



**INTERNATIONAL AGENCY FOR RESEARCH ON CANCER
CENTRE INTERNATIONAL DE RECHERCHE SUR LE CANCER**

**Governing Council
Fifty-first Session**

**GC/51/11
16/03/2009**

*Lyon, 14–15 May 2009
Auditorium*

STATEMENT BY THE IARC STAFF ASSOCIATION

1. On behalf of all IARC staff members we thank the Governing Council for the interest they have shown in Staff Association activities, the support they have provided to ensure its existence at IARC and for the time taken each year during this meeting to listen to the staff's perspective. The staff are proud of the mission of IARC and the World Health Organization, share a commitment to the success of the Agency and the improvement of public health and would like to have a participatory role in the processes that lead to these goals. We are very pleased to be attending this meeting.
2. The past several years have been difficult for the Staff Association. Since 2005 two Committees have resigned and between 2007 and 2008, for almost a year, there was no Committee due to a lack of candidates. A new Committee was elected in October 2008 and we hope that this signals a new era of continuous staff representation and participation in the Agency.
3. Since the 2007 speech, staff at the Agency have had to adapt to major organizational changes including the election of a new Director and the implementation of a new management system (SAP). We know that the future holds more change, with the reorganization of the Agency and instability due to the global financial crisis, but we hope that the staff and the administration can be partners and face these challenges together.
4. In these uncertain financial times, we are pleased with the Director's commitment to trying to manage the budget without turning to work force reductions unless absolutely necessary. We also would like to thank all Participating States for their commitment to the Agency and its budget; this communicates the need to place health concerns front and centre, especially when economic hardships force difficult decisions.
5. The budget is a source of great worry to many staff, as it has an effect on both jobs and the work that they do. In times of financial hardship, research might be viewed by some as a luxury, when in essence, these are the times most critical to investing in knowledge-building and promoting health.

6. The continued effects of the implementation of the new SAP system is another major worry. This project has been more complex and its roll-out more difficult than expected and the problems due to its implementation are beginning to wear on staff and are being felt outside the Agency as well. More information is starting to be communicated to staff and we look forward to learning more about the situation and plans for remedying it. We believe that a forum should be created for staff to discuss the problems caused by and inherent in the system and possible solutions, as this will go a long way towards resolving the tensions.

7. We would like to congratulate the Director for the initiatives he has taken since joining the Agency, including increasing communication with staff and asking for and listening to their input and ideas. We believe this is the best way forward for the Agency, as staff who understand and feel a part of the Agency are highly motivated and willing to give their utmost to help the Agency succeed.

8. This renewed dialogue gives us a chance to work on many issues including: increasing the transparency of many administrative procedures, like the selection of candidates for posts; improving the communication between the scientific and administrative sectors; creating an atmosphere of ethical responsibility within the Agency and improving the career oriented training opportunities available to staff, leading to an enhanced quality of work.

9. Part of this process is the Staff Climate Survey, which is carried out every two years. The results of the last survey in 2007 indicated that among other things, there was much concern about bureaucracy, fairness and a perceived divide between general service (GS) and professional (P) staff. Also worrying was the fact that 12% of staff indicated that they had experienced harassment by their supervisor or other co-workers, and many expressed strong negative emotions in the corresponding comments section. In spite of this, staff members were proud to work for the Agency and WHO and believed in its mission. These issues were not addressed by the previous Administration.

10. The Survey will be conducted again this year, in April, and we hope to present its results during the Council. We hope that the results will be more positive than the last time and that we will be able to work with the Administration to resolve any issues raised.

11. This year the Committee wants to work on its relationship with the Administration and also our relationship with staff. We want to encourage interactions between staff and to make sure that they feel that the Staff Association Committee is their committee. To this end, we are having open office hours, trying to enhance the visibility of our communications (partly through improving the Association's website to make it more interactive and lively), and want to promote the dissemination of new ideas. This is a daunting task as it is done on top of our regular workload, but we will try our best to make it happen.

12. In his first speech to staff Christopher Wild said that he hoped staff would look on their stay at IARC as one of the best times in their lives. We welcome this noble goal and hope that with the support of the Governing Council, the Staff Association can work with him to help make this happen.

13. Thank you again.