

**WFP Professional Staff Association (PSA) Statement to the Executive Board,
Rome, 10-14 June 2019**

Mister President,
Distinguished Members of the Board,
Distinguished membership,
Executive Director,
Union of General Service Staff Colleagues,
WFP Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Professional Staff Association (PSA) is honored to be invited once again to address the WFP Executive Board. The PSA intervention is an established feature of the Annual Session, which we consider a key forum to discuss the progress made by WFP in staff issues and the challenges ahead of us, as an ever-expanding global organization.

The WFP Professional Staff Association, established in 2007, is the official worldwide voice of all professional staff, national and international. We promote and safeguard the rights, interests and welfare of our colleagues wherever they are in the world.

To better serve our staff and fulfil our mandate, we are a leading member of the Federation CCISUA, Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations, which represents over 60,000 staff from 17 UN organizations, including UNICEF, UNHCR and UN Headquarters.

The consultation and communication process between the PSA and WFP management remains robust and solid through the Staff Management Council chaired by the Deputy Executive Director, Mr. Amir Abdulla. The PSA Annual General meeting, held in Nairobi in December

2018, was a good opportunity to enable a fruitful exchange between staff serving in the field and worldwide and senior management.

In the past two years, we have also enjoyed a constructive and fruitful collaboration with the HR Director, Mr. John Aylieff, a relationship based on mutual respect and a common vision that the wellbeing of the staff coincides with the wellbeing of the Organization and delivery on the zero-hunger mandate.

We take this opportunity to sincerely thank John and wish him all the best for his next assignment, and we are confident that a similar relationship will be built with the incoming HR Director.

Excellencies, as our world and our work become ever more connected and complex, we seek to work with management to achieve greater consistency in the administration and conditions of all WFP professional staff.

We seek to work with the Staff Management Council and Human Resources Division (HR), to ensure that HR policies and processes are fully aligned and coherent, whether they are applied in Beira, Baghdad, Bangkok, or Bogota.

Delegation of authority and consistent application of HR rules

One of the most critical areas for our membership relates to Human Resources.

The PSA believes that throughout WFP, Directors (in Rome and in the Field) have a delegation of authority without matching accountability. While we recognize the importance of enabling the manager to carry out their tasks and achieve operational efficiency, we think authority should go hand in hand with accountability.

We have noted that the application of the broad delegation of authority has the potential to result in the uneven application of some HR policies across WFP, with limited intervention from the Human Resources Division, whose role appears primarily of an advisory nature rather than oversight. This wide discretion, while important, embraces many areas affecting staff, stemming from the creation, abolition and grading of positions, reassignment, promotion, management of National Staff and use of consultancies and other temporary contracts.

This is reflected, for example, in the application of the outcome of the Integrated Road Map realignment process concerning national staff, where it has resulted in some abolishment of positions. Accordingly, payment of termination indemnity, a core condition of service, varies from country to country depending on the decisions of managers and sometimes goes unpaid to staff holding Fixed Term appointments, despite the long and the good service in the Organization. We believe a corporate policy is needed to avoid discrepancies and unequal treatment of staff.

The same delegation of authority allows for the persistent trend of the organization to increase its operational reliance on consultants and temporary personnel. The PSA has raised this matter in the past two years, but the situation has not improved, with thousands of temporary employees, i.e. Consultants, Service Contracts (SCs), and Special Service Agreement (SSAs) holders, employed in Rome and in the Field offices for prolonged periods of time. At present, as per HR data¹, 56% of the WFP workforce is on temporary contracts, in many instances covering core and managerial positions.

This triggers knock-on effects, such as reducing the positions for regular staff and contributing to a larger number of staff unassigned (known as the RADAR list - Requiring A Decision About Reassignment-), not to mention the long-term negative impact on the Pension Fund.

¹ Reference: "Workforce Trend by Contract Category" as of April 2019
<https://newgo.wfp.org/documents/our-people-statistics-a-glimpse-of-our-workforce>

In conclusion, we ask that the Human Resources Division is fully empowered to exercise its oversight role to ensure that this extended delegation of authority does not trigger inequality and inconsistency.

Length of Investigations and disciplinary processes

Furthermore, we need to work together towards an Organization free of any form of misconduct, where staff feel comfortable to report allegations with no fear of retaliation.

The investigation and consequent disciplinary proceedings are, despite the progress reported by HR, very lengthy, with the result that all together it may take years to receive a decision on the outcome of an investigation, with severe consequences either for the alleged victims and the alleged offenders.

We understand that a joint Working Group, including members of the Executive Board and the Management, has been set to work on issues of harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination. We hope this Working Group will address the delay of the investigations and disciplinary processes.

Dysfunctionality of the FAO Appeals Committee

Similarly, the internal justice system is often lengthy and dysfunctional. The FAO Appeals Committee, which is the joint WFP-FAO body assigned to make recommendations to the FAO Director General on the appeals put forward by staff, could take more than a year only to schedule a hearing, contravening the Staff Rules.

We regret to say that, although it is reported that there have been improvements in the past months, currently the FAO Appeals Committee is failing to make this process any easier for the staff members; therefore, with the above backlog, overall a decision from the FAO Director-General may take years to be delivered.

The delays congest the system; the result is that any given grievance would see a final decision from the ILO Administrative Tribunal after more than 5 years. It is important that WFP deals with this serious issue and improves the process through legal and operational means, because “Justice delayed is justice denied”.

WFP continues to be a great organization, where there is dialogue, transparency and can-do attitude of the staff and the management and where duty-of-care is more than just a sentence. An efficient process of investigations and disciplinary matters is part of this concept. It is an honor and a privilege to be part of the WFP global team. Once again, we wish to thank the Executive Board, and the Executive Director, for giving us the opportunity to share with you issues that significantly impact professional staff members and the organization at large.

Thank you!