

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

45th STAFF COUNCIL/45ème CONSEIL DU PERSONNEL

Minutes/Actes

Meeting No: 45/52
Date: 5 July 2018
Time: 1:30 pm
Venue: Room F
Quorum: 13/16 Units

45th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate with 13 units present at 1:30 pm, with Deputy Council Chair Andraž Melanšek in the Chair and Martin Pickles (Unit 29) taking notes. The meeting was recorded and a copy deposited with the UNSU Administrator. Units present were: 6, 13, 14, 17, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29 & 30

It was agreed to officially close the 51st meeting of the Staff Council, which had previously been suspended pending a resumed session. The meeting was called to order as the 52nd meeting of the 45th Staff Council.

1. Adoption of the Agenda

Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) requested that agenda item 5 ('Implementation of Council Resolution regarding CCISUA') be moved to agenda item 2. Council agreed.

Chandana Mutucamarana (Unit 30) requested that at a future meeting the Staff Council discuss why the previous practice of allowing staff access to the UN grounds to watch the 4th July fireworks had been discontinued.

The agenda was adopted as amended.

2. Implementation of Council Resolution regarding CCISUA

Michelle Rockcliffe expressed her deep concerns about the repeated negative activities and behaviour of the President and 2nd Vice-President of the UNSU and how this was painting the entire UNSU in a bad light. She feared that the UNSU would never again be trusted to act as president of CCISUA. Ms Rockcliffe noted that she had received no response to her emails to the UNSU President detailing her concerns. Ms Rockcliffe had therefore decided to table a resolution of no-confidence in the President of the UNSU.

The Vice-Chair asked Ms Rockcliffe to read out her resolution paragraph by paragraph for the consideration of the Staff Council.

In response to paragraph 7 ('Deeply concerned that...') Unit 25 Rep. questioned the reference to the 2nd Vice-President where the rest of the draft only referred to the actions of the President and asked for clarification. Ms

Rockcliffe expressed her view that both the President and the 2nd Vice-President's actions were to be criticized as they had both embarrassed the entire staff union in front of management with their actions at recent SMCs.

The Chair suggested that the meeting move to an informal setting for 15 minutes to discuss the draft resolution informally. The Council agreed. Ms Rockcliffe asked that her decision to vote in favour of the resolution following any amendments be placed on record as she had to leave the meeting early. The Chair later expressed his doubt that this was acceptable under UNSU policy, and the alternate representative of Ms Rockcliffe's unit cast his vote on behalf of their unit when the Council moved to consider the resolution formally.

The Council suspended the formal meeting at 13:45 and resumed at 14:02.

The Chair called the meeting back to order and stated that during the informal discussions a text had been agreed upon by the majority of members present. Before moving to a vote on the resolution he gave the floor to a Council member who wished to make a statement for the record.

Ibrahima Fayé (Unit 6) reminded the Council of the legal concept 'audi alterem partem'; that wherever there is conflict or disagreement, it is essential to allow both sides to express their views and/or to react to an allegation. Mr Fayé stressed that he had nothing against a no-confidence vote but felt it important for the Leadership to be given a chance to address the points made in the proposed resolution. He warned the Council of the potentially damaging effect of the resolution on the Union's standing with staff and with management as it would expose division. Mr Fayé further expressed his concern that the draft resolution, largely triggered by the most recent broadcast sent by the President to the Staff-at-large, might be seen as retaliatory.

Unit 25 Rep. supported Mr Fayé's point and suggested the Staff Council call a special meeting to discuss the concerns listed in the draft resolution with Leadership. Mr Fayé and Mr Mutucamarana supported Mr Tamamian's suggestion.

Rosemary Lane (Unit 23) pointed out that Leadership were aware of the Staff Council's meeting today and had chosen not to attend. She reminded the Council that the President would be at the AFT meeting in Pittsburgh the following week and feared that if no action were taken today the issue would be endlessly postponed whilst further communications were being sent out in the Union's name. She pointed to past behaviour of the President in relation to the Council as indicating that any discussion with the President on the issue was likely to be fruitless. Ms Lane further recalled that it was the Council's prerogative to have a no-confidence vote and this was not a motion to recall. Ms Lane also underscored that the President had sent out a broadcast on Tuesday 3rd July that was factually incorrect.

Camille Beydon (Unit 26) emphasized that there were no legal implications to the resolution and recalled the precedent of the UNSU meeting to express its loss of confidence in the ICSC, to which ICSC members were not invited. She affirmed that the resolution was merely a vehicle for the Staff Council members to voice their concerns as Staff Representatives.

Ahmad Ismail (Unit 20) agreed with the spirit of the draft resolution and pointed out that many of the issues that it contained were points he had raised with the Leadership in the past. He was, nonetheless, anxious to avoid a

public display of division and supported Mr Tamamian's earlier suggestion of a special session of the Staff Council. He expressed his preference for an opportunity to have an exchange with the Leadership to address the concerns highlighted by the draft resolution. He noted that many of the issues underscored in the draft resolution pertained to actions in and relationships with bodies outside the UNSU and stated that it would be difficult to explain their relevance and thus the need for the draft resolution to constituents. He suggested that if one of the key concerns of the Staff Council was the factually incorrect nature of the President's most recent broadcast, the Council should adopt a resolution making that point and asking for a retraction.

Mériem Harbi (Unit 28) stated that the divide within the Council was already evident and that previous attempts by the Staff Council to address Leadership's failure to uphold the Council's rights had failed. She pointed to a history of the Staff Council and individual members thereof being subject to a litany of accusations and haranguing from Leadership and to the Leadership's past failure to honour payment of the debts of the UNSU to external service providers, despite Council resolutions. She recalled that on Tuesday (3rd July) a surreal broadcast had been sent by Leadership to the Staff-at-Large without consulting the Staff Council. It was important to express the Council's factual view of events for the record, and the draft resolution was such a statement of fact and not an accusation and should therefore be voted upon. The draft resolution was not intended to call into question the elected status of Leadership, but rather the inability of the Council to function properly because of the behaviour of the President. The Council should not have to bear responsibility for decisions it did not take. Ms Harbi further pointed out that a resolution was the only way of ensuring that the voice of the Council was heard.

Martin Pickles (Unit 29) and Tun Khine (Unit 17) expressed their support for a vote on the draft resolution.

Ms Harbi put forward a motion for a vote to take place on the draft resolution. The motion was seconded by Ms Lane.

A recorded vote on whether to vote on the draft resolution or not was held. Results:

For – 7 (Units 14, 17, 23, 24, 26, 28 and 29)

Against – 1 (Unit 13)

Abstain – 4 (Units 6, 20, 25 and 30)

The vote on the draft resolution was then held. The draft resolution received 8 votes in favour, none against and 4 abstentions. The resolution was adopted.

Mr Fayé in his capacity as Treasurer of the UNSU provided a follow-up on the Council's previous resolution asking the Treasurer for an update on the payment of the UNSU's contribution to CCISUA. He clarified that CCISUA sends an invoice to all Unions on the basis of their pledges made at the CCISUA Assembly, in the case of the UNSU by the President. The Treasurer cannot pay the amended amount decided upon by the Staff Council until he receives an amended invoice from the CCISUA Treasurer. He noted that the Secretary of the Staff Council had written to CCISUA sharing with them the Staff Council's resolution to increase UNSU's contribution to CCISUA and asking the CCISUA Treasurer to adjust the invoice accordingly. A response was still pending.

3. Adoption of Minutes of previous Council meetings

Minutes for meeting 51 were adopted.

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

Ms Lane and Mr Tamamian stated that they had questions on this agenda item, but that in the absence of Leadership they would reserve them for a future occasion.

5. Garage Administration

Item not taken up in absence of the President.

6. NJ Drivers Licences

Postponed in absence of the Leadership.

7. Reports by Units

Meriem Harbi requested an anticipated consideration of item 10 as Unit 28 had an urgent report to make and asked that the floor be given to Kathryn Kuchenbrod.

Ms Kuchenbrod shared that leadership had referred to her and Ms Harbi the case of a General Service staff member in their unit whose temporary contract ended on 13 July 2018. Said staff member was currently an asylum seeker in the United States. Although she passed the relevant UN exam and her temporary contract was thus eligible for conversion to a Fixed-Term Appointment, her lack of G4 or Green Card status meant that the conversion would not be carried out. Ms Harbi noted that there was nothing in writing to confirm the above, but that the staff member had been duly informed orally and had been in touch with human resources to seek assistance. Ms Kuchenbrod and Ms Harbi had raised the case with the 1st Vice-President of the UNSU and with the Department of Management. Ms Harbi stated that this was a complicated matter involving relations with the host country and expressed her regret that no access to the Legal Counsel of the UNSU had been offered.

Mr Fransisco Brito (OPPBA) voiced his concern that staff on temporary contracts were considered external and thus subject to the UN resolution enacting a freeze on the hiring of external candidates at the General Service level.

The Chair asked that the Council be kept apprised of the situation to see what they or Leadership could do.

The meeting adjourned at 14:35.