



UNAIDS PROGRAMME COORDINATING BOARD

UNAIDS/PCB (38)/16.13
Issue date: 23 June 2016

THIRTY-EIGHTH MEETING

Date: 28 - 30 June 2016

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

REPORT OF THE UNAIDS SECRETARIAT STAFF ASSOCIATION (USSA) TO THE UNAIDS PROGRAMME COORDINATING BOARD

INTRODUCTION

1. Since June 2004, the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association (USSA) has reported annually to the Programme Coordinating Board.
2. This report highlights key developments since June 2014, focusing on staff priorities identified in the annual USSA staff survey, and will be complemented by an oral presentation to the Board by the USSA Rapporteur on behalf of the Chair.

USSA STATEMENT TO THE 2016 PROGRAMME COORDINATING BOARD

3. Staff at UNAIDS are proud of what has been achieved in the past 12 months, and we are committed to redoubling efforts with all partners to Fast Track the response so the world ends the AIDS epidemic by 2030. Timelines and workloads have been intense, yet rewarding. We have seen the build-up of a new momentum in the AIDS response, evidenced in the United Nations General Assembly High Level Meeting on Ending AIDS earlier this month. This was a time for “all hands on deck” in the Organization, and staff responded by working as a dynamic team - all offices, all levels - to help drive inclusion in the process and a strong outcome that advances the UNAIDS Strategy agreed by this Board. Staff know that the hardest work is ahead, and you have our full commitment to supporting programmatic and advocacy efforts across regions and countries and together advancing the UNAIDS vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths.
4. The UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association (USSA) Executive Committee continues to have a productive and strong dialogue with UNAIDS senior management. We are fully committed to working with management to uphold an ethical and supportive working environment with socially responsible employment conditions that promote the development of staff capacity and fair, transparent, consistent and accountable human resources management processes and grievance procedures which maximize our collective positive impact for the HIV response.
5. UNAIDS staff are actively engaged in the work of the Association. Each year we conduct a survey of staff on workplace issues and ask colleagues to indicate their top priorities and rate our performance on the top issues they identified the previous years. We enjoy strong support of our colleagues, but there are areas where we can, and must, do better.
6. In the most recent survey we had a 70% response rate - the highest to date, and far exceeding the 10-30% response rates reported by other staff associations conducting similar consultative exercises. The issues we will address in this statement are based on the views and priorities expressed in the staff survey, as well as the meetings that took place earlier this month between the Executive Committee and senior management. Our statement will focus on three topics:
 - a. Engagement in the UNAIDS repositioning exercise
 - b. Improving Staff Health Insurance services
 - c. Promoting Dignity at Work

Engagement in the UNAIDS repositioning exercise

7. We are grateful for the strong and continuous support of the Executive Director and senior management to ensuring that staff, though the USSA, are engaged in the processes related to the repositioning exercise. We believe that we played a positive and constructive role in the 2011-2012 functional review exercise, contributing to recommendations that would foster change with a human face, strengthen UNAIDS for the future, and minimize disruptions that could affect our cohesion and impact us as an organization. We are approaching the current exercise in the same spirit.
8. Staff have serious concerns about the current financial situation for UNAIDS and the risk that temporary financial instability could have lasting consequences for the Organization if we lose excellent, highly-skilled colleagues due to the availability of resources. The USSA is grateful for the support of the Board and your shared concern, particularly the PCB decision calling for intensified resource mobilization efforts and full funding of the 2016- 2021 UBRAF. We appreciate the Executive Director's encouragement to all UNAIDS staff to re-double resource mobilization efforts and look forward to the appropriate in-house procedures and channels being developed and communicated to staff, to allow for effective implementation of that vision.
9. We appreciate senior management's commitment to taking a comprehensive and strategic approach to this exercise, focused on being "fit for purpose" based on the UNAIDS Strategy 2016-2021 and outcomes of the recent High Level Meeting, with the full involvement of staff in a transparent and inclusive process that fully respects Staff Regulations and Rules. We welcome the efforts by management to review and reduce non-staff costs wherever possible, with a view to protecting and retaining our most valuable asset - the skills, expertise and passion of the Secretariat staff. The USSA supports continued efforts in this regard.
10. We are grateful for the Executive Director's commitment to ensuring that all decisions affecting staff will be implemented "with a human face", so that colleagues are supported and enabled throughout and beyond the process, have maximum advance notice for anything that may affect them negatively, and for those who may face separation, they have maximum support of the organization - including to "land on their feet" in new functions. The USSA firmly believes that continued close staff-management collaboration will avoid the pain, inefficiencies and appeals seen in other agencies going through reorganization and related staffing changes.
11. The USSA would welcome the opportunity to provide a brief update on this process from the perspective of staff at the December 2016 PCB meeting.

Improving WHO Staff Health Insurance (SHI) services:

12. As reported to you previously, the USSA has been working with UNAIDS management and WHO SHI to improve services for staff based on five minimum standards. This year's USSA Survey results show positive trends in staff satisfaction which reflects this cooperative approach. Staff have reported improvements in the areas of provision of a 24/7 emergency number, improved claim processing times, new cards, and more regular SHI communications. We would particularly like to thank UNAIDS management efforts which has resulted in UNAIDS administration and staff being included on the governing bodies of WHO SHI. We also thank members of the Board who have shown interest in this issue and have reinforced the importance of UNAIDS having a formal role on these bodies.
13. However, we remain vigilant. This year has already shown some backsliding on claim processing times. Most importantly, there has been limited progress on the issue of local

recognition. While we have observed efforts on the part of WHO SHI to solve this problem, this remains an issue of great concern to all staff. The UNAIDS SHI Task Force survey of UCDs and RST Directors reports that 64% of duty stations do not have a single health facility where WHO SHI is recognized. For our part, we will continue to put SHI on the agenda and encourage continued attention and mobilization until a satisfactory resolution of the concerns of UNAIDS staff.

14. Beyond these issues, the survey has shown that staffs living with HIV and other chronic conditions are burdened by the 20% share of costs, which is not covered by the insurance. When it represents 5% of their salary, the “catastrophic coverage” compensation is applied. We think that UNAIDS can do better and be the leading HIV employer in the world; by showing solidarity and equity for 100% coverage; and aligning with practices of others like the Global Fund. We will work with the administration to seek solutions to this issue.

Promoting Dignity at Work

15. The USSA continues to “take the temperature” of the house through the annual USSA staff survey. We note from the results of this year’s survey that there have been improvements, but some areas of concern remain. We have discussed the survey findings with senior management during our Face to Face meeting last week and are encouraged by their continued commitment to maintaining a dynamic and enabling working environment, including a commitment to zero tolerance for any form of ill-treatment or harassment. The USSA looks forward to renewing our work with management on this important issue for staff which is of particular importance during these times of uncertainty for staff, and which can impact on staff health and wellbeing with negative consequences for the organization.
16. The USSA is committed to continue to support staff and advise individual colleagues. We have actively engaged with the WHO Office of the Ombudsperson and have referred colleagues to this office, and will continue to do so as appropriate. Within our Dignity at Work mandate, with the support of the Federation of International Staff Associations (FICSA), we have offered short sessions to staff on the prevention of harassment and how to deal with it. We hope to continue to provide similar support going forward this year and early 2017.
17. Through FICSA, the USSA has advocated for increased priority and investment in staff mental health and well-being, particularly for staff in hardship duty stations. We are pleased that this issue is being taken up the UN’s senior leadership - notably the High Level Committee on Management and the UN Medical Directors Working Group. We wish to thank Jan Beagle for her commitment and support on this issue at the UN System level, and we look forward to working together to identify ways this issue might be addressed in UNAIDS. Through FICSA, we are also advocating for a modernization of family leave policies across the UN, to align with international standards and best practice. The UN needs a policy framework that enables staff – both men and women – to better balance their family and work obligations. By modernizing its policies in this area, the UN can be counted among leading global employers that are family-friendly and advancing gender equality.
18. All of these initiatives support the concept of Dignity at Work and we will continue to focus our energies in this area.

GOING FORWARD

19. The USSA commits to continuing to working with staff and management on the three priority areas for staff mentioned above. In this way, we hope to ensure that: UNAIDS remains a workplace of choice with highly committed and professional staff; that the current financial situation will have minimum negative impacts for staff; and that the realignment process will result in an renewed energy to ensure that the world ends the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

We thank you for your continued support.

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