

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

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**Minutes/Actes**

Meeting No: 45/66  
Date: 25 October 2018  
Time: 13:15  
Venue: Room F  
Quorum: 21/27 Units

**45<sup>th</sup> Staff Council Meeting Minutes**

The meeting was quorate at 1:30 pm. Staff Council Chair Camille McKenzie chaired and UNSU Secretary Aitor Arauz Chapman took notes. Given the sensitive nature of the topics discussed, the meeting was not recorded. Units present were: 3, 6, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 37, 39.

The Chair appealed to members to hold an objective and adult debate, given the nature of the issues on the agenda.

**1. Adoption of the agenda**

The First Vice-President offered to address item 7 via email in order to save time. Item 4 was modified to “Retaliation against staff representatives”. Item 6 “DGACM Contracts” was moved up to place 4. The agenda was adopted as amended.

A number of members pointed out that the Council at its previous meeting had agreed to address the breach of confidentiality by the President. In view of the tight agenda, the Chair suggested postponing it to the following week.

**2. Adoption of minutes**

Minutes of meeting 61, 62, 63, 64 and 65 were adopted.

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

No EB report was submitted.

The President had circulated her summary of communications. Sherif Mohamed (Unit 27) enquired about the Catering Committee. The President replied it was a joint staff-management committee and pointed out that François Charlier (Unit 3) was also a member.

Kenneth Rosario (Unit 39) enquired about how the EB had addressed the issues affecting a member of the Leadership. The matter was deferred to the end of the meeting to be discussed in closed Council.

#### **4. DGACM Contracts**

Four DGACM staff members affected by contract termination present at the meeting were invited to speak. Sarah M'Bodji (Unit 31) reported on extensive meetings up to the level of the USG, who had been able to offer no solution to place the staff members facing separation. The USG alerted that situations like this would be becoming more common in future and confirmed that the Organisation had no obligation to fixed-term contracts.

A colleague speaking on behalf of the affected staff members stated that we were not doing honour to the nature of the United Nations as a human rights organisation if we did not fight for our colleagues facing termination. Why was the Union not doing more to help individuals with 10 – 15 years of service? There was a lack of transparency in the placement system. Nepotism and job patronage were endemic. Some people had connections, while others were expendable. If it could happen to these four colleagues, it could happen to any of us, yet we only reacted when it affected us up close.

Sherif Mohamed pointed out that this item had only been placed on the agenda once before. He recalled that the staff members' Unit representatives had submitted a resolution. The Council had assumed the case was being addressed by them. The Council had heard no news on the issue in the interim.

The President stated that she had intervened and initiated a process with DGACM. She had delegated in the Staff Representatives and Sarah M'Bodji. She regretted that she had not been kept apprised of events by the representatives. She then excused her presence to attend to other engagements.

Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) regretted that the Staff Council seemed unable to follow up on its own decisions. Kenneth Rosario (Unit 39) sympathised with the staff members involved. The administration had no respect for the Union, given our habit of passing the buck. It was important to address and expose the underlying weaknesses in the process.

The Treasurer recalled that the approved budget included USD 300,000 for litigation. This was exactly the kind of situation the money should be used for. Sherif Mohamed thanked the Treasurer for his suggestion, which was precisely what he sought from this kind of conversation. Michelle Rockcliffe insisted on the need for a process to decide how cases were referred to the litigator.

William Bly (Unit 23) suggested all staff reps draw on their networks to help the staff members find placement. Deputy Chair Andraž Melanšek regretted that the staff reps and President had not done their work. What mattered now was taking specific actions in support of staff. Sarah M'Bodji had a list of positions the staff had applied for and would share it with Council members. She supported a clearer process for referral to the litigator. She also stressed the need to educate staff on the nature of contracts and procedures.

Kenneth Rosario tabled a motion:

***To call upon George Irving and place a suspension of action in favour of these staff members.***

The motion was adopted unanimously.

Sherif Mohamed (Unit 27) demanded that the Council look into the circumstances whereby the staff members' situation had only been brought to the Council a week before their termination. Assistant Treasurer Rosemary Lane regretted that the entire Council was being tarred with the same brush. The issue was only brought to the Council once it was a crisis. Information was not provided by those who should have been addressing it. François Charlier (Unit 3) stressed the need to address the systemic problem, which was the lack of transparency in the recruiting system.

### **5. Retaliation against staff representatives**

The affected staff members updated on their situation and all the steps they had taken. The judge had issued a suspension of action pending consideration of suspension. Their contract had been extended for 2 weeks. OSLA had turned down the application considering they did not have a case. A meeting was arranged with the Ombudswoman. They had continued applying to other openings.

Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) felt it was disgraceful that the Secretary General had not replied to the Council's request for an urgent meeting. The First Vice President agreed to follow up with his office.

### **6. GSDM/Management Reform**

Francisco Brito reported on a townhall meeting with USG DM, where it was announced that 98% of staff had been matched and would be placed by Jan 1. They were still working on placing the remainder. Tun Khine (Unit 17) added that the future USG of DOS reported that only 3% of staff remained to be placed and they were working for a 100% placement. Andraž Melanšek alerted that soon synergies would be sought in the reform process and some jobs may be at risk. GSDM would put 300 positions at risk (mainly GS staff) with functions being relocated. We could expect downward pressure on all salaries. The First Vice-President alerted to the fact that some staff members were being mismatched to positions for which they did not have the skills or background. The Unions were working to counter attempts to reduce salaries at ICSC.

Shirley Abraham (Unit 37) stressed the need to keep ahead of the curve on GSDM. The threat had not been averted. Francisco Brito pointed out that plans for GSDM were in turmoil, but Member States were calling for even more offshoring and savings than in the original plan. We should be proactive and push for publication of the Downsizing AI. Andraž Melanšek suggested a Broadcast to staff calling the administration's bluff and alerting all staff to the Administration's delaying tactics. The Secretary asked for a draft to be submitted at the following meeting. Sarah M'Bodji renewed the call for a communications strategy. María Renée Luque (Unit 19) recalled the importance of reaching out to unit members to educate them on the various changes under way.

Unit 25 Rep. suggested compiling data on positions at risk in each Department, as well as analysing the effects of the extension of the retirement age on potential attrition.

### **7. Status of elections**

The Chair had forwarded an email from the Polling Officers reporting on status of preparations for elections. The issue was postponed due to lack of time.

### **8. Gender Parity**

The Council agreed that the wording of the draft amendments to the Staff Rules was ambiguous and needed to be clarified. Members were worried that it was impossible to ascertain the President's position in her absence. In light of her breach of confidentiality the previous week, the Council decided, under UNSU Regulation 4.8.14, that she would not represent the Union at the forthcoming SMC VTC on Gender scheduled for October 29.

The Council adopted the following motions:

**The United Nations Staff Union opposes the draft amendments to Staff Rules 9.3 and 13.1**

**The United Nations Staff Union designates First-Vice President Patricia Nemeth as its representative for the October 29 SMC VTC on Gender. She may be accompanied by an Advisor.**

The meeting adjourned at 2:50 pm.