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Date: August 20, 2024 at 12:11:23 PM EDT
To: VOA Notices <voanotices@voanews.com>
Subject: VOA Director's Message to Staff - August 20, 2024

Colleagues,

Last week, some of you may have seen job postings for new Senior Executive Service (SES) positions overseeing the Persian, Africa and Latin America Divisions. We will soon be posting additional SES positions overseeing the East Asia and Pacific, Eurasia, South and Central Asia and new China Divisions, as well as the News Center. This is part of an important and ongoing initiative I am implementing to strengthen the leadership structure of VOA. I would like to take a moment to explain the rationale for this initiative, which started before I arrived at VOA—but which I strongly support.

In June 2023, USAGM management applied to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for additional SES position authority. Under federal-wide OPM rules, agencies are entitled to a set number of SES positions as determined by OPM. USAGM believed there were many positions, particularly within VOA, which had the requisite complexity, level of supervision and authority commensurate with SES positions. USAGM filed lengthy applications seeking SES authority for 11 additional positions. In February 2024, OPM granted USAGM authority for six additional SES positions.

USAGM management decided to take those six additional SES slots and re-purpose two USAGM slots to allow for eight new SES positions at VOA, which we have decided to use to lead seven divisions and the News Center. Please remember that VOA currently has only three SES positions, a small number compared to our size and fewer than our parent agency—a point that prompted Amanda to initiate the process of securing additional positions from OPM.

Once approved, HR worked with VOA to finalize the Position Descriptions and vacancy announcements for the newly designated SES positions. This involved obtaining various approvals under USAGM guidelines and procedures. Now that this process has been finally completed, VOA is posting the eight new SES vacancies on USAJOBS, and they will be open to both federal and non-federal candidates. We hope to fill these positions over the next several months.

Posting these positions is in no way a reflection on the current VOA Division Directors. While we are casting a wide net for well-qualified candidates, I am encouraging all persons who are currently filling these positions to apply for these SES vacancies.

I strongly believe that filling these SES positions will benefit Voice of America now and in the future in many ways. Having these positions established in the Senior Executive Service will further raise these positions' profile and recognize the important and complex work of a VOA division director. It will also help to recruit future leaders at VOA who may be more likely to apply for these positions given their increased status and compensation levels. It will also ensure that compensation for these highly specialized positions is aligned with comparable positions throughout the federal government.

I recognize that VOA has just been through some difficult budget decisions, and it is likely we are facing another tough budget year. While I am sensitive to any budget impact, it is more important to strengthen VOA for the future. We may not have the opportunity again for some time.

Sincerely,

Mike