International Agency for Research on Cancer

World Health Organization

STATEMENT BY THE IARC STAFF ASSOCIATION

1.   First, on behalf of the Staff Association Committee (SAC), I wish to thank the Governing Council for giving us the opportunity to make this presentation today, and thus to let the voice of IARC staff be heard.

2.   The SAC has been operating once again since December 2013. It had been suspended following the General Assembly on 4 June 2013 as only three members remained on the Committee – three members had reached the end of their term, and no candidate was then standing for election. The call for candidates in September 2013 then turned out to be unsuccessful.

3.   This is why no one represented the SAC at the Global Staff/Management Council (GSMC) in October 2013, and IARC staff lost that channel of dialogue with the Administration.

4.   In June 2014, there will be a new call for candidates to replace the three outgoing Committee members. We do hope that there will be enough candidates to ensure the sustainability of the SAC in the current context. The suspension of the Committee led to the reconsideration of the SAC's work, and we are now trying to communicate more effectively – so that the entire staff can better follow and understand our work. Among others, the improvements made to the SAC's website are a step in this direction.

5.   On 20 March 2014, the SAC, the Director of Administration and Finance (DAF) and the Human Resources Officer (HRO) held their first working meeting. We are pleased to resume dialogue with the Administration and to work constructively and smoothly together. Two meetings with the Director will also be held each year.

6.   Many topics have already been brought to the attention of the Administration:

- The Classification Review Committee (CRC) was suspended in January 2013 and replaced with a system that necessitates the restructuring of an entire Group – this exercise has to be cost-neutral for payroll – before a position can be considered for reclassification. Staff are concerned about this; the SAC will make sure this system is reviewed in 2015, as announced by the Director in June 2013 in his response to the results of the Work Climate Survey 2012–2013. The SAC will also ensure that training and career development plans announced by the Administration are indeed implemented.

- The SAC requested that the Administration invite a representative of the WHO Staff Health Insurance (SHI) to IARC to explain the recent changes (as from 1 January 2014) regarding the reimbursement of catastrophic expenses to all insured people.

- Some staff members would like the Administration to study and implement a teleworking system in some special circumstances (e.g. public transport strikes, extreme weather events or high pollution peaks). This is currently not envisaged by the Administration.

7. This is a crucial year for the "Nouveau Centre" project, as many decisions will be made during 2014: the selection of its location, the launch of the architectural competition and the drafting of the "Nouveau Centre" specifications. The SAC wants to implement a mechanism to collect requests and comments from Agency staff to make sure they are adequately consulted during the development of this "Nouveau Centre". The SAC also wishes to create a working group composed of staff members and SAC representatives in collaboration with the IARC Occupational Health and Safety Committee.

8. The SAC's presentations to previous Governing Councils mentioned several times that many people working at IARC were referred to as "non-staff" and this term had a negative connotation for fellowship students, doctoral students, postdoctoral scientists and trainees. This term no longer exists, and all colleagues working, collaborating or studying at IARC are now called "IARC personnel". This decision, warmly welcomed by everyone, is related to the creation of the Early Career Scientists Association – one of the objectives of which is the promotion of collaboration and dialogue among early career scientists as well as between early career scientists and the Education and Training Group (ETR).

9. In 2013, a 360° evaluation exercise was implemented. This allowed some staff members to assess their first-level supervisors. This is a new system, which received a less than enthusiastic welcome from some staff members since they did not know exactly how the information would be used and whether anonymity would be preserved. Reflecting these comments, the Administration requested the company responsible for implementing the 360° exercise to summarize the responses and retrieve the inputs in one language only before reporting the results to IARC.

10. The electronic Staff Performance Management and Development System (e-PMDS) has been available online at IARC since January 2014. This system was created by WHO and must now be used by IARC. To switch from paper to an electronic format, all IARC staff were trained to use this new tool, meant to streamline the process. However, the SAC received several comments, especially about the lack of feedback, positive or negative, received by the staff member being evaluated from their direct supervisor. Previously, with the paper format, it was possible to start a discussion at that stage of the process. However, the Administration explained that the e-PMDS is above all the written completion of an oral discussion that must take place with the supervisor before it is written; further, the second-level supervisor can return the e-PMDS to the staff member before the second-level supervisor signs it, for the staff

member to review and start over the part concerning the year-end review. The process is therefore not rigid. The e-PMDS now requires staff members to select competencies in order to improve their expertise in selected areas. In order to help in completing this process, the Administration announced that in-house training would be offered, as the inadequate budget available does not enable IARC to organize external training. The SAC will remain vigilant concerning the quality of the training.

11.   In his response to the outcome of the Work Climate Survey 2012–2013 in June 2013, the Director wrote that the Administration would organize training on harassment awareness – mandatory for everyone. Although the Staff Physician held two presentations on Work-related Stress, and the number of attendees showed that this topic is of primary concern for the staff, no harassment awareness training has yet been organized. The WHO Ombudsman came to the Agency twice, but he did not respond positively to the Administration's request to present training on this topic; since WHO does not offer harassment awareness training either, the Administration will establish its own training programme starting in May 2014.

12.   Concerning the call for tenders for the food services in the IARC cafeteria, launched at the beginning of May 2014, the Administrative Services Officer (ASO) allowed the SAC to carry out a survey of the staff beforehand in order to improve on the current services offered. The SAC and a working group from outside the Committee (composed of volunteers) submitted a questionnaire to give the staff the opportunity to express their opinions and submit their comments on the cafeteria services. The results have been provided to ASO, who will take these into account when establishing the specifications.

13.   The SAC's work is important within IARC but also outside the Agency, thanks to its involvement in the Global Staff/Management Council (GSMC) and its partnership with the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA). It is, however, time- and resource-consuming for the Committee members to attend meetings of those bodies, and even more so when there are fewer Committee members, as is the case now. I therefore hope that the next elected Committee will be composed of many more members. I wish it every success. As the President of the Staff Association, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues for their commitment and dedication. Once again, I thank the Director and the members of the Governing Council for giving us the opportunity to address the Council.