STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNAIDS SECRETARIAT STAFF ASSOCIATION
Additional documents for this item: none

Action required at this meeting—the Programme Coordinating Board is invited to:

Take Note of the statement by the representative of the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association (USSA)

Cost implications for the implementation of the decisions: none
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Introduction

1. The UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association’s (USSA) mission is to:
   - advocate for fair, transparent, inclusive and supportive employment conditions that enable staff to make the most positive contribution to the global HIV response;
   - ensure that conditions of employment conform to commonly accepted standards established by the ILO and WHO Staff Rules and Regulations;
   - safeguard the rights and interests of members of staff; and
   - promote staff welfare and wellbeing so that all employees, and ultimately the organization, function at peak levels in contributing to national, regional and the global HIV responses.

2. The USSA represents the rights and interests of the 738 staff around the world of which, as of April 2021, over 70% were dues-paying members of the Staff Association.

3. The USSA is governed by a Constitution, which has been ratified by all dues paying members and has an elected Executive Committee. The Executive Committee strives to maintain an open and constructive dialogue with the Senior Management Team on key issues affecting staff. The USSA’s discussions with Management are guided by principles laid out in the Agreement on Cooperation between the UNAIDS administration and the USSA which was formalized and signed with Management in 2010. This agreement commits Senior Management and the USSA to mutually and meaningfully engage in a timely and constructive manner on all issues affecting staff; to communicate openly, honestly and regularly; and to apply good faith in resolving issues.

4. As per the USSA Constitution – the Staff Association Executive Committee has 15 members elected by all dues paying members through an annual election process—seven who are Geneva-based, and eight from the field. The executive positions within the USSA Executive Committee are democratically elected by the 15 staff representatives and from May 2021 both the Chair and the Vice Chair are, for the first time, field based.

5. Since June 2004, the USSA has reported annually to the Programme Coordinating Board and on an exceptional basis during the 47th meeting of the PCB in December 2020. This report highlights key developments since the USSA’s last report to the PCB in December 2020, as well as the results of the annual USSA staff survey completed in May 2021 covering the period May 2020 through April 2021.

6. An oral statement to the Board will complement this report.

Relationships between the USSA and Management

7. The USSA has continued to have robust exchanges, and discussions both in public and in private, with the Executive Director and senior management and we take this opportunity to thank the UNAIDS Senior Leadership for their engagement and collaboration with the Staff Association since USSA’s last report to the PCB. The Staff Association looks forward to continuing, improving and strengthening the cooperation and collaboration between USSA and Management in 2021 and 2022.

8. The USSA will continue to represent staff concerns directly and clearly, and will continue to present the issues and concerns which staff communicate to the USSA through
various mediums and channels. USSA will also work with senior management in a constructive and solutions-oriented manner to the degree that this is possible.

9. In our interactions with the Executive Director and other senior managers in recent months, the USSA has underscored the importance of ensuring a stable and dignified work environment with minimum negative impact on staff as the organization moves into the more challenging, and for staff, the more frightening, part of the alignment process in the weeks and months ahead.

10. During the coming transition period, the Staff Association has prioritized issues concerning staff in its work plan related to the alignment.

11. USSA will be making use of all opportunities over the coming year to work with UNAIDS management to strengthen a supportive working environment that:

- Ensures fair and equal employment conditions for all, whether full-time, temporary or consultant staff, consistent with UNAIDS rules and regulations;
- Is focused on the organisation’s duty of care to staff physical and mental well-being especially during the upcoming change and alignment processes;
- Guarantees transparent, fair, consistent and accountable human resources management processes;
- Provides timely and accurate information on organizational changes underway making clear the logic and rationale for change;
- Makes staffing decisions in the best interests of the HIV response through competency-based staffing selection which also recognizes the importance of diversity in the workforce;
- Actively prevents all forms of incivility, harassment, sexual harassment or abuse of authority, and takes swift action when such events occur; and
- Promotes the development of staff capacities that can maximise the organisation’s positive impact on the global AIDS response.

12. USSA recognizes and welcomes a number of specific products developed jointly with Management, USSA and various staff working groups and committees over the past year through collaboration, inclusion and consultation, including (but not limited to):

- Development of the new UNAIDS policy Preventing and Addressing Abusive Conduct: Policy and Procedures Concerning Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Discrimination, and Abuse of Authority;
- Development, translation, and dissemination of the Know Your Staff Health Insurance (SHI) brief which helps ensure staff, retirees, and their dependents have easy access to important information to facilitate access to timely and quality care, in addition, to resources in case of questions/need for further support).
- First of its kind all-staff webinars on SHI in collaboration with SHI colleagues

Decision Point from 47th PCB Meeting

13. The USSA notes Decision Point 11.2 from the 47th PCB meeting requesting that the Executive Director “take note of concerns raised by Secretariat staff and to take swift actions as appropriate, reporting back on progress to the 48th PCB through the update on strategic human resources management issues including an update on the implementation of the Management Action Plan”.
14. At the time of writing this report, the USSA has not had access to the Executive Director’s Report to this 48th PCB and as such will address any issues arising from the Executive Director’s report and management update in its oral statement to the PCB.

15. USSA notes that the task of addressing the issues of abusive behaviour, harassment, incivility and abuse of authority raised by USSA in the 47th PCB meeting and clearly indicated in the global staff survey (in which, of the 113 cases reported, 61% or reported that the perpetrator was a senior manager or director) was tasked to the Executive Director by the PCB to address through this decision point.

16. USSA notes that management subsequently devolved the task of addressing these issues to the Senior Leadership Team, departments and directors, requesting that teams hold discussions and develop healthy workplace Codes of Conduct. Senior leaders also discussed the issues at Cabinet level, and individual Cabinet members produced personal commitment statements based on their own reflections and understandings of the abusive behaviour staff have experienced and the lack of staff trust in management identified in the general staff survey. USSA commends these positive initiatives but notes that it remains unclear to the majority of staff how their specific concerns will be heard and addressed, and how the lack of trust in management they expressed through the survey will be reversed. To date, the actions taken have not, according to USSA staff survey findings (shown in subsequent sections of this report and in the paragraph 17 of this report) resulted in a clear perception of positive change or of increased trust.

17. USSA staff survey feedback indicates that staff continue to feel that there has been a lack of clear and consistent messaging on the processes underway to resolve the issues raised at the 47th PCB, and continue, six months later to express very low levels of trust in management. USSA survey data showed that Only 8% of respondents fully agree that Senior Leadership leads by example with regards to creating an equal, safe and empowering workplace.

18. Six months after management’s global staff survey, the USSA survey found that 149 respondents (31%) had experienced at least one event in the workplace which left them feeling humiliated, offended, or intimidated, often by a senior manager. This is higher than was identified in the general staff survey (113 people reporting). These findings remain at extremely concerning levels.

The 2021 USSA Staff Survey

19. In order to receive feedback from staff on wellbeing and staff concerns and to guide priorities and workplan of the USSA, USSA has conducted an annual staff survey for eight years running (since 2013) and has consistently had, according to the Federation of International Civil Servant Associations (FICSA), some of the highest response rates on staff surveys in the UN system. USSA has, over these years, amassed a wealth of data and trends analysis on issues affecting staff.

20. During the development of management’s global staff survey in 2020, USSA provided seven years of data to assist in the development of management’s survey tool just as USSA had previously done to inform the development of the Management Action Plan (MAP).

21. USSA also had a number of detailed discussions with the Human Resources Management Department during the development of the global staff survey and as a result the USSA modified the USSA survey tool recently rolled out in May 2021, eliminating full sections which duplicated questions in the global staff survey, adding new
topics not covered in the global staff survey, and integrating management feedback into specific sections of the USSA survey.

22. USSA noted management’s concerns about potential confusion for staff in being asked to complete both a management and an independent annual survey spaced six months apart, fearing the possibility of creating ‘survey fatigue’. As a result, the USSA carefully considered a proposal from management to combine the USSA survey with the global staff survey.

23. Following extensive discussion and advice from independent experts on staff satisfaction survey development and use, the USSA came to the conclusion that there was significant benefit in maintaining an independent staff survey in keeping with good practice recommendations and in the best interests of USSA’s membership to continue an annual independent staff survey. Staff also told USSA that they value the fact that the USSA survey is staff developed, owned and delivered.

24. USSA appreciates management’s extensive question-by-question review of the USSA survey tool which provides good analysis and will help strengthen the USSA survey tool for 2022. This exercise will also assist in ensuring complementarity of survey tools.

25. This section provides an overview of key findings from the 2021 USSA staff survey and highlights some significant personal, professional, organizational and HIV response concerns from staff.

26. The survey covered the period from May 2020 through April 2021 and was conducted between April and May 2021. The survey had a 71% response rate, one of the highest response rates the independent USSA annual survey has garnered over its eight year history. Given COVID-19’s impact on staff, their personal situations and working modalities, the alignment process, the culture change initiative, and other processes underway at the same time, this high response rate further confirms for USSA the importance of providing an annual independent assessment.

27. Response rates, including from Geneva, regions and countries, ranged from nearly 100% of staff in one region, to 63% in another. Overall, 69% of respondents were based in country, regional and liaison offices, and 31% were based in Geneva. The following graphic provides additional details on survey respondent characteristics:
28. The 2021 USSA staff survey found that the priority issues of concern to staff are:
   - the realignment process
   - job security
   - transparency and fairness,
   - work-life balance
   - mobility, and
   - the Staff Health Insurance, including eligibility for retirees, disabled staff, or those staff whose positions have been or will be abolished.

29. The USSA annual staff survey is also used to assess USSA performance and as a planning tool. The 2021 survey found that staff believe the USSA should focus on continuing and strengthening its advocacy and engagement on issues related to fairness and transparency in the alignment process, promoting career development initiatives (including initiatives to support staff who may be displaced by the alignment process, especially our national and G staff colleagues), and the organisation’s duty of care to all staff.

**UNAIDS Alignment Exercise Process and Implementation and UCD selection**

30. Responses from the USSA annual staff survey on the alignment were varied. Overall 51% of respondents agree that the alignment process is being done transparently, and 65% of respondents outside Geneva agreed that there has been adequate consideration of risks to staff and dependent health and well-being in the alignment process arising from COVID-19 to date.

31. 48% of respondents however indicated that they didn’t know if they would be treated fairly if their position is changed or abolished in the alignment. 69% of respondents expressed concern about the timeline of the alignment process, and 73% expressed concern about adequate integration of feedback that staff provided in the overall alignment process.
32. In terms of UCD assessment, most respondents (64%) agreed that UCD assessment will improve UNAIDS and place the best qualified staff in UCD posts. However, 29% of respondents believe improvement is needed to ensure better transparency and fairness and that the UCD assessment should strive for consistency in processes (80%) now that the UCD assessment process has been piloted and implemented.

33. USSA is concerned that the current UCD recruitment process (which was underway from March through April 2021) was paused in May 2021 following completion of interviews and placement discussions. Affected applicants were notified that the halt was due to the ongoing alignment process, and uncertainties related to the organisation’s financial health. No guidance has been provided on exactly when the more than 20 applicants may learn the results of the UCD recruitment process or how the process will be affected by the alignment. This has left the affected staff members unable to make personal and family decisions on matters such as school enrollments for their children, accommodation lease extensions, and other matters with personal and financial implications and has fueled the corridor chatter that a transparent and professionalized recruitment process will be overturned.

34. USSA repeatedly raised staff concerns in 2020 on the wisdom of undertaking a full UCD assignment process with an alignment underway, and with COVID-19 impacting the potential to move a large number of staff to new duty stations. USSA further notes its concern at the significant time invested by the organization, and by some of its most senior managers, in a process that has left key positions unfilled, staff unhappy, and which has reinforced lack of trust and transparency concerns for staff.

35. During the week of 17 May 2021, and as a result of increasing expressions of concern from staff, the UNAIDS Staff Association launched a pulse survey which asked staff to express in a single word how they were feeling about the alignment process. The full word cloud image is shown below. Forty-one per cent of staff globally responded over the course of the three days of the survey. A total of 29 responses (8% of respondents) used positive language (including words such as hopeful, optimistic, confident, transparent, excited and happy); 279 staff members however, (92% of the respondents), expressed negative feelings (anxious, worried, uncertain, stressed, confused, frustrated, fearful, insecure, overwhelmed, distrustful, and more). These results, albeit impressionistic, are consistent with the findings of the USSA staff survey results on the alignment process outlined above.
36. The USSA staff survey and feedback through various other mediums continue to tell the USSA that staff members are feeling weighed down: stressed by the personal impacts of living and working through more than a year of the COVID-19 pandemic: struggling to undertake normal work duties while also engaging in the multiple strands of the organizational culture change process, an intense alignment process, and the development of the new Global AIDS Strategy. And added to all those pressures, staff have still managed to build momentum and engagement for the High-Level Meeting on AIDS, all the while fearing that they may not have a position in UNAIDS by the end of the year as a result of the alignment. These anxieties staff are experiencing were heightened as a result of the recent Townhall announcement of donor financial cuts to UNAIDS.

37. As the following graphic shows, work life balance issues (discussed in more detail later in this report) remain a key issue with 80% of respondents reporting through the USSA survey that their workloads have increase in the past 12 months, and with nearly 60% of staff saying that their performance has been impacted due to work-related stress and anxiety.
UNAIDS and the Management Response to COVID-19 Impact on Staff

38. The above graphic shows that staff continue to express general satisfaction with management’s business continuity efforts through the COVID-19 pandemic.

39. The 2021 USSA staff survey repeated the questions around COVID-19 to learn how staff are coping with impacts of the pandemic on staff performance and well-being. The vast majority of staff expressed satisfaction with management’s efforts to ensure the safety of staff and their dependents, and in exercising the organization’s duty of care. Most respondents reported high satisfaction on all questions related to COVID-19 and emergency preparedness.

40. It is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to present challenges to UNAIDS staff around the world as the pandemic enters second and third waves in different countries and access to vaccines remains uneven and inadequate. Staff survey comments and feedback indicate that the inequalities in accessing vaccinations between and amongst staff in different duty stations has added to stress and anxiety levels and impacted mental wellbeing of staff at a time when the organization is undergoing change and transition and requires staff to function at peak performance.

41. Staff expressed confidence that management has continued to ensure business continuity while allowing for flexible working arrangements so that staff could care for their own health and safety and that of their families. Comments submitted by survey respondents gave credit for these good results to Geneva as well as to the Regional Support Teams and Country Offices which quickly mobilized to respond to the rapidly escalating emergency.

42. Nearly all respondents who answered questions about COVID-19 felt they had the required knowledge to use the tools UNAIDS provided for working remotely, and 81% of respondents said that UNAIDS’ teleworking policy has supported them in dealing with their personal and family situations.
43. Eighty-five per cent (up from 80% the previous year) of survey respondents reported that the equipment and hardware that was provided by UNAIDS allowed them to work remotely and that the IT infrastructure in their duty stations was largely sufficient for remote work; 87% (up from 84% the previous year) felt that administrative processes in UNAIDS including HR, procurement, travel, and payments continued remotely without undue disruption; and 75% (a slight drop from 78% in 2019) felt that core HIV response business has been continuing even during use of remote working modalities without significant disruption.

44. More than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, respondents also shared how teleworking has impacted work, physical and mental health and overall well-being. Responses included both positive and negative aspects, such as “teleworking has impacted my work positively, I have more time to spend with my family”; “I work longer hours”; “managing teleworking with children’s learning from home is not easy”; “I often feel overwhelmed when I have to participate in several virtual meetings in a day. It increases stress.”

45. Staff communicated that there is still room for improvement, with 61% of respondents noting in the USSA 2021 survey that personal costs incurred from remote working modalities have not been adequately covered by the organization for national (both N and G) staff.

46. The Staff Association looks forward to working with management to take stock of the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic response, including the move to alternative working and convening modalities and how more extensive use of such modalities promote staff wellbeing while providing important cost-savings.

47. We draw attention to the issues around duty of care that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and will work with management to continue to advocate for better access to medical evacuation services for both international and national staff with severe medical conditions, whether resulting from COVID-19 or other life-threatening medical conditions.

48. The addition of a second Staff Counsellor for Wellbeing and Mental Health has been welcomed as a significant support for staff and 81% of staff respondents stated that UNAIDS Management’s support on duty of care specifically related to COVID-19 is adequate.

**Staff Health Insurance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHI Summary</th>
<th>27% say they are not aware of which healthcare facilities recognize SHI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9%</td>
<td>report having used the hotline with a positive experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73%</td>
<td>think services provided are comparable to other duty stations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54%</td>
<td>think the costs are the same or cheaper (up from 30% in 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56%</td>
<td>of respondents read the “know Your SHI” brief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>medical emergencies occurred in 2020 where treatment was delayed or prevented due to lack of SHI recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>report having used the hotline with a negative experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85%</td>
<td>believe online claims processing is better than paper-based system (up from 80% in 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement during COVID-19:</td>
<td>15.5% report that the claims processing time is faster since the pandemic started</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Staff Health Insurance**
49. Staff Health Insurance (SHI) issues remain high on the minds of staff, retirees, and their dependents, with survey respondents identifying it as one of the top four priority issues. Specifically, staff continue to be concerned about access to quality care, reimbursement times, and support for staff and their families living with chronic illnesses.

50. COVID-19 has spotlighted the challenges staff have in accessing health services that are an essential element of the organization’s overall duty of care for staff, their families and retirees, particularly during the response to the pandemic and through extended periods of pandemic lockdown and social distancing.

51. COVID-19 has made clear the urgent need to ensure that staff have access to facilities in their duty stations that recognize SHI. 27% of survey respondents were unaware of whether there are SHI-recognized facilities in their duty station. And even when SHI is recognized, 13% of staff have had difficulty accessing care at SHI-recognized providers (consistent with 2019 survey results) and 4.5% said that the access to care they needed was COVID-19-related.

52. Recognition of SHI has also been consistently rated “poor” or “very poor” in previous years (43% in 2019, for example).

53. There are currently over 400 existing agreements with health care providers worldwide. USSA is delighted that SHI has launched an additional network of 6,000 health care providers in Africa and the Middle East.

54. The expansion of the service provider network is critical and SHI recognition is especially important during times of crisis. Survey respondents reported 34 medical emergencies in the last 12 months where treatment was delayed or prevented due to lack of SHI recognition (up from 27 in 2019 - 10 were COVID-19 emergencies)

55. The survey also found that 31% of respondents are themselves, or have a recognized dependent, living with a chronic illness and of those who are, 54% reported that up-front, out-of-pocket expenses for treatment, diagnostics or care affected their ability to access or stay on necessary treatment. 48% said that the staff 20% co-share of costs represents a significant financial burden; 8% said a particular drug (for example, ARVs) are not available in their duty station; and 12% reported absence of direct payment (when cost is above 15% of your salary) for medicines or treatment.

56. 15% of survey respondents reported the claims processing time is faster since the pandemic started, while 35% said the time is the same. 86% reported that the online SHI claims processing is better than the paper-based system it replaced (up from 80% in 2020).

**Transparency and Fairness**

57. The Management Action Plan specified the need to review and redesign the staff mobility policy, the organization’s recruitment and workforce planning processes, and its career development modalities, including for national and G staff. USSA looks forward to assisting in these policy revisions following the alignment.

58. At the June 2019 PCB, the USSA stressed that the organization’s recruitment, promotion and mobility policies and practices are perceived by staff as lacking transparency, fairness and are enabling favoritism. Comments appended to the USSA staff survey indicate that perceptions remain unchanged and USSA renews its call for any review or revision of fundamental human resources processes to be transparent and fully
consultative, ensuring that staff representation is included in the review and development processes.

59. USSA has been pleased to have provided input on a number of issues of concern to staff in support of management action. To cite just several examples:

- USSA provided detailed reviews of the draft and final Alignment Implementation Guidelines and also independently developed a more user-friendly guide to those Guidelines for staff
- USSA participated throughout the Alignment process through the Alignment Task Team, the Senior Leadership Team, and other mechanisms that have been established.

60. USSA will continue to support management in ensuring that all staffing and other decisions are taken fairly, equitably, honestly and transparently, without patronage or favoritism. USSA’s position is clear that increasing transparency and the consistent application of rules is critical, not only in helping to ensure accountability, but in helping build trust amongst staff that these processes are and will be fair.

61. USSA has received a number of complaints from staff since our last report to the PCB regarding the hiring of external recruitments in the period leading up to the alignment which could displace a number of existing staff. External recruitments are occurring despite other processes being suspended, such as UCD recruitment and re-classification and grading review process.

62. USSA has also received a considerable number of expressions of concern regarding the number of consultancies contracted to individuals from International Civil Society to work on initiatives through the Executive Office where existing skilled and experienced staff exist inside the organisation. Such practices continue to fuel negative perceptions about transparency and fairness.

63. USSA notes with appreciation the change in the policy which allows national staff to apply for international positions, and the creation of short-term development assignments as initiatives which will contribute to skills development and career advancement.

**Incivility, Discrimination, Abuse of Authority, Harassment and Other Misconduct**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respectful Workplace Summary</th>
<th>31% (n=149) experienced &gt;0 events in the workplace which left them feeling offended, humiliated, or intimidated (43% in 2020)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>84% Say they know where to report/request support when they experience misconduct</td>
<td>26% reported the incident (same as 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38% of those who reported did so to USSA (up from 20% in 2020)</td>
<td>74% did not report the incident (same as 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse of authority and ill treatment</td>
<td>Most common reasons cited for not reporting:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of those who reported did so to a supervisor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- concern about retaliation (45%)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Incivility, Discrimination, Abuse of Authority, Harassment and Other Misconduct
64. Following the launch of the UNAIDS policy addressing harassment, including sexual harassment, discrimination and abuse of authority in 2020, 31% of respondents (down from 43% in 2020) indicated that they had experienced incidents in the workplace which left them feeling offended, humiliated, or intimidated. However, only 26% of those who experienced such incidents reported them.

65. Of those who reported, 60% (down from 68% in 2020) did so to a supervisor and 38% did so to USSA. While the absolute number of people who reported experiencing one or more incidents was 149, down from 186 in 2020 and 229 in 2019, this is still far from our goal of a respectful workplace where staff do not experience incivility, discrimination, abuse of authority, harassment or other misconduct.

66. USSA repeats its call for management to take a zero tolerance approach to incivility, quick interventions when receiving complaints, and to strengthen the engagement of the Dignity at Work Advisers, the Gender Action Plan Challenge Group, UN Plus, Young UN, UN Globe, and the Diversity Task Force as potentially critical contributors to ensuring that UNAIDS is a safe environment for all staff.

67. USSA recognizes the efforts of management in addressing sexual harassment over the past year. During the past 12 months, there were three incidents of sexual harassment reported through the USSA staff survey, compared to ten in 2019. USSA congratulates management for this excellent result and continues to call for zero tolerance on all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment, in the workplace.

68. Among those respondents that did not report the workplace incidents, more people expressed the following concerns:
   a. “I feel there is a bias against staff who raise ethical issues” (39%, up from 23%);
   b. “I was concerned about retaliation from my manager/supervisor or colleagues” (45%, up from 32%), and
   c. “I didn’t believe that corrective action would be taken” (58%, up from 34%).

69. It should be noted that following the release of the global staff survey results in early 2021, the USSA offered assistance to management through a letter to the Executive Director as follows:
We propose that you [EXD] and Cabinet meet with the USSA Executive Committee as soon as possible, as Cabinet develops its action plan. Particular issues that USSA would like to discuss at this meeting include: how the issues that staff bring to USSA contextualise the [management] survey results; concrete actions that can address the lack of confidence that staff have in senior leadership; what the results mean for alignment, as this process is underway and a source of anxiety for staff; and ensuring that staff in departments / teams / regions with particularly negative results feel safe to continue to express their views.”

70. At the time of writing this report, the USSA has had no response to these offers. These offers were repeated in discussions with senior management in late May 2021.

71. USSA also remains concerned that discrimination persists at UNAIDS. We note with particular concern that the staff survey shows that 58 people indicated that they experienced discrimination in the workplace (an increase from 54 people reporting in 2020). USSA appreciates Management’s engagements with UN Plus and the Staff Association while also investing in programmes that sensitize staff on the core issues that UNAIDS champions.

72. Advancing gender equality is integral in reaching zero discrimination. This year’s survey shows that there has been progress in addressing discrimination related to gender and gender identity (20% of survey respondents in 2020 reported at least one incident of discrimination based on gender, and 12.16% in 2021). USSA supports the full implementation of the Gender Action Plan to 2023, along with the Secretariat’s plan to implement a gender-action learning programme. The Staff Association will continue to work with management and the Gender Action Plan Challenge Group towards achieving a gender-equal and equitable workplace.

73. USSA survey results show that there has been an increase in the number of staff witnessing or experiencing incidents of abuse of authority (83 people reporting in 2021, and 64 people reporting in 2020). We urge management to provide refresher courses for existing UCDs, RST Directors and all other managers (including our most senior managers) to refresh their understanding of their responsibilities in ensuring a workplace free of harassment, bullying, abuse of authority and misconduct.

74. USSA applauds the efforts of the Culture Transformation team and staff who fully engaged in these change activities. Eighty-three percent of respondents indicated participating in at least one Culture Transformation activity. Respondents also stated that they believe UNAIDS will become an equal, safe and empowering workplace through Culture Transformation (49%) and that it will contribute to a reduction in misconduct (50%). However, respondents appear to have a more favorable opinion of supervisors than Senior Leadership with regards to leading by example and creating a
safe, equal, and empowering workplace (73% of survey respondents feel that their immediate supervisor leads by example, but only 43% felt that our senior managers do).

75. USSA notes that staff are unclear what next steps in the culture change process are planned and what performance and success indicators have been developed to help gauge the success of this work. USSA requests that management provide regular updates to staff on implementation of the Management Action Plan, the Gender Action Plan, and in addressing recommendations of the JIU report and how all these processes relate to the alignment.

Staff Workloads – Burnout and Stress

76. As mentioned in summary form earlier in this report, the 2021 Staff Survey shows that 80% (up from 73% in 2021) of respondents felt that their workloads had increased over the previous 12 months, (up from 50% 2020). 59% (up from 46% in 2020) of respondents felt that their performance suffered due to work-related stress or anxiety in the last 12 months. 82% (up from 72% in 2020) of respondents reported having performed extra hours in response to internal UNAIDS requests in the past year. It should be noted that the two main reasons for performing extra hours were to respond to internal requests and for special initiatives / priorities at the request of the organization. Responding to external requests was ranked third, indicating that a significant majority of additional work and work stress is internally generated, without the corresponding prioritization that would reduce other demands on time. 50% of respondents say there have been changes in their team that they feel increased their workload. 67% of those who said yes to this question also said they reported this issue to a supervisor with 27% of those who reported the issue said doing so led to positive change.

77. USSA continues to note with great concern the negative impacts that increasing workloads and stress have had on staff well-being, productivity, and overall organizational performance, and we reiterate our call on management to seek ways to strengthen staff support services and to better prioritize work through improved planning and workload distribution.
78. USSA notes with particular concern the existing heavy workloads being carried by our Human Resource Management colleagues due to the departure of staff in the department. These staff are facing the potential increase in their existing workloads as a result of the alignment. USSA asks that management consider the staffing needs of HRM to implement the alignment without undue stress on its staff.

79. In 2021 alone, staff have participated throughout the intensive process of developing the new Global AIDS Strategy, and staff are handling multiple assignments: core/regular work, UBRAF, High-Level Meeting on AIDS, culture transformation, and alignment, in addition to coping with COVID-19, with the numbers of referrals that USSA is making to mental health services more than doubling in the past 12 months.

80. In 2021, 44% of survey respondents said they have used one of the arrangements available under UNAIDS flexible working arrangements.

81. Staff also raised concerns regarding effects of harmful air pollution on their health and that of their dependents. 24% of respondents stated that they live in areas affected consistently or by peaks of harmful air pollution and 12% have themselves or had dependents who have suffered health consequences as a result. The majority of respondents noting that they are affected, also noted that they have incurred expenses to mitigate the impact of pollution on themselves and their dependents.

82. USSA will develop a position paper with recommendations for management to consider the most appropriate support measures for affected staff and for management to join in existing UN discussions on this important issue.
Q59: Do you think that UNAIDS should implement, and support measures (including financially) to protect and mitigate the impact of consistent or peaks of harmful air pollution on staff (as UNAIDS does in case of staff security)? (Select all that apply)

- 66% believe UNAIDS should contribute to the purchase of air purifiers, N95 masks, air pollution monitors for homes, and cars
- 69% believe UNAIDS should monitor exposure to harmful air pollution
- 50% believe UNAIDS should advocate for a review of duty station hardship classification, reduce time assigned at duty station and or shorter home leave cycle
- 35% believe UNAIDS should contribute to the cost of insulation in homes, cars

83. At the same time, 88% (up from 82% in 2020) of survey respondents reported that they are happy to go to work. This positively reflects staff commitment to UNAIDS and its mission and reinforces the importance of moving quickly to address workload and work-related stress and anxiety issues.

**Staff Development: Learning and Training Programmes**

84. USSA continues to urge management to explore opportunities for staff to undertake appropriate learning and training programmes, and for staff to be allowed adequate time within work schedules for such initiatives. USSA believes that this is an important element in addressing staff concerns about lack of opportunities for career progression and growth especially as staff face the potential of significant change resulting from the alignment process. USSA notes that the Alignment Implementation Guidelines contain provisions for capacity strengthening and skills building for staff as part of the effort to ensure staff access capacity development support if needed.

**USSA Issues, Priorities and Requests**

85. USSA recognizes that the finalization and operationalization of the organizational alignment will dominate the conversation and thinking of staff and the organization (and thus USSA) over the coming year, and USSA calls for clear, unfiltered, timely and regular communication from management on the process and impact on staff in order to allay the escalating staff anxiety about restructuring which continues unabated.

86. We note that, while there has been considerable discussion around elements of the alignment process, there is a sense expressed through staff comments appended to the USSA survey that there are also many things happening that are not being communicated with transparency, clarity and regularity to staff.

87. While staff have heard management say that the organisation’s donors require UNAIDS to be aligned to the new global HIV strategy as fast as possible, we do not believe that they would expect this to be done to the detriment of staff well-being and overall health. As such, we request management to recognize the extent to which UNAIDS staff are stressed; on the verge of burnout; or already burnt out. We call on management to offer more support to staff to allow staff to better cope with the high workload and stress perhaps in the form on time-off for staff who have been working consistently beyond their normal workloads in the past six months.
88. In addition to the many issues that will fall out of the strategy and alignment processes, USSA will continue to focus on advocating for staff on their critical concerns:

   a. fairness, inclusiveness, and transparency during the alignment and as an organizational norm;
   b. staff wellness and related SHI issues especially issues brought to light by the COVID-19 pandemic;
   c. the review and reform of the recruitment policy and mobility;
   d. zero tolerance around harassment, bullying, discrimination, sexual harassment and other forms of abuse including abuse of authority;
   e. the performance management system;
   f. remote working modalities; and
   g. professional and career development opportunities.

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