



**Governing Council
Fifty-fourth Session**

**GC/54/7
27/03/2012**

*Lyon, 17–18 May 2012
Auditorium*

STATEMENT BY THE IARC STAFF ASSOCIATION

Dear Mr Chairman, Dear Dr Wild, Honourable members of the Governing Council, and Colleagues,

1. On behalf of the Staff Association, we thank you for giving us the opportunity to address the Governing Council and in your constant interest shown in staff matters.
2. This statement serves to convey the concerns of the staff of IARC directly to the Governing Council and we hope to represent their opinions faithfully. We appreciated the recognition by the Governing Council last year that "The staff is the most valuable component of the Organization".
3. Last year we presented the results of the biennial work climate survey, which demonstrated that working conditions had improved measurably since the preceding survey. There were also a number of areas where further improvements would be possible, but it was difficult to find concrete solutions due to the nature of the survey questions. In order to better identify where in the organization there is need for improvement, we have begun re-drafting the survey to be more specific and to provide a more quantifiable assessment of issues previously raised through free-text comments. We will do our best to encourage a broad participation in the next work climate survey, scheduled for the end of this year. In particular, we hope to continue to improve the participation of the "non-staff" (fellows, post-docs and students). The results will be submitted to the 55th session of the Governing Council.
4. Continuing from this point, we would like to point out that an important number of those working at IARC come under the unfortunate title of "non-staff". Fellows, postdocs and other scientists in training positions make crucial contributions to the work of the agency, as they do in most scientific and academic organizations. However, UN and WHO Staff Rules do not recognize this class of employee. An unfortunate consequence of this has been that the rights and responsibilities of this group has been poorly specified and in practice, highly variable between Sections. The Fellowship Charter created in 2011 was a welcome step towards uniform standards, but many fundamental conditions such as rates of pay, the availability of holidays and the provision of maternity or paternity leave remained at the discretion of Group Heads.

5. The Staff Association Committee (SAC) has pursued a more equitable treatment of these positions and is pleased that a process has been launched to ensure consistent conditions of employment for non-staff across the agency.

6. We are all aware of the continuing effects of the global financial crisis and the impact this has had on WHO, leading to difficult times for many WHO staff. We recognize the efforts of the Director in exercising responsible management of the budget, and the oversight by the Governing Council of the use of their Special Fund. Consequently IARC has been spared the need of making the urgent changes forced on our parent organization. However, one concern is that as Staff Rules at IARC are based on those at WHO, we may be inadvertently affected by changes introduced to deal with the dramatic circumstances which we have been prudent to avoid.

7. The SAC is working in collaboration with WHO staff representatives and will strive to avoid unwarranted degradations of staff employment conditions at IARC. The Global Staff / Management Council (GSMC), postponed to the autumn, will be the occasion to discuss with management planned or already decided changes to staff rules affecting personnel policies or conditions of service.

8. Another area of concern for staff has been the turbulent situation within the administration, where, in some cases, changes were launched by senior staff who left before their completion. Many staff of the former Budget and Finance Office foresaw difficulties with the proposed reforms and unfortunately some of these concerns appear to have been well-founded. The difficulty of juggling responsibilities to organization wide accounting on one hand, and grant preparation on the other, has led to conflicts with scientific sections and a sense of frustration on all sides.

9. The SAC has been pleased to welcome Mr David Allen, the new Director of Administration and Finance (DAF), who we hope will be able to find long-term solutions to these problems. In particular, we congratulate him on his decision to respond to the perception of excessive bureaucracy by reviewing internal rules and procedures. We wish him the best of luck in this difficult but important task.

10. An additional major concern is the state of the IARC buildings, in particular the Tower. As the Governing Council learned at its last meeting, the building structure is in a poor state. This was illustrated recently when the heating and ventilation system failed during half a day. The Director has informed the staff that due to these issues, the Governing Council will need to consider different options including moving the Agency to a new location. This presents an opportunity to improve the environmental impact of the Agency, currently compromised by the energy-inefficient building. This would be particularly welcomed by the staff, who are sensitive to environmental issues and support the official position of the UN Secretary General Mr Ban Ki-moon, who encourages UN staff to "green the blue".

11. Therefore, we hope that in evaluating potential sites for the relocation of the Agency, the importance of proximity to the Lyon public transport system is recognized. This would avoid increasing the use of private cars by staff and also maintain the convenience of access for the large number of international visitors, central to the work of the Agency. The SAC is also pleased to note the "Green IARC" section of DAF's work-plan.

12. Employers are more and more aware that good working conditions benefit the Organization. And this is not limited to security, but has to be extended to health of staff. An issue brought to the attention of the SAC was the dissatisfaction of nursing mothers with the breast-feeding facilities. The SAC has made available its meeting room as a more appropriate location. Other projects related to health and well-being include a proposal for a room where pregnant women, or other staff needing a short respite might rest, and the encouragement of physical activity, including group participation in the annual Lyon fun-run.

13. Finally, we would like to thank once again the Director and the Governing Council for providing this platform. I would also like to thank the members of the Staff Association Committee for their work, and to wish every success to the new Committee which will soon be elected.