



**OAS STAFF ASSOCIATION**  
**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE**  
**STAFF COMMITTEE 2017-2018**

**July 2017 – June 2018**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Founded in 1928, the OAS Staff Association celebrated its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. The Staff Association serves to support, promote, and defend employee compensation and benefits, career development, working conditions, and the general welfare of staff members and their families. To date, the OAS General Secretariat has 493 staff members at headquarters and in OAS member States, all of whom are automatically members of the Staff Association, and 276 of these are contributing members.

The 2017-2018 Staff Committee included Steven Griner, President; Luiz Marcelo Azevedo, Vice President; Rebeca Omaña, Secretary, Pamela Izaguirre, Deputy Secretary; Adam Siegel, Treasurer; Magali Santos, Deputy Treasurer. Maria Elena Cruz and Luis Villalobos served as members and Rafael del Castillo and Clara Hoyos served as alternate members. Carla Sorani Hluchan served as the Principal Representative to the Retirement and Pension Committee and Beatriz Ferro-Santos, as Alternate Representative to the Retirement and Pension Committee. The Committee also appointed 22 staff to serve as members and alternates on ten advisory committees to address issues related to insurance matters, disciplinary measures, performance evaluation and parking, among others.

Leslie Alvarez is the Staff Administrator and Monserrat Magaña Ocaña is the intern. Both support the work of the Staff Committee, the Joint Committees, the Nominating and Teller Committees. In other words, Leslie and Monserrat supported us in everything we did!

**II. BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE 2017-2018 TERM**

The 2017-2018 Staff Committee began its work on August 2, 2017, and met regularly once a week, on Wednesdays. The Committee held 34 formal and 5 informal meetings. (In order to constitute a formal meeting, at least five of the nine titular members must be present or participate via telephone.) The Staff Committee also consulted with one and other by email to approve our bulletins (Staff News) and other written notifications and address other urgent business.

The full Staff Committee met with the Secretary General on two occasions (August 28, 2017 and January 10, 2018) and the Assistant Secretary General on October 17, 2017. Members also maintained close contact and met, often more than once, with the Chief of Staff, Secretary of Administration and Finances, the Inspector General, the advisor in charge of the Department of Human Resources, the Ombudsperson and subsequently with the interim Ombudsperson and the members of the Administrative Tribunal. The members also met with several missions, including the Permanent Representatives or Alternates of Antigua and Barbuda, Brazil, Canada, and the United States as well as the Permanent Representative of Paraguay to the OAS, Ambassador Elisa Ruiz Diaz Bareiro, who chaired the Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Affairs.

Through its 56 Staff News, three (3) FYI information bulletins and an informational session, the Staff Committee provided detailed information and elicited input on a wide array of issues, which are detailed in the body of this report. The Staff Committee made a concerted effort to disseminate the activities of the OAS General Secretariat through its Facebook page and Twitter account. During the last 12 months, the number of followers of the Staff Association twitter account increased from 82 to 413 and the number of followers of Facebook page increased from 200 to 454. The Staff Committee also opened an Instagram account at the beginning of its term and has 67 followers.

Two important priorities of the 2017-2018 Staff Committee included the strengthening of the Office of the Ombudsperson and a selection of a permanent director of Human Resources. As detailed in this report, the Staff Committee provided its observations to the Secretary General and his Chief of Staff regarding these issues and worked constructively with the administration to address these concerns. Other issues that the Staff Committee followed included the efforts of the Department of Human Resources in addressing the backlog of pending regulatory competitions and reclassifications, the situation of the Administrative Tribunal and the discussion of the Committee for Administrative and Budgetary Affairs (CAAP) regarding both the budget and the reform of the quota system.

Committee members also offered support to many individual staff members. The members provided consultations regarding workplace harassment allegations and requests for post audits and reclassifications and offered advice regarding the institutional mechanisms available to address specific situations.

Unfortunately, the 2017-2018 period was marred by a number of natural disasters and humanitarian crisis in OAS Member countries. In response, the OAS Staff Committee organized five separate fundraising drives to assist victims in Antigua and Barbuda, Mexico, Dominica, Venezuela and Guatemala. The campaigns raised a total of \$13,156.50 as well as in-kind contributions for both Dominica and Venezuela, demonstrating the generosity of OAS staff,

consultants and interns and their commitment to help the peoples of the Americas in their time of need. The Staff Committee would like to extend its gratitude to the OAS Federal Credit Union for its contributions totaling \$4,000 and to the Federal Credit Union of the Inter-American Development Bank for its matching funds of \$1,535.61 for the campaign for #FuerzaMexico.

The 2017-2018 Committee hosted several social events, culminating with the Spring Barbecue and the staff portrait to commemorate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Staff Association. As is customary, the Committee also organized the Annual Holiday Bazaar, the End-of-Year Holiday Toast and the Children's Christmas Party. Committee members supported, attended and promoted other social activities of the OAS General Secretariat, including those of the OAS Soccer tournament, the Art Group and activities of the Art Museum of the Americas, the Columbus Memorial Library, the Inter-American Commission of Women and the Health Unit.

The members of the 2017-2018 Staff Committee would like to thank those colleagues who volunteered to help with the social events as well as those who have served on the advisory committees. Without your help, nothing would be possible.

### **III. PRIORITY ISSUES, RELATED ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS**

Among the principal activities carried out and results achieved in priority areas, the following are highlighted:

#### **1. Improper Access to Personal Information and the Secretariat-wide audit**

The members of the Staff Committee met with the Inspector General, the Ombudsperson and the Chief of Staff regarding the improper access to private and confidential information, which was revealed to staff through Personnel Circular No. 27/17 on June 30, 2017. Given the lack of precise information regarding the type of information accessed and the actions taken by the administration, the Staff Committee offered four recommendations on September 8, 2017 through Staff News #6. These recommendations included 1) remedial actions such as credit monitoring or credit protection; 2) an investigation to be conducted by a third party; 3) a thorough review of information security protocols and procedures of the General Secretariat; and 4) an informative session for staff regarding this issue. The administration followed through on two of the recommendations, conducting a Secretariat-wide audit of safeguarding personal and confidential information through the office of the Inspector General and participating in the informational session organized by the Staff Committee on October 20, 2017.

On February 6, 2018, the Inspector General, Hugo Ascencio informed the Committee that the execution of the audit would be based on the Generally Accepted Privacy Principles (GAPP) established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountant (AICPA) and Canadian

Institute of Chartered Accountants (CICA). He noted that all of the Secretariats responded to the questionnaires, which covered the type of information collected and the manner in which it was stored. In the first instance, the audit will include the Department of Information and Technology Services (DOITS), the Department of Legal Services, the Department of Financial Services, the Department of Human Resources, the Department of Procurement Services and the Retirement and Pension Fund.

While the Inspector General anticipated that the audit would be concluded by the end of March, as of the writing of this report, the Staff Committee has yet to receive a copy. It is worth mentioning that it is standard practice to only include the summary of the audits in the annual report of the Inspector General, but during the informative session, Chief of Staff Gonzalo Koncke promised that the OAS Staff Committee would receive the report and recommendations in their entirety.

## **2. Position of the Director of the Department of Human Resources**

In keeping with the recommendations of Judgement 165 of the Administrative Tribunal, the previous Staff Committee provided a list of 10 recruitment companies to the Secretary General. The Secretary General subsequently requested that the 2017-2018 Staff Committee recommend a company from that list to provide the services required to identify a new Director of the Department of Human Resources. The Committee selected five companies to be interviewed and evaluated the companies using the five criteria: 1) relevant experience in recruiting for an international organization in the field of human resources; 2) presence of these companies in the OAS member States; 3) price schedule; 4) time needed to select the candidate; and 5) other intangibles. The Staff Committee recommended DHR International. The Secretary General accepted this recommendation and contracted the company, which collected applications for the position and would later hire this firm to recruit for the position of Ombudsperson as well.

DHR, International received 28 applications for the Director of Human Resources position. On February 23, 2018, the Vice-President of the Staff Committee, Luiz Marcelo Azevedo, participated in the interviews of the five candidates recommended by DHR International. Also participating in the interviews were Charles Grover, the Secretary of Administration and Finance and Peter Metzger, Vice Chairman of DHR, International.

## **3. Calendar of competitions and reclassifications**

The 2017-2018 Staff Committee closely followed the calendar of competitions and reclassifications. Regulatory competitions include those competitions in accordance with the following articles of the General Standards, Staff Rules and Resolutions of the General Assembly:

- Article 20 (e) of the General Standards: Staff members with Series A contracts financed by the Regular Fund;
- Staff Rule 103.7 (e): Staff members receiving subsidies for special functions;
- Article 23 of the General Standards: executive staff posts; and
- AG / Res. 1 (L-E / 15): Director of the Department of Information and Technology Services.

The 2016 - 2017 Work Plan included 58 processes, of which two were canceled. As of May 31, 2018, 39 processes have been completed; 14 are in one or another of the stages of recruitment and selection process; two were cancelled; and three have yet to be published.

Likewise, competitions for vacant posts include competitive processes for positions financed by the Regular Fund and by Specific Funds. Out of a total of 68 competitions for vacant posts, 28 have been completed, 22 are in one or another of the stages of competitive recruitment and selection, and seven were canceled.

In 2017, it was not possible to complete all the processes included in the Work Plan of the Department of Human Resources, and thus, the Permanent Council approved an extension of the term included in the transitional provision provided in Article 20 (e) until December 31, 2018.

The Staff Committee recognizes the work completed by the Department of Human Resources and that of the Advisory Committee on Selection and Promotions in completing 67 competitive processes. As a member of the latter committee, the President of the Staff Committee participated in 15 interview panels for both regulatory competitions and those for vacant posts. As previously mentioned, the Vice-President participated in the interview panels for the Director of Human Resources and the Ombudsperson.

#### **4. The Office of the Ombudsperson**

The purpose of the Office of the Ombudsperson is to address the concerns of the staff and offer recommendations to the administration in the most impartial, neutral and independent manner possible, according to the Code of Ethics of the International Ombudsman Association. The Ombudsperson must possess special expertise in mediation and conflict resolution and be able to earn the trust of the staff. It was for this reason that the Staff Committee expressed its objections to the appointment of an interim Ombudsperson through its Staff News #29 on February 5, 2018. In a meeting on January 16 on this issue, the Secretary General did indicate his intention to initiate the competition for Ombudsperson as soon as possible and informed the Committee members that he contemplated a role for the Staff Association in the selection process, as well as in the preparation of the terms of reference for the post.

As previously mentioned, the Secretary General contracted DHR International to assist in the recruitment of qualified candidates for this position. It received 22 applications, of which five



candidates were interviewed. The Vice President of the Staff Committee participated in the interview panel, along with the Chief of Staff, Gonzalo Koncke and the Advisor in Charge of the Department of Human Resources, Jose Luis Ramirez.

## **5. The Administrative Tribunal**

The Staff Committee met on several occasions with the Administrative Tribunal (August 21, 2017 via videoconference, October 10, 2017 and May 4, 2018) about the importance of having a fully operational final guarantor of dispute resolution for all OAS Staff. The Staff Committee issued Staff News #12 and #50, which detailed its observations.

On May 4, Judge Michel Bastarache (President) noted that adequate funding had been provided to the Administrative Tribunal for 2018 on the basis of a budget originally projected to cover the proceedings of one (1) case and basic operating expenses. Most of the expenses related to the Administrative Tribunal involve translation of documents presented by the parties in a case, and the judges have requested to the OAS General Secretariat to present, as far as possible, the translation of its own documents in accordance with the practice of other administrative tribunals.

Judge Bastarache noted that a more predictable disbursement of funds may be required due to extraordinary expenses this year related to the installation of a new database to facilitate access to the jurisprudence of the Tribunal, the digital and printed publication of the new Rules of Procedure, the implementation of an electronic litigation system, and other one-time activities.

The OAS Staff Committee noted its concern about the high costs related to taking a case before the Administrative Tribunal. To date, the OAS Staff Association covers the cost of one-hour an initial legal consultation, but from that point on, the staff member assumes the costs of legal representation and those expenses may or may not be reimbursed depending on the decision rendered.

In November 2018, the Administrative Tribunal will celebrate its 45th anniversary and plans to hold a Town Hall Meeting with OAS Staff. The judges intend to invite the Inspector General and the Ombudsperson to discuss the mandate of each office and the procedures to follow to access their services.

## **6. Debate on the 2018 Budget**

The Staff Committee closely followed the debates in the CAAP to approve the 2018 budget, meeting individually with the Chair of that Committee, Ambassador Elisa Ruiz Diaz Bareiro and representatives from other missions. In a meeting with the Secretary of Administration and Finance, Mr. Grover noted that a realistic budget for normal operations of the OAS is estimated

at \$110 million, although the budget approved amounted to only \$80 million. The shortfall meant that deferred maintenance totaling some \$35 million would be delayed and investment in human resources would be limited. Concerning our IT infrastructure, he mentioned the importance of updating the Oracle server and database, which are so out of date that they are no longer supported by the same company, Oracle. He also highlighted the importance of the improvement of procedures using the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and providing opportunities for training for staff.

## **7. Discussion on the Reform of the Quota System in the Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Matters**

On April 30, 2018, the Staff Committee sent an open letter to the representatives of the Committee for Administrative and Budgetary Affairs (CAAP) to offer its observation regarding the reform of the quota system and its short- and long-term impact on the operating budget of the OAS. The observations included:

1. The “concept budget” of \$115,463 million prepared is the only scenario that reflects the true needs of the General Secretariat to comply with both existing and new mandates approved by the General Assembly.
2. The significant funding increases to five OAS organs without providing for increased resources is cause for concern.<sup>[2]</sup> (The OAS Staff Association celebrates the increase of the budget for these organs of the OAS, which address vital needs in the Member States.).
3. Any reform to the quota system must take into account cost of living and statutory adjustments to be compliant with AG/RES.1319 (XXV-O/95), which implemented a policy of parity with United Nations salaries and UN job classification standards. The General Secretariat has had to defend seven class action lawsuits – Judgments 37, 64, 66, 90, 91, 124 and 126 – three of which involved paying out millions of dollars to staff for breach of contract when parity was violated in 1978.<sup>[3]</sup>
4. If the quota system is not reformed, resources will be reduced by US \$16.2 million, which could result in a 20% decrease of funds for staffing and severely impact the effectiveness of the OAS.

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<sup>[2]</sup> AG/RES. 2912 (XLVII-O/17), FINANCING OF THE 2018 PROGRAM-BUDGET OF THE ORGANIZATION, Points 3a, 3b and 3c. ) The five organs include the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the Inter-American Commission of Women, the Inter-American Children’s Institute and the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development.

<sup>[3]</sup> A Brief History of Parity with the UN at the OAS. <http://www.staff.oas.org/documents/News%2015-16/FYI%205.htm>

## **8. Recommendations to the Secretary General on concrete measures to be taken as a result of the Staff Survey**

The members of the 2017-2018 Staff Committee developed an updated document that complements the existing “Analysis of Recommendations presented by the GS-OAS Officials” and offered a series of recommendations to the Secretary General on concrete measures to be taken into consideration in the categories of human resources and professional development.

The recommendations were prepared based on the analysis conducted and presented by the 2016-2017 Staff Committee to the Secretary General on January 23, 2017, which provided the responses of the staff to the survey published on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

The President of the Staff Committee sent a letter on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018 to the Secretary General presenting four recommendations, including 1) an Secretariat-wide audit of all posts; 2) a plan for professional development for OAS Staff; 3) constituting the Ethics Committee and 4) a plan providing a career path to those persons with CPRs.

## **9. Request to implement policies regarding gender identity at OAS Headquarters**

On August 28, 2017, the Committee gave the Secretary General a letter from the OAS LGBTQI group, requesting that the General Secretariat consider a policy that permits transgender persons who visit the OAS to receive security passes with the name by which they choose to identify. The Staff Committee also indicated that it was available to work with the General Secretariat to revisit existing policies and propose improvements in its implementation.

## **10. Security Protocols at OAS Headquarters**

The members of the Staff Committee met with Steven Bernal, Chief of Security, on January 3, 2018 regarding the OAS security program and services that will be offered to staff in 2018.

The Chief of Security expressed the interest in working with the Staff Association in responding to concerns or ideas that improve safety and security at HQ facilities. He described to the Committee the procedures and systems that are presently in place to assist in maintaining a safe and secure environment for staff, tenants, and visitors to the OAS and requested assistance in disseminating information about the security policies and plans, which was done on February 21, 2018 through Staff News #33.

The security unit under the direction of the General Services Department continues to seek improvements to services and to respond to some areas of interest to our staff will develop training in the following topics:



- Travel security for HQ and International staff
- Personal security
- Emergency building evacuations

In assistance with other areas, the Chief of Security described an improved and approved process that provides members of the LGBTI community participating in meetings at the OAS HQ facilities the ability to use a preferred name. He also reminded the Committee of the existing security access control procedures, which are outlined in Memorandum #126 and can be accessed at the following link: <http://bit.ly/2GtbGVI>.

### **11. Leadership Training for Women in International Development**

In conjunction with the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), the Staff Committee covered the registration fees for two women to attend the “Forum to Advance Women’s Leadership in the International Development Sector,” held on June 6, 2018 in Washington, D.C. This one-day forum was for both experienced and emerging leaders in international development who want to deepen their leadership skills and build a culture of inclusivity in their organizations. After receiving ten applications, the Committee members selected Melanie Blackwell of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and Mariana Herrera from the Department of Planning and Evaluation to attend this event.

### **12. Campaigns to raise funds for victims of natural disasters and humanitarian crisis**

In response to natural disasters and a humanitarian crisis in OAS member countries, the OAS Staff Committee organized five separate campaigns to raise money and essential goods for the victims. The outpouring of assistance provided by OAS staff, consultants, and interns was overwhelming and demonstrated the generosity of the people who work at the OAS and their commitment to alleviating human suffering.

The first campaign was organized on September 14<sup>th</sup> in response to Hurricane Irma that destroyed much of the country’s infrastructure and displaced hundreds of residents, particularly in the island of Barbuda. The OAS Federal Credit Union contributed to the fund and on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017, the President of the Staff Committee presented the Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda, Ambassador Ronald Sanders a check for \$2,135.37. Contributions continued to be deposited in the account and on May 17<sup>th</sup>, the President of the Staff Committee sent to the Permanent Mission another check for \$380.21.

Earthquakes shook Oaxaca and Chiapas on September 7 and twelve days later another earthquake caused hundreds of deaths and property damage in the states of Mexico, Morelos, Guerrero, Puebla and Mexico City. The campaign launched by the OAS Staff Committee to

support the fund #FuerzaMexico was supported by a generous contribution of the OAS Federal Credit Union and were channeled to the Credit Union of the Inter-American Development Bank, which provided matching funds. The total contributions for this campaign came to \$1,535.61.

On September 18, the people of the Commonwealth of Dominica suffered tremendous losses as a result of Hurricane Maria and the Staff Committee opened an account to receive financial contributions, and again the OAS Federal Credit Union contributed, and also organized a donation drive of essential items, including baby and adult diapers. The Staff Committee used the funds collected (\$1,772.33) to purchase additional items, all of which were forwarded through the Embassy and Permanent Mission of Dominica for their delivery to the island. After sending the goods, additional contributions of 1,004.94 were deposited in the account and the Staff Committee is waiting instructions on how these funds can be best put to use.

In response to the growing humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018, the OAS Staff Committee organized a donation drive, including both financial contributions and essential items. The goods collected were delivered to Venezuela through the nongovernmental organization, Vision Democrática. On June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018, the Staff Committee President received an email confirming the delivery to nongovernmental organizations in various parts of Venezuela. The cash contributions of this drive came to \$2466.37, which were used to purchase additional items and cover the shipping of the goods collected.

On June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018, the Staff Committee opened an account for disaster relief for the victims of the eruption of the Volcano Fuego and contributions to this fund are still being made as of the writing of this report.

The OAS Staff Committee is also pleased to report that contributions collected for Hurricane Earl in Belize by the 2016-2017 Staff Committee, raised a total of \$766.06 which were channeled through the Permanent Mission of Belize and subsequently to the Belizean Red Cross. Part of these funds were used to conduct a first-responders course in Belize. The Staff Committee would like to thank the OAS Representative in Belize, Starrett Greene for helping coordinate the transfer of these funds and their use in this very important activity.

#### IV. SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

The Staff Committee organized, promoted and/or supported social activities, including the following:

**Coordination of Portuguese language classes.** The Staff Committee coordinated with the *Instituto de Língua e Cultura Brasileira* (ILC Brasil), a Brazilian Portuguese language institute to offer online Portuguese courses to OAS staff, consultants, interns, and members of the Permanent Missions. For those who already speak Portuguese, ILC Brazil offered a six-

week prep course to improve skills and prepare for the official Celpe-Bras proficiency exam (the Brazilian Portuguese equivalent of the Toefl or Dele).

**Support for the OAS Soccer Tournament.** The OAS Soccer tournament games were played in August to November for the Fall 2017 and April to July in the Spring 2018. In the Fall, 10 teams participated and in the Spring, there were 8 teams. The OAS Staff Committee provided a financial contribution of \$300 for the organization of the tournament and also publicized it through its Staff News, Facebook and Twitter.

**Annual OAS Holiday Bazaar.** The OAS Holiday Bazaar was held December 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017 in the Terrace Level of the OAS. A total of 11 vendors participated, offering handmade jewelry, clothing, art and Christmas ornaments as well as artisan chocolates. Fees charged to the vendors for space in the Bazaar brought in \$1,275 for the OAS Staff Association.

**Children's Christmas Party.** The Children's Christmas Party was held in the Hall of the Americas on December 10, 2018 and 80 children registered to attend and receive a special gift from Santa Claus and to jump in the moon bounce and slide down its slide. A special thanks to Luigi Bianchini, to general services and all the other volunteers who helped set up, serve pizza and clean up afterwards.

**Holiday Toast.** The Holiday Toast was held in the Cafeteria at the Terrace Level of the OAS GSB on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017 with good wishes for the coming year. OAS Staff, consultants, interns and members of the Permanent Missions were in attendance.

**90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration.** The Staff Committee commemorated the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Association at the Annual Spring Barbecue held on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Staff members, consultants and interns were invited to take a staff portrait with the Secretary General and the Assistant Secretary General in front of the OAS Main Building. The Staff Committee also invited members of the Association of Retirees of the Organization of American States (AROAS) to attend and many did.

In anticipation of the Spring Barbecue, the Staff Committee held a design contest for a logo to commemorate this important milestone. The winner, Laureano Menendez, who is the son of Roberto Menéndez, Chief of the MAPP OEA in Colombia, was given a \$50 credit at the OAS Gift Shop and his logo was used on a coffee mug, which was given as a gift to all contributing members of the Association.

To celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Staff Committee also held drawings for two VIP tickets to the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Best of D.C. Celebration at the OAS Museum in April, which were won by Maria Teresa Mellenkamp. The Staff Committee wishes to thank Jane Thery for donating the

tickets. In May, the Staff Committee held drawing for two pairs of tickets for “In the Time of Butterflies” donated by Gala Theatre, which were won by Jennifer Molina and Stella Villagran.

Lastly, the Staff Committee organized a drive to post old and new pictures of OAS Staff to the Staff Association Facebook page. The 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary photo album has 312 pictures of OAS Staff, past and present, at work at headquarters and in the OAS member countries.

## **V. ACTIVITIES OF THE JOINT COMMITTEES**

### **1. Joint Advisory Committee on Employee Parking**

The Parking Committee met 7 times from August 2017 – June 2018. During this time, the Committee reviewed several cases and responded according to the rules. There were negotiations between the committee and the staff members in question. The Committee always tried to consider the best interest of the staff while stressing the point that parking at the OAS is not a right, but a privilege. The Committee had discussions on a possible rate increase for parking, an increase in bike's spaces, and a decrease in Colonial parking, but no definite decisions were taken. .

The Committee had several discussions regarding the inclusion of parking privileges to the security guards and cleaning staff and a recommendation has been officially submitted to the Secretary for Administration and Finance, although it has yet to be approved. The Committee also was gathering quotes on some potential costly repairs on the entrance ramp in the GSB building.

The most recent financial report from December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017 showed receipts of \$566,801 and expenses of \$565,404, which include personnel, International Building Services, metrochecks and maintenance and other expenses. The fund balance was \$237,491.

### **2. Joint Committee of the Medical Benefits Trust Fund**

For the year ended December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017 the Medical Benefits Trust Fund (MBTF) had a portfolio return of 16.3% versus the benchmark of 14.6%. The ending balance for the period was approximately \$55.5 million. The portfolio continues to maintain its stability due to its diversification of investments. For the year ended 2017 the MBTF had a \$432,000 operational deficit of income over expenses. Total contributions decreased from \$13.3 million in 2016 to \$12.6 million in 2017 and this was partly the effect to staff reductions. The Secretariat, to offset some of this decrease did make a \$150,000 ex-gratia contribution.

The yearly financial audit performed by the new auditors BDO provided a clean opinion on the financial statements of the MBTF as of December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

During this period CONDUENT our investment/financial advisor was asked to run scenarios to diversify our portfolio with a tilt towards an increase in our equity allocation. The new portfolio allocation eliminated our investment in alternatives which was PIMCO ALL Asset. Board members agreed to phase in the new portfolio allocations over time as follows:

Asset Class

US Equities	– Vanguard Total Stock Market	55%
Non US Equities	– American Funds Euro Pacific Growth	20%
US Investment Grade Bonds	– Pimco Total Return	22%
Cash		<u>3%</u>
		100%

**3. Joint Committee on Insurance Matters**

The representatives of the Staff Association to the Joint Committee on Insurance Matters (JCIM) continued to represent the interests of staff members participating in the OAS Health Insurance Plan and worked with the other members of the JCIM to both monitor the Plan’s performance and determine, in collaboration with its expert advisors, Plan changes that would deliver long-term benefits for members. Proposals to ensure the Plan’s financial health and encourage beneficial, informed choices by Plan members were developed and submitted to the Secretary General for his consideration. At the time this report was prepared, the JCIM has yet to receive a response. Of concern to the JCIM was that in 2017, for the first time since its establishment in 2000, the Medical Fund had experienced an operating deficit of over US\$ 400,000. The representatives of the Staff Association to the JCIM flagged this development as an issue requiring urgent attention, and noted that the proposals submitted for the consideration of the Secretary General, if approved, could assist in mitigating this trend.

**4. Joint Advisory Committee on Reconsideration**

From September to November, 2017, Lilly Ching served as the representative of the Staff Association on the Joint Advisory Committee on Reconsideration, which analyzed a request submitted by a staff member on June 30, 2017. The request was communicated to two members of the Committee on July 21, 2017, who then proceeded to identify an OAS Staff Member who could serve as third member and chair.

On August 11, 2017 the Committee communicated to the advisor in charge of the Department of Human Resources of its composition: Michael Bejos (Chair,) Hilary Anderson (member,) and Lilly Ching as well as the date the Committee would begin its review.

On September 5, 2017, the members began the review of the case. From September to November, they met regularly and conducted extensive interviews with the parties involved in the case. On November 3, 2017 the Committee rendered its report to the Secretary General. (The report was adopted unanimously)



and was sent to the advisor in charge of the Department of Human Resources.) Ms. Ching has not been informed about the proceedings that followed.

On August 25, 2017, the advisor in charge of the Department of Human Resources informed two members of the Joint Advisory Committee on Reconsideration that another request had submitted by a staff member on August 4, 2017. Both Ms. Ching and the principal member of the Committee on behalf of the Secretary General declined to participate and notified the Department of Human Resources that the alternate representative of the Staff Association, María Claudia Camacho, would assume the review this particular case. On September 20, 2017, the Committee notified the Department of Human Resources that Patricia Quiroz would serve as the chair and Mónica Villegas as a member. On September 26, the advisor in charge of the Department of Human Resources informed the Committee that the staff member asked that the request to be cancelled.

#### **5. Joint Disciplinary Committee**

The Staff Association's representation on the Joint Disciplinary Committee reported that during the period August 26, 2017 to June 22, 2018, there were no cases or issues presented.

#### **6. Staff Incentives Award Committee**

The Staff Incentives Award Committee was consulted on the Guidelines for the Outstanding Performance Award and correspondence was sent from the Department of Human Resources on June 9, 2017, requesting that Directors and Secretaries submit nominations for the Staff Awards. The Staff Incentives Award Committee meeting met on September 13, 2017, to review the nominations for the Outstanding Performance Award.

A total of 44 nominations for outstanding performance were received and considered. Eleven staff members were selected to be awarded the Recognition for Outstanding Performance at the Secretariat level, and 33 staff members were selected to receive the Recognition for Outstanding Performance at the Department level. The date of the Awards Ceremony is still to be finalized and will be announced by the Department of Human Resources.

#### **7. Leo S. Rowe Memorial Award Committee**

The representatives of the Staff Association on the 2017-2018 Leo S. Rowe Memorial Award Committee report that to date no meetings of the Committee have been held, given that the call for nominations are still to be published by the Department of Human Resources.

#### **8. Performance Evaluation Review Committee**

On February 2, 2018, the PERC held a meeting in which it was determined that 28 staff members had not completed the midterm evaluation. Of the said number, 18 members had requested an

extension from the PERC and 10 had not request an extension from the PERC. Following the meeting, it was decided to grant an extension period from February 5 to February 10, 2018.

## **9. Advisory Committee**

The members of the advisory committee met on January 23, 2018, with the President of the Staff Committee to discuss issues related to the reform of the quota system, budget negotiation and other priorities of staff.

## **10. 401M Committee**

The Plan Administration Committee (PAC) met to discuss several issues involving the 401(m) plan. Continuing with the discussion of the previous meeting in February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017, the committee evaluated different options for total outsourcing of the administration and operation of the General Secretariat's section 401(m) Retirement Savings Plan, including, but not limited to, recordkeeping, investment advisory, client and trustee/custodial services. The Committee decided to approach other IGOs (mainly World Bank and IADB) and to start an RFP for the replacement. OAS DHR will contact them and based on their response an RFP/RFI could be started as soon as possible. The PAC also approved payment for legal advice provided to the plan. For future legal advice to the plan it was decided to appoint Sarah Davidson from DLS. Finally, the PAC discussed the possibility of appointing a new Chairperson of the PAC, considering the actual CP is acting in his character of advisor of the Retirement and Pension Fund and his role in the PAC could be time consuming during this period. It was decided that for the moment no changes will take place.

## **VI. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF INTEREST TO THE STAFF**

### **1. Leo Rowe Fund Loans**

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the Leo S. Rowe Pan American Fund, which provides low-interest educational loans for OAS staff members and their dependents to pursue studies, including professional courses, training and research. The Rowe Fund also helps citizens from Latin America and the Caribbean (F-1 or J-1 visa holders) finance a portion of their studies or research at U.S. universities through interest-free loans.

A former Director General of the Pan American Union, Dr. Rowe devoted the greater part of his life to fostering understanding and integration among the nations of the Americas, demonstrating special interest in the education of Latin American and Caribbean youth, whom he assisted during his lifetime and to whom he bequeathed most of his assets in his will. He was also known for recognizing the achievements of his colleagues, inspiring them, and improving their performance on behalf of the Organization, and ultimately, the Americas.

During the 2017-2018 term, the Staff Association guaranteed 27 education loans through the Leo S. Rowe Fund to contributing members of the Staff Association. These loans for \$184,291.6 contributed to the human development of OAS staff members and their families. The Staff Association acts as guarantor for loans to contributing members of the Association.

## **2. Terry Woods Award**

This recognition is awarded annually by the Staff Association to commemorate the work of Mr. Terry Woods, to staff members or persons who have provided extraordinary services to staff members of the OAS – either through the promotion or protection of their rights, or contributing to their well-being or improvement in their working conditions. The Staff Committee sent Staff News #55 requesting nominations for this prestigious award.

## **VII. OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION**

### **1. Status of Membership in the Staff Association**

During the Committee's 2017-2018 term, 16 new contributing members of the Staff Association were added, bringing the total to 276 contributing members. As of June 2018, there were 493 staff members meaning that only 55.9% of the members pay for the activities and other benefits of the Staff Association. If you are not a contributing member, please consider being one.

## **VII. PENDING MATTERS**

The 2018-2019 Staff Committee should follow up on some important pending matters, including:

1. Review and follow-up on the implementation of the OIG report on the Secretariat-wide audit of safeguarding personal and confidential information.
2. Work with the new Ombudsperson to implement its annual workplan and incorporate this office in the Staff Rules of the Organization.
3. Work with the new Director of Human Resources to continue to make progress on competitions for vacant posts and to expedite the process for issuing staff contracts with specific funds.
4. Continue monitoring pending competitions and follow-up on completion by the end of 2019.
5. Continue to monitor the reform of the quota system and its ramifications of the 2018 budget and beyond.
6. Continue monitoring pending decisions regarding health benefits based on the recommendations made by the Joint Committee on Insurance Matter to the Secretary General.



7. Follow up on the "Plan of action to streamline and simplify human resources processes" that the SG should submit to the CAAP in preparation for the deliberations on the 2019 Program-Budget.