

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

45th STAFF COUNCIL/45ème CONSEIL DU PERSONNEL

Minutes/Actes

Meeting No: 45/20
Date: 28 September 2017
Time: 1:15 pm
Venue: CR B
Quorum: 12/16 Units

45th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate at 1:15 pm with 12 units present. The Deputy Chairman held the Chair and the Secretary took notes. The meeting was recorded and a copy deposited with the UNSU Administrator.

1. Adoption of the Agenda

The Agenda was adopted with no changes.

2. Adoption of Minutes of previous Council meeting

Adoption of the minutes was postponed due to late submission.

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

The Executive Board report was received. VP1 believed the President was working on her report and summary of communications.

4. UNSU finances

The Assistant Treasurer was waiting on some final receipts to close the Staff Day accounts.

The Treasurer drew attention to the draft resolution RES STC/45/18 for the establishment of a UN staff relief committee for victims of hurricanes Irma and Maria in Antigua and Barbuda and the Commonwealth of Dominica. Council members inquired about the procedure to establish relief committees, and why some islands were covered and others not. VP2 explained that committees were established at the request of staff members. Regarding Puerto Rico, Council members would encourage staff members to initiate a committee. RES STC/45/18 was adopted unanimously and transmitted to Leadership for action.

5. Security

No report was submitted in absence of Unit 39.

6. Long term absence of the Chair of Staff Council

Unit 14 Rep. had stepped down as Council Chair. The Deputy Chair reported that Polling Officers had been appointed and were working towards holding by-elections. Unit 25 Rep. suggested waiting until the Council was completed to renew the position of Chair. Unit 30 moved to proceed to vote immediate. The Council declined a motion to delay the election of Chair by 6 votes against, 3 in favour and 3 abstentions.

Having decided to proceed with the election, Unit 13 Alt. nominated Camille McKenzie (Unit 13 Rep.). Unit 25 Rep. nominated Kathryn Kuchenbrod (Unit 28 Rep.) and also volunteered himself.

Given the absence of one of the nominees, Unit 23 Alt. moved to postpone the vote to the following week. The motion was defeated by 7 votes against to 5 in favour.

Given some member's objections to the nomination of an absent member and concerns regarding precedent on the matter, the Council voted on the question: *Should nominations to posts be accepted on behalf Council members not present at a meeting?* The outcome was 1 in favour, 5 against and 5 abstentions. Kathryn Kuchenbrod's nomination was therefore withdrawn.

The two candidates made a brief statement. Camille McKenzie pledged to be a firm chair ensuring that Council worked with respect. She was willing to undertake the task with responsibility and counted on experienced members' support. Unit 25 Rep. highlighted the challenges faced by staff members, which required a strong Council. The task required personal determination and commitment to the work of the Council, which he had demonstrated over the previous months.

The Vice Chair recused himself on the item. Unit 30 Rep. took over the Chair.

After opinions voiced by VP2 regarding the voting procedure, Unit 28 Alt. submitted the following motion: *On issues pertaining to votes, only voting members should be allowed to take the floor.* The motion passed with 8 votes in favour and 1 against.

The Secretary submitted the following motion: *Henceforth all elections shall be conducted by secret ballot.* The motion passed with 9 votes in favour and 1 against.

The Council proceeded to vote by secret ballot. Unit 13 Rep. received 8 votes. Unit 25 Rep. received 4 votes.

Camille McKenzie (Unit 13 Rep.) was proclaimed Chair of the Staff Council.

7. Update on Field JNC by Leadership

Leadership would submit a report in writing to Council on the Field JNC

8. SMC Working group on flexible workspace (brief by Marie Delbecque)

Unit 26 Rep. reported on the first meeting of the working group on Flexible Workspace. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Cutts, but he would be replaced since he was moving to another position. Geneva and Bangkok took part via webex. The WG's terms of reference were included in the Broadcast of 28 September. Though flexible workspace would be applied differently in each duty station, the WG should agree on the general principles. The SG's next report was not expected to substantially modify the principles of Flexible Workspace application.

Flexible Workspace is meant to be carried out through consultations with staff affected, looking into their workflows and procedures. In theory, staff is involved in every step of design of the floorplan. The President had conducted a survey of departments affected over the summer with 48 / 100 responses. Responses varied significantly between people who had moved recently and those who had been working for some time under the arrangement.

Unit 30 Alt. inquired about the existence of studies regarding staff members' health, wellbeing and productivity. Results of research were contradictory and productivity measurements were generally subjective. It was not his experience that management had consulted with staff in any way whatsoever. VP2 highlighted the Administration's inconsistent messages. Unit 26 Rep. had offered to take the lead on the issue and would be submitting to the Council a position paper based on exchanges with Geneva.

The Secretary warned against the Administration's attempts to link Flexible Workspace with flexible working arrangements, which they were pushing as a gender issue. Unit 26 Rep. believed the Council should insist on tackling the issues separately. She called for a Council member to take the lead on flexible working arrangements. Unit 28 Alt. volunteered to join the working group, since some members of her Unit were affected.

9. Reports from Units

Unit 23 Alt. reported that DESA had a new USG. The development pillar was subject to restructuring. The new USG wanted to be proactive and streamline the department's work before Member States came up with their own proposals. He would hold a Town Hall the following week and had promised to consult with staff. Demands were on the rise in relation to the 2030 Agenda, but staff were concerned that the next round of Umoja development would require further cost cuts.

10. Any other business

Unit 23 Alt. inquired about the broadcast with Union updates published that morning. She asked where the statement on Mobility came from, since it bore no relation to what was discussed in the Working Group she was a member of. She would have expected Leadership to contact Council members who were working on issues before putting out a message. Unit 29 Alt. asked Leadership where the information was obtained, if the information could be amended and what would be done in the future to avoid communication errors. The Secretary pointed out this was yet another example of the complications caused when Leadership issued messages unilaterally. VP2 said she would consult with the President where the information was obtained.

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 pm.

Items remaining on the agenda for the following meeting were:

1. Update on Field JNC
2. Update from Steering Committee on Statutes Review WG
3. Gender Parity Strategy
4. Special post allowance and UNDT judgements on equal pay for equal work
5. Suspension of Mobility exercise
6. Suspension of 2014 continuous appointments exercise