

STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNAIDS SECRETARIAT STAFF ASSOCIATION

Additional documents for this item: N/A

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. The UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association (USSA) is grateful for the opportunity to share this report on the issues affecting all categories of staff within the UNAIDS Secretariat.
2. This report is informed by information collected by the USSA since the PCB meeting held in December 2025. Information was gathered through staff town halls, regional outreach and direct communication with and from staff.
3. The report also provides an update on implementation of the recommendations which USSA tabled in the previous PCB.

Background on the UNAIDS Staff Association

4. 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 International Labour Organization (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.
5. 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 on issues affecting staff arising that arise from the day-to-day management and administration of the organization. That agreement also commits management to contribute operational resources to the Staff Association.
6. UNAIDS is one of the few UN staff associations that manages a legal support mechanism for staff. While the Staff Association represents all UNAIDS staff, only 241 due paying members are eligible to access legal support through this mechanism should the need arise during their employment with UNAIDS. In the past two years around 50 staff accessed legal guidance through the USSA 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.

Revised constitution and Membership of Executive Committee

7. Last month, there were 227 members, down from 341 in November 2025 but as the restructuring continues and contracts come to an end, the number of dues-paying members changes every month.
8. Following the revision of the constitution and most separated staff leaving, a call for nominations to join the USSA Executive Committee was announced, elections are underway 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.

10. The USSA continues to struggle with the available resources and has incorporated many cost-cutting measures in its revised draft memorandum of understanding with management. Despite the reduced funding, it is critical to ensure that at least a minimum of financial support reaches the USSA so it can play its role effectively.

Progress on USSA recommendations from PCB 57 and recent steps taken by the USSA

11. The following is an update on the progress or actions that have been taken on the recommendations the Staff Association made to the 57th PCB meeting in December 2025. At that PCB session, the USSA was requested to report back with updates on restructuring.
12. Eight recommendations and issues for actions related to the restructuring and transformation of UNAIDS and UN80 were tabled for consideration in the USSA statement.
13. The Staff Association was well-represented in the restructuring consultation group and recruitment review, but the pace of restructuring did not allow sufficient time and opportunities for meaningful consultation with staff.
14. At the time of the recommendation, the USSA expressed its concern that the UN80 proposals regarding UNAIDS were imposed from above without any consultation with the Staff Association or staff and not through governance structures of UNAIDS like PCB and ECOSOC. We had also requested the PCB established a working group, consult and include the USSA which represents staff, as part of the process.
15. Nevertheless, we take note of the significant work being undertaken and the efforts of the PCB throughout the transition process. The recently issued draft report of the PCB Working Group is welcomed as a first step in the right direction. It reflects a pragmatic understanding of the epidemic and the current context for the HIV response, presents options for consideration, and rejecting approaches that would undermine the brilliant gains achieved by the Joint Programme over the past three decades.
16. We acknowledge and commend management for the updates that are sent to staff, including direction given to Regional Directors to engage staff about developments. However, while these efforts are appreciated, USSA notes that staff are still anxious because of the uncertainty on the way forward remains stressful for staff.
17. Regarding communication around and updating of the organogram, we take note of the completion of the compendium process and the opportunity it provided for some colleagues to remain with the UNAIDS Secretariat. We appreciate the communication from management, including the full list of compendium positions that were disseminated to all staff. We, however, share the concerns of staff that the organogram is not live and appears to be somewhat different from the one presented when the recommendations for restructuring were made last year.
18. The Staff Association continues to be saddened by the departure of so many of our colleagues, with the last few months seeing a significant number leaving the organization. The USSA was not unaffected by the restructuring: seven members of the USSA Executive were separated from the organization. This is a clear reminder of the vulnerable situation we all find ourselves in during these difficult times.

19. The mission for UNAIDS 2030 remains incomplete and the communities we serve continue to look to the organization to deliver on its mandate. It is critical that we devote our collective strengths to achieving our mission and ensure stability for the UNAIDS staff who are delivering beyond their capacity in these challenging circumstances. Even in countries where progress was made up to 2025, the gains are fragile and sustainability of response is a big challenge.
20. Staff continue to experience unsustainable workloads, especially at the field level. While the expectations of stakeholders remain the same, our limited footprint and available resources make it more challenging to deliver.

Working relationship between management and the USSA

21. The USSA wish to share a brief update on the working relationship between management and the Staff Association.
22. The USSA has been working constructively with the UNAIDS management to minimize pain to staff and ensure the dignified exit of those who are separating from the organisation. However, the Staff Association feels that many decisions taken by UNAIDS management were shared with very late, thereby preventing it from consulting sufficiently with staff.

USSA advocacy and support for staff

23. The USSA continues to engage staff and communicate through town halls, surveys and regional outreach.
24. The USSA has been providing legal support to its dues-paying members, including legal insurance coverage for staff. Support was provided to 49 members, 36 of whom received one-on-one legal assistance and 13 of whom received support related to legal insurance.
25. To allow separating staff to remain in touch and to institutionalize the extended family sentiment, the USSA worked closely with the People's Management Department to launch an alumni portal on LinkedIn. Further, to provide transition support for colleagues, we sponsored 43 staff to attend pre-retirement seminars.
26. USSA maintained its strong focus on health and well-being of staff. We continued our work with Staff Counsellor, and on Staff Health Insurance and WHO Staff Health and Wellbeing to ensure continued access to benefits so staff can safeguard their health and well-being and can be reimbursed in a timely manner.

Challenges faced and way forward

27. Even when recent changes in the global financial aid landscape have exposed the fragility of the HIV response, it is distressing to see that one of the most successful United Nations programmes—UNAIDS—has been considered for sunseting despite having already undertaken a planned and comprehensive restructuring process.
28. UNAIDS seems to be a victim of its own success. Yet recent shifts in the foreign aid landscape have highlighted the fragility of the HIV response and confirmed the need for continued investment to sustain the gains made.

29. At our most recent town hall, staff raised a plethora of concerns and key priorities, some of which we think must be tabled in this forum.
- Concerns and anxiety remain regarding the proposed further restructuring of UNAIDS. The PCB Working Group has outlined a number of possible options, including the transfer of functions to other agencies and the transition of country-level operations to Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs). While we appreciate the move away from "sunsetting" language and the efforts made by management to keep staff informed of these proposals, it is important to note that staff morale continues to be affected. There is a need to allow the organization to stabilize following the recent restructuring and to enable staff to focus fully on delivering the UNAIDS 2030 mission.
 - Transparency and fairness in the transformation process, including the rehiring of separated staff as and when resources or positions become available. Management committed to creating a database of separated staff and to prioritizing them for future opportunities; however, some staff feel that this has not been implemented.
 - Staff health and work-life balance remain challenges given workloads and a mismatch between resources and expectations.
 - There is a need for clarity around single-person country offices. Staff stated that they were expected to absorb political, technical and operational pressures with far fewer resources, no transportation, and no additional compensation for additional workloads.
 - Earlier this year, there were significant changes to the UNAIDS online operations systems which impacted significantly on our work, including the absorptive capacity of funds. While there has been some training, more support and training are needed to allow for seamless transition to these new work tools.
 - Separation procedures and timely release of entitlements on separations continue to be a problem for several staff members.

Proposed recommendations

30. The Staff Association presents below a summary of outstanding issues which staff would like the senior management to address.
- On the restructuring proposals, the USSA urges PCB leadership and management to protect remaining staff from further restructuring, which would only increase anxiety and erode staff morale.
 - In considering the proposals of the PCB Working Group, it should be recognized that certain Secretariat functions must be maintained as an integrated whole, as there are no corresponding capacities or champions at the country level to assume these responsibilities.
 - The USSA encourages management to continue taking steps to prevent staff from becoming overloaded and experiencing burnout.
 - The USSA strongly encourages management to share and clearly outline plans for staff once decisions have been made regarding the implementation of the PCB Working Group's recommendations and the future transition of UNAIDS.
 - The USSA requests that any further transition not be rushed and that it be implemented only once the current structure has stabilized and its effectiveness has

been properly assessed. In this regard, the USSA looks to the leadership of the PCB for guidance and oversight.

- The USSA requests transparency regarding extensions, waivers and rehiring decisions as and when additional resources become available, and encourages continued resource mobilization commensurate with the expected results from offices. Regular updates to the organogram would support these efforts.
- Equitable strengthening of offices at all levels of the organization is needed, together with strengthened country capacity to improve implementation.
- The USSA requests the streamlining and simplification of procedures to ensure dignified separations and the timely release of entitlements, drawing lessons from the recent round of restructuring.
- Management should reassure staff that their separation entitlements will not be curtailed in the event of any future restructuring and that any such process will be transparent, fair and conducted with meaningful involvement of the USSA.
- The USSA requests management to simplify processes and remove unnecessary managerial layers in order to facilitate the implementation of workplans, particularly extra-budgetary projects, through enhanced delegation of authority and the removal of intermediate layers of control that slow implementation.
- The USSA urges management to communicate clearly with staff regarding proposed single-person offices and the transition of staff into new roles, so as to provide clarity on the way forward and help address the operational challenges they face.

Proposed decision points

The Programme Coordinating Board is invited to:

31. *Take note* of the Statement by the representative of the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association.

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