages a legal support mechanism for staff. However, while the Staff Association represents all UNAIDS staff, only 341 dues paying members are eligible to claim limited legal support should the need arise during their employment with UNAIDS. In the past two years, the USSA assisted around 50 staff in accessing legal guidance to review decisions on employment conditions that were considered inconsistent with labour standards and/or staff rules and regulations or in violation of staff rights, etc.

## Remarks

### *Revised constitution and membership of ExComm*

5. Following the restructuring that has reduced staff numbers by around 55%, the USSA constitution revision was launched in October 2025, with the new constitution endorsed by 98% of voting members. As the restructuring proceeds, the number of dues-paying members is changing every month; it stood at 340 in November 2025.

### *Salient features of the new USSA constitution*

6. Date of bringing the new constitution into effect: 01 November 2025.
7. The new constitution aligns the USSA with the new structure and maximizes efficiency while not losing sight of its mission. It reduces the number of Exco members from fifteen to seven in line with 55% reduction in UNAIDS Staff, adopts biannual work planning, and commits to minimizing travel expenses.

8. New elections will be organized early in 2026 and a new bureau will be elected.
9. The memorandum of agreement with UNAIDS management is also being revised to align with the new constitution.

### **Progress on USSA recommendations from PCB 56 and recent steps taken by the USSA**

10. Chair, I will now provide an update on progress or actions that have been taken following the recommendations the Staff Association made to the 56th PCB meeting in June 2025.
11. Considering the exceptional nature of this meeting, the USSA will not dwell on a point-by-point review of progress concerning its recommendations at PCB 56. It is patently clear to us that the Organization will not be able to deliver its commitments under the new Global AIDS Strategy. Faced with a problem that required courage and imagination to solve, it chose instead to sacrifice the one asset that could not be replaced: its staff.
12. The USSA notes with concern the UN80 proposals, which were not preceded by consultation with the USSA or staff, and, that a full and transparent account of it has not been made available as to how such a drastic sun setting deadline was included in UN 80 proposals.
13. Many staff members remain confused about the multiple, complex processes involved in their separation from the organization and are thus uncertain whether their rights and entitlements will be entirely respected and fulfilled upon leaving. Some of the flexibilities that were introduced have been caught up in bureaucratic processes, defeating the intended purpose. Staff delocalized from Geneva continue to battle with issues of work permits, for example.
14. We expect UNAIDS management to reaffirm its commitment to safeguard the rights and entitlements of all staff, in particular those who are being separated.
15. We also expect management to provide specific and constructive feedback to all applicants who have not been successful in the compendium exercise, so that the experience can at least have some learning value for them.

### **Working relationship between management and the USSA**

16. Chair, as is customary, I wish to share a brief update on the working relationship between management and the Staff Association.
17. The USSA has been working constructively with the UNAIDS management through these challenging times to minimize pains to staff and ensure the dignified exit of those who are separating from UNAIDS. The Staff Association is well represented in the restructuring consultation group and recruitment review. However, the pace of restructuring has not allowed time and space for meaningful consultation. The USSA also feels that the UN80 proposals regarding UNAIDS were imposed from above without any consultation with the Staff Association or staff.
18. The USSA has been providing legal support to its dues-paying members, including legal insurance coverage to staff.
19. The USSA has been engaging staff and trying to communicate as much as possible through town halls, surveys and regional outreach. However, the Staff Association feels

that many decisions taken by UNAIDS management were shared with the USSA at the eleventh hour, preventing it from consulting staff broadly.

20. To allow separating staff to remain in touch and to institutionalize the extended family sentiment, the USSA has worked with People's Management to launch an alumni portal and to provide transition support by sponsoring pre-retirement seminars, and working with Staff Health Insurance and WHO Staff Health and Wellbeing to ensure staff health and well-being.

### Challenges faced and way forward

21. We seem to be victims of our own success, though recent changes in the global financial aid landscape have exposed the fragility of the HIV response and confirmed the need to continue investing to sustain the gains made.
22. The USSA would like to thank and applaud the PCB for its decision to convene an urgent meeting and for suggesting a pragmatic way forward.
23. Delivering on the new Global AIDS Strategy looks very difficult in a context of limited resources and given the uncertainties surrounding UNAIDS's future.
24. The unprecedented restructuring of UNAIDS has affected the morale of the staff, though their commitment to serve communities keeps them going in these challenging circumstances.

### Proposed recommendations

25. The Staff Association presents below a summary of outstanding issues which staff would like the senior management to address.
  - On the UN80 proposals, the USSA requests the PCB to guide UNAIDS, through a process that is realistic, to ringfence the gains made thus far and ensure that services continued to be delivered.
  - The USSA notes with serious concern that the UN80 proposals were announced without consultation with staff and the USSA, and it urges UNAIDS management to keep staff fully informed of discussions affecting their future under UN80 and to consult the USSA on any proposals affecting staff.
  - The USSA calls for greater transparency in how the UN80 proposals and timelines are announced and it requests the PCB to use all resources at its disposal to engage with the Office of UN Secretary-General and various UN General Assembly forums like ECOSOC to highlight the importance of aligning the UN80 proposals regarding UNAIDS with PCB-decided timelines for the transformation of UNAIDS. This will help address staff anxieties and allow staff to focus on the unfinished agenda of ending AIDS by 2030.
  - Staff expects UNAIDS management to reaffirm its commitment to safeguard the rights and entitlements of all staff, in particular those who are being separated.
  - The USSA request regular updates through live updating of the organogram and requests management to take steps that ensure the dignified departure of staff. This includes ensuring timely communication with governments about UNAIDS Country Director transitions and thanking sitting Country Directors for their contributions in a timely manner.

- The USSA is deeply saddened by the departure of so many of its members and wishes them long lives and prosperity wherever the road may lead.

**Proposed decision points**

**The Programme Coordinating Board is invited to:**

26. *Take note* of the Statement by the representative of the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association (USSA)

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