

UNITED NATIONS STAFF UNION
SYNDICAT DU PERSONNEL DE L'ORGANISATION DES NATIONS
UNIES

45th STAFF COUNCIL/45ème CONSEIL DU PERSONNEL

Minutes/Actes

Meeting No: 45/12
Date: 29 June 2017
Time: 1:30 – 2:30 pm
Venue: Library Building 3F Conference room
Quorum: 15/16 Units

45th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate at 1:30 pm with Deputy Chair F Doulton in the Chair and Secretary A. Arauz taking notes. The meeting was recorded and a copy deposited with the UNSU Administrator.

1. Adoption of the Agenda

Unit 27 Rep. requested to add to the Agenda the two topics that had been the subject of a heated email exchange, namely the authorisation of funds for the President's first trip to Entebbe and the Audit report. It was agreed to consider them under item 4 (UNSU Finances). The Chairman requested to move item 5 (Farewell to Staff Council Deputy Chair and election of new Deputy Chair) to item 3. The modified agenda was adopted unanimously.

2. Adoption of Minutes of previous Council meeting

Unit 39 Rep. inquired about the absence of a standing point on the situation with Security on the Agenda, as decided at a previous meeting. The Secretary acknowledged the mistake and agreed to include it in future.

Previous minutes were adopted unanimously.

3. Farewell to Staff Council Deputy Chair and election of new Deputy Chair

Outgoing Deputy Chair Mr. Fred Doulton delivered a farewell statement expressing his appreciation to the Staff Council and encouragement for future work. Various Council members thanked Mr. Doulton for his contribution to the Staff Union over the years and wished him the best in his future endeavours.

The Chair called for nominations to the position of Deputy Chair. The Assistant Secretary nominated Mr. Ondre Baronette (Unit 33) and Unit 25 Rep. nominated Andraz Melansek (Unit 17). The President challenged Mr. Melansek's eligibility on grounds of his term of employment. Mr. Melansek clarified the situation and the challenge was dismissed. He further questioned how the President had obtained access to his employment details.

Mr. Melansek was elected with eight votes. Mr. Baronette received six votes. Mr. Melansek asked Mr. Doulton to continue to chair the meeting.

4. Executive Board report and President's report and summary of communications

The Assistant Rapporteur submitted to the Council an initiative considered within the Executive Board to combine the Executive Board report and minutes, which incurred in repetition. The Secretary called for the EB to report to the Council on the same week's meeting. Unit 6 Alt. pointed out that the Council did not need to see the EB minutes, but did require a timely report. The Chair suggested that the issue be taken up by the Working Group on review of the Statutes, since the EB minutes and report were both statutory requirements.

The Secretary inquired about the President's summary of communications. The President replied she had nothing to report, since she had held no meetings during the week.

5. UNSU finances (including trip to Entebbe and Audit)

In absence of the Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer took up the item. On the trip to Entebbe, she referred to her recent email on the matter. The Audit report had been circulated to the Council. Auditors had presented the report to the EB and had submitted their bill. They had made some recommendations, aside from which everything was in order. The former President and Treasurer had signed a management note taking note of the recommendations. The note was also submitted to the Audit Committee, who had no comments. She suggested a meeting with the Audit Committee could be arranged if Council members had further questions.

Unit 6 Alt. requested that in future important Council issues be brought to meetings and not addressed via email. She requested information on UNSU expenses from the Assistant Treasurer, who replied that she could not provide them since she was not being provided access to the information.

With regards to recent emails, Unit 39 Rep. made reference to the STA governing the acceptable use of communications in the Organisation, pointing out that certain expletives and accusations regarding race and religion were identified as prohibited conduct. Expressions in that tone by persons holding positions on the Council, regardless of whether we agree or disagree, could not be tolerated.

The Assistant Treasurer stressed the importance of paying the auditors for services rendered. The Executive Board had agreed to do so and asked the Treasurer to proceed with a Resolution, which the Treasurer objected to. Unit 6 Alt. believed the Treasurer's concerns were reasonable and that a meeting with the Audit Committee should be arranged. Unit 25 Rep. requested a legal opinion on the risk of withholding payment.

The Council voted by show of hands to grant the floor to an observer in the room. Egor Ovcharenko (observer) explained that the audit was commissioned by the 44th Council. Partial staggered payments were made. If the audit was correct, the 45th Council should proceed with payment.

The Chairman submitted a motion to organize a meeting with the Audit Committee within a week. The motion passed with 12 votes in favour, none against, and three abstentions.

Regarding the first trip to Entebbe, Unit 27 Rep. regretted the absence of the Treasurer in view of divergent positions. He suggested postponing the item until the Treasurer was present. Unit 26 Rep., with regards to the Treasurer's recent calculations circulated by email, inquired about the figure of USD 60,000, since the second resolution extending the trip to 6 people had authorised a final figure of USD 48,000.

The Secretary moved to request the Treasurer to submit a resolution with the final closed accounts for retroactive approval of the Entebbe detour. The motion passed with 12 votes in favour, one against, and one abstention.

6. Resolution 12 on Staff Day

The Second Vice President presented the Draft Resolution with details on the organisation of activities. The Secretary General had agreed to support the event, providing security, cleaning, use of the Express Bar, etc. Income would derive from the raffle, from selling drinks at the ball and from tickets for SM's guests. A car would be bought, after consulting with missions to obtain favourable terms.

The resolution passed with 10 votes in favour, two votes against and two abstentions.

7. Resolution 13 on retaining legal counsel

Unit 25 Rep. inquired about the potential travel costs incurred by the legal counsel. The President explained the terms, which were extremely favourable. Travel would be incurred only when strictly required, and Ms. Artigas' frequent presence in New York could be taken advantage of for face-to-face meetings.

Unit 20 Rep. expressed concerns about the process applied. Unit 6 Alt. endorsed Ms. Artigas but felt the Union also needed a litigator. Unit 39 Rep. considered Ms. Artigas was the best person for the position. However, he called for official hiring rules to be applied, with a public announcement and a competitive process. Unit 20 Rep. added that the requirements should be determined first and then a candidate found, not the other way around. The Chair asked about previous Council experience in this kind of procedure. The Assistant Treasurer explained that the previous Council had established a committee to examine CVs.

After a debate on the best way to proceed, Unit 34 Alt. moved to adopt the resolution with an amendment to limit the engagement to 3 months, while a regular process was pursued. The resolution thus amended passed with nine votes in favour, four votes against and two abstentions.

The meeting adjourned at 2:50 pm.

Items remaining on the agenda for the following meeting were:

8. Liaison Officers to AFT (draft resolution)
9. Update on DM briefing on GSDM
10. Update on the Staff Pension Committee
11. Brainstorming on working groups / liaison officers / contact points
12. Decision on Summer recess
13. Any Other Business