

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

45th STAFF COUNCIL/45ème CONSEIL DU PERSONNEL

Minutes/Actes

Meeting No: 45/35
Date: 22 February 2018
Time: 1:15 pm
Venue: CR B
Quorum: 10/16 Units

45th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate with 11 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 recorded and a copy deposited with the UNSU Administrator.

The Council Chair made a statement regarding rumours whereby she was exerting influence on the Secretary of the Polling Officers. She denied categorically that she had at any time attempted to influence the decisions of the Polling Officers, and considered the accusation an insult to her integrity. She demanded that whomever was behind those rumours cease immediately.

1. Adoption of the Agenda

The Chair called for Council members to be respectful during and not hold private conversations during meetings.

Thomas Chacko (Unit 30) asked for the standing item on Security to be confirmed in advance and removed from the agenda if there were no updates from Kenneth Rosario (Unit 39). The Chair confirmed she would do so.

Unit 25 Rep. asked for item 9 "Global Staff Action" to be brought forward. Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) asked for item 6 "UNJSPC", delated from the previous week, to be considered as a matter of priority. The Second Vice-President Cristina Silva asked for item 5 "Staff Emergency Fund" to be postponed until the President was present, with a prior debate at the Executive Board. Assistant Treasurer Rosemary Lane, asked to retain it.

The agenda was adopted with "Global Staff Action" moved up to item 7.

2. Adoption of Minutes of previous Council meeting

Minutes had not been distributed and would be submitted for the following week.

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

Report for the EB meeting of 13 February were pending.

First Vice-President Patricia Nemeth apologised for the lack of a written document. She reported that she had met with the Staff Counsellors' office, who expressed their interest in transferring the Emergency Fund back to the Union.

4. UNSU Finances

No report in absence of the Treasurer.

5. Staff Emergency Relief Fund

The Assistant Treasurer reported on the President's request at the JNC that the administration transfer the Staff Emergency Relief Fund back to the Union, which was currently administered by the Staff Counsellor's office, since managing files required access to staff members' sensitive personal information, including their financial situation level of indebtedness. Due to staff cuts, the Staff Counsellor wanted to transfer the Fund back to the Union. No loans had been approved for at least a year and files had been lost or thrown out. She was perplexed to learn that the President had agreed to bringing the Fund back to the Union. She felt this was not a good idea. She hoped to examine the issue at the Executive Board.

Unit 25 Rep. called for anybody contacted by the Staff Counsellor's office to transmit the message that this would be a Staff Council decision taken in due course. Michelle Rockcliffe agreed that it should be a Council decision.

6. UNJSPC

Michelle Rockcliffe reported on the current situation at the UN Joint Staff Pension Committee, the tripartite body bringing together representatives of the Governing Bodies, of the Secretary General and those elected by staff. At their first meeting in November it became clear that most representatives were not participate properly in the meeting due to communication issues, since they were calling in. Participants' representatives proposed a third annual meeting on Governance. The Secretary General's representatives saw the UNJSPC as a negotiating body like the SMC. A culture change was required for all members to understand that they all shared a fiduciary responsibility to participants. The main issue raised at the governance meeting was the backlog in payments (which would be a lot worse with GSDM). They had suggested an amendment for 80% of payment to be made immediately regardless of delays in paperwork. The new RSG for Investments took up one hour of

three with his presentation. Little time was left to suggest other improvements that would safeguard participants' right.

Participants' representatives from overseas would need to be flown in mid-March to ensure adequate representation at the coming meeting. She asked the Council to provide funding to fly representatives in on 20 - 22 March and would be submitting a resolution to that effect. Participation in person would allow them to meet with the Secretary General and do adequate preparatory work for the meetings.

At a question from Mériem Harbi (Unit 28), Michelle Rockcliffe clarified that the representatives would be travelling from Jerusalem and Nairobi. Funding from the Union was required because the Administration was not flying people in to these meetings. When cost sharing had been requested from CCISUA, they had also refused to pay. Rosemary Lane felt that UNSU should not be solely responsible for covering representatives' travel; Leadership should follow up with the Federations. The Second Vice-President suggested writing to the Secretary General regarding the issue of travel funding. Michelle Rockcliffe added that they were working towards an official budget, but this was a one-time emergency. Ahmad Ismail (Unit 20) felt that each union should bring their own representatives. Michelle Rockcliffe clarified that there is no "ownership" of participants' representatives, who can work at any organisation. We are already at a disadvantage because we cannot coordinate in advance. She would submit a draft resolution.

7. Global Staff Action

Unit 25 Rep. referred to the call from Federations to exert pressure on the ICSC on 27 February. He supported that UNSU participate and that the Council discuss forms of participation. First Vice-President Patricia Nemeth would distribute the letter signed by all 3 federations to the GA President and Executive Heads. Rosemary Lane felt that calling for marches was not viable in NY. Since staff were generally unaware of how the ICSC operated, she suggested a "brown bag" information session. The Council agreed to organise an information session. Second Vice-President Cristina Silva reported on a meeting of the Executive Board with a staff member from the ICSC, who agreed in principle. She pointed out that the ICSC methodology was a restricted document. Camille Beydon (Unit 26) pointed out that it was important at an action event to present CCISUA's perspective. She suggested inviting Ian Richards, who would be in town. Unit 25 Rep. suggested inviting Egor Ovcharenko. Michelle Rockcliffe agreed with the speakers, but not with the idea of a brown bag event. Camille Beydon suggested calling it a teach-in.

Unit 25 Rep. suggested issuing a broadcast convening a Global Day of Action on 27 February, with a time and location. In the interim we could invite speakers and draft background documentation. Rosemary Lane suggested circulating the Federation's letter as soon as possible. The Chair verified that the Council was in agreement on how to proceed.

8. Security

No report in absence of Kenneth Rosario.

9. Follow up on General Meeting

The Secretary regretted that the Union officers who were on the podium at the General Meeting had to face criticism for the delays in holding by-elections to unrepresented units. The delays were undermining the Union's credibility, since it was now obvious that they were intentional. He would be forwarding an initiative to bring representatives of all unrepresented units into the Council in order to defeat the purpose of any intentional delay. The Chair reminded him that the Council was not responsible for the delays. We could make suggestions to the polling officers, but could not give them instructions. She asked him to avoid listening to rumours.

Rosemary Lane asked why the Chair of the Polling Officers never replied to invitations to attend meetings or provide updates. The delay was ridiculous and clearly something was not right. The Chair recalled the Chair of the Polling Officer's irregular schedule and certain health issues. The Council should come together and make a decision, but should avoid conspiracy theories. Michelle Rockcliffe cautioned against obstructing the process not that the polling officers were finally moving ahead. Kathryn Kuchenbrod (Unit 28) requested that elections be the first item of the agenda for every Council meeting.

Camille Beydon inquired about contradictory instructions regarding the degree of confidentiality of draft SGBs and ST/AIs. If they were not confidential, they should be distributed in a broadcast for feedback from all staff members, not only those represented on the Council. The Second Vice-President confirmed that all documents distributed could be shared with units, and agreed that the drafts should be broadcast. The First Vice-President suggested that it should be OHRM who broadcast them. The issue would be discussed with OHRM.

10. Driving Licence issue for staff members living in New Jersey

Guozhong Cao (Unit 25) raised the issue of driving licences issued in New Jersey. Duration of driving licences issued to members from certain countries had been reduced to less than one year. The Chair explained that it was the visa duration of stay that was used. Mériem Harbi asked if the Union could contact the Committee of Relations with the Host Country in order to raise the issue. Unit 25 Rep. suggested drafting a letter on behalf of the Union to the Committee. As a next step, we could approach the New Jersey authorities. He volunteered to draft the letter.

The meeting adjourned at 2:50 pm.