

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

45th STAFF COUNCIL/45ème CONSEIL DU PERSONNEL

Minutes/Actes

Meeting No: 45/46
Date: 10 May 2018
Time: 1:30 pm
Venue: CR D
Quorum: 12/16 Units

45th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate with 10 units present at 1:25 pm, with Council Chair Camille McKenzie in the Chair and UNSU Secretary Aitor Arauz-Chapman taking notes. The meeting was recorded and a copy deposited with the UNSU Administrator.

1. Adoption of the Agenda

Andraž Melanšek (Unit 17) suggested combining agenda items on GSDM (DGACM and OPPBA). “WG on Testing Practices” (item 6) was moved to item 4.

2. Adoption of Minutes of previous Council meetings

Minutes for meetings 45 were adopted.

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

The President had distributed a summary of communications via email. Andraž Melanšek asked about the gym. The President replied that she had been asked to propose a date for the official opening. Hopefully it would happen in short order, perhaps the following week. Second Vice-President Cristina Silva added that the UNSRC disagreed with the idea of having an annual fee for users, as agreed between Leadership and the Administration. In reply to a question by Ondré Baronette (Unit 33), the President explained that the gym was funded by the IOC, who had also provided funding for maintenance. The equipment was under warranty for 3 years, but it was important to have funds available for maintenance after that date. Tun Khine (Unit 17) asked if there was a set of policies in place for use of the gym. The President replied that a committee had been established to that end.

Kenneth Rosario (Unit 39) asked about follow-up to resolutions adopted by the Council. He pointed out that USG Jan Beagle had lately been receiving bad press, including allegations of harassment. He recalled that the Union had taken a vote of no confidence against her in 1997. The current situation was similar. He was concerned that our resolutions would merely sit on her desk. The President replied that she expected the issue to be taken up at the CCISUA General Meeting at the end of the month.

Francisco Brito (OPPBA) asked why OPPBA representatives had not been invited to the JNC held on 8 May, and what had been discussed. The President replied that the Administration had announced that Kuala Lumpur had been dropped from the list of service center locations, leaving Mexico City, Budapest and Nairobi. The ASG OHRM had committed to holding an ad-hoc meeting in June once the ACABQ's report to the 5th Committee was published.

The President reminded the Council that the Long Service Awards would be held on 17 May in Conference Room 4. Invitations had been sent out for USGs to present on behalf of their departments.

4. Resolution on WG on Testing Practices at the UN

Andraž Melanšek introduced his draft resolution, driven by a concern about the proliferation of testing for all sorts of purposes. The draft resolution proposed establishing a working group to look into the issue. The President supported the initiative. She suggested also reviewing the use of electronic examinations. Kenneth Rosario and Ahmad Ismail (Unit 20) recalled that there were different types of exams, including required recruitment exams and in-job tests. It would be worthwhile investigating if there was a policy limiting managers' discretion.

The resolution was adopted unanimously as RES/STC/45/39.

Andraž Melanšek would call for volunteers after the meeting.

5. Evaluation of the work of the EB

Unit 25 Rep. asked for the Council to evaluate the work of the EB after a year's mandate. He felt that members of the EB had not reached out to Council members to enquire about their concerns. There was a high level of absenteeism on the part of some members, judging by EB reports. He reminded EB members that they were accountable to the Council. He recalled a previous conversation regarding the possibility of rotating EB positions so other members could gain experience. He was also concerned that EB reports arrived with a week's delay.

Chandana Mutucumarana (Unit 30) explained that EB reports had to be adopted at the following meeting before they could be circulated to the Council. He also pointed out that some EB members were not obtaining their full 45 hours of time release.

Kenneth Rosario suggested that the EB share its agenda with the Council to ensure follow-up. The Council could also provide more direct instructions to the EB. He recalled that time release was an entitlement and asked if a letter regarding time release had been requested of DM. The President confirmed it had, and therefore any section denying time release for Union activities was in violation of article 8 of the Staff Rules.

Guozhong Cao (Unit 25) pointed out that time release was insufficient for all staff representatives. We should request more time. He was also concerned by the lack of follow-up for Council resolutions.

Treasurer Ibrahima Fayé pointed out that meetings were held during lunch hours, which did not count as time release. EB members' workload was never adjusted by managers. Some of us wore various conflicting hats. He suggested reviewing the timing of meetings. He asked the Leadership to address with the SG directly how time release was implemented by departments, who would do nothing to facilitate staff representatives' work.

Andraž Melanšek suggested taking note of the debate, identifying the main issues offline and determining which actions should be pursued by Leadership and which by the Council.

6. DGACM Staff affected by GSDM

Chandana Mutucumarana called for the Council's support regarding 7 staff members from the digitisation group who had not found placement for when the programme closed in June. 3 staff members had permanent contracts and were receiving support from Management, but the 4 colleagues on fixed-term contracts could be sent home. Kenneth Rosario recalled that this was the same issue that had brought down Jan Beagle years ago. We should respond with bolder action. Sherif Mohamed (Unit 27) felt it was useless to target individual managers, since this was a system-wide issue. The best option was to work with our Departments to find placement for people affected. Second Vice-President Cristina Silva suggested that Chandana Mutucumarana draft a resolution for the following meeting. She recalled that a VTC on the Downsizing policy was scheduled for Monday of the following week. Chandana Mutucumarana recalled that this had happened before, when 99 colleagues from the print shop with permanent contracts had their post abolished. After the rulings on that case, the Administration knew it had to take care of colleagues with permanent contracts. His concern was regarding staff members on fixed-term contracts. The President recalled that a discussion was scheduled with OHRM for June.

7. Review of Resolution of CCISUA GA

The Secretary asked the Council to revisit Resolution STC/45/29 in order to fill in the blank name on the travel authorisation. The Treasurer pointed out difficulties that delegation members were already facing buying tickets due to the amounts authorised. The Secretary requested that in future all travel adhere to UN travel standards. Unit 25 Rep. disagreed. Traveling in economy allowed Union members to travel whilst keeping within our budget. The Second Vice-President requested her name also be added, in view of the agenda. Marie Delbecque (Unit 26) felt it was important for a member of Leadership to stay in New York. The President stressed it was important for the Union to agree on its message and its position before the meeting.

The Council voted to add Andraž Melanšek to the Resolution by 8 votes in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention. The Council voted to add the Second Vice-President by 4 votes in favour, 3 against and 2 abstentions. The Council voted that future travel budgets should be determined by the Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer, in accordance with UN travel standards, by 4 votes in favour, 1 against and 2 abstentions.

The meeting adjourned at 2:50 pm.