

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

Meeting No: 45/50
Date: 14 June 2018
Time: 1:30 pm
Venue: Room E
Quorum: 13/16 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 items on Arbitration Committee and G4 visa Working Group moved up to number 4 and 5 respectively, as well as the removal of 11 on signatures on communications.

2. Adoption of Minutes of previous Council meetings

Minutes for meetings 49 remained pending due to a discrepancy regarding the content raised by Second Vice-President Cristina Silva. The Secretary agreed to circulate a revised version.

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.

The Second Vice-President apologised that Leadership had been too busy to prepare a report. The Chair insisted that Leadership should find the time to report to the Council in writing. The Secretary asked that the quality of Leadership's reporting be subjected to a similar degree of scrutiny as his own.

Regarding agenda items for the coming JNC meeting, the Second Vice-President announced that two items received from Deputy Chair Andraž Melanšek would be suggested. She would also add an item on the garage.

The Second Vice President would also circulate a broadcast on the new staff gym. Kenneth Rosario (Unit 39) raised his concern regarding the issue of the garage, where the Administration had used the pretext of cost of living as a false premise for increasing rates. He was also concerned by the loss of parking spaces. Rapporteur

Chandana Mutucumarana stressed the importance of having a functioning Garage Board. The Council agreed to add the Garage to the following weeks' agenda.

4. Introduction of the Arbitration Committee

Modou Dieng, Elizabeth Kissoon-Barker, Zhepyir Mabande and Elina Pekler, members of the newly elected Arbitration Committee, attended the meeting and introduced themselves. (Vincent Wilkinson had excused his absence.) The Council thanked them for taking on the task. The Council Chair would facilitate a first meeting of the new Arbitration Committee.

5. Report of the Working Group on G4 visa issues

Mohammad Salamat and Jainaba Jobarteh, Chair and Secretary of the WG respectively, introduced themselves to the Staff Council. The Chair presented the final report of the G4 visa working group, established under RES/STC/45/3 of April, 13 2017. They had examined the difficulties and issues faced by staff on G4 visas. They issued a survey that received 862 replies from staff, of which 74% reported they had faced no issues, but 26% had. The main issues for staff members of certain nationalities were: the short duration of visas, the length of time required to obtain them, single entry visas, restrictions to freedom of movement within the USA, and the obligation to use specific ports of entry. These limitations impacted staff members' productivity, due to the time consumed by the administrative burden and to important meetings and events missed. Staff members had also missed important personal events, including family funerals. All of the above took a toll on the morale of staff members and their families.

The WG's report included five recommendations:

- A unified visa policy to be applied to all staff without discrimination as international civil servants, with long-term multi-entry visas granted to all staff.
- Call on the Secretary General to initiate constructive negotiations with the Host Country to ensure full application of the Headquarters Agreement.
- Call on the SG to consider the possibility of invoking the arbitration clause in the Headquarters Agreement.
- In the meantime, for the SG to provide staff members from affected countries information about restrictions prior to recruitment in New York.
- Suggest that the SG regularly monitor the situation with the Visa and Travel Unit.

The Chair of the Working Group asked the Council to endorse the report via a resolution and to request that Leadership elevate it to the SG. He thanked those members of the Staff Council who had supported the WG and considered that the WG's concluded with the submission of the report.

The Council welcomed the report by acclamation and thanked the Working Group.

Kenneth Rosario raised the problem with driving licenses faced by certain nationals, which varied from State to State. He also recalled the issues faced by international civil servants at other locations around the world. Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) enquired about recommendation d) in the draft resolution. Unit 25 Rep. explained that the group had attempted to identify the legal basis for the current visa policy but had not been able to. Hence the request for specialist support. Marie Delbecque (Unit 26) felt that the report should be shared with all staff, since their input had been requested. The Chair of the WG advised against it, due to the political nature of the contents. He suggested that a summary be circulated instead. The draft resolution was amended accordingly, including the addition of a reference to timeframes for action.

The resolution was adopted unanimously as RES/STC/45/41 with 13 votes in favour.

6. Resolution on Legal Advisor

Unit 25 Rep. reiterated his concern that the Legal Advisor's opinions had not been shared with the Council on grounds of confidentiality. He felt that the issues raised were in no way confidential. The Second Vice-President replied that there was excessive scrutiny from the Staff Council and felt that the Advisor's expertise and experience were not being recognised. Marie Delbecque did not question the advisor's capacity but said she would not be voting on her renewal until she was able to see the material content of her opinions. Kenneth Rosario suggested that the Council hold a VTC conversation with Carmen Artigas to transmit the Council's questions and concerns. He felt it was unfair for the Council to make decisions regarding Ms. Artigas without giving her a fair hearing. He felt that there was a possibility for common ground, since he believed the advisor's contribution was valuable. Michelle Rockcliffe supported the statement but underlined that the entire Council should benefit from the advice, with the exception of personal information that should be redacted. Andraž Melanšek recalled that Ms. Artigas had been hired in contravention of procurement rules (with no alternative candidates considered), on the basis of an initial 3-month hire, had then worked 4 months without a contract and been paid retroactively, and was again working with no contract. The Secretary agreed with Kenneth Rosario and Michelle Rockcliffe and felt there was problem of format and a problem of attitude. The format problem could be resolved if the Ms. Artigas was simply asked to draft her opinions in a format that could be shared with the Council, as distinct from her correspondence with Leadership. The attitude problem derived from the President and Second Vice-President's repeated failure to acknowledge and understand that Ms. Artigas' advice should benefit the entire Union. They had behaved as if she were their personal attorney, which added no value for the Council. He requested an explicit statement from Leadership that they understood this principle and would act accordingly. Unit 25 Rep pointed out a number of generic references to opinions whose substance had not been shared with the Council. Kenneth Rosario suggested that all questions on ongoing issues be reformulated in order to give Ms. Artigas the opportunity to present her opinions in a format that could be shared with the Council.

Andraž Melanšek submitted a motion to close the item of the Agenda. The Chair suggested that the Second Vice-President should be allowed to reply and the Council agreed to it.

The Second Vice-President recalled that she had shared a list of the issues the Ms. Artigas had worked on month by month. She agreed that Ms. Artigas' legal advice could be submitted in a shareable format henceforward, but she could not agree to share her emails. She continued to work on a number of issues. Leadership had never

intended that the legal advice be reserved for Leadership. Her proposal was to renew the advisor's contract until March. George Irving had agreed to coordinate his work with Ms. Artigas. Rosemary Lane (Unit 23) clarified that the previous arrangement did not preclude staff members from obtaining legal advice. She also expressed her concern regarding the advisor's earnings cap and the availability of funds in the budget once the cost of a litigator was added. On a motion by Andraž Melanšek the Council voted unanimously to close the agenda item.

7. Resolution for ICSC meeting in Bonn, Germany

Valentin Stancu (Unit 14) introduced a draft resolution authorising his travel to the forthcoming ICSC meeting in Bonn, Germany as a representative of the "S" category. Kenneth Rosario supported the resolution but requested that the designated representative hold a meeting in order to receive full information on the history of the issues that would be discussed. Valentin Stancu agreed to do so. The resolution was adopted unanimously as RES/STC/45/42 with 13 votes in favour.

8. Draft Resolution on Staff Members affected by Downsizing and GSDM

Rapporteur Chandana Mutucumarana introduced a draft resolution on Downsizing and GSDM. After a minor amendment, the Council adopted the draft unanimously as RES/STC/45/43 with 13 votes in favour.

9. CCISUA GA in Bangkok

Unit 25 Rep. requested a report on the events that took place at the CCISUA GA in Bangkok. Kenneth Rosario shared his perspective. He had concerns regarding the way the CCISUA Bureau had implemented certain decisions adopted by the CCISUA GA. He was also concerned by rotation between CCISUA Bureau members, which meant that certain individuals could retain an indefinite hold on power. He suggested developing an MoU with CCISUA regarding the return on UNSU's investment in the Federation. Michelle Rockcliffe recalled that the federation was not pay-for-play. Contributions were proportional to each Union's assets. She suggested adjusting the terms of resolution to reflect financial procedures.

The Second Vice President interrupted proceedings during 10 minutes by speaking loudly out of order.

The resolution on additional funding for CCISUA submitted by Unit 25, with technical amendments, was adopted as RES/STC/45/44 by 10 votes in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention.

Kenneth Rosario made a statement to recall that the CCISUA Board had refused to apply a decision adopted by its own General Assembly. The Second Vice-President asked the Council to consider if we were obtaining value for money from CCISUA.

The meeting adjourned at 14:50 pm.