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IOM International Organization for Migration  
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations  
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

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**MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN IOM**

## MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN IOM

### Introduction

1. In November 2000, the Administration presented to the Eightieth Session of the Council a comprehensive report on human resources (HR) policy in IOM (MC/INF/242), in which the various components of the HR policy prevailing at the time were presented. Since then, IOM has given concise reports on developments in the HR field to the governing bodies as part of the Director General's annual report.
2. HR policies have remained largely unchanged and continue to be based on:  
  
... principles of fair and consistent treatment of staff members in the context of IOM's international environment and efficient project management. These policies assume that staff who are treated fairly and consistently will be a dedicated group, motivated to do the best possible work.<sup>1</sup>
3. In the ten years since the above-mentioned HR document was presented, changes have taken place both internally and externally. Consequently, the Administration has continually adapted HR policies and procedures and formulated new policies to address the evolving nature of IOM's operations. This document revisits the earlier policies and practices in light of more recent changes, identifies some of the challenges facing IOM in 2010 and highlights HR policy development areas for the coming years.
4. In February 2009, a staff satisfaction survey was conducted. The results of this survey showed that most IOM staff take pride in their work and are satisfied to work for IOM. With respect to HR implementation, staff development and staff promotion the scores were not as positive: 60 per cent of the respondents stated that HR management was not implemented objectively; 71 per cent considered that promotions were not implemented in a transparent and fair manner; and 33 per cent claimed not to have had an adequate opportunity to grow professionally over the past year (2008). These figures provided a relevant benchmark for further improvements.

### External and internal factors influencing HR

5. Owing to globalization, the volume and diversity of migratory streams have grown along with an increase in the international political attention given to migration and its influence on socio-economic development processes. As a result of this growth, IOM has significantly increased its project volume and broadened its scope of activities. Responding to Member States' requests and the growing complexity of the Organization's tasks, IOM staff must show a greater variety of skills and knowledge, sometimes of a highly specialized nature.
6. Another relevant change was the launch of the HR module of PRISM (a SAP ERP system) in January 2006. This is now an indispensable tool for managing support processes and procedures in the HR, financial and project management fields. Its successful introduction has not only enlarged the information management potential, but has also increased the need for administrative standardization and a more rigorous application of rules and procedures.

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<sup>1</sup> Human resources policy in IOM (MC/INF/242), para. 3.

7. At present, IOM is preparing for an organizational change that will take place as a result of the structural review. The change is likely to generate a certain amount of anxiety among IOM staff, but it will not affect the Organization's HR policy principles.

### **Employer of choice**

8. In order to attract and retain sufficient numbers of knowledgeable, skilled and dedicated personnel, IOM needs to be an employer of choice in the international civil servant market, by offering the following:

- (a) Competitive salaries and benefits;
- (b) Reasonable job security;
- (c) Professional growth and career development opportunities;
- (d) A work climate that enhances and sustains high-quality performance;
- (e) Fairness and transparency in management decisions.

9. IOM is also an employer that values diversity and gender equality. Since 1995,<sup>2</sup> equality of opportunity and treatment of men and women has been a guiding principle of the Organization. Gender balance representation is regularly monitored, including through the annual human resources reports<sup>3</sup> presented at the Council. Furthermore, in close collaboration with the Gender Issues Coordination, proactive strategies are put in place to ensure an equal representation of men and women in all categories and at all levels.

10. **Competitive salaries and benefits:** IOM uses the United Nations common system as the reference for its staff employment conditions. The Organization often has to compete for projects with certain non-governmental organizations or private sector groups that do not apply this system and can occasionally develop and operate projects at a lower cost than IOM. This can put pressure on the appropriate and consistent application to all staff of the IOM Staff Regulations and Rules (SRR).

11. In its efforts to retain high-quality staff, IOM frequently finds itself in competition with United Nations agencies, whose core funding allows them not only to offer the full benefits of the United Nations common system, usually at a higher grade equivalent, but also a significantly higher degree of job security.

12. In the field of HR, the rigorous application of projectization has its drawbacks. It regularly gives rise to unintended inequalities in the application of the SRR owing to funding differences between Field Offices. These differences in employment conditions are particularly apparent for local staff.

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<sup>2</sup> MC/1853 (Staff and programme policies on gender issues) of 7 November 1995.

<sup>3</sup> MC/INF/295 (Report on human resources management) of 15 October 2009.

13. The proposed policy developments in the area of salaries and benefits are as follows:
- To further harmonize and standardize employment conditions (salaries and benefits) for General Service staff;
  - To further harmonize the SRR;
  - To further train Chiefs of Missions (COMs) and Resource Management Officers (RMOs) in the proper application of the SRR;
  - To update administrative manuals.
14. **Reasonable job security:** IOM is essentially a project-executing organization. Therefore, caution is still required in offering long-term job security to its staff in the form of permanent contracts. At the same time, it must be able to retain its qualified staff members who have proven to be very valuable to the Organization. In order to overcome this dilemma, the policy of recent years has been to concentrate on a consistent and transparent approach in the awarding of different types of contracts, describing clearly the conditions of eligibility for more secure contracts.<sup>4</sup>
15. In line with recent developments elsewhere, the awarding of regular contracts is now subject to conditions that are more selective. At the same time, the two-year fixed-term contract has been introduced as an enlargement of job security within the area of fixed-term contracts.
16. The proposed policy developments in the area of job security are as follows:
- To ensure that managers issue special short-term contracts for the actual total duration of the foreseen funding of a project;
  - To ensure the prospect of progressively better job security with continued satisfactory employment with the Organization.
17. **Professional growth and career development opportunities:** In a professional and dynamic working environment such as IOM's, it is not the salary level alone, or the benefit package, that constitutes the main appeal of the Organization. Quite often opportunities for professional growth and broadening of experience are highly valued. Therefore, staff development has always been an important feature of the HR policy.
18. In 1997, IOM established the Staff Development and Learning Unit as part of the Human Resources Management Division (HRM) under the Department of Resources Management. In 2000, it operated with a budget of CHF 640,000.<sup>5</sup> A staff development strategy was formulated, and training projects were developed every year in order to improve the skills and competencies of staff and to develop new skills according to the changing needs of the Organization.

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<sup>4</sup> The recently issued IOM policy on contracts provides for two main types of contracts: regular (indefinite) contracts and special contracts. The special contracts can be divided into two main types: (1) fixed-term contracts, namely one-year fixed-term contracts and two-year fixed-term contracts, both being contracts of a limited duration issued on the basis of the full Staff Regulations and Rules; and (2) special short-term contracts (up to nine months) of limited duration based on the conditions described in the contract itself. Both types of contracts can be extended.

<sup>5</sup> The 2010 budget is CHF 656,000 – plus USD 100,000 in Discretionary Income.

### ***Rotation***

19. In addition to the staff learning strategy, and as part of a drive to broaden staff experience and enhance flexibility, in 2008 IOM started the implementation of a systematic process of mandatory rotation for staff in the Professional category. This is intended to serve both the individual staff member and the Organization. The main objectives of this process for staff members and the Organization are as follows:

- To broaden staff experience and career prospects by providing exposure to different types of assignments at different duty stations;
- To share the burden among Professional staff of working at different types of duty stations;
- To share the knowledge and experience gained in different assignments for the benefit of colleagues and the Organization.

20. The new policy has been met in general with a positive response among staff members. It is perceived to open up new opportunities and create positive challenges. The main challenge for the Organization is the consistent and transparent application of the basic rotation policies and principles, as well as ensuring that a sufficient number of funded positions are available for rotation.

21. Owing to the projectized nature of IOM, only a limited number of staff members eligible for rotation leave a fully funded post behind, which means that some posts cannot be filled owing to the non-availability of further funding.

22. The proposed policy developments in the area of professional growth and career development are as follows:

- To re-introduce and improve a performance appraisal instrument;
- To further concentrate staff training and learning activities on such key IOM positions as COMs, (R)RMOs, Project Development Officers, and so on;
- To improve and refine the rotation process so that it becomes a high-quality instrument for career and organization development.

23. **Work climate:** The overall work climate at IOM is considered positive and conducive to a consistent high-level output of staff. Some cases of inappropriate staff behaviour have affected the work climate negatively and appropriate measures have been taken to redress the situation.

24. IOM has several instruments that regulate the work climate by setting the standards of behaviour of staff members towards each other and towards third parties. The Standards of Conduct, introduced in 2001, is one of these instruments.<sup>6</sup>

25. The Policy for a Respectful Working Environment was introduced in 2002 and updated in 2007.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The Standards of Conduct provide concise and readily accessible guidelines for staff conduct which reflect the status and role of IOM staff as international civil servants and enhance and advance the integrity of the Organization.

<sup>7</sup> The policy provides clear guidelines on how to deal with cases of harassment and abuse of authority as and when they occur. It also gives clarification on relevant terms and procedures for taking both informal and formal complaint action.

26. In addition to these instruments, in April 2009 the Organization introduced the Policy on Reporting Irregular Practices, Wrongdoing and Misconduct, otherwise known as the “Whistleblower policy”.<sup>8</sup>

27. The proposed policy developments in the area of improvements in the work climate are as follows:

- To include the topic of improvements in the work climate in the core training courses;
- To keep IOM staff informed on the resolution of cases related to inappropriate staff behaviour, while maintaining the confidentiality of the persons involved;
- To set measurable standards for a healthy work climate.

28. **Fairness and transparency:** In 2009, HRM worked closely with the Ombudsperson and the Staff Association Committee (SAC) to ensure that “perceived” unfairness either in cases of administrative or managerial behaviour towards a staff member is addressed in an appropriate manner, and that the application of rules and policies is consistent and fair.

29. At the same time, the Organization has retained the flexibility to take exceptional measures when fully justified by the circumstances. Also, in such cases, care has been taken to ensure transparency in terms of how and why certain exceptions are granted.

30. In order to ensure transparency while maintaining confidentiality, it is important for IOM to adopt a communication strategy towards IOM’s community at large, which enhances a more positive perception of the Organization’s fairness.

31. The proposed policy developments in the area of fairness and transparency are as follows:

- To ensure consistency in the application of the SRR by keeping adequate records of their application and possible exceptions in the past;
- To introduce counselling facilities for staff through which policies can be explained and signals of certain policies working out unfairly can be received by the Administration, and not only via the Ombudsperson or the SAC;
- To improve the communication of the policy measures taken to all staff.

### **IOM policy on Associate Experts**

32. IOM currently has Associate Expert agreements with 16 countries and benefits from having young professional experts provided by Member States for one, two and sometimes three years. These experts are a vital resource for the Organization and supplement its operations in diverse technical and operational areas at various duty stations. At the same time, these assignments are “learning-driven” and provide the Associate Expert with an opportunity to gain significant experience in an international environment.

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<sup>8</sup> Part of a healthy work climate is the Organization’s ability to identify and respond to cases of wrongdoing and misconduct, which negatively affect the work climate. In order to protect those staff members who wish to report such cases, this policy was introduced to make it easier for them to do so.

33. In recent years it has been possible to attain a retention rate of about 70 per cent after the third year, which demonstrates the importance that IOM assigns to the programme. The professional growth of the Associate Expert is ensured by the structured supervision and performance management system from which he or she benefits.

34. In the event that IOM retains an Associate Expert after the third year, which depends mainly on the availability of a suitable funded position, he or she becomes an IOM staff member and enjoys the same conditions of service as other international staff of the Organization, as well as the same obligations.

### **IOM policy on hiring nationals of non-Member States**

35. The Organization's policy on hiring the nationals of non-Member States is in accordance with Article 20, paragraph 3, of the IOM Constitution, which states that: "Efficiency, competence and integrity shall be the necessary considerations in the recruitment and employment of the staff which, except in special circumstances, shall be recruited among the nationals of the Member States of the Organization, taking into account the principle of equitable geographical distribution."

36. Another relevant regulation in this area is IOM Staff Regulation 4.7 (Promotion policy), which states that: "Without prejudice to the recruitment of the best available talent at all levels, the fullest regard shall be had, in filling vacancies, to the qualifications and experience of persons already in the service of the Organization".

37. Lastly, the Report on human resources management (MC/INF/295) submitted to the Ninety-eighth Session of the Council showed that out of the 1,093 Professional Staff employed by the Organization, 88 were from non-Member States.

### **Concluding remarks**

38. The policies described above are likely to bring IOM further towards the overall aim of being an attractive and fair employer where staff wish to (continue to) work in fulfilling the Organization's current mandate and help in shaping IOM's mandate for the future.

39. This can be sustained only if HR policies are recognized as a strategic component in IOM's management and when they are given, organizationally and institutionally, a place reflecting their strategic value.

40. The IOM Administration is committed to providing high-quality HR services that strengthen and guide IOM staff, as well as the Administration itself, in serving the international community in a professional and dedicated manner. In order to be able to achieve this, it is necessary for HRM to be well staffed and resourced. In the immediate future, it will be essential to strengthen the staffing of HRM.