

UNITED NATIONS STAFF UNION
SYNDICAT DU PERSONNEL DE L'ORGANISATION DES NATIONS UNIES**45th STAFF COUNCIL/45ème CONSEIL DU PERSONNEL****Minutes/Actes**

Meeting No: 45/49
Date: 7 June 2018
Time: 1:30 pm
Venue: UNSU Meeting room
Quorum: 12/16 Units

45th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate with 10 units present at 1:30 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

The agenda was adopted with OPPBA moved to item 4 and the addition of an item “Legal Advisor and Litigator” added as item 6.

2. Adoption of Minutes of previous Council meetings

Minutes for meetings 48 were adopted with no changes.

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

The report of the previous EB meeting had been circulated by email. There were no questions.

Second Vice-President Cristina Silva excused the President’s absence due to an emergency at home. There was no report from the President, who had just returned from the CCISUA Assembly in Bangkok. The Second Vice-President reported that since Monday she had been following up on pending cases and had been examining PHPs for interns. She was working on a draft broadcast for the Fitness Centre, which she would share with the Staff Council to make sure that the message replied all of staff’s questions. There was a meeting of the Staff Day Committee scheduled. She had received complaints from staff members regarding the election process; namely the short deadline and the lack of candidate bios.

First Vice-President Patricia Nemeth reported that she had met with the Health and Life Insurance Committee to coordinate positions before the coming SMC. She had forwarded a report on the CCISUA GA. She asked Council members to let her know what segments of the SMC they wanted to attend.

Unit 25 Rep. asked for a report on the CCISUA GA for the following week, either verbal or in writing. He asked for the item to be included in the following week's agenda. The First Vice-President said she would share the CCISUA GA minutes once they were published and agreed to report at the following meeting.

The Second Vice-President had asked the Administrator to circulate attendance figures for the EB and Council. She asked Council Members to point out any discrepancies they identified.

The First Vice-President pointed out that some staff members had complained that certain units were not holding meetings and asked all representatives to make sure they did so.

4. OPPBA

Two representatives of OPPBA took the floor to remind the Staff Council that they had been requesting support on GSDM and the SG's Management Reform since February. The ACABQ had endorsed most elements of the reform plan, which was due to be adopted by the 5th Committee within the month of June. A number of existing posts were currently being reclassified by OHRM to be placed under the two new departments. Staff members were concerned that their skillsets may not match the new posts they would have to reapply for. Staff on fixed-term appointments were particularly vulnerable. The time for passiveness was over. Staff needed legal counsel to assist them in knowing exactly what their rights were, well in advance of the first separations. A lawyer should be sitting at every meeting with management. Post were being reclassified in secret, with no consultation with staff. The administration had been promising training, but there was no plan and no budget. We needed to be proactive and prepare contingencies.

The Secretary replied that the Executive Board had drawn up a shortlist of qualified lawyers with different profiles who would be available to provide counsel, pending a final decision by the Council.

5. UNSU Delegation to AFT Convention

The Secretary submitted a resolution designating the UNSU delegation to the AFT Convention to be held in Pittsburgh from 13-16 July 2018. Camille Beydon (Unit 26) suggested that the Council research the issues that were affecting teachers and other civil servants in the US, and to compile a list of issues that the delegation could raise, in order to make the most of the Convention. Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) recalled an excellent training seminar she had attended with AFT and encouraged all representatives to make use of future opportunities. The Secretary signalled a paragraph he had included in the resolution for a pre-trip coordination meeting that would submit a mandate for approval by the Staff Council, which he hoped could become a staple item on future travel resolutions. The resolution was adopted unanimously as RES/STC/45/40.

6. Legal Advisor / Litigator

The Secretary submitted a draft resolution to renew the services of the Legal Advisor through the end of the 45th Staff Council's mandate. He thanked the Second Vice-President for the work she had done in compiling all the advice that the legal advisor had provided to Leadership in the previous months. The compilation was distributed in the room. Unit 25 Rep. asked why a resolution was being submitted for an indefinite renewal when the Council had already decided that renewal would be decided month by month. The Secretary explained that it was Leadership's preferred approach. The Second Vice-President pointed out that month-by-month renewal was unrealistic. The Treasurer pointed out that Ms. Artigas was a UN retiree and could therefore not earn more than USD 22,000 a year. Unit 25 Rep. questioned the confidentiality of some of the issues listed in the documents and recalled his doubts regarding the quality of some of the advisor's opinions. The Secretary recalled that Ms. Artigas' collaboration with Leadership had begun as a fluid exchange of emails, which made it hard to extract specific opinions, but hoped that in future she could present her contributions in a way that was easier for Leadership to share with the Council. The Second Vice-President was confident that the presentation format would not be an issue, but the Staff Council needed to decide whether or not they considered the advisor's work satisfactory, in view of Unit 25 Rep's concerns. She felt her contribution was valuable, and she could work closely with the litigators selected.

The Secretary introduced the conclusions of the Executive Board's interview process to select a Litigator. The EB recommended rostering George Irving and Raeka Safai, who could be assigned cases according to their strengths and availability.

Sherif Mohamed (Unit 27) and the Treasurer expressed concerns about the duplication of roles between a legal advisor and a litigator. The Secretary agreed and added his concern that none of the three were local to New York, when the idea was to have somebody in the room in order to exert pressure on the administration and avoid having to litigate, if possible. Michelle Rockcliffe pointed out that they could take part via VTC. She valued George Irving's experience and was sure that his presence on the phone would have the desired effect. It was established that neither of the litigators had requested a monthly retainer beyond an hourly payment.

After a meandering debate, the Staff Council adopted the following motions by consensus:

- to postpone consideration of the resolution on the Legal Advisor to the following week.
- to establish a legal counsel roster composed of George Irving and Raeka Safai.
- to notify OPPBA representatives that their staff could submit requests for legal counsel to Leadership, who would authorise the expense. The same principle would apply to other staff members approaching the Union for support.

The meeting adjourned at 14:35 pm.