

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

45th STAFF COUNCIL/45ème CONSEIL DU PERSONNEL

Minutes/Actes

Meeting No: 45/33
Date: 1 February 2018
Time: 1:15 pm
Venue: CR A
Quorum: 10/16 Units

45th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate with 9 units present at 1:25 pm, with Staff Council Chair Camille McKenzie in the Chair and Secretary Aitor Arauz-Chapman taking notes. The meeting was attended by 2 staff members as observers. The meeting was recorded and a copy deposited with the UNSU Administrator.

1. Adoption of the Agenda

The Chair pointed out that items 6 and 10, both on Internal Justice training, may coincide. When Unit 25 Rep arrived at the meeting, we could resolve the discrepancy. The Agenda was adopted with that caveat.

2. Adoption of Minutes of previous Council meeting

Minutes for meeting 32 were adopted with no changes.

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

2nd Vice-President Cristina Silva excused the President who was not able to attend due to a conflicting engagement. In reference to the week's meetings, she reported that the JNC had not received the minutes to the previous meeting due to discrepancies on the format. They would be shared once received.

Regarding Snow Days, an issue addressed at the JNC, she said that OHRM had agreed to review the individual cases of staff member affected by the building closure. She invited Council Members to reach out to their Unit members and compile information on specific cases of staff members who had been charged Annual Leave, which would be forwarded to OHRM for review. Camille Beydon (Unit 26) feared that it would affect a lot of people, and that those who had telecommuted would feel discriminated. The 1st Vice-President Patricia Nemeth recalled the difference between early release and building closure. Staff members would be affected differently depending on their schedules. The Secretary explained that part of the problem was that OHRM was unaware of the details of what had happened in each department, since policies and attitudes to telecommuting were different. He would prepare a spreadsheet to compile data from Units.

1st VP explained the conditions governing early release and building closure (which are different situations). The Chair and Kenneth Rosario (Unit 39) highlighted the case of counties or States where a state of emergency was decreed when conditions were worse than on Manhattan. The decisions should be taken solely on the basis of staff safety and not politicised. Likewise, all three States should be factored in.

4. JNC

In addition to the debate above, the Secretary shared with the Council his concern that USG DM was attempting to remove herself from membership of the JNC, which would lower the level of interlocation. The JNC staff delegation would follow the issue closely. 2nd VP added an argument presented by the USG whereby she was not present at other duty stations' JNC, so should not be present at Headquarters'. Kenneth Rosario (Unit 39) suggested that if USG DM did not want to attend meetings, she should provide a clear written delegation of authority to ASG ORHM. There was also a disagreement on the degree of detail reflected in the minutes. The administration preferred a summary list of decisions, whereas the staff side required a verifiable record of statements made by the Administration.

5. UNSU Finances

No report in absence of the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer.

6. Resolution on Organizing a workshop on rules of UNDT and UNAT

2nd VP reported that she had spoken to Carmen Artigas, who would be in NY in May for the Internal Justice Council and was willing to offer the Council training on the Internal Justice System free of charge. The Executive Board had agreed to offer her a USD 1000 and adopted a decision to that effect. Training for Council members would be 21 May and a seminar would be held for staff on 22 May.

Unit 25 Rep withdrew his resolution on the same matter, but made the point that UNSU's first and utmost obligation was to staff members, and our funds should be used to make training available to all staff. He pointed out a factually incorrect statement in the EB resolution, which stated that the EB was the legislative body of the Union. The 2nd VP clarified that it was due to a cut-paste error.

Camille Beydon inquired how the training would be shared with staff. The Chair explained that the initiative included a lunchtime seminar session for staff who may not be able to obtain leave for Union matters.

Camille Beydon also asked how the training would be different from that organised by AFT, which included briefings by people currently working in the IJS. The 2nd VP explained that Carmen was independent from the Administration and could provide a different perspective. The Secretary felt it was not necessarily a bad idea to duplicate training sessions, given not all representatives were available on every occasion.

Unit 25 Rep. questioned the competence of Carmen Artigas on the basis of the quality of her recent opinions. He would not be attending the training and wondered how many people would be interested in attending. Kathryn Kuchenbrod (Unit 28) requested more information on the proposed training, on the trainer's cv, and possible alternatives.

The Secretary recalled that Carmen Artigas was still engaged under a temporary agreement agreed by the Council in June 2017 for a period of 3 months (STC/RES/45/13). A separate debate should be held to resolve the limbo of the Union's relationship with the legal advisor. He also clarified that the document circulated was an EB decision, not a draft resolution for the Council (despite the confusing format). The decision had already been made and did not require a Council vote.

7. Security

Kenneth Rosario (Unit 39) reported that FICSA had asked him to also represent them (along with CCISUA) at the Interagency Security Management Network (ISMN) meeting coming up in New York. USG Drennan had again called for him to be excluded on spurious grounds. Ian Richards wrote a strongly worded letter to the Chief of Staff defending Mr. Rosario's legitimacy as a representative.

The Staff Council requested the UNSU President, as a matter of urgency, to again forward to the Chief of Staff resolution STC/RES/45/15 of 7 September 2017, requesting a status update on the issue.

USG Drennan had also unilaterally abolished the Minimum Operational Security Standards (MOSS), part of the Security Management System adopted by the GA, and had blocked channels of communication on the matter with the Unions.

Kenneth Rosario also reported a repeated incident of assault by a staff member against a security officer. The ASG for OHRM had made the discretionary decision to not suspend the staff member. He called for the Staff Council to take up the issue. Council members expressed concerns regarding the details of the case, as well as implications of Staff Council intervention in terms of due process in the investigation under way. The Secretary offered to draft a resolution for the following meeting.

8. Resolution on Staff Day

The 2nd VP introduced a draft resolution on Staff Day. Camille Beydon asked for the resolution to be postponed until the Treasurers were present. The motion was put to a vote and passed with 7 in favour and 1 abstention.

9. General Meeting

The Secretary apologised for not preparing a matrix for agenda items as promised at the last meeting. Unit 25 Rep asked for the draft resolution going to the General Meeting to be recirculated to the Council.

10. Internal Justice System Training with Carmen Artigas

Seen under item 6.

11. Case of a staff member from Unit 25

A staff member from Unit 25 sought a representative to be designated to support her in a harassment case. She had expressed her preference that it not be a DGACM representative. The 1st VP agreed to speak to her.

12. UNDT Geneva ruling on salary scale review

The Secretary updated the information provided at the last meeting, with a total of 3 rulings issued by the Disputes Tribunal in Geneva. The President and 2nd VP had spoken with OSLA, asking them to share their template for the cases. OSLA offered to take up the cases, which varied depending on whether staff members had spouses or the age of their children. OSLA would require administrative support, since the number of cases that could emerge was unknown. The Union had engaged an intern who could help work on the matter. The argument would also have to be presented differently, due to the evolving timeframes. The Secretary was gathering the details of the ruling in order to draft an informative broadcast for all staff members, inviting them to take their complaints to the MEU, with support from the Union.

Chandana Mutucumarana (Unit 30) asked whether the broadcast would specify that only dues-paying members would receive support from the Union. Units 25 and 28 objected, saying that all staff members should be supported. The 2nd VP suggested a strong encouragement for members to join, and Unit 25 suggested attaching the enrolment form to the broadcast.

13. President's submission to IJC on class action

The Secretary drew the Council's attention to the document circulated by the President with a submission to the Internal Justice Council regarding the possibility of the Union representing staff collectively. The IJC had accepted to consider the submission in May. They were also open to a brainstorming session with staff representatives.

The meeting adjourned at 2:50 pm. There would be no meeting the following week due to SMC. The next meeting would be on 15 February.