

STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNAIDS SECRETARIAT STAFF ASSOCIATION

Additional documents for this item:

Action required at this meeting—the Programme Coordinating Board is invited to:

- *Take note* of the statement by the representative of the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association.

Cost implications for the implementation of the decisions: none

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Introduction

1. Programme Coordinating Board papers have uniform formatting in order to enhance their professionalism and accessibility to members of the PCB, who have diverse professional backgrounds and expertise. On behalf of the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association (USSA), I thank you for the opportunity to share about the issues affecting staff. Our presentation is informed by data from the USSA, all staff town halls, regional outreach, and direct communication from staff. It will also provide an update on the implementation of recommendations which USSA proffered last year.

Background on the UNAIDS Staff Association

2. The USSA was established in April 2005 as an independent staff association, representing all staff in the UNAIDS Secretariat. By virtue of our constitution, the purposes of the USSA are to:
 - ensure the conditions of employment of all staff conform to generally accepted labour standards, particularly those recommended by the ILO, the principles of the Staff Rules and Regulations, and other provisions of law applicable to all staff;
 - safeguard the rights and interests of all staff and promote their welfare; and
 - cooperate in achieving the objectives of UNAIDS.
3. In addition, to enable the work of the Staff Association, the 2010 Agreement of Cooperation between the UNAIDS management and the USSA stipulates collaboration in good faith for consultation on policies, procedures and practices relating to conditions of employment and issues affecting staff arising from day-to-day management and administration of the organization. That agreement also commits management to contribute operational resources to the Staff Association.
4. We are one of the few UN staff associations that manage a legal support mechanism for staff. However, while the Staff Association represents all UNAIDS staff, only 341 dues paying members are eligible to claim limited legal support should the need arise during their employment with UNAIDS. Over the past two years, USSA assisted around 50 staff in accessing legal guidance to review decisions on employment conditions that were considered inconsistent with labour standards and/or staff rules and regulations or violation of staff rights, abolition of posts etc.

Remarks

Revised constitution and membership of ExComm

5. Following the restructuring that has brought staff number down by around 55% USSA Constitution revision was launched in October 2025, and the new constitution has been endorsed by 98% of members who voted

Salient feature of new constitution

6. Date of effecting new constitution – 01 November 2025

7. As the restructuring implementation is underway the numbers of dues paying members are changing every month that stand currently at 340
8. The new constitution aligns USSA with the new structure and maximizes efficiency while not losing sight of its mission, bringing down the Exco members to 7, biannual work planning, minimizing travel expenses.
9. New Elections will be organized early next year and new bureau elected
10. Aligning with the new constitution the MOA with management is also being revised.

Progress on USSA recommendations from PCB 56 and some steps taken by USSA recently

11. Chair, I will now provide an update on progress or actions that have been taken following the recommendations the Staff Association made to the 56th PCB meeting in June 2025.
12. Considering the exceptional nature of this meeting, the USSA will not dwell on a point-by-point review of progress concerning its recommendations at PCB 56. It is patently clear to us that the Organisation will not be able to deliver its commitments under the new Global AIDS Strategy. Faced with a problem that required courage and imagination to solve, it chose instead to sacrifice the one asset it had that could not be replaced: its staff.
13. USSA notes with concern the UN80 proposals which were not consulted with USSA or staff, and these notwithstanding, that a full and transparent account of it has not been made available. Many staff members remain confused about the multiple, complex processes involved in their separation from the organization, and are thus uncertain whether their rights and entitlements will be entirely respected and fulfilled upon leaving. Flexibilities introduced have been caught up in bureaucratic processes, defeating the intended purpose. Staff delocalized from Geneva continue to battle with issues of work permits.
14. We expect Management to reaffirm its commitment to safeguarding the rights and entitlements of all staff, in particular those who are being separated.
15. We also expect Management to provide specific and constructive feedback to all applicants who have not been successful in the Compendium exercise, so that it can at least have learning value for them.
16. USSA is deeply saddened by the departure of so many of its members and wishes them a long life and prosperity wherever the road may lead.

Working relationship between management and USSA

17. Chair, as is customary, I wish to share a brief update on the working relationship between management and the Staff Association.

18. USSA has been working constructively with management through these challenging times to minimise pains to staff and ensure dignified exit of those separating from UNAIDS. USSA is well represented in the restructuring consultation group and recruitment review. However, the pace of restructuring has not allowed time and space for meaningful consultation. USSA also feels that 13. UN80 proposals were imposed from top without any consultation with USSA or staff.
19. USSA has been providing legal support to its dues, paying members including legal insurance coverage to staff.
20. USSA has been engaging staff, and trying to communicate as much as possible, through town halls, surveys and regional outreach. However, USSA feels that many decisions taken by management were shared with USSA at the eleventh hour, preventing it from consulting staff broadly.
21. To allow separating staff remain in touch and to institutionalize the extended family sentiment, USSA has worked with PM to launch an Alumni portal & provided Transition Support by sponsoring pre-retirement seminars, and working with SHI and SHW to ensure staff health and wellbeing

Challenges faced and way forward

22. We seem to be victim of our own success, though recent changes in global financial aid landscape have exposed fragility of the response and need to continue investing to sustain the gains
23. USSA would like to thank and applaud PCB for its decision to convene an urgent meeting and suggesting a pragmatic way forward.
24. Delivering on new Global AIDS Strategy looks very difficult with such limited resources and given the uncertainties surrounding UNAIDS future
25. The historically biggest restructuring in UNAIDS has affected the morale of the staff, though their commitment to serve communities keeps them going in these challenging circumstances

Proposed recommendations

26. The staff Association presents below a summary of outstanding issues which staff would like the senior management to address:
 - On UN 80 proposals, USSA requests PCB to guide UNAIDS, through a process that is realistic, ringfences gains made thus far and ensures services to communities seamlessly.
 - USSA notes with serious concern that UN80 proposals were announced without any consultation with staff and USSA and it urges management through PCB to keep staff fully informed of the discussions affecting their future under UN80 and consult USSA on any proposal affecting staff.

- USSA calls for greater transparency in how the UN 80 proposals and timelines have been announced and request PCB to use all resources at its disposal to engage with office of SG and various forums under UNGA to highlight the need to align PCB decided timelines with the UN 80 proposals that will address anxiety of staff and let them focus on the unfinished agenda of ending AIDS by 2030.
- Staff expects Management to reaffirm its commitment to safeguarding the rights and entitlements of all staff, in particular those who are being separated.
- USSA request regular updates through live updating of organogram and request management to take steps to ensure dignified exit of the staff. This includes ensuring that communication with governments related to UCO transition and thanking sitting UCDs for their remarkable contributions are issued in a timely manner to avoid any ambiguity.
- USSA is deeply saddened by the departure of so many of its members and wishes them long life and prosperity wherever the road may lead.

Proposed decision points

27. Take note of the statement by the representative of the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association.

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