

**OAS STAFF ASSOCIATION**  
**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE**  
**STAFF COMMITTEE 2014-2015**

**July 2014 – July 2015**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The Staff Committee 2014 – 2015 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 action taken by representatives of the Staff Committee on the Joint Committees.

The Staff Committee 2014-2015 was composed of Carla Sorani, President; Beatriz Ferro-Santos, Vice President; Juan Cruz Monticelli, Secretary; Teresa Bustamante, Treasurer; Jan Astaphan, Deputy Treasurer; Beverly Wharton-Lake, Principal Representative to the Retirement and Pension Committee, Lilly Ching, Patricia Quiroz, and Cecilia Martins as members; Luiz Marcelo Azevedo, as Alternate Representative to the Retirement and Pension Committee, and Sheyla Carvalho and Marya Hynes, as alternates. The work of the Staff Committee, the Joint Committees, the Nominating Committee, and the Teller Committee were also supported by Ms. Tamara Garicoche.

**II. BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE 2014-2015 TERM**

The Staff Committee 2014-2015 began its work on July 11, 2014, and met regularly on Wednesdays. It held 20 formal meetings and just as many informal ones. Attendance of elected members of the Staff Committee at the formal meetings varied from 20% to 90%. In addition, there were e-mail consultations when required by urgent business.

The Staff Committee's work was focused mainly on representing staff members' interests, accompanying them in various processes such as position audits, harassment investigations, disciplinary proceedings, reconsideration, and investigations, competitive selection, and separations. In addition, the Staff Committee fulfilled its functions by ensuring that decisions and measures adopted by the General Secretariat with respect to the staff comply with existing regulations and are applied transparently and consistently. The Committee also strengthened the dissemination of information of interest to the staff, to promote understanding of their rights and obligations.

**III. RESULTS AND RELATED ACTIVITIES**

Here are highlights of the results obtained and activities related to them:

- 1. CONTINUED REPRESENTATION OF STAFF INTERESTS IN MATTERS OF WORK HARASSMENT CASES, POSITION AUDITS, DISCIPLINE, COMPETITIONS, INVESTIGATIONS, MEDICAL EXAMS, AND SEPARATIONS.**

Activities accomplished:

1. Personalized attention and follow-up for more than 77 consultations and requests for assistance received on labor matters.
2. Accompaniment and advisory services for staff in meetings with the General Secretariat to deal with specific issues.
3. Representation of staff on various Joint Committees.
4. Holding of two meetings with Secretary General Insulza and Secretary General Almagro, the Assistant Secretary General, and the Chief of Staff of the Secretary General.
5. Support for access to loans and grants from the Leo S. Rowe Fund.
6. Participation in working meetings and consultations with representatives of the General Secretariat to deal with specific issues or raise specific concerns and/or recommendations.

## **2. HELPING MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION GET A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF BUDGETARY MATTERS, HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES AND PRACTICES, AND AMENDMENTS TO CHAPTER III OF THE GENERAL STANDARDS, AMONG OTHER TOPICS.**

Activities accomplished:

7. Preparation and publication of information documents on the different versions of the proposed changes in Chapter III of the General Standards.
8. Holding of an information meeting for the staff to present opinions, comments, and concerns about the changes approved in Chapter III of the General Standards
9. Preparation and presentation of various documents and requests for information from the General Secretariat on specific situations that directly affect the staff.
10. Continuation of the bilingual information service FYI to inform staff about their rights and obligations.
11. Publication of 64 *Staff News*

## **3. THE COMMITTEE HELPED THE MEMBER STATES TO UNDERSTAND THE RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF STAFF MEMBERS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CAAP.**

Activities accomplished:

12. Making courtesy visits to Permanent Missions to the OAS.
13. Presence of staff representatives in decision-making areas such as the Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Matters (CAAP), the Permanent Council (CP), and the General Assembly (AG).

## **4. MAINTAINING COORDINATION WITH STAFF ASSOCIATIONS OF OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Activities accomplished:

14. Consultations to and requests for advice from the FICSA Secretariat on various topics of interest to the staff.
15. Coordination with international organizations in the Washington area to identify new benefits and joint services.

## **5. ADOPTION AND PRESENTATION OF PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE THE REGULATIONS AND METHODOLOGY FOR INVESTIGATION OF CASES OF LABOR AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Activities accomplished:

16. Review, adoption, and presentation of a new proposal for amendment of the current regulations on sexual harassment.
17. Active participation of four members of the Staff Committee in the Working Group to amend the current regulations and investigation mechanisms on labor and sexual harassment.
18. Consultations with other international organizations on regulations governing labor and sexual harassment.

## **6. IMPROVED COMMUNICATION AND JOINT WORK WITH THE ADMINISTRATION**

Activities accomplished:

19. Holding of multiple meetings with the transition team.
20. Joint coordination of the forum for a participatory transition.
21. Holding of meetings with the Secretary General and his Chief of Staff.
22. Holding of the first town hall meeting.

## **7. MORE ACTIVITIES FOR RECREATION AND OF INTEREST OR BENEFIT FOR THE STAFF**

Activities accomplished:

23. Sponsorship of recreational and sports activities (5K Run/Walk and football).
24. Coordination of language classes with discounts for contributing members through the International Language Institute.
25. Providing of new services and benefits for contributing members.
26. Support for the Joint Football Tournament in Fall 2014 and Spring 2015.
27. Support for the OAS 5K Race – February 2015.
28. Organization of the Annual OAS Bazaar, November 2014.
29. Organization of the End-of-Year Children's Party, December 2014.
30. Organization of the New Year's toast for the staff, December 2014.
31. Annual barbeque, May 2015.
32. Promotion and dissemination of cultural and general-interest activities in Washington, DC.
33. Show and sale of Gift Shop products at IACHR meetings in October 2014 and March 2015.
34. Free yoga classes for contributing members.

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

The Joint Committees continued with their regular work. The Staff Committee thanks the staff representatives who served on them for their commitment and work. In addition, the Staff Committee made progress in following the work of the Working Groups established to address issues of interest to the staff. The major points can be summarized as follows:

### **i. Joint Committee on Parking**

The Committee on Parking met four times and dealt with at least eight cases, in which it made decisions and recommendations; for example, it decided to establish a mechanism for informing staff about the parking regulations and policies, and procedures for dealing with cases of parking violations.

It also debated and dealt with other topics, such as: the Committee's work methodology, a proposal for updating the parking regulations (Administrative Memorandum 83) that are being reviewed, matters related to improvements in the parking installations, including new booths for the parking attendants at the ADM and MNB; new security exit/entrance barriers at the ADM and MNB; the project for repaving the ADM parking lot and installing speed bumps in the GSB garage.

With respect to projects for 2015, the discussion is still under way. New projects include the new electric installations at the MNB and ADM, new security cameras and lighting for the ADM parking, and paving repairs along 17<sup>th</sup> Street. Discussion began on the possibility of allowing parking by employees of IBS (security, cleaning, etc.). The Committee arranged to include a "Parking" section in the online tool of OASConnect, so that staff members can present their requests and complaints to the Committee on Parking.

Official financial information is available as of December 31, 2014 and the balance of the Parking Fund is \$201,780, with commitments covered until the end of 2015. A copy of this statement is available in a separate annex. The estimated cost of projects for 2015 is about \$40,000. A proposal was submitted to increase the parking rates as recommended the Management Modernization Report. However, no specific measure has yet been approved or adopted.

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

An investment policy document was approved because the Committee did not have a formal investment policy. In the future, this investment policy document will orient future trustees on how to invest the funds, with information on the type of investments authorized and the percentages to be invested in them.

At its meetings the Committee extensively discussed the precarious situations of one of the investment managers, PIMCO. The Committee decided to ask Buck Consultants to conduct a search to identify a new investment manager and reduce the participation in PIMCO, and selected PAYDEN to invest part of the bonds that had been invested in PIMCO.

## **iii. Joint Committee on Insurance**

During this period the Committee held seven regular meetings and seven work meetings. In addition to these meetings, the representatives of the Committee were invited to participate in the meetings of the Joint Committee of the Medical Benefits Trust Fund. In summary, the following matters is of interest:

During this period, to comply with the internal regulations of the GS/OAS and as a normal and prudent practice, the Joint Committee on Insurance ("JCIM") requested bids for the awarding the administration of the SG/OAS Health Plan. Based on the results of an exhaustive evaluation, the Committee recommended Cigna as the plan administrator and it took over on May 1, 2015. The staff representatives voted in favor of changing the plan administrator in order to choose a profitable and efficient provider with better service to clients.

The Committee also reviewed the policy for continuation of medical insurance coverage after separation from service with the General Secretariat. The revised policy was approved by the Secretary General and published on October 21, 2014. This policy now includes a requirement for participation for five years as a condition for continued participation after separation from service. This requirement was added to guarantee the financial stability of the Trust Fund that finances self-insurance (Health Plan) and covers all participants' costs.

#### **iv. Joint Committee for Reconsideration Cases**

The Committee received and dealt with three cases during this period. One of the requests was withdrawn by the petitioner. The Committee issued one report that was transmitted to the Secretary General in accordance with the regulations, and one case remains under study by the Committee.

#### **v. Joint Committee for Discipline Cases**

No activities were reported.

#### **vi. Performance Evaluation Review Committee (PERC)**

The PERC met three times, on August 8, 2014, October 6, 2014, and March 13, 2015. Those meetings dealt with several cases related to the completion of the 2013 Performance Evaluation Cycle and the 2014 Performance Evaluation Cycle. After careful consideration, the Committee made the following decisions:

- Staff members who had not completed the final evaluation of the 2013 cycle, or who had not completed the objectives phase of the 2014 cycle, were given an extension of five days and reminded of Administrative Memorandum No. 92 rev.1.
- Staff members who had not completed the final evaluation of the 2014 cycle were given an extension of five days and reminded of Administrative Memorandum No. 92 rev.1.

#### **vii. Committee on Staff Incentives and Prizes**

The Committee's first meeting was held on March 20, 2015, for the purpose of reviewing and agreeing upon guidelines for awarding the Best Performance Prize. Notes were sent by the Department of Human Resources to inform the Directors and Secretaries to present candidates for the staff prizes.

There were a total of 43 nominations for outstanding performance. Of these, eight staff members received awards for outstanding performance at the Secretariat level and 35 at the Department level. It should be noted that the candidates of the departments presented at the end of 2014 were not accepted, because the award was for exceptional performance during 2014.

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

#### **i. Leo Rowe Fund Loans**

During the 2014-2015 period, the Staff Association guaranteed 20 education loans through the Leo S. Rowe Fund to contributing members of the Staff Association. These loans for \$129,915.06

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.

## **ii. Terry Woods Award**

The 2014 Terry Woods Award was granted to Mr. Daniel Vilariño, Treasurer of the Retirement and Pension Fund. It was presented during the General Secretariat's Staff Awards Ceremony and his name was added to the commemorative plaques at the General Services Building (TL).

This recognition is awarded annually by the Staff Association to commemorate the work of Mr. Terry Woods, to staff members 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.

## **V. OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION**

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

During the 2014 – 2015 term of the Committee, 16 new contributing members of the Staff Association were added, bringing the total to 301 contributing members, 13 less than at the end of the previous period. As of June 2015 there are 541 staff members in the General Secretariat who are de facto members of the Staff Association, but only 301 of the 541 are contributing members, which means that the activities and benefits are paid for by 55% of the members.

## **VI. PENDING MATTERS**

The 2015-2016 Staff Committee must follow up on some matters of great importance that are pending decision. These include:

1. Holding of required competitions for positions and publishing a schedule of the competitions.
2. Transparent and consistent implementation of procedures for selection of personnel.
3. Establishment and implementation of the Ethics Committee.
4. Follow-up of the presentation and negotiation of the 2016-2017 Program Budget.
5. Training on regulations and mechanisms concerning labor and sexual harassment.
6. Restitution of the budget item for reimbursement of tuition and training on general topics (languages, software, regulations, etc.) for the staff.