



Minutes/Actes:

Meeting No: 46/21
Date: 31 October 2019
Time: 13:15 - 14:30
Venue: Conf. Room E
Quorum: 09/17 Units

46th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was not quorate at 13:30 and accordingly the quorum was waived, and the Council started its 21st meeting with the understanding that no decisions can be made. Staff Council Chair Camille McKenzie chaired the meeting and Secretary Sherif Mohamed took notes. Units present were: 06, 13, 18, 21, 24, 26, 27, 30, 31. The 1st and 2nd Vice Presidents were in attendance.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted without a change.

The Chairperson Camille McKenzie announced that a member of the staff side on the Catering Committee will attend the present meeting to address the Council regarding item no. 8 (Inputs for Catering Committee). Another guest from DPPA was the focal point assigned by the staff to represent them given that they did not have an elected staff rep. and was supposed to brief the Council on item no. 3 on the agenda. The Chairperson explained that it was the common practice of the Council that it decided to allow focal points assigned by staff to attend the Council meetings in this capacity, ask to add agenda items, and to address the Council under these agenda items.

2. Adoption of previous minutes

Given the lack of a quorum, adoption of outstanding minutes was suspended to next meeting. We will need to adopt the following minutes: (1) The 1st Council Emergency Meeting (on the budget and workplan), (2) The 10th, 14th, 16th, 19th, 20th, and the present minutes for meeting no. 21.

3. Jian Pak DPPA/DPO

Item deferred to next meeting.

4. President's Report and Summary of Communications

The 1st VP Aitor Arauz Chapman highlighted some of the activities mentioned in the President's report. He referred to the bizarre situation with the proposed ST/SGB on Downsizing, which did not conform to previous agreements achieved by different SMC working groups over more than 2 years of hard work. The Unions had 2 objections to the newly proposed policy: (1) procedural objection, given that the new policy is a clear breach of the SMC rules; (2) objection on the nature of the changes: regarding some of the changes made in the new policy which did not reflect or ignored previous SMC agreements. The Unions decided to request bringing the policy back to the SMC, which might mean further delays to the launch of the policy. He also explained that ASG/OHR explained in a previous meeting that the purpose of the changes was to streamline the text of the ST/SGB and to clearly differentiate overall policy vs detailed implementation guidelines. This was not acceptable to the Unions, as guidelines are not subject to consultation.

The Deputy Chair condemned the common ambiguities in the ST/SGB's and ST/AI's. She also referred to her comment in the 20th meeting of the Council when she also condemned similar and other ambiguities and issues with other UN official documents, to the extent that some of these documents were subject to criticism by Judges of UN Tribunals.

Michelle Rockcliffe inquired about the agenda for the CCISUA midterm which will be held in New York next week and requested that agendas of such important meetings should be shared with the staff reps as soon as available to ensure enough time for an informed UNSU position. The 1st VP promised to share the agenda of the said meeting with the Council and promised to discuss the issues on the agenda with the EB to formulate a UNSU position, while invited those who are interested to attend that meeting.

The 2nd VP Francisco Brito agreed that it was necessary to have invested a little time in discussing the items on this important meeting's agenda.

Michelle Rockcliffe condemned the poor hospitality offered to guests from other Unions visiting New York on official Union business. She reiterated her condemnation towards the decreased UNSU contributions to CCISUA and requested to give this matter the due consideration to prevent such mistakes in the future.

5. Executive Board report

There was no EB meeting this week.

6. UNSU finances

The Chair reminded the Council that we anticipated a meeting between the Treasurers and the former Assistant Treasurer, in which they should have settled the issues emerged from Staff Day. The Treasurer Jaime Garreta confirmed that the meeting has taken place, and that they were moving forward with the conciliation of the financial statements. He

also briefed the Council on a meeting with the Auditing Company which was held on 30 October 2019 in the UNSU conference room. The Chair asked about the status of the outstanding payments to volunteers and the Treasurer confirmed that checks were sent out.

The 2nd VP praised the cooperative approach between the Treasurers and the former Assistant Treasurer and called for ensuring similar cooperation in all the aspects of work in the Union.

The Treasurer promised to do their best to finalize and bring the revised financial reports to the Council at its next meeting.

The Assistant Treasurer complained about the outdated computers and software packages that they use for book keeping and called for the Council to upgrade these important assets.

7. Training for Staff Representatives

The 1st VP briefed the Council on 2 training invitations received from FICSA (Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations) to attend training programmes on different subjects. He explained that one of them was a training for staff representatives on the procedures of presenting cases before the ILO Tribunals which was out-of-scope for us. He continued that the 2nd offer was a training for staff representatives on promoting Mental Health in the workplace. He was sorry that we could not get to this item earlier in the month to be able to send 1 or 2 staff representatives to the latter training. He further called for the Council to establish a committee dedicated to the training needs of staff representatives, which was mandated to recommend training opportunities, preferably to the Council as a whole.

The Deputy Chair volunteered to the membership of this Committee. Michelle Rockcliffe, Coralie Tripier, Sherif Mohamed and Sergio Pires Vieira also volunteered for the Committee's membership.

The Deputy Chair briefed the Council on the Young UN meeting she attended earlier. She described to the Council the flat composition of the group – rather than a hierarchical one and invited the Council to consider its current processes and machineries to be able to revitalize the Union and bring more members on board.

The rapporteur Coralie Tripier thought training was very important, especially for the new staff representatives who did not receive any Union related formal training so far. She also joined the calls for more group trainings to replace individual trainings that involve travel given its environmental effects.

Michelle Rockcliffe regretted that we don't have a relationship with AFT (American Federation of Teachers) anymore, given the fact that they used to provide very good training opportunities to the staff representatives and asked the Council to consider similar affiliations in the future.

Assistant Secretary Sarah M'Bodji asked the Deputy Chair for more information regarding her call for transforming the UNSU to offer a model similar to Young UN's. The Deputy Chair explained that Young UN's flat composition enabled better collaboration through innovation and described how the group performed better coordination using an online platform which was found to be transparent and gave everyone the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process.

Sergio Pires Vieira (Unit 22) supported Coralie's suggestion to consider more group trainings and to reduce the trainings that involve travel. He thought there were two different types of training courses that staff representatives might need and asked to adjust any training opportunity related to these two groups to reflect any change we might seek for our Union.

8. Inputs for Catering Committee

A member of the Catering Committee briefed the Council on the latest meeting of the Committee, and – in general terms – about the work done by the staff-side member of this Committee. She explained that the contract with the vendor had recently been extended without proper consultation within the Committee. She also mentioned the reluctance they had to deal with to gain access to the latest contract between management and Culinart (the company that provides catering and cafeteria services to the UNHQ). In terms of this contractual relationship she raised the following concerns: the lack of health inspections for the facilities of the cafeteria and catering. She was shocked to learn that the company that inspected Culinart fell under the Culinart's parent company's umbrella. She also raised concerns regarding adhering to the standard food temperatures, and the lack of first aid trained employees in the Cafeteria, and eventually the reluctance she experienced from Culinart's part to disclose the details of the health inspection report to the Committee. She also mentioned that Culinart purchased alcohols from the Duty Free and sold it for regular prices at the Delegates Lounge.

The Catering Committee member also explained that the relationship between the UN and Culinart was called "profit sharing" which sounded like both share profits, yet she learned, that the approximate percentage of the profit that the UN received did not exceed 5 %, while the UN provided the cafeteria and café facilities to Culinart without a charge.

She went on and explained that, as mentioned in the contract, Culinart was supposed to pay penalties to the Organization in case they received negative feedback from their

customers. She mentioned that when she inquired about any precedents, she was told that the service was always rated to be good.

She further explained that Culinart always complained about their relationship with the Organization claiming that they lost a lot of money because of their obligation to hire unionized employees and previous employees who worked in the same position with previous vendors. Culinart complained that these employees were overpaid. The company also claimed that the only profit that makes up their financial losses were the catering for special events, which usually took place after 6 pm or on weekends.

She mentioned that many suggestions were made for Culinart to enhance their services and reduce their prices, including to offer discount on food and drinks that remained after 4 p.m. instead of throwing them away, which was not accepted by Culinart as such practice did not conform to their policies, and they preferred throwing food away.

She explained that the austerity measures being currently followed by the Organization resulted in further financial losses to Culinart (given their claim that they only make profits from catering for special events). In this regard, the Council was again shocked to learn that UN management may have to subsidize Culinart for their financial losses during the period of special measures.

She also mentioned other ideas that were presented to the Committee like using the Vienna Café for other alternative vendors, or even the use of food trucks in specific locations around the Secretariat, ideas that unfortunately failed to find listening ears in the Committee.

The Assistant Secretary reminded the Council that after an earlier incident 2 cafeteria employees were fired for an unauthorized use of staff members' credit cards. The Chair shed light on this incident and mentioned that the two cafeteria employees involved in the incident were reported, arrested, and were not allowed to work for Culinart, or for the UN in any other capacity.

Katheryn Kuchenbrod (Unit 31) asked for more details regarding the obligation to hire unionized staff. The Catering Committee member explained that the UN obligated any vendor to rehire the employees who worked for previous vendors, which Culinart did not like.

The Chair inquired about the health inspections that Culinart made in the light reports emerged from Security that during their patrols, rodents were present all over the Culinart facilities. It was explained that the responsibility of fighting rodents fell upon the UN not Culinart, which could have been used as an excuse in case inspections showed negative results.

The 2nd VP condemned subsidizing Culinart for their financial losses due to the austerity measures and asked to gather more information about this matter for an immediate action.

Michelle Rockcliffe inquired about a relevant meeting with the 5th Committee, and that Culinart answered all the questions raised at this meeting regarding the high prices and low quality with the excuse that they were losing money because they had to hire unionized staff members, which meant extra cost on the part of the company for entitlements like health insurance.

The Rapporteur asked about the channel through which the Union can complain and ask to put an end to issues related to the above shocking information. She also inquired whether similar cafeteria and catering arrangements used in other Duty Stations were ever considered by UNHQ in New York.

Simona Chindea (Unit 24) mentioned that all the information she received raised serious concerns about how the UN management generally handled vendors' contracts and called for more information in this connection and explained that the possibility of corruption was not excluded.

The Committee member mentioned that during their meeting with management, DOS (management representatives from Department of Operational Support) always rejected requests to use other vendors claiming that they will have to go through new procurement process which usually takes a long time and would be unlikely to attract new offers.

The Chair, to the surprise of the Council, explained that Culinart did not pay for the overtime of Security Staff who secured the Delegates Lounge after 6 p.m. on Friday nights, which means Culinart were charging customers regular prices for drinks they bought at a discount from the Duty Free and Security had to pay for this extra cost to maximize Culinarts' profits from the DL.

9. Unit Chairs/Polling Officers/By-Elections

The 1st VP informed the Council that we now have more than half of the Unit Chairs and that meetings with them is being planned to arrange for the selection of new Polling Officers and the elections of a new Arbitration Committee.

10. Reports by Units

Nothing was raised.

11. AOB

Nothing was raised.

The meeting adjourned at 14:30.
