



Minutes/Actes:

Meeting No: 46/17
Date: 19 September 2019
Time: 13:15 - 14:30
Venue: Conf. Room A
Quorum: 14/17 Units

46th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate with 11 Units present at 13:30. Staff Council Chair Camille McKenzie chaired the meeting and Secretary Sherif Mohamed took notes. Units present were: 06, 13, 14, 17, 18, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 33. The President and the 1st Vice President were in attendance.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The 1st VP Aitor Arauz Chapman suggested the inclusion of an item on the Disability Inclusion Policy, to elect a focal point for the implementation of the Strategy in the UNHQ. It was decided that the suggested item will be discussed under the agenda item on President's Report. Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) requested to include a standing agenda item on Financial Reports. The Chair promised to add the agenda item starting next meeting.

2. Adoption of previous minutes

The Chair informed the Council that the Secretary shared the draft minutes of meetings 10, 11, 13, 15, and 16 with the Council members the same day, and asked them to read them during the next two weeks so they get adopted on the Council's next meeting. The Assistant Secretary forwarded the draft minutes of meeting 14 to the Secretary who promised to send it with the minutes of meeting no. 17.

3. President's Report and Summary of Communications

The 1st VP mentioned that due to the unprecedented workload the leadership team witnessed the past week, they did not prepare a President's Report, nor a summary of communications. Michelle Rockcliffe expressed her dissatisfaction for the lack of a President report and called for the Leadership team to prepare more detailed reports in the future, at least 3 sentences that would provide context to the list. The 1st VP mentioned that they try to include all the information that can be included, yet not everything can be shared in writing.

On the Disability Inclusion Strategy: the 1st VP briefed the Council on the request of the SG to appoint disability inclusion Focal Points to monitor and participate in the implementation of the strategy and asked the Council to vote on the Council nominee (Sarah M'Bodji) whom was nominated during the previous Council meeting but was not voted upon owed to the lack of quorum.

The Chair gave the floor to the Assistant Secretary Sarah M'Bodji to give a few words to the Council members regarding her nomination to this position.

The Assistant Secretary made a short statement regarding her experience in the field of disability inclusion technologies.

A motion was made to nominate the Assistant Secretary to serve for this position. The motion was seconded. The Council moved to vote on the motion.

The motion was approved unanimously with 11 votes in favour, 0 votes against, and 0 abstentions.

4. Executive Board report

In connection with the EB agenda item regarding Hurricane Dorian, Michelle Rockcliffe reminded the Council two older requests for financial assistance were made to the Council to help overcome the aftermath of the hurricanes that hit Comoros and Mozambique, and that the two requests should be reviewed at the same time as the request for the Bahamas.

5. Climate Action

The President asked that the Climate Action focal points meet after the Council meeting to make final arrangements for the event. She asked for volunteers for the UNSU table during the event.

The Deputy Chair Ramona Kohrs inquired if Council members can bring a photographer to take pictures of the event. Sherif Okasha (Unit 28) mentioned that he will invite a friend who is a professional photographer/journalist to cover the event.

6. Pension Fund

The Chair welcomed the two guests whom are Senior Investment Officers at the Pension Fund.

The Chair gave the floor to Michelle Rockcliffe. Michelle introduced the two guests who were invited to the Council meeting to brief the Council on the critical issues related to

investments within the Pension Fund and to answer any questions the Council members might have.

Michelle Rockcliffe started by making mention to the joint-statement which was prepared by the Participants' Representatives. She also mentioned the 8 topics which were brought to the attention of the Pension Board, including items on the composition of the Board as compared with its current composition, the jurisdiction of the UN Appeals Tribunal over the Pension Fund, and the timely payment for participants, among other issues. She also raised her concerns regarding the unbalanced representation on the Board and mentioned a relevant GA resolution 73/274 which recommended a change to the composition of the Board.

She called for Staff Reps to read the GA resolution to further understand the issues that might affect our funds, and to show support to the participants' representatives.

She reported some inaccuracies in the figures contained in a publication on the work of the Pension Fund, and mentioned that she is planning to call for an investigation in this regard, and that the Pension Fund management intentionally deprived her and other staff from accessing the shared drives which contain the accurate data.

The two senior investment officers briefed the Council on the issues related to the risky investment practices which started to take place recently after the merging the roles of the RSG to the Pension Fund and the Director of the Fund to become only one position that manages the Fund. They mentioned the difficulties they encountered to do their jobs the right way, which entails making sure we have the best investments for our pension funds.

They went on to brief the Council on the change-management practices which were implemented about a year and a half ago and described the negative effects of such changes on the relationship between management and staff members of the Fund. They also mentioned that some of these changes were not well-studied and resulted in a hostile working atmosphere that lacked mutual confidence.

They went on and mentioned more details regarding the merge of the roles of the RSG and the Director of the Fund, resulting in a lack of accountability, which was previously ensured by having a representative of the SG to observe the performance of the Director and how the Fund management are working to achieve the SG's vision regarding the Fund. With such a dangerous change, they said that they were not sure that the SG was aware of what was going on in the Fund.

The Chair left at 14:10 and The Deputy Chair chaired the rest of the meeting.

They went on to give the Council members further details regarding the investments policies in the Fund and described their efforts to try to minimize any damage expected as a result of what they called 'unstudied investment decisions'.

The Secretary Sherif Mohamed said that, like any other investment, there were risks associated to every investment decision. He asked the guests to give the Council more information about the areas that posed a threat to the Pension funds.

The guests explained that in the investment's world, taking small well-studied risks is better than taking huge poorly studied risks. Michelle Rockcliffe further explained that of the main principles of the UN Pension Fund safety, security, convertibility, liquidity, and integrity of the funds are of a vital importance and that these principles are not being taken into consideration in the case of such huge poorly studied investments decisions.

The guests continued that it is never necessary to make big profits out of risky investments that might pose threats to the safety of the funds.

They also mentioned what happened when staff members tried to provide opinions about such investment decisions, and that management would punish those who object to their investment decisions.

The Deputy Chair mentioned that during her 10 years of reading about climate change, she observed how other entities refrained from investing in projects that involved fossil fuel. She questioned whether or not it was possible that the Pension Fund had investments in relation to companies that do not consider environment-sensitive practices, given that a number of these companies ended up bankrupt.

Christian Clark (OCHA Staff Focal Point) mentioned that showing the dangers regarding staff money would motivate staff to participate in an action and therefore he asked about any the potential dangers and any suggested actions/solutions that can be adopted by the Staff Council.

The guests suggested a call for a fresh start between the staff and management of the Fund. They also suggested that staff raise calls for a change in the structure of the Fund/Board and to place some limitations to the absolute powers associated with the new DoA policy.

Michelle Rockcliffe also suggested a return to the policy of including the investment officers in the decision-making process, given their experience in identifying areas of investment that pose risks to our funds.

Jason Charles (Unit 13) asked the leadership whether or not they have any specific ideas or plans on how to overcome this worrisome issue.

The 1st VP said that as a starting point the relationship between staff and management in the Fund should be bound by strict rules. There should be some well-defined job descriptions, duties, and responsibilities and the importance of setting strict limits on how far management could affect the work of other staff members.

Simona Chindea (Unit 24) raised concerns regarding the lack of accountability as a result of the merge between the roles of the RSG and the Director of the Fund.

The guests responded with examples on how the previous system (RSG and Director) created an atmosphere of confidence in the Fund and secured the safety of our funds at the same time, which is not the case now with the new system (merged RSG and Director roles).

Michelle Rockcliffe mentioned that the RSG is currently pulling all the authorities related to investments from senior investment officers rather than granting them more authority under the framework of the new DoA policy.

The President emphasized on the importance of listening to all involved parties when it comes to investment decisions.

Christian Clark suggested initiating a petition from the staff-at-large to request some solid accountability measures.

The Secretary inquired if there are any solid action points that can be considered by the Council. Michelle Rockcliffe responded by showing her support to the idea of initiating a global staff petition with some strict requests aimed at safeguarding the billions of dollars in investments that staff have no idea how they are managed.

The meeting adjourned at 14:45.
