

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

45th STAFF COUNCIL/45ème CONSEIL DU PERSONNEL

Minutes/Actes

Meeting No: 45/14
Date: 13 July 2017, 17 July 2017
Time: 1 :15 – 2 :30 pm
Venue: Room 9, Room 2724
Quorum: 11/16 Units, 9/16 Units

45th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate at 1:15 pm with Deputy Chair A. Melanšek 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

Item 6 “Briefing by Audit Committee” was moved to number 2. Unit 6 Alt. pointed out that the standing item “Unit Issues” was missing. Unit 25 Rep. requested an item “Communication”.

2. Briefing by members of the Audit Committee

The members of the Audit Committee (B. Valdes and S. Safronov) congratulated members of the Council on their election. They explained the procedure for selecting the audit company, based on their submission of three options to the Council. The Audit Committee considered the results were good (better than previous audits). Minor errors had been corrected, and the audit provided a good basis to move forward. In reply to questions from the floor, the Audit Committee explained: that it was the Audit Committee who selected the company; that a year-by-year audit of the 5-year period would have been more expensive than a bulk audit; that companies were requested to bid for the full period; that they did not feel that a bulk audit implied a loss of information or transparency; that the Audit Committee’s mandate was to recommend an Auditor, not to engage in procurement; Mr. Valdes considered that a single audit for an entire mandate was sufficient, while Mr. Safronov considered it better to have an annual audit; due to unfortunate circumstances, the decision was adopted by the Council, on the Audit Committee’s recommendation, to commission a single report for the entire outstanding period; that the training that appeared in the accounts was not provided to them, but to the previous Audit Committee.

3. Adoption of Minutes of previous Council meetings

The President requested that all her statements be recorded in the Minutes. The Chairman explained that minutes were in disarray after the transfer of the role of Secretary. The Secretary explained that the Minutes are not a verbatim report and can therefore not include every statement made, though there was a margin for members to

correct omissions ex post. He would research the issue and submit to Council a specific policy. In the meantime, he was not submitting minutes for meetings 12 and 13. There were therefore no minutes pending adoption.

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

The Executive Board report was retracted due to a discrepancy between versions adopted and submitted. The Treasurer underlined the importance of expense decisions being recorded in the EB minutes.

5. UNSU finances

The Treasurer announced 3 updates: 1) At 30 June 2017 the MetLaw plan had received 234 applications. The deadline was extended due to last-minute requests. 250 applications were expected by the deadline. In terms of dues-paying members, there were 900 as of 30 June 2017, and 1,020 were submitted to payroll for the end of July. 2) The Union had acquired QuickBooks and he had held a successful meeting with the former Treasurer, who he thanked for her assistance in transferring accounts. On return from recess he would be in a position to provide monthly statements, which would be useful when it came time to audit. 3) He was waiting for the Staff Day Committee to open an account in order to transfer the authorized USD 50,000.

Unit 25 Rep. inquired about the Treasurer's statement at the General Meeting whereby membership needed to be doubled in order to square the budget. Even by doubling the membership, revenues would not increase by a sufficient margin. The Treasurer replied that not all staff members made the same contribution. He also underlined the need for the Council to be invested in increasing membership. The MetLaw program had been effective in attracting members, but further efforts were required. Unit 6 Alt. called for an increase of the suggested scale and for the subscription form to be attached to all broadcasts. The Treasurer called on the Working Group on improving the Union's finances to contribute ideas.

It was confirmed that the pending signatures would be added to the UNFCU account forthwith.

6. Security

On the matter of Integration, Unit 39 Rep reported that the USG for DFS had stated that he would assume delegated authority and that priority on missions would be given to permanent and continuing contracts. Of 297 DSS staff members in the field, only 12 have permanent and continuing contracts - the rest will be covered by DFS, excluding DSS staff members currently employed by UNDP. In reply to a question, he stressed the importance of the Union representing staff's concerns before OHRM and DM with regards to a misguided project.

Unit 39 Rep regretted the lack of support from Leadership after attempted retaliation from USG Drennan. The President stated that she remained available to engage Mr. Drennan, but that she needed the facts in writing. Unit 39 Rep declared his lack of confidence in the Leadership. Unit 28 Alt. called for an informal meeting on internal communications.

Unit 25 Rep. moved to suspend the meeting and resume on Monday 17 in order to cover pending agenda items.

The meeting was suspended at 2:40 pm.

The meeting resumed at 1:15 on Monday 17 July in CR 2724 with Deputy Chair A. Melanšek in the Chair and M. Pickles taking notes. The meeting was quorate with 9 Units present.

7. Unit Issues

Unit 27 Rep. provided an update on the review of DGACM CTO policy. A staff member in unit 27 had raised a concern about discrepancies in the application of CTO policy between different offices and departments, and between different categories of staff. He would seek input from other departments/units on their policy practice so as to ensure fairness (via email). Unit 6 Alt. queried whether CTO applied to P staff and was informed that it does in DGACM. Unit 39 Rep. reminded the council that CTO is not merely a policy, rather it is a staff rule.

Unit 28 Rep. shared that staff are beginning to seek her out for advice. She has been able to help one colleague who was given the wrong grade upon conversion of contract. She hoped to convene a unit meeting in the next couple of weeks, depending on staff absences. Meetings with the Director and the USG were still pending.

Unit 17 Alt. provided feedback from the first townhall meeting with the new USG. Said meeting addressed the issue of Flexible Workspace (flexspace). Unit 39 Rep recalled the precedents of USG's Ladsous (DPKO) and Feltman (DPA), both of whom firmly resisted the introduction of flexspace. He suggested that the new USG be asked to substantiate/explain this sudden change of heart for the department, pointing out the dichotomy between the cost of flexspace and an 8% cut to the DPKO budget. He also suggested reminding USGs that staff had a right to be consulted on the matter. The Assistant Treasurer volunteered to review the relevant GA resolution(s) and the provisions on restrictions on amount of hot-desking, as well as previous Council action. She also recalled that the GA had mandated a study on impact of flexspace on output and efficiency before flexspace was implemented and which she did not believe had actually happened. The Deputy Chair suggested that flexspace be a future Council agenda item.

Unit 6 Alt. reported back on the alleged conflict of interest issue pertaining to herself and I. Faye participating as members of the UNJSPF Board. The UNSPC (UN Staff Pension Committee) unilaterally decided, without the staff reps present, to refuse to allow Ms. Rockcliffe and Mr. Faye to participate. They had appealed the decision, but the initial tribunal they took the case to declined to hear it, claiming the issue was not within their jurisdiction.

This effectively gave the UNSPC carte blanche to do as it pleased. They were vigorously pursuing the case on merits but this process would take 2 – 3 months. Ms. Rockcliffe would be travelling to the Pension Board meeting in Vienna in her capacity as the appointed CCISUA advisor. Her travel costs would be met by CCISUA. She submitted to the Council a resolution requesting USD 9000 to finance the travel of Mr. Faye, acknowledging that the costs should be met by CCISUA and/or UNISERV, but that given the lack of time she would request UNSU to provide the funds, to be hopefully reimbursed by CCISUA or UNISERV in the future. The Chair noted a lack of consensus on voting on the resolution at the meeting. The resolution was withdrawn.

Unit 29 Rep. suggested that UNSU wage a press campaign on the issue, recommending a monthly meeting be set up with journalists. Unit 6 Alt. suggested that the UNSU rally a march after the SG's townhall and emphasised that the UNSU needs to speak up. Unit 28 Rep suggested that the best first step would be an informal meeting to brainstorm ideas on raising the voice/profile of UNSU.

The Assistant Treasurer shared the information that the SG would be meeting via VTC with the leadership of all UN unions on Thursday 20 July and asked why we had not been informed nor invited to participate by Leadership. Unit 28 Rep. noted that Leadership failed to raise the issue of the invitation at the 14th meeting of the staff council and emphasised that the leadership's lack of consultation with the council was unacceptable. Unit 6 Alt. stated that AFT liaison reps could have helped with planning for the meeting between the Leadership and the SG and queried whether leadership were aware of the appointment of the 4 Staff Council – AFT liaison officers.

8. Communication

The council adopted the following motion:

The Staff Council,

Expresses its disappointment that no-one from the Leadership of the United Nations Staff Union (UNSU) participated in the official resumed 14th meeting of the Staff Council, at which the issue of communication was a specific agenda item;

Further expresses its disappointment that the Staff Council was neither informed about nor consulted with regard to the meeting between the Secretary General and the leaderships of all United Nations staff union organisations scheduled to take place via VideoTele Conference (VTC) on Thursday 20th July 2017 in advance of the Secretary General's townhall meeting;

Requests that members of the Staff Council participate at the aforementioned meeting.

9. - The use of Staff categories in the UN and related future ICSC/GA plans

The Council adopted the following motion:

The Staff Council

Requests that the Leadership of the United Nations Staff Union (UNSU) provide the Staff Council with a full written report on its meeting with the National Staff Association (NASA) held in Entebbe, Uganda, from 3rd – 7th July 2017.

Further requests that the Leadership provide the Staff Council with a copy of the relevant General Assembly (GA) resolution(s) on the nationalisation of posts.

10. Tasks related to the Council Work Plan

The Deputy Chair would circulate the tasks under the Staff Council work plan via email and request members to volunteer.

11. AOB

The Assistant Treasurer referred to the payment still pending to the auditors and informed the Council that all the requirements had been met for payment. She suggested that the Council formally request payment of the outstanding balance.

Unit 39 Rep. suggested requiring that all Leadership and/or EB decisions/actions be recorded in writing.

The Deputy Chair shared that new Administrative Instructions (AI) on flexspace and on downsizing were being prepared. The Assistant Treasurer agreed to look into the matter further.

The meeting adjourned at 2:33 pm.