

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

Minutes/Actes

Meeting No: 45/51
Date: 28 June 2018
Time: 1:30 pm
Venue: Room B
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.

At the beginning of the meeting, the Chair made a statement recalling the importance of civility, respect and order in meetings. The Executive in particular should lead by example. Second Vice-President Cristina Silva felt she had been denied the use of the floor at the previous meeting.

1. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted with no changes.

2. Adoption of Minutes of previous Council meetings

Minutes for meetings 49 and 50 were adopted with changes requested by Second Vice-President Cristina Silva.

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 President stated that she had not circulated a written summary of communications because she preferred to have a conversation with Council. She had distributed her summary from May 24 and a list of agreements adopted at the SMC and also some from the ad-hoc SMC on Management Reform in February. This second document was enlightening in terms of what management had agreed to. A full SMC had been held the week before, in mid-June. Postponement of the SMC from its usual dates in April meant that the SG's reports on Management reform were already before the ACABQ and 5th Committee, with no adequate consultation with staff. 5th Committee members had informed her that there was no agreement regarding GSDM. No decision would be made and the issue would be brought back the following year. On Management reform, there were many issues pending discussion. In the meantime, Management was moving ahead.

Christian Saunders' replacement as D-2 at DM had been identified in the person on Ms. *** from UNICEF, an expert in Enterprise Resource Planning, which she took to be an indication that Management was moving quickly along the path of automation.

On the SMC proper, UNSU had suggested the establishment of a WG on Occupational Health, including staff affected by PTSD and exposure to dangerous working conditions, but the Medical Service had opposed. She was still in conversations with Management on how to best have an impact on the issue. The Medical Service was establishing Occupational Health and Safety Committees at a local level. They had invited three or four staff representatives to participate in a training session on occupational health and safety. She asked interested staff reps to express an interest as soon as possible.

The President remained on the SMC 3x3, and she hoped that the new SMC President Hany Abdelaziz would contribute to moving the work forward.

Valentin Stancu (Unit 14) inquired about Martin Njuhigu, who had been elected by Staff Unions to be the single representative before the GA. The President confirmed the fact. He was the President of the Staff Association in Nairobi. Secretariat staff in Nairobi. Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) raised the issue of payment for his expenses. It was important for him to understand that he always represented Staff's position.

The Secretary appreciated that the President wanted to have a conversation with the Staff Council but insisted that the President should provide information in writing. She had shared a wealth of details, including on names and appointments, that most members were hearing for the first time. The conversation would become a monologue if staff representatives were not provided written information in advance. Unit 25 Rep. also asked for updated information on the Leadership's activity.

Francisco Brito (OOPBA) underlined the distinction between Management Reform and the GSDM. Management reform was breezing through. On GSDM, the ACABQ's report was extremely worrying. They had recommended that the GA ask the Secretary General for a new proposal with only 2 service centres, at least one in Africa and one in a French speaking country. They had also called for more processes to be offshored, as well as a review of staffing tables. He was worried that the SMC had not pushed hard enough on these issues. He called for the Staff Council to remain vigilant and be very pragmatic.

Eugenia Beldo asked why a staff member from Nairobi was elected to represent staff before the GA. How did this come about, considering NY is the largest Union? In view of the Medical Service's refusal to establish a working group on Occupational Health under the SMC, it was incumbent on the Union to maintain a roster of staff members reporting issues with mental health and PTSD. The Medical service could be invited to take part, but the list should be maintained regardless, and elevated to OHRM.

The President agreed that UNSU should be more prominent as the largest Union. Originally NY was usually the focal point for the GA, since we were already in place. She gave a historical overview of the creation of CCISUA and the history of the single representative for staff before the GA.

Deputy Chair Andraž Melanšek took over the chair at 2:00.

Mériem Harbi (Unit 28) submitted a motion to close the item and move on with the agenda. The motion passed with 7 votes in favour and one abstention.

4. Introduction of the new AFT representative

Kathryn Kuchenbrod (Unit 28) introduced Alfredo Chuquihuara, who would be taking over from Raoul Altidor. She also introduced Regional Director Viri Peterson, who looked forward to seeing the UNSU delegation at the AFT Convention in Pittsburgh. The Chair welcomed both on behalf of the Staff Council.

5. Staff Council recess in August

The Second Vice-President had requested the item in order to clarify if the Council intended to take recess. Kenneth Rosario (Unit 39) cautioned that Management does not take time off. August and September are preparatory periods for the General Assembly. Unit 25 Rep. The Chair sought a consensus for the Council to not take recess in August. He confirmed that there would be no recess in August.

6. UNSU Logo

The Second Vice-President had worked with the Graphic Design Unit to review the new logo, which had been rejected by the Administration because it combined the UN logo with other motifs. She submitted a new design, which combined the UN logo with text in French and English. Michelle Rockcliffe wondered how it was possible for OLA to decide that the logos for the Staff Union and Recreation Clubs were not acceptable. Why had the Union not stood up to this arbitrary decision? Rapporteur Chandana Mutucumarana suggested going back to the old logo with human figures on it. The President explained that the logo was a longstanding issue with OLA. It was forbidden to manipulate the UN logo with the addition of extraneous elements. Kenneth Rosario drew on his experience investigating fraudulent uses of the UN logo to make a clear distinction between internal and external users. He asked the President to share the correspondence where the Administration had explained their interpretation of the rules, which was clearly misguided. The Secretary recalled that the Union visual identity was in disarray and called for the issue to be resolved as soon as possible. He did not oppose the new image as a last resort. Other members disagreed and insisted that the Union should take a first stance on the matter. Valentin Stancu (Unit 14) asked for email, Facebook and twitter handles to be added to the footer.

7. Draft Resolution for legal advisor

The Second Vice-President introduced an updated draft resolution to renew the legal advisor's contract, with a reduction on the number of hours and remuneration, in order to be in line with remuneration caps for system retirees. Unit 25 Rep. recalled that he had asked repeatedly to see the legal advisor's opinions. The only document

he had seen in due form was her opinion saying that the Council did not have a right to conduct by-elections, which was legally unsound. He felt the advisor was not reliable, based on the only opinion the Council had been able to evaluate. He suggested, as a compromise, that her contract be renewed month by month in order for the Council to be able to evaluate the quality of her work, based on fully disclosure of the opinions she provided. Kenneth Rosario suggested that she be put on a retainer and that her opinions be requested on an ad-hoc basis. The President supported Unit 25 Rep's proposal. Going forward it would be easier for the Leadership to submit a month-by-month breakdown of the work she had done. The Second Vice-President recalled that she had shared a list of Ms. Artigas' legal opinions month by month. Unit 25 Rep would submit an amended draft resolution.

8. Draft Resolution on AFT Convention additional DSAs

The Secretary introduced a motion to add 3 DSA payments for members of the UNSU delegation to attend a pre-session orientation on the eve of the Convention. The President and Second Vice-President also wished to attend the pension fiduciary meeting. Michelle Rockcliffe objected, since those attending the orientation could easily travel on the same day. Kenneth Rosario suggested that the delegation resolve the issue internally and return to the Council with an agreement.

The meeting was extended for 15 minutes until 2:45. Michelle Rockcliffe asked for item 11 to be brought up. The Staff Council agreed.

9. Reports and updates from SMC and CCISUA

Michelle Rockcliffe made a statement regarding CCISUA and SMC. She was concerned about the projection of our Union at various events. For CCISUA the Council had adopted a resolution to pledge up to USD 36,500. The President had embarrassed the Union by pledging USD 9,000. For SMC, the Council had agreed on 3 advisors: Kenneth Rosario for Security, herself for Health and Pension, and First Vice-President Patricia Nemeth, who had written a number of papers. On arrival at the table on Monday, she was instructed by the President to sit against the wall. She had never received such treatment as an advisor. Advisors were excluded from emails from the Secretary and could not keep up with the meeting. When the First Vice-President attempted to take the floor, the President called time out to object. She called for the President to behave as a head of delegation. She would not be embarrassed again by the President at the AFT Convention. This kind of behaviour was precisely the reason why UNSU was not being voted to important positions.

Kenneth Rosario supported her statement and gave concrete examples of how these divisions were undermining the Union. We could not give management pretexts to question who was entitled to speak on behalf of the Union. Andraž Melanšek (Unit 17) had also received echoes from management and representatives from other Unions. The President claimed that she had not been aware of the seating arrangement prior to the meeting itself. She was waiting for the Administration to file a complaint in order to understand their objection to Advisors speaking. Kenneth Rosario made it clear that the Administration's advisors spoke freely whenever they felt the need.

The meeting was suspended at 2:50 pm., to be continued the following Tuesday with pending items.