

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

45th STAFF COUNCIL/45ème CONSEIL DU PERSONNEL

Minutes/Actes

Meeting No: 45/27
Date: 30 November 2017
Time: 1:15 pm
Venue: CR A
Quorum: 14/16 Units

45th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate at 1:25 pm with Staff Council Chair Camille McKenzie in the Chair and Secretary Aitor Arauz-Chapman taking notes. The meeting was recorded and a copy deposited with the UNSU Administrator. Eugenia Beldo and Francisco Brito were present as focal points for OPPBA.¹

1. Adoption of the Agenda

On the time allocated to each item, Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) suggested that individual speaking times be limited to 2 minutes, and believed that the number of items considered each week was excessive. The Chair expressed her willingness to adapt the agenda as the Council saw fit. The agenda was adopted with no changes after Unit 25 Rep. announced he would raise some suggestions under AOB.

2. Adoption of Minutes of previous Council meeting

Minutes for meeting 25 and 26 remained pending.

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

VP2 Cristina Silva reported on a meeting with USG Khare to debrief on the President's trip to MINURSO, a summary would be circulated. The Secretary would write up a report on the previous week's JNC meeting. Leadership had been working on a response to the draft Downsizing policy, would request an extension from Management and was considering taking it back to SMC. Leadership was not part of the previous working group and staff members had expressed concern with the draft.

4. UNSU finances

The Treasurer had submitted accounts in writing. No update was given in the absence of the Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer.

¹ Status confirmed prior to publication of minutes.

5. Security

No update was given in the absence of Kenneth Rosario (Unit 39).

6. Downsizing and Restructuring

Thomas Chacko (Unit 30) called for a more detailed discussion on the draft Downsizing policy, which he felt lent itself to abusive interpretations. Chandana Mutucumarana (Unit 30) recalled the situation faced by staff members from the printing service, who had been reassigned to a digitisation project funded by Qatar, for which funding was running out. He called for the Union to support these staff members, as well as to reject the draft policy as it stood and take it back to SMC. Daniel Burden (Unit 34) said his Unit believed the draft was worthless and should be rejected.

Unit 25 Rep. was concerned that OPPBA colleagues could face a similar process. He recalled that the draft policy was the outcome of long negotiations. He was appreciative of colleagues who had taken part in those negotiations and had expressed their willingness to brief the Council on the issue.

UNSU President Bibi Sherifa Khan questioned the source of Unit 25 Rep's information and did not expect a downsizing exercise in OPPBA. The ACABQ's report for the 2018/19 programme budget only proposed the abolishment of 2 post and redeployment of 3 more. That was the only certainty for now. A factual approach was required. The Union would insist that prior consultation be conducted prior to any reduction plan.

Kenneth Rosario (Unit 39) recalled the precedent for staff reductions, and warned against letting the Administration control the environment. Strong Unions drew on the media when necessary. The issue was serious had to be addressed more firmly by UNSU and its sister unions. Unit 25 Rep. supported a parallel strategy of media engagement. He suggested a separate meeting on the issue.

Eugenia Beldo was concerned about the inclusion of performance evaluation ratings in the criteria for job placements, since they were highly subjective. Some offices had a moratorium on "excellent" ratings, which were easier to obtain in the field. Satisfactory and above ratings should be given equal consideration. She alerted that the proposed programme budgets examined by the ACABQ are very different from the full potential effects of GSDM.

The President replied that she intended to request an extension on the AI on Downsizing. Part of the problem was that at SMC each union had one vote, while some sister unions had different opinions on the matter. She had invited Francisco Brito and Igor Ovcharenko to brief the Council the coming Monday, to provide an understanding of how the SMC WG had managed the process.

Kenneth Rosario (Unit 39) pointed out that Staff Rule 8.1 establishing the SMC is based on the concept that management and staff are equal partners. As with the policy on Whistle-blower protection, the Administration

had ignored the outcome of SMC consultations. We therefore had a basis to take the issue to the Appeals Tribunal.

The President would ask to include the draft Policy on Whistle-blower protection on the agenda of the coming SMC. On Downsizing, she believed that a policy was better than Guidelines or an IC, given the uncertainty of the environment. The policy could then be taken back to SMC for review. She called for the establishment of a working group with Council and non-Council members to analyse and improve the Downsizing policy.

7. Agenda for the General Meeting on 13 December 2017

The Secretary asked Council members to submit items at the next meeting, which was the last opportunity to adopt an agenda. The President said she wished to convene the meeting mainly to talk about the management reform. With the coming SMC and publication of the ACABQ report, more information would hopefully be available in the coming week.

Kenneth Rosario (Unit 39) suggested taking advantage of the General Meeting to invite journalists to the meeting, accompanied by a press release. Eugenia Beldo warned against hostile press organisations. Mériem Harbi (Unit 28) also called for caution. The President proposed, if necessary, a march to the circle after the General Meeting. The EB could agree on slogans. The press would be welcome. Unit 25 Rep. felt it was essential to have a clear message based on sound facts. He was concerned that we may not be ready for such a meeting, reserving his position on whether to support it or not.

8. Membership of Joint Committees

The Secretary proposed a resolution with the committees that needed to be reviewed and confirmed. On the Advisory Board on Compensation and Claims, the President was pending meeting with two long-serving members to confirm their willingness to serve and suggested Andraz Melansek as a third member. The President transmitted complaints from some members of the WG on Statute Review regarding the meeting times. Unit 25 Rep. would reach out to them and attempt to convene at more consensual hours. He also recalled that comments could be submitted via Unite Connections.

The draft was adopted unanimously as Resolution 22, subject to addition of certain names that were read out by the Secretary.

9. Update of work with AFT

Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) suggested Tuesday for a lunch-and-learn on pensions with the Units that had expressed an interest.

10. Special post allowance on UNDT judgments on equal pay for equal work

The Secretary reported on a positive exchange with Martha Helena López (ASG for HR Management) on the issue at the recent JNC. DM intended to review all AIs over 5 years old, and ST/AI/1999/17 was high on their list. They agreed that SPA panels were unnecessary and should be abolished, while insisting that the 3-month occupancy period was necessary. However, they intended to propose retroactive pay from day one on the higher position once a staff member fulfilled the required 3-month condition.

11. Conference room signage

Item postponed.

12. Update on OPPBA

The President reported that Director of the Accounts Division had told OPPBA staff to start finding jobs. She and VP1 Patricia Nemeth met with the staff and shared the information they had so far. Leadership and some members of the EB had met with OOPBA representatives on the issue of representation to management. They proposed that while Polling Officers organised by-election, the Leadership would work with Eugenia Beldo, Francisco Brito and Jaime Garreta as focal points. She just needed an email confirming that the proposal was accepted. They would be welcome to bring OPPBA issues to the Staff Council and the Union would extend its full support. Eugenia Beldo asked Leadership that Francisco Brito and Jaime Garreta be invited to future meetings with OPPBA management.

13. AOB

Unit 35 Rep. advised he would be submitting a resolution proposing a training session for up to 30 staff members on procedures before the UNDT/AT with the same trainer that was providing the training FICS training in Vienna. He requested an item on the following week's agenda.

Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) transmitted a question from a staff member: Would the Union be interested in hosting a meeting with staff on the topic of sexual exploitation and abuse? The President had reached out to AFT to host a meeting on Gender policy. Unit 25 Rep. seconded the suggestion

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 pm.