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

45th STAFF COUNCIL/45ème CONSEIL DU PERSONNEL

Minutes/Actes
Meeting No: 45/75
Date: 17 January 2019
Time: 13:15 - 14:30
Venue: Room D
Quorum: 16/27 Units

45th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate at 1:30 pm with 16 Units present. Deputy Chair Andraž Melanšek chaired the meeting and Secretary Aitor Arauz-Chapman took notes. Units present were: 3, 6, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 33, 37. The meeting was recorded and a copy deposited with the Union administrator.

1.   Adoption of the agenda

Item 6 "Upcoming General Meeting" was moved to number 4. The agenda was adopted as amended.

2.   Adoption of minutes of previous Council meetings

Minutes of meeting 74 were adopted.

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

The EB report had been distributed via email. Assistant Secretary Sherif Mohamed referred to two items in further detail. On awareness raising, the EB proposed to the Council a regular newsletter published by the Staff Council. He had prepared a template for a 1-page newsletter. Participation from all Council members would be required to generate content. The Executive Board could collect contributions and exercise editorial control. He submitted a motion:

To issue a Union Newsletter (name tbd).

Sarah M'Bodji (Unit 31) recalled that the Council had already decided to charge a group with devising a communication strategy. The Newsletter could be combined with that effort. Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) feared that staff reps did not have enough time to move these initiatives forward. Sarah M'Bodji renewed her offer to draft Terms of Reference for the Communications Group.

The Council agreed to endorse the proposal and charged the EB with working out the details.

The Assistant Secretary also reported to the Council on ongoing work by the EB to create a compendium of all decisions, resolutions and motions adopted by the Council and EB. The work would be presented once completed.

The President said that she had not prepared a report and summary of communications. Michelle Rockcliffe recalled once again that despite the President's absence, the Council should be informed of communications received by the Union. The Assistant Secretary shared the concern, but hoped that we could move forward in a spirit of cooperation, as had defined the last few days. He asked the President to commit to be forthcoming with her reports.

The President wished Council members a happy new year. She welcomed a more participatory approach to issues affecting colleagues. Some departments were more affected by reforms than others. However, this was only the beginning of substantial changes. The only way we could make a meaningful contribution was to work together. At the morning SG's Townhall she had tried to incorporate everybody's inputs into her statement. We had heard nothing new from the SG. Management in DMSPC and DOS were working out the details of the new architecture. No jobs had been lost so far, but that could change. We had to keep working to ensure everybody stays on board, which includes making sure colleagues get the training they need, that they get their job descriptions and have the resources they need to perform. Regarding the SG's comments, Michelle Rockcliffe underlined her concern that the SG's representatives on the Pension Board were not working in favour of staff. She appraised the Council of a series of instances where Management reps had not responded to staff's concerns. William Bly (Unit 23) referred to the need to raise awareness and prepare strategies in advance, and also provide options to influence change.

5. General Meeting

The Secretary invited Council members to confirm / suggest items to be presented under item 1. "Update of UNSU work". Options already raised were: Common System, HLIC, Pension Fund, UN reform, Accessibility, G to P, GSDM. The Treasurer would present finances. Michelle Rockcliffe would speak on HLIC and Pensions. The Assistant Secretary recalled the need to tailor the style to general staff, and avoid using acronyms. The Arbitration Committee had been invited to present a report, but it was not clear if the Polling Officers had been invited to speak on the Elections item. The Secretary would confirm with the Chair and the EB would finalise the speaking order at its meeting the day before the GM.

5. GSDM / Management Reform

The Assistant Secretary recalled the Secretary General's statement at the Town Hall saying that GSDM was a "legacy" reform, and also that it would be conducted with the "minimum" impact to staff. The Union should be engaged in defining how those "minimum" effects played out. The President added that there was no doubt that GSDM was going forward. It was the technological lynchpin that would replace certain categories of work. That was why the WG had agreed to a set of mitigation measures, which the SG had committed to uphold to the maximum extent possible. However, the Administration had not agreed to extend those mitigation measures to all cases of Downsizing. Michelle Rockcliffe believed that the agreed Downsizing policy should cover all future cases. Ahmad Ismail (Unit 20) agreed that there was no going back on GSDM. Departments had received instructions to cut between 2.5 and 4% of their budget for 2020. There was a move to pool similar job functions in order to facilitate transfers to other duty stations. The President recalled that the Downsizing Policy agreed at

SMC over two years ago was still pending approval by OLA. Mitigation measures were under a separate SMC agreement. She would circulate the document again.

Based on the morning's debate, Maria Renée Luque (Unit 19) asked for specific and meaningful proposals that we could present to staff, including on training. Sarah M'Bodji recalled the SG's mention of Manager Dashboards, and proposed that Staff Reps should be involved in defining the information on those dashboards. She was willing to get involved. William Bly recalled the danger that people be hired to do jobs that current staff were perfectly able to do if they received the required training.

6.   Status of Elections

Ahmad Ismail recalled his questions about the integrity of the Chair of the Polling Officers, given her involvement in Staff Day. He was surprised that OHRM could not provide the lists by Jan 1. Michelle Rockcliffe asked the President to justify the basis of her email from Jan 1 announcing to staff that the elections would be delayed and the Union would go into caretaker mode. The President replied that she had merely informed staff of information received from the Polling Officers. The Secretary was disappointed that the President should simply accept that delay as a fact and not do everything in her power to avoid it, rather than merely announcing it to staff. Ahmad Ismail recalled the need to discuss broadcasts that could potentially alarm staff with the Council in advance. Michelle Rockcliffe asked that the Polling Officers explain what they needed to do and what they expected to be the reason for delay. Rapporteur Camille Beydon recalled an idea to ask the Administration for time release for the Polling Officers. The Assistant Secretary suggested writing to the Administration to ask for the lists. Sarah M'Bodji asked for the POs to ensure that lists were developed in such a way that they could be useful to Unit reps in the next Council.

7.   Update on 2nd Vice President

Item redacted.

8.   Retreat to Finalize Statute and Regulation

No updates in absence of Unit 25 Rep.

9.   Staff Nominee to ABCC

The Chair asked if we had a name for the nomination. Assistant Treasurer Rosemary Lane recalled the conversation at the EB. She had attempted to clarify what the issues were with the names that had been submitted and was working to resolve the issue. The President recalled she had forwarded a chain of emails to the EB. The President proposed inviting the current staff representatives on the ABCC to the following meeting for an update.

The meeting adjourned at 14:40.

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