

INTRODUCING THE ASSOCIATION

The Association of PAHO/WHO Former Staff Members is being organized for the purpose of maintaining a link between its members and PAHO/WHO but more importantly, for creating close ties of companionship, fraternity, and camaraderie amongst its fellow members.

Our years of work together are like a life lived with a "family" which we cannot and should not erase from our hearts. All of us shared many experiences during our professional lives, and by staying in closer contact in the future, we should be able to deal better with issues common to us all. In having an organization to which we can turn, we will be able to obtain information and advice to help us with decisions.

In order to attain these goals, we intend to work in close cooperation with the various staff associations and retirees organizations, as well as with the PAHO administration. Only thus can our Association play a useful

and effective role in assisting us with such important issues as health insurance, taxes, pension, and the general well-being of our colleagues. We hope we will be able to reach our goal, and that we can accomplish our task without too many obstacles. We are sure that with your suggestions, help, proposals and constructive comments we can succeed.

To conclude, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to those who answered our questionnaire promptly, with their comments. These helped us greatly as it was very stimulating to find out that a great number of our colleagues shared our feelings, thus giving us an incentive to continue our task.

But your contribution alone will not suffice. The Association needs each and everyone of you -out there in retirement- to become actively involved to the extent you are able, and especially by becoming a member.

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BACKGROUND

The need of an association had been recognized by some retirees for a long time; however, it was Ms. Helena Motta Irwin who, after many telephone calls and letters was finally able to get together a group of interested colleagues. A preliminary meeting was held at PAHO Headquarters on 16 January 1990, attended by about 25 former staff members to explore the idea of forming this Association.

In order to carry out this task, an ad hoc Coordinating Committee was formed with the following persons:

Dr. Hans A. Bruch
Ms. Helena M. Irwin
Ms. Edith Quiñones
Ms. María Mercedes Segarra-Hines
Ms. Clara Silva D'Herbil
Mr. Federico Varela

On May 15 the committee met with Dr. Carlyle Guerra de Macedo, Director of PASB. He warmly welcomed the idea of forming this Association and gave his full support. Since then, we have worked closely with Mr. Jean Gauthier, Chief of Personnel, who has been most cooperative and has given us all the assistance required.

The first general meeting was held on 15 June 1990 attended by 50 persons to elect a Coordinating Committee and special sub-committees to propose a program of activities and budget, draft the By-laws, and prepare a newsletter. Besides the members of the ad hoc Coordinating Committee the following colleagues were elected to the various committees: Dr. Jaime Ayalde, Dr. Alfred Gerald, Ms. Yolanda Hanson, Ms. Esther Jaramillo, Mr. Antonio Ríos, Dr. Said Sadique, and Ms. Jean Surgi.

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MEMBERSHIP

The Association is open to all those who worked for PAHO/WHO and includes surviving spouses.

Membership is encouraged also for our colleagues who reside outside the continental United States of America.

Dues will be established by the Board of Directors.

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CALL FOR CANDIDATES

Within the coming weeks you will be receiving a letter asking you to propose candidates or to stand yourself for the Board of Directors of the Association, as the group now serving is provisional, constituted only to get the Association started.

The next general meeting will take place on 8 November, 1990 at PAHO headquarters in order to approve the By-laws, the program of activities and budget, and elect the permanent officers of the Association.

For practical reasons, candidates for the Board should live in the Washington metropolitan area.

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HEALTH INSURANCE

The following decisions taken at the meeting of the Headquarters and Regional Surveillance Committees, held in Geneva last November, mainly affect former staff:

On the minus side, the minimum pension for calculating contributions will be based on 30 instead of 20 years' service, a measure that will hit hard certain categories of retired staff.

On the plus side, the contribution borne by WHO will be twice that borne by the participants, namely 2/3 by WHO, 1/3 by participants.

The proposal to make the retired staff alone pay for their deficit was again rejected by a large majority.

(It had been possible to build up a reserve fund because the contributions of former staff were higher than the benefits paid out. The consequences of not increasing contributions at the appropriate time --a problem of management-- should not weigh more heavily upon the retired staff than on other participants.)

The Director-General agreed to WHO's meeting the deficit until the year 2000, when it is expected that the actuarial shortfall will be eliminated.

(Since the number of former staff is constantly increasing, costs attributable to them is expected to increase proportionately in the coming years. Given present recruitment policy, those costs will be less and less offset by the inflow of young staff. We must therefore remain on guard and defend our interests. A major argument: our contributions are calculated on the basis of a gross pension on which we pay income tax, unlike present staff members whose contributions are based on net remuneration.)

It will be possible in the future to provide better coverage for geriatric care.

(The ambiguity of the present rules sometimes results in inequalities and hence in injustices.)

The problem of domiciliary care for those who have become dependent, but whose condition does not warrant hospitalization is expected to be considered with more objectivity and understanding, and above all with more efficacy.

(The question of long-term hospitalization in geriatric facilities was also studied. A major problem is the definition of geriatric care. Thus the measures taken, though a step in the right direction, are not yet satisfactory. We must on no account drop our guard during the study*that is to be conducted in each region this year.)

Retired staff will be allowed a representative, with the right to vote, and an alternate on Surveillance Committees, subject to the approval of the Director-General.

(Copied from NEWS of Association of Former Staff Members, WHO/Geneva, June 1990)

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PENSION FUND

The UN General Assembly last December adopted measures to restore the actuarial balance of the Joint Staff Pension Fund, approving, through resolution 44/199, four measures recommended by the Joint Staff Pension Board:

1. Raising retirement age to 62 for participants entering or re-entering the Fund on or after 1 January 1990.

2. Increasing the penalty for early retirement (that is, before age 57) to 6 % annually.

(The decision to raise retiring age was reached by consensus, without major difficulties: in past years this subject faced insurmountable opposition.)

3. Delaying adjustments of deferred retirement benefits to age 55 for those separating from service on or after 31 December 1989.

4. Increasing the rate of contribution to the Fund from 22.5% to 23.7% of the pensionable remuneration, of which UN organizations will pay 15.8% and participants 7.9%.

RETIREMENTS

Except for the increase of contributions and the delaying of adjustments for deferred pensions, the impact of the other measures will only be significant many years from now.

The United Nations General Assembly also requested the International Civil Service Commission to take into account the recently approved remuneration structure in reviewing pensionable remuneration of professional staff. This includes, inter alia, an average increase of remuneration of five per cent in New York and an equivalent increase in other duty stations.

Although all measures do not directly affect pensioners, they contribute in ensuring and maintaining the actuarial balance of the Fund.

Pensioners frequently ask about the financial health of the Fund. The financial problems experienced by the UN and its agencies have not affected the Fund because contributions to it have been paid regularly. Nor has the Fund suffered significant losses as a result of adverse movements of financial markets and exchange rates because of the nature of investments and the distribution of currencies used.

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PERSONAL NOTES

We would like to start a "Personal" column to find out the whereabouts of our colleagues. Please help by sending news about yourself and any others you may know about.

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Dr. Luis Carlos Ochoa, Assistant Director, retired on 10 March 1990. Dr. Ochoa served PAHO in several positions, since 1972.

Dr. George Alleyne was appointed on 11 March 1990 to replace Dr. Ochoa.

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ACTIVITIES

An activity also envisaged by the Association --mentioned by many in the replies to the questionnaire-- is an annual trip, either international or domestic, for members and their families.

Please send us your suggestions so we may start planning.

Please note that our newsletter and all other reading material will be printed in English only.

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OBITUARIES

Mr. Javier Malagón, husband of our colleague Helena, passed away on July 6, 1990. We send Mrs. Malagón our deepest sympathy.

We also regret to inform of the death of our colleague Mr. Carlos Urrutia, on March 9, 1990. Mr. Urrutia served as Chief of Conference in PAHO for many years.

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