

"DUAL CAREER AND STAFF MOBILITY PROGRAMME"

Mrs. Petra Ten Hoop-Bender, Human Resources Programme Coordinator of the UN, Geneva

Mrs. Petra Ten Hoop-Bender, coordinator of the UN Dual-Career and Staff Mobility (DC&SM) program, explained to the EUFASA delegates the UN spouses' employment policy and the staff mobility plan.

UN employees are confronted with mobility i.e. many changes and field assignments before they come home to H.Q. The UN is not fully aware that behind its employees there are family units who pay a high price for this mobility. Especially amongst younger couples, the desire to keep up dual careers often lead to not considering a job at UN or leaving it. This has led the UN organizations, in July 2004, to launch a "*Joint Guidance Note on Expatriate Spouse Employment*". Its main goals being the harmonization of spouse employment policies, setting up and strengthening the sustainability of Local Expatriate Spouse Associations, increasing access to work permits and improving access to career development.

The UN has also set up a *UN Staff Mobility website* with information on family life in host countries, how to prepare before leaving, bulletin boards, housing, links of people who can help find a job, write a CV, cultural issues. It also gives the possibility of receiving counselling during and after their assignment (70 countries covered by website, and information on 40 local associations). Its main focus being strengthening local spouses associations and career development, to make sure that the time of an assignment is not a dead time for spouses but can be used either as a job opportunity but also as an opportunity to further personal development by studying, volunteering or networking in countries with no work permit. Local spouses associations can also develop their own website inside the general website if they do not have the capacity for themselves (UN has created a specific guide for this purpose).

LESA (Local Expatriate Spouse Associations) serves as a link with both UN Coordinator and Country Team, addresses issues of work permits, helps families settle into their new duty station, produces and updates country-specific material for publication on the website and networks locally within and outside UN. Team is composed totally by volunteers, guided by two people of HQ secretariat. Biggest and most helpful LESA being the one set up at HQ Geneva. It has published guidelines on how to set up your own company and take it with you, which, with today's technologies, is the best bet.

Recently a *Global Expatriate Spouse Association* has been created in order to make their voices heard within the UN even in times of budget restrictions. It brings the 40 LESAs together.

Mrs. Ten Hoop-Bender expressed her desire to know more about EUFASA, join forces and exchange information on pragmatic things that can be worked on together.

During the Q&A session, cooperation between UN global expatriate associations or local associations and EUFASA was raised and answered positively as well as links with family officers where they exist.