

## **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 the opportunity to speak to you today.
2. The main role of the SAC is to represent the staff working at the Agency: to promote and defend their rights and interests. It is the focal point for staff questions and concerns and assess the working climate.
3. We wish to update you on developments since our written statement last year. The COVID-19 pandemic has created challenges and difficulties for the personnel. The staff appreciates the regular communication provided by the administration by weekly Town Hall meetings, emails and intranet updates. We acknowledge the work of the Information Technology Services and the Administrative Services Offices for creating solutions for keeping the personnel connected while teleworking, and for keeping us safe when we are at IARC premises.
4. Despite the sanitary crises challenges, personnel have shown strong resilience and high work ethic. This is exemplified by statistics of scientific productivity such as number of manuscripts (n=486 publications since January 2020) and grant applications submitted (n=268 submitted since July 2020). The pandemic offered the opportunity to test the flexible teleworking policy, along with some ad hoc measures throughout the year. This approach was instrumental in maintaining continuity of day-to-day work during periods of mobility restriction (so called lockdown) and social distancing measures. SAC hopes that the flexibility of some of the ad hoc measures will be incorporated into the future teleworking policy.

## **SUPPORT OF THE SAC TO THE PERSONNEL**

5. In the past year, SAC has supported the personnel in many ways, as exemplified below:
  - ✓ Creation of a 'COVID Helpline' at the beginning of the first lockdown in March 2020, at the request of IARC administration, with 13 IARC volunteers providing support services to personnel in need including translations, assistance with medical appointments, shopping and more.
  - ✓ Organization of virtual regular lunchtime physical activities that were usually held on site before the pandemic. The administration supported similar activities online which were introduced at the start of the first confinement period via WHO Regional Office for Europe.
  - ✓ Publication of quarterly newsletters, including features of personnel from across the Agency aiming to keeping contact, gathering, and sharing positive information.
  - ✓ Organization of the personnel's summer holiday virtual photo album.

- ✓ Organization of a Year-End online show (“The Show must go on...line”) replacing the usual Children’s Christmas party and adult Christmas cocktail. The event was successful, with participation of 167 staff members and family members.
- ✓ Organization of the ‘No-one alone for Christmas’ initiative, by linking up families staying in Lyon with IARC personnel living alone and unable to travel.
- ✓ Organization of the ‘Open your home’ initiative, where those leaving town over the holidays could lend their houses to those staying in Lyon who would welcome a change of scenery, particularly for those teleworking.
- ✓ Creation of a virtual illustrated Winter Holiday Recipe Book with favourite recipes provided by personnel, with contribution from 27 staff members representing 14 countries. The initiative was well received by personnel and will continue into the spring/summer seasons.

### **WORK CLIMATE SURVEY**

6. In the first few months of 2021, the bi-annual Work Climate Survey was launched, and received a 50% response rate, which was considered adequate in the current situation. The SAC and management will release a report on the results of this survey and associated actions taken for the next Governing Council session.

### **QUALITY OF WORK LIFE**

7. The Quality of Work Life (QWL) Initiative – a joint initiative between the Management, SAC and the Early Career Scientist Association (ECSA) – grew out of the 2018–2019 Work Climate Survey which highlighted several areas requiring attention at IARC:

- A. Promoting a harmonious and respectful work environment and preventing escalation of conflicts;
- B. Supporting personnel in achieving their career growth and development plans;
- C. Promoting work-life balance and well-being of all personnel; and
- D. Supporting supervisors in team and performance management.

8. During 2020, the Respectful Workplace Day event focused on the recommendations drawn up by the Working Group on promoting a harmonious and respectful work environment and preventing the escalation of conflicts. The Working Group’s recommendations were shared with all staff and posters were distributed around the Agency to underline the IARC Values. Winners of the Reward and Recognition programme for 2020 demonstrated these core values and represented personnel from all levels of the Agency.

9. The Working Group on promoting work-life balance and well-being of all personnel conducted an extensive survey on the impact of force-majeure teleworking. The questions ranged from IT and connection issues to mental and physical well-being, perceived benefits and disadvantages of teleworking and suggestions for the future. The results were released to all personnel on 22 April 2021.

10. A Mentoring Programme has been developed with the input of a Working Group comprised of staff and administration to create a programme well suited to IARC needs. It will be launched in a pilot phase within the next few weeks. This will facilitate mentorship across all staff categories and represents a large-scale response to a need that was highlighted in 2019.

11. The Prevention of Psychosocial Risks Working Group has conceived a campaign called "Take 5". The campaign involves short presentations, at the monthly administrative Town Hall meetings, in which the staff physician gives practical, achievable advice to all personnel to help manage and improve their mental health during the pandemic.

12. The Environmental Working Group is currently working on identifying key performance indicators to measure IARC's environmental impact. The Working Group has reviewed documentation and best practices and will be making recommendations during the next few months.

### **CONCLUSION**

13. As the liaison between the personnel and the administration, SAC is committed to report staff concerns and tributes to the management. This last year has been challenging with the COVID situation with fewer opportunities to meet and discuss. Therefore, we are striving to work even more closely with the management in the future, especially in these times of reorganization and budget constraints.

14. As the Chair of the Staff Association, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my extremely dedicated colleagues for their commitment and enthusiasm and once again, I thank the Director and the members of the Governing Council for giving us the opportunity to address the Council.