

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

Meeting No: 45/58
Date: 23 August 2018
Time: 1:30 pm
Venue: Room 6
Quorum: 19/27 Units

45th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate with 19 units present at 1:30 pm, with Staff 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. Units present were: 3, 6, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 31, 33, 37, 39.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The Secretary suggested postponing item 7 “Audit Committee” since members of the Finance Committee had been on leave and had not been able to review the candidacies. The agenda was adopted as amended.

2. Adoption of minutes

Minutes of meeting 57 were adopted without changes.

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

The President’s report had been circulated via email. There had been no Executive Board meeting.

Based on the President’s report, Assistant Treasurer Rosemary Lane asked about the “GS promotional video”. First Vice-President Patricia Nemeth explained that it was a video with testimonials from various GS staff, as well as high-ranking management representatives, intended for use in lobbying Member States and the 5th Committee in favour of abolishing the G-to-P exam. She was hopeful that the G77 would be supportive.

Under common system issues, the First Vice-President added that the federations would also be lobbying Member States to provide an end of service grant after five years of service in all categories, as agreed at the ICSC meeting in Bonn. This second improvement would be harder to win.

4. UNSU Finances

The Assistant Treasurer reported that the bill for the election company had been paid and she had received the first invoices for Staff Day. Otherwise the finance front was quiet.

5. GSDM / Management Reform

No update in absence of Unit 38 representatives.

6. Staff Day

Second Vice-President Cristina Silva had circulated a status report on behalf of the Staff Day Committee. Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) reported that she was still working on obtaining a car. She had also faced obstacles obtaining records for the previous Staff Day. Records up to 2008 had been digitised, but she did not have access to records for 2017. There were practical issues that could be easily resolved by consulting the previous year's records. She also announced that raffle tickets had been distributed and invited Council members to help sell tickets. She pointed out that the Executive Board had approved payment for raffle tickets that could not be used, and was concerned that standard procedures had not been fulfilled for that procurement. She also regretted that better facilities had not been provided for the sale of tickets.

Michelle Rockcliffe and Unit 25 Rep. tabled the following motion:

That all Staff Day records for 2017 be immediately released to the Staff Council all current Staff Day Committees and that records for Staff Days 2017 and 2018 be digitised in due course.

The motion was adopted unanimously.

In reference to the figures in the Staff Day status update, Sarah M'Bodji (Unit 31) asked how the amounts for expenses had been determined and where the funds were coming from. Michelle Rockcliffe explained that the amounts were in line with past practice. She explained that the Staff Day raffle, drinks sales, etc. also generated income that was used to defray the costs. Sarah M'Bodji questioned certain expenditures, including the cost of trophies; hiring bartenders instead of asking staff members to volunteer; and the purchase of balloons, which are discouraged by environmental organisations. The Secretary explained the process whereby the Staff Council had designated a Staff Day Committee. He acknowledged the volunteers' hard work and assumed the Committee had adopted a budget, but regretted it had not been shared with the Council, which could have provided useful suggestions or inputs.

María René Luque (Unit 19) suggested that Council members who were passionate about an issue should become more involved, including by joining the Staff Day Committee in order to contribute to the effort. She felt we should review our working methods in order to spend less time requesting reports and be more supportive of the people who were doing the work. A number of Council members shared the concern regarding the figures

François Charlier (Unit 3) wondered if Staff Day could be postponed. He suggested designating focal points within the Council in order to support Leadership on specific issues. The First Vice-President agreed that the Council could be more supportive of Leadership. She would be happy to delegate on a number of issues. Fatimazohra Nouinou (Unit 10) suggested that the Staff Day Committee should be invited to an ad-hoc meeting with the Council in order to iron out the details and avoid unnecessary expenses.

The Staff Council adopted the following motion with 16 votes in favour and 2 abstentions:

Motion to invite the Staff Day Committee to a meeting with the Staff Council on Tuesday 28 August (backup date Monday 27) according to their availability, at which they will be invited to present a detailed itemised budget for joint review.

The Chair agreed to extend an invitation to the Staff Day Committee with both dates as an option.

Michelle Rockcliffe recalled the procurement process laid out by the Treasurer, which included the requirement for 3 proposals before an expense was approved. In reply to a question from Kathryn Kuchenbrod (Unit 28), she explained that the first tickets printed could not be used because the Treasurer had decided that the process had been exposed to excessive risk, since the tickets had been passed around between a number of people before they came into her custody. She hoped that more volunteers would sign up to help with the various preparations.

7. Staff members with refugee status

François Charlier and other Staff Reps referred to cases of eligible candidates or staff members or temporary contracts who had not been confirmed due to their status as asylum applicants or asylees in the US. A conversation ensued about the current policy, whereby only citizens, green-card holders and G4 visa holders were authorised by the host country to work at the UN, thus excluding asylees / refugees. While the Union was not in a position to sway the host country's policies, Camille Beydon (Unit 26) and François Charlier believed that, as a minimum, the administration should be more transparent with staff members in this situation to avoid last-minute surprises. François Charlier was convinced that the Secretary General would be sensitive to the issue, given his background. The First Vice-President would raise the issue with OLA and report back to the Council.

8. YPP

Ahmad Ismail (Unit 20) recalled that results were pending publication for the YPP exams held the year before. Candidates were still not receiving any response to their queries. There was a contact form on the examination site that was not responsive. He asked that Leadership take up the issue so that candidate staff members could obtain information on the status of their exam. He felt it was worthwhile escalating the issue to obtain greater clarity from the Examinations Unit. He did not question the integrity of the markers, but he had grave concerns about the process itself. It was irregular for a new round of exams to be announced even before the previous results were out. He would continue to work on the issue. At a minimum, the contact form should be functional.

Assistant Treasurer Rosemary Lane, who had been co-chair of the Central Examinations Board for many years, stated that the Administration had decided to go back to prior practice of informing internal candidates of their exam results. Public Information results should be issued as soon as the procedure was completed. Marks for MAGNET had been distributed about a month ago.

Deputy Chair Andraž Melanšek, who had worked at the Examination Unit, reported that, given their capacity, the policy was to not answer queries from candidates beyond official announcements. However, the Unit's work was governed by the relevant ST/AI. That was the basis on which the Union could intervene.

The First Vice-President would talk to the chief of the Examination Unit and report at the next meeting.

9. WAE

François Charlier reported on a case where WAE was being used to place a staff member in a precarious situation. It appeared that the administration was resorting to WAE in order to hire staff for shorter periods, with no certainty as to how much work they could expect in the year. The Secretary clarified that WAE had worked effectively for many years for freelance language staff, who were aware of the limitations. However, if other departments were starting to use the framework arrangement instead of more predictable types of contracts, it could be problematic and should be addressed. He suggested doing so at the level of the hiring department, as it was not advisable to reopen the general policy in WAE.

The Council came back to the issue of Focal Points and examined the best way to share the burden and coordinate on issues in the context of a larger Council. The Secretary would compile a list of the major issues the Council had worked on for members to sign up on specific items where they had expertise or interest.

10. UNAT Ruling

Deferred in absence of the proponent. The Secretary would circulate relevant recent UNAT rulings as background reading for the following meeting.

11. Issues raise by units

Fatimazohra Nouinou raised the issue of early release prior to official holidays. The First Vice-President confirmed that the issue had been raised at the recent JNC meeting. The Administration's position was that early release before holidays or due to weather conditions was a discretionary faculty that DM would continue to exercise on an ad-hoc basis and in coordination with the SG's office.

The meeting adjourned at 14:40.