

Monday 11 and Tuesday 12 May 2020

To be held by webconference (due to COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions)

STATEMENT BY THE IARC STAFF ASSOCIATION

1. On behalf of the IARC Staff Association Committee (SAC), I would like to thank the Governing Council for the opportunity to speak to you today.

2. The main role of the SAC is to represent the staff working at the Agency: to defend their rights and interests. It is the focal point for staff questions and concerns. We also take stock of the “internal temperature” of our staff as they are pivotal to the success of IARC.

3. We strongly believe that there is no “us”, Staff, and “them”, Management. Based on this principle, we are ready to work closely with Management to make IARC a better place to work. We are encouraged that this is recognized by the Director as she alluded to this in her speech to launch the Quality of Work Life Initiative, and we quote:

“To do better science, we need a better workplace”

4. We fully agree with this statement and in this spirit wish to bring you up to speed on developments since our statement last year.

QUALITY OF WORK LIFE (QWL)

5. Inspired by the Director in the context of IARC as a Respectful Workplace, the IARC QWL work plan was completed by a working group, chaired by the Director of Administration and Finance and the participation of the Staff Association, as well as the Early Career Scientists Association in May–June 2019, harmonizing various initiatives aiming to ensure and promote quality of work life at IARC. The QWL work plan focuses on four (interrelated) QWL elements:

- Promote a harmonious and respectful work environment and prevent escalation of conflicts;
- Support personnel in achieving their career growth and development plans;
- Promote the work-life balance and well-being of all personnel;
- Support supervisors in team and performance management.

6. All personnel have been involved at all stages of this initiative, from the prioritization of the work plan to the implementation of each element by participating in working groups. Now there is a strong appetite from staff to see the outcomes of these working groups.

7. A better quality of work life goes along with a healthier workplace. This year, the weekly gym, Pilates, Zumba, and yoga classes have continued to be popular and we added a regular lunchtime walk.

8. A number of highly successful social events have also been organized. The SAC believes that these events provide an important opportunity for inter-Agency communication and the chance for colleagues to relax together. As well as the traditional (now alcohol-free) end-of-year events, we organized a highly popular ski-outing in January, international dinner series and give access to cultural events in Lyon.

FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

9. We warmly welcome the revised teleworking policy, introduced in January 2020, opening the right to telework to all staff, irrespective of their grade, and streamlining the process of teleworking request submission. In this time of crisis due to COVID-19, IARC Personnel have seized the opportunity to prove they can still be efficient, leading to strengthened trust between supervisors and supervisees.

STAFF CONCERNS

10. The current financial situation is of concern, with increased uncertainty and anxiety about job security, career opportunities and long-term career prospects for all personnel (Staff members and Early Career and Visiting Scientists). We understand that this is a difficult time but the solution cannot rest only in increased precariousness for newly recruited staff.

11. In addition to a degree of anxiety regarding the financial health of the Agency, there is, naturally, some worry about the impact of potential restructuring of the Sections or Groups linked to the yet-to-be completed Medium-Term Strategy.

12. These concerns have been exacerbated by the recent COVID-19 outbreak with apprehension about the potential financial impact especially for staff members whose positions are financed by grants.

CONCLUSION

13. We are happy to report that a positive and professional working relationship between the newly elected Staff Association and senior Management has been established over the last year thanks to the Director, the Director of Administration and Finance and the new Human Resources Officer. We are striving to work even more closely with them in the future, especially in these times of reorganization and budget constraints.

14. As the Chair of the Staff Association, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my extremely dedicated colleagues for their commitment and enthusiasm and once again, I thank the Director and the members of the Governing Council for giving us the opportunity to address the Council.