



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



## 146th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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### PAHO'S INTEGRITY AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

#### Background

1. Upon taking office in 2003, the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (PASB) initiated a process of organizational renewal and strengthening in response to the needs of the Member States of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). Guided by the mandates of PAHO and the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as by the recommendations of PAHO's External Auditors and of the Working Group on PAHO in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,<sup>1</sup> this process resulted in the identification of five strategic objectives for the Organization, one of them being the enhancement of management practices.<sup>2</sup> To this end, in 2005 an Organization-wide initiative was launched to strengthen individual and corporate accountability, entitled "Standards of Accountability and Transparency."<sup>3</sup>

2. As part of this transparency and accountability initiative, PASB implemented a Code of Ethical Principles and Conduct. This important document combined the core values and ethical principles of the Organization, with a set of rules establishing clear boundaries of acceptable behavior in PAHO. The Code also established the "Integrity and Conflict Management System" (ICMS) within the Organization, which described and integrated all of the Organization's resources available at that time to handle staff inquiries, concerns, complaints allegations, reporting, and investigations into alleged misconduct or violations of PAHO's rules and procedures.

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<sup>1</sup> "Process of Institutional Strengthening of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau," CD46.R2 (2005).

<sup>2</sup> See, "Update on the Process of Institutional Strengthening within the Pan American Sanitary Bureau," CD46/15, Rev. 1 (2005); "Progress Report on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the External Auditor's Special Report, September 2004," CD46/28 (2005).

<sup>3</sup> Roadmap Initiative on "Standards of Accountability and Transparency" *see* "Update on the Process of Institutional Strengthening of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau," CE138/26 (2006).

3. The institutional strengthening initiative in 2005 also led to: the appointment of an Ombudsperson and of an Information Security Officer, the establishment of an independent Ethics Office<sup>4</sup> and of a dedicated Integrity Help Line, and the implementation of a Declaration of Interest Program for staff.

4. As described in PAHO's Code of Ethical Principles and Conduct, the ICMS seeks to integrate and coordinate the newly established offices, policies, and mechanisms described above with existing entities within PAHO that already worked on integrity and conflict management issues (Human Resources Management, the Office of Legal Counsel, the Office of Internal Oversight and Evaluation Services, the PAHO Board of Appeals, the Grievance Panel, and the PAHO/AMRO Staff Association). The result of this effort is a more coherent framework and comprehensive system for handling integrity and conflict management issues.

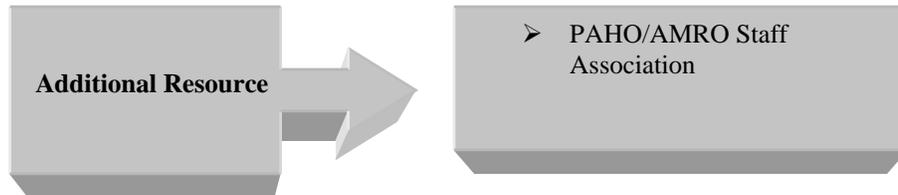
5. The ICMS became fully operational in 2007. The ICMS has led to a better coordination of the various resources for dealing with ethical issues and for managing conflict in the workplace. In addition, the Organization has established a dedicated website (<http://www.paho.org/english/icms>) that provides all staff with useful guidance on the most appropriate resource to contact for inquiries, concerns, reporting of allegations, or investigations into alleged misconduct or violations of PAHO's rules and procedures.

6. At present, the composition of the ICMS is as follows:



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<sup>4</sup> PAHO's Ethics Officer was appointed in 2006.



7. The ICMS resources provide staff with informal and formal means to seek advice on ethical issues, to contest decisions or actions that affect their employment or careers, and to resolve interpersonal disputes occurring at the workplace. These range from informal resources such as the Ombudsperson, who provides confidential advice and information, or sets up a voluntary mediation process, to a more formal approach allowing staff to appeal administrative decisions before the PAHO Board of Appeals. Reports regarding allegations of misconduct or ethical violations are investigated by the Ethics Office (which may refer the case elsewhere if the situation warrants). Information and guidance about the options available for addressing these concerns is readily accessible to all staff on PAHO's intranet; mandatory ethics training programs also are in place. Once staff members have exhausted the formal means of internal dispute resolution, they may present their cases to the ILO Administrative Tribunal for a final decision.

8. The ICMS has a Coordinating Committee, which consists of the Ethics Program Manager, Legal Counsel, and Human Resources Manager. This Coordinating Committee has a double responsibility: (a) coordinating the various resources to ensure the effective functioning of the ICMS, and (b) proposing policy changes in order to improve the functioning of the system.

### **Strengthening and Streamlining the ICMS**

9. Unlike many other organizations and private sector entities, which have instituted pure conflict resolution systems, PAHO's system combines integrity and conflict resolution issues in one cohesive system. The rationale for this approach is based on the premise that the promotion of ethical conduct in every facet of the Organization's work can lead to a better work environment and an overall reduction in conflict.

10. Since its establishment in 2007, the ICMS has had a considerable impact in the promotion of ethical behavior and the reduction of conflict throughout the Organization. Nonetheless, in 2009 the Director of the PASB requested a further comprehensive review of the system to bring certain aspects of the ICMS, particularly the formal administration of justice system, in line with international best practices and the reforms that are taking

place throughout the United Nations system. Specifically, the current review of the ICMS focuses on streamlining the processes so that internal appeal of cases can be resolved in a timely manner, improving the capacity to consider complex cases, ensuring fairness and due process.

11. In line with international best practices, the aspects of the administration of justice process within the ICMS that are currently under consideration include: (a) establishing segregated responsibilities with internal checks and balances; (b) eliminating redundancies within the ICMS, duplication of efforts, avoidable errors, possible conflict of interests, and unnecessary delays; and (c) the possibility of establishing an external chairperson for the PAHO Board of Appeals with professional expertise in conflict resolution and related processes.

12. The above issues are not unique to PAHO. These same problems have challenged the UN and its specialized agencies, and many international organizations for years. The current review of the ICMS is intended to establish more robust, independent, transparent, and professional processes, all of which are essential to the Organization's ability to remain at the forefront of the highest standards in the areas of integrity, ethical behavior, accountability, and conflict resolution.

#### **Action by the Executive Committee**

13. The Executive Committee is invited to take note of this report.

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