



### STATEMENT BY THE IARC STAFF ASSOCIATION

1. On behalf of the IARC Staff Association Committee (SAC), I would like to thank the Governing Council for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you today and tell you about the work and achievements of the Staff Association during the past twelve months and update you on developments since last year's statement.
2. The present Committee took office following elections in May 2025, in which 12 candidates put their names forward and a record number of votes were cast. This demonstrates the commitment of IARC staff members towards advocating for the wellbeing of their colleagues.
3. A key focus of the current mandate has been to improve communication and build trustful relations between IARC Management and personnel. I am pleased to report that considerable progress has been made in this regard through the establishment of regular meetings between SAC members and the Director (DIR) (every 3-4 months), the Director of Administration and Finance (DAF), and the Human Resource Officer (HRO) (held every 6 weeks). These meetings have been productive and provided the space in which SAC members can draw attention to concerns and queries from IARC personnel.
4. In this regard, we are pleased to note that the Memorandum of Understanding is practically finalized and under signature. However, the length of time taken to conclude this document is regrettable. Once completed, it will help to foster a mutually beneficial and trust-based collaboration. We thank previous members of the SAC for their efforts in launching this initiative.
5. Among the priorities IARC colleagues identified this past year, the impact of the financial difficulties facing IARC and the exercise to reprioritize scientific activities have been the foremost concerns. We appreciate the efforts from Management to communicate the realities of IARC's financial situation in a transparent manner. Nevertheless, the rollout of the reprioritization exercise and implementation of financial efficiency measures contributed to increased anxiety, concern for the future and diminished morale across the workforce.
6. Notably, senior scientist positions were abolished before the close of the previous biennium resulting in the separation from service of four colleagues, each of whom had served the Agency for many years. The SAC regrets that these departures add to the number of senior scientific positions that have been abolished in recent years and acknowledges concerns raised by colleagues that separations from service have fallen overwhelmingly on scientist positions. While staff understand and appreciate the gravity of the financial situation, concerns about the loss of scientific capacity persist. The SAC has raised these issues with Management on several occasions. We reiterate that any measures to address financial difficulties recognize that IARC, as a research agency, requires sufficient scientific expertise to deliver on its mandate. Should further cuts become necessary, an in-depth review to streamline administrative processes should be considered to potentially mitigate the impact on the scientific workforce.

7. Alongside effects of IARC's financial challenges, significant distress has been experienced by personnel regarding the abolition of the former Epigenomics and Mechanisms Branch. The SAC appreciated the opportunity to support and represent colleagues concerned in both group and bilateral meetings with Management. However, we very much regret that certain decisions made during this difficult period were taken without full consideration of the later consequences for staff and their research activities. Information provided to colleagues was too frequently inaccurate, which created doubts and caused unnecessary anxiety during an already stressful time, and posed serious jeopardy for the ongoing and planned work of colleagues.

8. The SAC also wishes once again to raise its concern regarding the prolonged absence of a staff physician at IARC. It has now been approximately two years since a staff physician has been in post at the Agency on a regular and reliable basis. This absence has resulted in a significant backlog of periodic medical examinations, most notably affecting colleagues working in the laboratories. While we note that a solution is close to being secured, we respectfully request that immediate measures be taken to address the existing backlog of appointments and that safeguards be put in place to prevent extended periods without a staff physician in the future. Furthermore, this gap has coincided with a period of heightened stress and anxiety across the Agency, compounding concerns and increasing vulnerabilities among personnel. In line with discussions and resolutions from the most recent WHO Global Staff Management Council (GSMC) meeting, the SAC stresses that readily accessible psychological support (including, but not limited to, a staff physician, Ombudsperson services, and a staff wellbeing counsellor) is critical during these challenging times. Therefore, the SAC considers that the appointment of a staff physician, and the availability of easily accessible psychological support, must be treated as an absolute priority to safeguard staff mental and physical health.

9. As in previous years, the SAC has continued to fulfil its mandate to represent and serve IARC personnel. In November 2025, two members of the SAC attended the 24th meeting of the GSMC in Geneva. Key topics in which SAC representatives engaged included the decreasing number and availability at WHO level of Ombudspersons, staff counsellors, and other informal resources for staff mental and physical wellbeing, plus the functioning of the Internal Justice System.

10. Furthermore, two representatives of the SAC attended the 79th Council of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) in February 2026. Our delegates took part in several working group meetings on matters covering the compensation package, pensions reform, and broader structural changes within the UN system.

11. In addition, SAC members have also attended regular meetings of General Executive Office of WHO Staff Associations and FICSA.

12. SAC members have also actively represented staff through internal committees, including selection committees, local reassignment committees, the occupational health and safety committee, and the cafeteria committee. Moreover, the SAC has continued to work in close collaboration with the Commission for Social, Cultural and Recreational Activities (CASCR). The CASCR organizes regular activities open to all personnel, including sports classes, end of year shows (for personnel and their children), and other social events to improve wellbeing and create a collegial community. We thank the colleagues involved in these valued activities for their time and commitment to improving the working environment at the Agency.

13. A major activity in the past year has been the release of the periodic Work Climate Survey. This anonymous survey is open to all personnel and offers the possibility for colleagues to express their opinion on their employment conditions and working environment. For the 2026 survey, we received 242 responses out of 429 personnel. The following provides a snapshot of the results.

14. Eighty-three percent of respondents reported that they are proud to work for IARC, and 83% indicated that their work gives them a sense of satisfaction. In general, supervisory practices at IARC are regarded as positive by colleagues: Eighty-eight percent of respondents reported they feel that their supervisor has confidence in their work. Encouragingly, a good team spirit, particularly in smaller groups or teams, was explicitly mentioned by multiple respondents, with 70% of respondents believing that the people in their team collaborate successfully.

15. Despite these very positive results, personnel expressed frustration that reports made about suspected misbehaviour at a supervisory level were sometimes not adequately or not promptly addressed. In terms of potential cases of harassment, the results show that 23 colleagues reported feeling harassed in the workplace, which includes 2 potential cases of sexual harassment. In addition, 30 colleagues reported having witnessed possible cases of harassment.

16. Unfortunately, more than half of respondents (54%) disagreed with the statement that morale at IARC is high. Specific issues contributing to low morale and stress included contract precarity, concerns over financial instability and the growing administrative burden on scientific work. Several staff also mentioned grade and pay inequity, and implicit intergenerational disparities owing to the decreasing regular budget allocated towards younger staff members.

17. The survey also examined work modalities. Two thirds of respondents identified teleworking (45%) and the use of Microsoft Teams (21%) as the most relevant initiatives put in place by IARC. Since February 2023, IARC personnel have been able to benefit from up to eight teleworking days per month, applied in accordance with WHO Staff Regulations and Staff Rules. Survey findings indicate that 60% of IARC personnel telework at least five days per month, while 65% report satisfaction with the current telework arrangements. The SAC wishes to highlight the numerous benefits of Flexible Working Arrangement (FWA) such as an improved work–life balance, greater flexibility in working hours, reduced commuting time and decreased air pollution. These factors contribute towards improving physical and mental health, as well as social wellbeing, as highlighted in the [Joint WHO/ILO Report](#). The SAC looks forward to further collaboration with Management to consolidate the current FWA as a long-term arrangement aligning with the FWA implemented by WHO and working together with the future staff physician and Management to safeguard the mental and physical health of personnel.

18. To conclude with a reflection on the past year, the SAC has seen a willingness for transparent communication between Management and SAC, with real efforts made to improve communication with IARC personnel. However, some decisions communicated often lacked clarity which created uncertainty, and distress among personnel. Due in part to the current financial situation and implications of the possible withdrawal from IARC of the United States of America, there is growing concern regarding wellbeing at IARC. Therefore, the SAC considers the employment of a staff physician and the availability of easily accessible psychological support to be an absolute priority for staff mental and physical health.

19. As co-Chair of the Staff Association Committee, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all colleagues for their commitment and dedication, and once again, I thank the Director and the members of the Governing Council for the opportunity to address the Council today.