



Communiqué #2 December 19, 2007

Dear colleagues:

The Staff Committee is pleased to report on progress made on four major issues on which we have been working. (*Ctrl-click on each of them to see details*):

1. **Reclassifications**
2. **Review of the Staff Rules**
3. **Exercise facilities**
4. **Staffing changes**

UPDATE ON RECLASSIFICATIONS

Following-up on the Secretary General's undertaking given to the Staff Committee to deal expeditiously before the end of 2007 with the outstanding reclassification requests by approximately 63 staff members,¹ the Department of Human Resources (DHR) invited the Committee to participate in the reclassification exercise. The Staff Association President and Vice-President represented the Staff, while the DHR was represented by its Director, Ms. Rosa María Barreiro and Ms. Tony Gaxiola. The process was conducted in private and all information treated as strictly confidential.

Firstly, we are pleased that those posts which had been audited years ago and merely required either an adjustment to the Staff Member's record or the opening of the position to competition have been dealt with.

¹ See Communiqué #1 <http://staff.oas.org/english/communiques.htm> or in Spanish <http://staff.oas.org/spanish/comunicados.htm>

We are also satisfied that every effort was made to find a qualified auditor to review the posts and that while not all post reviews were done initially, that the remaining ones will be conducted in mid-January 2008. We reviewed the audits which have been conducted and found that they were conducted fairly with the same criteria applied to similar posts. Of the 40 posts reviewed, 24 were reclassified upwards. We are particularly pleased that no post was de-classified.

Further, we were concerned that in 4 cases it appeared that sufficient weight was not given to the level of responsibility and impact of the work to be done under those posts. We are pleased that the Department of Human Resources voluntarily conveyed our concern to the Auditor and that the Auditor re-examined the reviews, though the result was the same.

We also reviewed each of the initial written requests by Supervisors for the review of the 24 reclassified posts, in order to ensure that special duties allowances would be paid, in accordance with Staff Rule 103.7. Additionally, the Staff Representatives, taking into account the longstanding nature of the majority of the requests for post reviews and the resulting unfairness to the affected staff members, successfully negotiated an agreement with the Secretariat for Administration and Finance that, where appropriate, special duties allowance would be paid retroactively to staff members who are reclassified. We are assured that the same agreement will apply to any posts which are reclassified during the January 2008 audit.

This agreement in no way affects any staff member's right to any other claims for compensation for work done at a higher level prior to the audit, but the Staff Committee considers the agreement a fair solution to a difficult situation for both the Staff and the Administration.

Similarly, the Staff Representatives emphasized the provision in Staff Rule 102.3(g), which states that "A change in classification of a post shall become effective on the date that it is approved by the Secretary General" and underscored our expectation that this provision be respected.

We have been assured by the Secretariat for Administration and Finance that the Auditors' recommendations on the 24 posts will be approved by the Secretary General and that individual letters will be issued to the affected staff members prior to December 31st. Each of these letters should indicate the period for which the staff member will receive the retroactive payment of the special duties allowances, as appropriate. We have also been informed that letters will also be sent to the staff members whose posts were not reclassified and to their supervisors, with an invitation from the Department of Human Resources to participate in a career-building exercise.

The Staff Committee considers that the Department of Human Resources was completely transparent and flexible during this process, as well as sympathetic to the Staff's concerns and committed to working with us to resolve this longstanding and challenging situation in a harmonious way.

The Staff Representatives' involvement in this process was aimed at ensuring that the audits and special duties allowances awarded were objectively determined and that the Staff rights and benefits were respected.

If, after receiving the official notification of the result of the audit of his/her post, any Staff Member has a question or concern, he/she may contact the Staff President for assistance or clarification (gbristol@oas.org).

[Back](#)

REVIEW OF THE STAFF RULES

The review of the Staff Rules was held over a 2 month period and concluded on November 29th. The purpose of the exercise was to ensure that the Staff Rules reflected the various changes made over the years to the General Standards. Nonetheless, other improvements were made both for substantive reasons as well as for consistency and form. We are satisfied that the changes protect established Staff rights and benefits.

The meetings were chaired by Dr. William Berenson of the Department of Legal Affairs. The Staff was represented by the President, Vice-President and Ms. Linda Poole. The Department of Human Resources team, which represented the Secretariat for Administration and Finance (SAF), was led by Ms. Rosa María Barreiro, Director. We are pleased to report that the entire process was conducted in a spirit of camaraderie and mutual respect.

We look forward to the publication of the final version of the Staff Rules, which are currently awaiting the Secretary General's signature.

[Back](#)

EXERCISE FACILITIES

In response to requests from 3 groups of Staff members, the President has conducted negotiations with the Secretariat for Administration and Finance, in particular the Office of General Services and the Health Unit, regarding the need for exercise facilities for staff.

The space which has been made available to the Staff in the GSB, Loading Dock level, has now been carpeted and is open to use by all Staff. It is currently used by the Yoga group and the Zumba group. Mirrors are to be installed shortly by the Office of General Services. The contact person for Yoga is Mr. Miguel Escudero, mescudero@oas.org

Additionally, since a smooth floor surface is better suited to dancing, the Zumba group has been given permission to use the Cafeteria space in the Terrace Level also in the GSB, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. every Tuesday and Thursday. This location has been reserved for the Zumba group for these days and at this time. Requests by other persons to use it for the same periods will be considered on a case-by-case basis and those requests should be processed through the online Meeting Room reservation system sufficiently in advance for alternate arrangements to be made for the Zumba group. Mirrors will also be installed in the Cafeteria by the Office of General Services. The contact person for the Zumba group is Mrs. Luz Marina Alvarez, lalvarez@oas.org

Finally, the Staff Committee, with the help of other Staff members, is looking into the possibility of either having exercise equipment installed in the existing facility in the GSB, Loading Dock level, or securing discount rates for staff to join gyms which operate in Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia. There is an arrangement currently in force with Fitness First (1075 19th Street, NW, 202-659-1900) and the Bretton Woods Recreation Center in North Potomac (301-948-3357, Ex. 315, contact Shaun).

If the decision is taken to install exercise equipment in the GSB, alternate arrangements will be made for the Yoga class.

Any other Staff members or groups of Staff members who may be interested in using the exercise facility, are invited to contact the Staff President (gbristol@oas.org).

[Back](#)

STAFFING CHANGES

We are pleased to report that due to the successful intervention by the Staff Representatives, a positive outcome has been found for four of our fellow Staff members from the Inter-American Children's Institute (IIN). That Institute has been under new leadership since April 2007 and at the mandate of the Member States has been going through a restructuring process. Two of the staff members from the Institute will be joining the Staff at Headquarters in Washington, D.C. , in January 2008 (instead of having their services terminated), one has been granted special leave until her retirement in February 2008, and

the post of the other staff member will, after a 2 year delay, finally be audited in January 2008.

We are also pleased to report that we negotiated with the Department of Human Resources to change their proposed termination of services of a Staff member to a transfer from one Secretariat to another. This solution was welcomed by the affected Staff Member.



The Staff Committee takes this opportunity to reiterate its commitment to all the Staff and to wish each and every one of you a merry Christmas and a bright and prosperous New Year!

