

OAS STAFF ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STAFF COMMITTEE 2016-2017

July 2016 – July 2017

I. INTRODUCTION

The Staff Committee 2016–2017 reports to the staff of the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States on the work accomplished and the results obtained during its term. This document contains details of the activities undertaken by the Staff Committee and the summary of actions taken by representatives of the Staff Committee on the Joint Committees.

The Staff Committee 2016-2017 was composed of Kim Osborne, President; Catherine Pognat, Vice President; Paulina Corominas, Secretary; Marya Hynes, Deputy Secretary; Blanca Ochoa, Treasurer; Maria Elena Cruz, Deputy Treasurer; Carla Sorani Hluchan, Principal Representative to the Retirement and Pension Committee; Magali Santos and Rebeca Omaña as members; Beatriz Ferro-Santos, as Alternate Representative to the Retirement and Pension Committee, and Belisario Contreras and Percy Hurtado, as alternate.

On January 2017, the composition of the Committee changed when Kim Osborne stepped down as President of the Staff Association, as a result of her appointment as Executive Secretary for Integral Development; On that occasion, the Committee appointed Catherine Pognat as President, Blanca Ochoa as Vice President; Maria Elena Cruz as Treasurer, Magali Santos as Deputy Treasurer and Belisario Contreras from alternate to member of the Committee.

The work of the Staff Committee, the Joint Committees, the Nominating Committee, and the Teller Committee was also supported by Ms. Leslie Alvarez.

II. BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE 2016-2017 TERM

The Staff Committee 2016-2017 began its work on July 12, 2016, and met regularly on Wednesdays. The Committee held 24 formal and 4 informal meetings. Attendance of elected members of the Staff Committee at the formal meetings varied from 58% to 100%. In addition, there were e-mail consultations when required by urgent business.

The work of the Staff Committee centered on representing staff members' interests, accompanying them in various processes such as position audits, harassment investigations, disciplinary proceedings, reconsideration requests, competitive selection processes.

In addition, the Staff Committee ensured that other decisions and measures adopted by the General Secretariat with respect to the staff complied with existing regulations and were applied transparently and consistently. The Committee disseminated information of interest to the staff to promote understanding of their rights and obligations.

III. RESULTS AND RELATED ACTIVITIES

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

1. New Policy on the Alternative Work Arrangements Policy

Following up on the work started by the Staff Committee 2015-2016, the 2016-2017 Staff successfully advocated for and participated in the development of the Alternative Work Arrangement Policy which was approved by the Secretary General via Executive Order No. 16-08 in February of 2017.

The main arrangements agreed upon in this policy are Flexible working hours, compressed work schedule and situational telework. Access to these arrangements is not an automatic rights and must be negotiated with and agreed upon by each staff's supervisor.

2. Follow-up to the implementation of the Harassment Prevention Policy

The 2016-2017 Staff Committee urged all OAS personnel to attend the training provided by the Administration on the Policy and Conflict Resolution System for the Prevention and Elimination of All Forms of Workplace Harassment, which took place in September of 2016. The Harassment Prevention Policy applies to all Staff and non-Staff Personnel; i.e. all human resources of the General Secretariat pursuant to Article 17 (a) of the General Standards.

Furthermore, the Committee called on the Administration to include training as part of the orientation package to be given to all new OAS personnel. Along these lines, the Department of Human Resources informed the Committee that the Strategic Counsel has proposed to produce a video that would become part of the orientation package for persons hired by the Organization and for all current OAS staff, consultants and interns. The Committee also asked that all results-based contracts include a link to the Policy as well as a link to the OAS Code of Ethics.

3. Regularization of the contractual situation of staff members: competitions (expired short term contracts and reclassifications):

Throughout its term, the 2016-2017 Staff Committee followed up on the issue of the pending competitions and the delays incurred in the process.

The last update received by the Committee in March of the 2017 showed 58 competitions. Of these 36 were Series A contracts, 20 were reclassifications, 1 was due to Article 23 of the General Standards and 1 in application of a General Assembly Resolution.

Of the 58 processed listed by the Department of Human Resources, 15 had yet to be published, 35 were in process, 7 had been finalized and 1 was to be canceled.

Of the 7 completed competitions, 6 were reclassifications and 1 was in application of a General Assembly Competition.

Since March 31 however, more actions have been taken so the numbers of pending competitions will have decreased.

The Department of Human Resources indicated however that the objective was to finalize all competitive processes by the end of 2017.

4. Representation of the interests of staff members in relation to cases of workplace harassment, differential treatment, performance evaluations, competitions, terminations and post audits:

The Staff Committee provided advice, support and personal attention to staff members. It conducted individual consultations regarding, and accompanied and provided advice to staff members in meetings with the General Secretariat to address specific situations including workplace harassment and requests for audits and reclassification.

Additionally, the Committee designated staff members to participate in the various Joint Committees with the Administration. The results of the activities of these committees can be found in Item IV below.

5. Impact of UN GA Resolution A/C.5/70/L.14 (Review of United Nations common system) on OAS Staff.

Following the approval of UN GA Resolution A/C.5/70/L.14, the changes to OAS Staff compensation in the Professional category, became effective January 1, 2017.

The UN will now be discussing changes that will affect professionals in the General Services category.

6. Impact of 2016 reduction in personnel on Staff

As a result of the 2016 voluntary departure of 26 staff members and the ensuing need to redistribute functions among remaining staff, the 2016-2017 Staff Committee discussed the enhanced level of stress and low morale among OAS employees with the Secretary General. As a result, a survey

was developed and carried out to determine job functions of existing employees and gather input on morale and recommendations to improve working conditions at the General Secretariat.

A consultant was hired to analyze the results and the Committee has been working with the Office of the Secretary General to issue proposals based on staff input, designed to improve the working environment at the OAS.

7. Relations with the Department of Human Resources

The 2016-17 Staff Committee sought to improve relations and communications with the Department of Human Resources. To these end, it held several meetings with the Advisor in Charge of the Department of Human Resources to address the status of competitions and reclassifications; the need to modernize and simplify staff-related processes; the implementation of the Policy for the prevention and elimination of all forms of work harassment and; training needs for staff regarding the code of ethics of the OAS.

Regarding pending competitions, the Advisor indicated that delays are the product of various factors, some of which are beyond the control of the Department, such as: the selection by the areas of candidates to be interviewed; the programming of interviews and the consideration of cases in the Committee of Selection and Promotion. In spite of these delays, the Department of Human Resources deems all pending competitions ought to be completed by the end of 2017.

Regarding the modernization of processes, the Advisor indicated that in light of the concerns brought forth by the Committee, the Department plans to update its intranet page to facilitate and guarantee greater transparency in access to information on some processes. The department also hopes to automate the simplest processes such as the issuance of employment certificates.

On the policy for the prevention and elimination of all forms of workplace harassment and the need for training, the Strategic Counsel has proposed to produce a video, subject to availability of funds.

Both the Staff Committee and the Department of Human Resources agreed on the need to continue strengthening channels of communication for the benefit of the staff. It is hoped that periodic meetings between both parties will continue.

8. Competition for the Post of Director of the Department of Human Resources

In keeping with the recommendations of Judgement 165 of the Administrative Tribunal, the 2016-2017 Staff Committee insisted on the need to hire a new external firm to manage the competition process for the position of the Director of the Department of Human Resources.

To that end and at the request of the Secretary General, the Committee prepared a list of possible firms and presented it to the Secretary General.

9. Actions of the staff committee with the General Secretariat and dissemination of information among members of the staff association

The Committee used different means to communicate with Staff, particularly the Staff News, in order to disseminate information about specific situations that directly affect staff members. The Staff Committee published 59 “Staff News” this year.

The Committee published one bilingual “FYI” to inform staff about their rights and obligations this year.

The Committee also held one informative session during the year,–: on Friday, November 4th 2016 at Rubén Darío Room. The topics discussed included, among others, the joint Secretary General-Staff Association October 19th letter on the survey to determine staff job descriptions, the status of the Flexible work arrangements proposal, and the 2017 budget.

Also, a Town Hall Meeting was held with the participation of the Staff Committee (November 7, 2016) in the Hall of the Americas of the Main Building.

In addition, meetings were held with the Secretary General, the Secretary of Administration and Finance, and the Advisor of the Secretary General in charge of the Department of Human Resources, among others, on various topics.

10. Relations with Member States:

Throughout the year, the Staff Committee was present in decision-making fora such as the Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Matters (CAAP); the Permanent Council (CP); and the General Assembly (AG).

The Staff Committee also established one emergency relief effort campaigns during the year on August 2016, when the Government and People of Belize, suffered tremendous loss as a result of a Hurricane Earl. A donation of \$765.37 was made by the staff.

The Staff Committee wishes to send a heartfelt thank you to those who volunteered and contributed on this. These contributions serve as an important symbol of our solidarity with the people we serve in time of need.

11. Claudia Erazo’s Remembrance Service

It was with shock and deep sadness that the Staff Committee was informed of the passing of our dear friend, and colleague, Ms. Claudia Erazo, on October 6, 2016. Claudia had been serving the staff of the General Secretariat as a Secretary in the Department of Public Security. On June 1, 2011 she

transferred to the Department of Planning and Evaluation, where she worked until October 2016. Claudia was an exceptional professional, deeply committed to the OAS and to facilitating our efforts to serve the Secretariat and the Member States. The Staff Association held a memorial for all staff to come together and remember Claudia. The memorial was on Friday, October 14, 2016.

To show support to his family at this difficult time, the Staff Association opened an account at the OAS Credit Union. Donations provided were channeled through the Staff Association directly to her husband and family. A total of \$2005.00 was raised and donated to Daniel Erazo, on behalf of OAS Staff. The Staff Committee wishes to thank all those who contributed.

12. Recreational activities and activities of interest or benefit for the Staff

The Staff Committee organized, promoted and/or supported recreational activities as well as activities of interest to staff members. To date, it has contributed to the following activities held or sponsored during its term of office:

1. Coordination of language classes (Spanish and Portuguese) with discounts for contributing members through the Permanent Observer Mission of Spain and Instituto de Lingua e Cultura Brasileira (ILC).
2. Support for the Joint Football Tournament in the Fall 2016 and Spring 2017.
3. Organization of the Annual OAS Bazaar (December 2016).
4. Organization of the End-of-Year Children's Party (December 2016).
5. Organization of the New Year's toast for the staff (December 2016).
6. Annual Spring Barbecue (June 2017).
7. Promotion and dissemination of cultural and general-interest activities in Washington, DC.

IV. ACTIVITIES OF THE JOINT COMMITTEES

The Joint Committees continued their functions. The Staff Committee is grateful for the commitment and work of the staff representatives in the Joint Committees. Additionally, the Staff Committee progressed in following up on the labor of the working groups created to attend to specific matters of interest to staff. What follows are the issues that should be noted:

1. Joint Advisory Committee on Employee Parking

The Parking Committee has managed to meet 5 times so far this year (September 2016 – June 2017). It presided over several cases involving parking violations. While some of the cases have been resolved there are still a few pending cases to be heard and discussed. There still remains some difficulty with the open lines of communication with the staffer/consultant assigned to oversee the three parking lots and the committee members as there are some cases that the committee does not even know exists, and action(s) can sometimes be taken without the committee members involvement.

After three years of discussion, Memo 83 still has not been officially adopted. During a special meeting of the parking committee on June 21, 2017 a suggestion was made to send the draft version to the Legal Department for review “as is” for their approval and a query was made as to whether the memo could be granted a “working document” status so that changes can always be made to any specific section as things come up. Otherwise, the Joint Advisory Committee on Employee Parking must have a clear and realistic time for the memo to be revised and updated.

The Committee have yet to receive financial reports/statements of the parking fund for the year 2017. These should be provided by the parking staff without having to be requested by the committee at the end of every month or as soon as DFS can issue them. There are some decisions made without notifying the parking committee, like additional spaces allocated for bikes were made without any input or consultation with the committee members.

2. Joint Committee of the Medical Benefits Trust Fund

The Medical Benefit Trust Fund (MBTF) continues to provide a steady growth in its investment portfolio. As of March 31, 2017 the total net assets were \$49.8 million compared to \$44.5 million on March 31, 2016 which represents a \$5.3 million increase (12% increase).

The MBTF was issued an unqualified opinion by the external auditors BDO for 2016 and there were no material management comments. Once again a good job from our colleagues at DFAMS for having another clean audit.

The MBTF has decided to increase its equity allocation from 60% to 75% of the portfolio. The reasoning for this is given the positive cash flow of the Trust over the years that the funds will be better served in long term growth in the equity markets.

3. Joint Committee on Insurance Matters

The Staff Association to the JCHI continued to represent the interests of all staff members that participate in the OAS Health Insurance Plan.

During the period there were some changes to the representatives of the staff association on the committee:

- Fabian Victora, Principle Member resigned from the committee in March, 2017.
- Mr. Pernell Clarke was appointed by the Secretary General as the Chair of the Committee on May 5, 2017.
- Mr Juan Cruz Monticelli was nominated by the Staff Association to replace Fabian Victora on May 15, 2017.

During this period, the committee convened approximately 8 meetings to receive and analyze reports on the performance of the plan, receive the results of a claims audit, and receive reports on the performance on the international component of the plan.

It is also noteworthy that the committee made recommendations for adjustments to the plan for the 2017 financial year and questions and requests for clarifications were received from the Secretary General. None of the recommendations were implemented during the period under review.

The committee is currently in the process of preparing a new set of recommendations for the 2018 financial year. Adjustments to the plan will seek to minimize costs and maximize performance while making slight adjustments to the structure to address some identified shortcomings such as high out-of-network utilization of medical services and the utilization of specialist care among others.

4. Joint Advisory Committee on Reconsideration

On behalf of the Staff Association's representation on the Joint Advisory Committee on Reconsideration reported that during the period 2016-2017, there were no cases or issues presented.

5. Joint Disciplinary Committee

During the period June 2016 to June 2017, one case was referred to the Joint Disciplinary Committee. In its examination of this case, the Joint Disciplinary Committee met with both the accusing party and the accused (separately) and with a staff member who witnessed one of the interactions between both parties. The Committee also met privately several times to review the documents provided, the statements made by the parties during their meetings, and to draft a report for the Secretary General containing its findings and recommendations. The Joint

Disciplinary Committee presented its report directly to the Secretary General on October 28, 2016, who subsequently took action on the case.

6. Staff Incentives Award Committee

On September 12, 2016, Denise Goolsarran and Rosario Popovici were appointed to serve as representative and alternate representative respectively, by the Staff Association on the Staff Incentives Award Committee. There was email correspondence from the Department of Human Resources consulting with the Staff Incentives Award Committee (SIAC) on the content of correspondence to be sent to Directors and Secretaries to request the submission of nominations for the Award. Based on the consultations, it was agreed that correspondence would be sent keeping the format and content used in past years. In addition, the members of SIAC were informed of the proposed dates and activities for the Committee, as follows:

DATE	ACTIVITY/MEETINGS
June 14 th , 2017	DHR sends communication to Secretaries and Directors to open nominations
July 12 th , 2017	Deadline for submitting nominations
July 14 ^h , 2017 (room 404)	Meeting to review the nominations
July 19 th , 2017	The Chairman of the Committee will send the final recommendation to the Secretary General
July 26 th , 2017	The Secretary General approves or not the recommendations

To date, communication was issued by the Department of Human Resources to open nominations for the Award on June 16, 2017. The Staff Incentives Award Committee is expected to follow the proposed timetable for the completion of its activities for the 2016-2017 period.

7. Leo S. Rowe Memorial Award Committee

Following a proposed calendar prepared by the Department of Human Resources, in early June 2017, the 2017 Leo S Rowe Memorial Award Committee unanimously nominated Ms. Alison August-Treppel as Chair. The Committee also approved personnel circular No. 24/17 calling for nominations for the Leo S. Rowe Memorial Award, which was sent on June 15, 2017.

The staff representatives on the 2017 Leo S Rowe Memorial Award Committee (Margaret Palmer and Luiz Marcelo Azevedo) attended a meeting on July 13th 2017 to review the received nominations and select the candidate(s) to be recommended to the Secretary General.

8. 401M Committee

Technical and legal review of the Request for Proposals 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 expectation is to advertise the Request for Proposals by mid-June 2017 with a bid deadline for the end of July 2017.

New rules applicable to staff participation in the 401(m) Plan, issued by the Secretary General on May 31, 2017, through Executive Order No. 17-05, "Participation in the 401(m) Retirement Savings Plan". <http://www.oas.org/legal/spanish/gensec/EXOR1705.pdf> (E.O.

available in Spanish only). The new rules enact a more stringent set of criteria vis-à-vis staff eligibility to participate in the 401(m) Plan.

In February of this year, there was a meeting of the 401 (m) Management Committee in which contracts were evaluated with the Record Keeper and Investment Advisor. Also on that occasion a training was given to participants in the 401 (m) by the Record Keeper who came to Washington for that purpose.

V. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF INTEREST TO THE STAFF

1. Leo Rowe Fund Loans

During the 2016-2017 term, the Staff Association guaranteed 23 education loans through the Leo S. Rowe Fund to contributing members of the Staff Association. These loans for \$185,135.80 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 2016 Terry Woods Award is going to be presented during the General Secretariat's Staff Awards Ceremony, which will be held on September 26th, 2017.

VI. OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

1. Status of Membership in the Staff Association

During the Committee's 2016 – 2017 term, 10 new contributing members of the Staff Association were added, bringing the total to 265 contributing members, 26 fewer than at the end of the previous period, as a result of some Staff contributor Members who left the organization on July 2016, when they took the voluntary separation package. As of June 2017 there are 491 staff members in the General Secretariat who are de facto members of the Staff Association, but only 265 of the 491 are contributing members, which mean that the activities and benefits are paid for by 50% of the members.

VII. PENDING MATTERS

The 2017-2018 Staff Committee should follow up on some important pending matters, including:

1. Competition process: get an updated list of pending competitions and follow-up on completion by the end of 2017
2. Follow-up of the 2018 budget negotiation process
3. Competition process for the post of Director of the Department of Human Resources
4. Illicit investigations of staff: follow-up closely with the Administration to ensure that the matter is thoroughly investigated.
5. Recommendations to the Secretary General on concrete measures to be taken as a result of the Staff Survey
6. Continue strengthening relations with Administration and Department of Human Resources in particular.