

## For an Independent AFP that Respects Its Staff



The election of the two staff representatives on the AFP board is the only company vote that takes place worldwide. I urge all of you to take this opportunity to assert our shared commitment to the agency’s basic mission, which is to ensure that citizens all over the world receive news that is independent of both political and financial interests.

I believe that to fulfil its essential general interest mission, AFP needs not only financial but also and above all **human** resources. Plans to modernise the agency should not be pushed through against the wishes of staff; they should flow from a strategic plan that enjoys the widest possible support from all of us.

That is not the path chosen by current AFP management, which is seeking to force through its views. Although the agency needs well-staffed and well-financed technical and administrative services if its journalists are to be free to carry out their **mission of collecting and providing news**, the CEO and his team are bent on cutting AFP’s core asset: its staff.

Despite the high priority that management proclaims for new services such as video, the staff involved have to contend with penny-pinching, insecure labour contracts and general improvisation. Budget cuts wreak havoc all down the line, and there is worse to come. Management’s strategic plans call for new downward pressure on the wages bill and operating costs. Non-journalist staff have no guarantee that their jobs will survive.

## New Rights for All

As a member of the SUD-AFP (Solidarity, Unity & Democracy) trade union, I fight to protect the social and economic benefits of AFP staff and to win improvements in our collective rights.

A key step forward in that overall battle occurred in 2011: after a long legal battle between my union and AFP management, the French Constitutional Council ruled that the election of staff representatives to the board should be open to **all AFP staff, whatever their nationality**. That is why the election takes place worldwide; the only staff still excluded are those working for the German subsidiary.

The struggle for new rights is by no means over, particularly for staff working outside France. We need to win industrial relations standards that are common to all, and create democratically elected institutions all over the world on which staff can be represented to put their views to management.

On another front, the conflict with the European Union over the French government’s contribution to AFP’s finances raises the spectre of yet more attacks on the agency’s founding statutes. I know we can count on the sound judgement of AFP staff, who have always been ready to mobilise to defend the agency’s founding principles, its independence and worldwide reach.

If you choose me as your representative, my votes during board meetings will be based on the shared interests of staff. To that end, I will regularly meet with the trade unions and staff delegates and will act in close consultation with the journalists’ rep.

Benoît CHATORRIER

May 23, 2014

[benoit.chatorrier@afp.com](mailto:benoit.chatorrier@afp.com)

*I am 39 years old. I started out at AFP in 2002 as an operative in the payroll department at the Paris HQ. In 2008 I moved on to a white-collar managerial post in the same service. I have served as an elected shop-steward and a union-appointed delegate. I am currently an elected member of the Health and Safety Committee (CHSCT).*