



Minutes/Actes:

Meeting No: 46/20
Date: 24 October 2019
Time: 13:15 - 14:30
Venue: Conf. Room F
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, 17, 18, 21, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33. The 1st and 2nd Vice Presidents were in attendance.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The chair suggested to move item no. 6 “presentation on accountability” up on the agenda to become no. 2. Agenda was adopted as amended.

2. Accountability at the UN/Mario Baez

Mr. Mario Baez made a presentation to the Council about “the UN governance and accountability system”. The following are the highlights of the presentation (*more details are available in the handout distributed at the meeting*):

- The transformation of the UN from the “League of Nations” to the current “United Nations” System.
- The six governance organs in the UN (General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council, The Secretariat, International Court of Justice, Trusteeship Council).
- The six committees of the GA (1st Committee through 6th Committee).
- The subsidiary organ of the GA (Advisory Committee on Administration and Budgetary Questions - ACABQ).
- The composition of the Secretariat and the responsibilities of its different entities (departments).
- Overview of the United Nations System.

- On accountability, the presenter mentioned the anticipated new accountability framework which will be publicly disseminated and highlighted the need for a solid accountability framework in the light of the new DoA module. He also explained the components and the guiding principles of the accountability system. Finally, the presenter described the 3 lines of defence in connection to the accountability framework.
- ST/SGB/2016/9 on “Status, basic rights and duties of United Nations staff members” was highlighted, and the Staff Council was invited to inspect it.

Michelle Rockcliffe asked to have another session on this matter for further questions, given its importance.

The Deputy Chair Ramona Kohrs made reference to the GA resolutions (mostly coming from the Fifth Committee) that usually endorse the recommendations of the ACABQ and/or the BoA. She thought that, for the sake of transparency and accountability, and to improve the efficiency of implementing the mandates of the GA, the resolutions should clearly spell out in an annex the recommendations from other bodies that the GA endorses. She explained that even library staff faced issues while trying to sort out the different references in GA resolutions.

She gave an example when she - as a librarian - hardly found her way through a dilemma of endorsed recommendations contained in a multi-part budget document to figure out the exact targeted recommendation. She explained how tough it was to put together such puzzle pieces and she believed that the Fifth Committee could do a better job of putting together resolutions that make sense and that provide clear mandates and instructions to those who will have to implement them.

3. Adoption of previous minutes

Michelle Rockcliffe had general concerns regarding minutes (10, 14, and 16) and complained that in their current status they can't be adopted as formal Staff Union minutes. She described the mentioned minutes to be more like informal notes and asked that the Secretaries revise these minutes and bring them back to the Council for adoption.

Minutes for meetings 10, 14, 16 as well as minutes for the 1st Emergency Council Meeting were still pending.

Upon the Deputy Chair's request, adoption of minutes for meeting no. 19 was postponed for potential corrections. Minutes for meeting 19 were therefore pending.

4. President's Report and Summary of Communications

No written report was circulated. The 1st VP Aitor Arauz Chapman briefed the Council on the SMC VTC which discussed the downsizing policy that was extensively edited and deviated extremely away from some of the agreements reached by the downsizing working groups last year. The Staff Unions decided to insist that the document agreed upon be the one adopted, rather than the recently circulated version. He mentioned that downsizing is happening all over the Secretariat and in the absence of a downsizing policy an urgent action was needed.

5. Executive Board report

Michelle Rockcliffe mentioned that the Council agreed to pay the volunteers, but apparently according to the EB, the EB overstepped the Council's decision.

She also insisted that Treasurers provide monthly financial statements as well as other mandated financial documents.

The Rapporteur Coralie Tripier mentioned that in connection with the payments for volunteers, the EB changed the wording of its previous report to satisfy her previous request. Michelle Rockcliffe complained that the practice of holding the funds pending the Staff Day budget reconciliation is irregular and should not be followed. The Assistant Rapporteur Shirley Abraham thought it was regular to wait for the Staff Day financial statements before the disbursement of any further payments. The Chair thought that holding payments was not a fair practice. The Treasurer Jaime Garreta explained the circumstances regarding these payments and the rationale behind the EB decisions in this regard and the need to receive Staff Day reconciled financial statements at the earliest. Michelle Rockcliffe stated that she has delivered all the necessary and required documents and data in connection with the expenses and earnings of the Staff Day. She inquired what were the documents requested from her. She also questioned the inventory of drinks and other items which should be included in the financial statements. The Assistant Treasurer complained about the lack of cooperation from Michelle Rockcliffe's part and claimed that necessary verifications and documents was requested from her yet were never delivered to the Treasurers, a claim that was denied by Michelle Rockcliffe.

The Chair asked the involved parties to organize a special meeting among themselves to try to solve these issues and bring a final resolution to the Council.

Jason Charles (Unit 13) called for paying the volunteers before the upcoming Council meeting and to disconnect these payments from the reconciliation of the Staff Day accounts.

The Treasurer complained about the inconsistency of the payments to volunteers, which was justified to cover their transportation, and in some cases the amounts seemed unrealistic and raised questions and concerns in the EB, given the distance commuted.

The Assistant Rapporteur expressed concerns regarding the outstanding Staff Day accounts and justified in that sense why the EB refused to make any payments before the reconciliation of the accounts.

The Chair again requested to separate the question of payments to volunteers from the question of the reconciliation of Staff Day accounts and called for the Treasurers to proceed with the approved payments and asked the current Treasurer to meet with the former Assistant Treasurer to address the outstanding issues.

The Deputy Chair Ramona Kohrs asked for more details about the item on “legalities of telecommuting” in the EB report.

The 1st VP mentioned that the policy on FWA, which managers don't necessary have to comply with, have some grey areas in connection with insurance, taxation, purchase of equipment, among other issues, and that it was thought to be beneficial to share an article from NY times in this regard and that it might be important to bring the policy to the SMC for further discussions to clear these grey areas.

6. UNSU finances

The name of the standing agenda item was changed from “treasurer's report” to “UNSU finances”.

The Treasurer explained that they were trying to verify - month by month - the books with the bank statements and explained the rationale behind the Treasurers' decision to present UNSU finances quarterly instead of monthly. The Chair reminded them that as per the Statues and Regulations, it was required to provide monthly financial statements.

The Assistant Treasurer explained that the Treasurers are ready to provide monthly statements, but only after the current backlog was resolved, including the outstanding accounts of the Staff Day. He also referred to the statements circulated to the Council and that they give the overall condition of the budget as of now.

Michelle Rockcliffe thanked the Treasurers for moving the raffle tickets profit under the income table and questioned the amounts mentioned in the report. She also questioned the amount of the expenditure in connection to Staff Day which reads 26,888.85 and explained that the right amount was supposed to be over \$50,000.

The Deputy Chair asked for the details of all the expenses in comparison with the approved budget.

The 2nd VP promised to help the Treasurers clear the backlog and to help provide a separate report on the finances of the Staff Day. He asked the Council members to cooperate.

Lucelena Pimentel condemned the apparent conflict among some of the Council members and called for Unity.

7. Training for Staff Representatives

Deferred to next meeting.

8. Inputs for Catering Committee

Deferred to next meeting.

9. Unit Chairs/Polling Officers/By-Elections

Deferred to next meeting.

10. Reports by Units

Nothing was raised.

11. AOB

Nothing was raised.

The meeting adjourned at 15:00.
