

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

45th STAFF COUNCIL/45ème CONSEIL DU PERSONNEL

Minutes/Actes

Meeting No: 45/40
Date: 29 March 2018
Time: 1:20 pm
Venue: CR 9
Quorum: 11/16 Units

45th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate with 9 units present at 1:30 pm, with 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. Katy Joseph and Mariam Gueziel, former members of the GS salary survey committee, and Chris Runge Director, Public Employees Division, AFT, took part in the meeting as guest speakers.

1. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted with no changes.

2. Adoption of Minutes of previous Council meeting

Minutes of meetings 37, 38 and 39 were pending.

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

UNSU President Bibi Kahn had distributed a summary of communications via email and took questions. Marie Delbecque (Unit 26) asked about the meeting foreseen with ASG OHRM regarding her communication about strikes, who was busy due to ICSC. Hopefully it could be held in the coming weeks.

Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) enquired about a meeting with OCSS (item 7 on the President's list). The President reported it was part of an ongoing discussion with OCSS. The Union was requesting to reopen the cafeteria on the ground floor, which had been closed due to security concerns. If that cafeteria could not be reopened, alternative facilities needed to be found. The ASG of OCSS had identified a space that required work and moving offices. They were working on improving cafeteria venues and services.

For over 20 years, Muslim staff members and delegates had held Friday prayer on the 3rd floor of the library building. After CMP they were transferred to the Express Bar. The President had suggested to staff members who approached her to launch a petition, which she would transmit to OCSS.

The Interagency Games were due to take place with 6 teams taking part from NY. UNISS had discontinued their collaboration with the teams, who used to train there. Leadership was working with OCSS to find an alternative solution.

Unit 25 Rep. enquired a meeting with the Graphic Design Unit “for improving communication and information-sharing”. The President replied that she had spoken with two staff members who had come forward to help develop a corporate identity for Leadership. Leadership was also working on other ways to improve their information sharing with staff members.

4. UNSU Finances

No report in absence of the Treasurer.

5. Security briefing

Kenneth Rosario (Unit 39) referred to a number of cases he had brought to Leadership. He asked the President for a meeting between Staff Reps and OHRM, since certain cases required the involvement of the people affected, including Integration and attempts to circumvent the selection process. The President suggested including an item on the agenda of the coming JNC, and invited Kenneth Rosario to attend that meeting as an advisor. Marie Delbecque (Unit 26) recalled the resolution requiring that unit Staff Reps be invited whenever Leadership met with managers.

On Integration, Kenneth Rosario had asked at the SMC that the staff representatives dealing with these issues be able to liaise with other representatives in other organisations, to no effect. Management was using the narrative that Unions “were not co-managers” to avoid adequate consultation. The process had reached a point where staff members were being told to resign from their existing positions in order to apply for new ones. The President offered to organise a meeting of staff reps involved in Integration from Secretariat, UNPD and the field.

6. Follow up of Emergency General Meeting

Unit 25 Rep. suggested that in future, actions of this sort should be planned in advance. UNSU Secretary Aitor Arauz asked all those who spoke to review the write-up so it could be circulated to staff as soon as possible.

7. Resolution on Long service awards

Michelle Rockcliffe recalled that in the past the Award was always given by the Union. The President reported that she wrote to the USG DM to inform her that the Union was reviving the practice, offered them to co-host the event and share the expense. DM responded that expenses had always been covered by the Union, but they were willing to discuss the possibility of cost sharing.

8. GS Staff Salaries and Living and Working conditions

Katy Joseph reported that the salary survey was carried out locally under the Fleming principle every 8 to 10 years. A local salary committee formed by staff and management takes the lead on data collection at the local duty station. They compile information on GS positions within the organisations. They then collect external data with support from survey specialists from the ICSC. Employers agree on a voluntary basis to fill out a survey. Participating companies must meet certain criteria, including number of employees. These criteria are also vetted by the local survey committee. Once the data is collected, ICSC specialists and the committee sit down to review and tabulate it. They work out increases or decreases in relation to prevailing local conditions. A report is generated and submitted to the ICSC. That report also highlights concerns raised by committee members. Discrepancies between the methodology and what actually happens in the field are also reported. The ICSC makes its recommendations and forwards its report to the SG and GA.

Michelle Rockcliffe asked how many staff were on the committee and how the result of a 5.8 reduction was arrived at. Katy Joseph replied that membership should be half and half, to a total of 16, with both sides having alternates.

When vetting is done for employers, they should represent the best prevailing conditions in the local duty station. Some of the volunteers may not be the best. Information may not be up to date. If concerns are not raised and addressed prior to the end of the process, it can be problematic. The staff side has to be very diligent in ensuring that concerns are raised to the chairperson and answered.

Kenneth Rosario pointed out that the ICSC is a subsidiary body to the GA that has become a decision-making body. He raised the issue of Security salary scales. The ICSC decided unilaterally to remove the independent salary scale for Security staff. The Tribunals had ruled that the ICSC was part of the common system and therefore subject to its legal decisions. He quoted *Jaen vs. the Secretary General*. We required a strategic approach to the ICSC's methods.

Sherif Mohamed (Unit 27) recalled that the last salary scale review was conducted 3 years ago, so we would have to wait at least another 5 for the next one. Katy Joseph pointed out that an interim review was possible. After every survey the ICSC reviews the methodology. Somebody needed to go through the methodology and identify the shortcomings in order.

Mariam Gueziel added that an interim survey should be conducted, since staff members had expressed dissatisfaction with the previous one. They could share more detailed information to those who were nominated to the next committee. It was important to adequately prepare the methodology review, which requires long negotiations. Once people were on board, she offered to sit down with them and bring them up to speed on the last survey. The Local Salary Survey Committee report is submitted to technical review by some Commissioners. That is the opportunity to point out irregularities.

Assistant Secretary Daniel Burden asked about the -5.8%, which implied a salary freeze for existing staff. New staff were coming in at the second salary scale. Mariam Gueziel replied that with access to data, we could argue for an interim survey if we could demonstrate a significant shift in comparator conditions.

The Secretary asked if it would make sense to start establishing a team view a view to the next process. Mariam Gueziel replied that it didn't hurt to start organising people, as there was considerable capacity available amongst staff at large. The ICSC offers training on salary scales, which staff should be encouraged to attend. Training could also be organised by the Union for Staff Reps and staff interested in taking part in salary survey teams.

The President added that Second Vice-President Cristina Silva has been following the issue. We had now closed in 2% on the 5.8%. It was expected that the gap could be closed within 2 years. Leadership had been looking for external experts to support the local committee.

The Council agreed to invite the two guests to continue the conversation at a later occasion in order to leave time for a discussion with Ms. Runge.

9. AFT Director Chris Runge

Chris Runge, Director of the Public Employees Division at AFT, Congratulated UNSU on the rally the previous week. She updated the Council on AFT's actions in response to recent upsetting events at the ILO. The Workers Group had supported ICSC salary reduction proposals. AFT was investigating what had happened through AFL-CIO. She would follow up with UNSU.

Kenneth Rosario regretted that our Union did not have a media strategy, leaving control of the environment in hands of Management. Chris Runge felt we needed more than a communication strategy; we also needed a member engagement and organising strategy, and broader strategic thinking as a whole. Just listening in on one meeting, she identified a whole list of issues that we could use to mobilise staff. A strategic campaign was required, with the aim of increasing membership and attaining our goals. AFT could assist in developing and implementing strategies.

Our main goal should be the right to bargain. Striking was a tactic of last resort that could be used towards that end, but there were many other means to engage members, including petitions, internal unit coordination, agitation. A broader strategy is useful for education, motivation and action. We should also consider how to provide value for people to join: pensions, training, etc.

The President reported that UNSU had been invited to the AFT Convention in Pittsburgh in July. She planned to attend and thought it would be good to extend the invitation to AFT Liaisons. The delegation was limited (number specified in the invitation) but Council Members may be interested in attending.

Unit 25 Rep. asked about training available to all staff. Chris Runge referred him to AFT's booklet of training options.

The President thanked Chris Runge for her time and for the information she had shared.

The meeting adjourned at 3 pm.