



Minutes/Actes:

Meeting No: 46/26
Date: 09 January 2020
Time: 13:15 - 14:30
Venue: Room B
Quorum: 13/17 Units

46th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate at 13:30 with 10 Units present. Staff Council Chair Camille McKenzie chaired the meeting and Secretary Sherif Mohamed took notes. Units present were: 06, 13, 14, 17, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33. All members of the leadership team were in attendance.

1. Adoption of the agenda

Simona Chindea (Unit 24) requested to add an item on the status of the pension fund resolution. Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 06) requested to add an item on the recruitment of the team assistant. A draft UNSU Annual Report will be discussed under agenda item 9 "AOB".

2. Adoption of previous minutes

Minutes for meetings 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, and minutes for the Council's 2nd emergency meeting were adopted.

3. President's Report and Summary of Communications

The President updated the Council on the leadership team activities during the winter recess. She mentioned that a special townhall meeting with the SG for NY staff was requested. She also mentioned that BCSS were willing to provide their services to the Union free of charge. She also mentioned that SG is considering a visit to the Council. She further updated the Council on the new channel (NY1) added to the Union TV.

She also mentioned that the Controller agreed to reimburse the Union for the expenses incurred as a result of hiring an external contractor to temporarily cover the team assistant position.

Based on the President's reporting, Michelle Rockcliffe raised concerns about the free BCSS services having the appearance of a personal favour, instead of a transparent transaction or arrangement that would be continued into future councils. The President

explained that she raised with various offices the question why the Staff Union was charged for different events and that the Staff Union was an internal body and the purpose of the briefings or information sessions were to inform staff members. Therefore, no charge should be imposed on the Staff Union. She further noted that the BCSS was willing to treat the Union as an internal body and absorb the cost of those staff events. The Deputy Chair Ramona Kohrs explained that internal departments were being charged by BCSS.

The 1st Vice President Aitor Arauz Chapman mentioned that the Leadership had closely followed the adoption of the 2020 budget and promised to consolidate all the necessary documents (GA resolution, ACABQ reports) for each Department and share them with the Council. He mentioned that in general terms the budget proposed by the SG was eventually approved, which the 1st VP described as a positive indicator.

The Deputy Chair briefed the Council on different budget-related discussions and mentioned that there was a reduction of approximately USD 600,000 from the DGC budget as well as another reduction related to the travel of staff members. She also highlighted a contradiction in the resolution on the DGC budget, in which GA encouraged staff to enhance their skills while in a different paragraph decided to cut the budget for learning and development. She invited the Council members to inspect the report of the 5th committee (A/C.5/74/L.26), which include the details regarding the adoption of the budget.

Assistant Secretary Sarah M'Bodji also mentioned a proposed reduction in the amount of USD 5 millions in the costs of printing documents of the 5th committee, which she found illogical as the total cost of all the printing activities is a fraction of the proposed reduction. In this regard, she raised serious concerns about how DGACM managers were trying to implement this reduction even though it was illogical.

Karina Loktionova (Unit 29) mentioned that in a previous meeting with USG/DGACM it was mentioned that the Department will cut spending on freelancers and contractual services to satisfy the proposed reduction.

4. Executive Board Report

No EB meeting took place this week.

5. UNSU Finances

The Assistant Treasurer Yogesh Sakhardande updated the Council on the status of the financial statements of the Union and mentioned that it was delayed because of some amendments that need to be done to the financial statements before it was circulated to the Council. The Assistant Treasurer raised concerns about a receivable amount of 3,000 USD which was not reimbursed to the Union's accounts. Michelle Rockcliffe requested

that the Treasurer resend a bill to the involved parties requesting the transfer of the receivable amount (3,000 USD) and to follow up on this matter.

The Deputy Chair emphasized that financial statements should be prepared and shared with the Council monthly to allow it to make informed financial decisions.

The Assistant Treasurer mentioned that the financial statements being prepared contain all the requested details (spending against approved budget and net amounts currently available under each budget line).

6. Status of Pension Fund Resolution

Simona Chindea inquired about the status of the resolution adopted by the Council regarding investments in the Pension Fund. The 1st VP mentioned that the resolution was sent to the recipients as directed by the Council.

The Leadership was requested to provide return email receipts or some other means of ensuring that the resolution was indeed received by the Secretary-General, President of the GA and the Chair of the Pension Board.

7. Recruitment of the Union's Staff Assistant

The 1st VP updated the Council on the status of recruiting a staff assistant. He mentioned that one candidate was interviewed and selected, yet the selected candidate had to reject the offer as he accepted another position with a higher grade and level in a different Department.

The 1st VP mentioned that the leadership team reposted the TJO and that a candidate was scheduled to be interviewed on Friday 10 January 2020. He also mentioned that USG/DMSPC and the Controller promised that the TJO will be regularized and therefore will be converted to a fixed-term JO in the near future.

Michelle Rockcliffe inquired about the job opening and requested that such job openings be shared with the Council members for possible referrals. The Secretary shared the TJO link with the Council.

Sebastian Cervantes (Unit 22) asked why the TJO was open to internals only. The 1st VP explained that the TJO was created and published while external hiring was on freeze due to the austerity measures and GSDM mitigation.

Sebastian Cervantes asked that the Council plan an event to recognize the work of our temporary team assistant, Marian Fadel, to take place by the end of her contract with the Union.

The 1st VP suggested to extend Marian's contract for one more month after the team assistant is recruited to allow her to focus on the capacity building and training activities. The Council decided to discuss this suggestion in its upcoming meeting.

The 1st VP updated the Council on the Inspira announcements calling for interns and detailed some of the issues they faced while selecting the best interns.

Winryck Ford (Unit 22) inquired about the functions foreseen for the interns. The 1st VP explained that the Union needed stable capacity to control and handle the Union's different communication channels (social media platforms, TV channels, etc). He also explained that help was needed in the legal area to keep an eye on the rulings of UNDT and UNAT and to provide legal research support to the work of the Union.

Michelle Rockcliffe requested that the TJO be extended for another week. The Council decided to extend the TJO for one more week.

8. Reports by Units

The Assistant Secretary mentioned a training that she received on new technologies that she found very useful. However, she raised concerns regarding the move towards more automation of human jobs. She asked that the Council inspect this training on iSeek to analyse it for any potential risks.

On a different note, Michelle Rockcliffe said that staff received instructions related to the application of the Flexible Working Arrangements policy (FWA). The instructions did not adhere to ST/SGB/2019/3 nor to ST/IC/2019/15, and that these instructions were prepared and shared with staff without proper consultations.

Winryck Ford reported that because of the loss of a certain vendor, additional work was added to staff members of one of DGC offices. He also mentioned that staff members of this office were asked to absorb that extra work – bearing in mind the strict limitations on overtime - which negatively affected the morale and well-being of the staff as this request negatively affected their rights to enjoy work-life balance. He also mentioned that this same group of staff were deprived the right to telecommute 3 days a week as instructed in ST/SGB/2019/3. He thought that managers in this area clearly oppose telecommuting which had negative effects on the staff. He finally mentioned that the issue was escalated to the Director then to the USG/DGC and that he will update the Council on any progress in this regard.

The Secretary mentioned that the different application of the FWA policy was an issue of a bigger scale, based on similar reports from several other departments. He thought that this issue should be addressed on a larger scale (JNC, for instance) to ensure that all staff enjoy the same rights across board.

The Assistant Treasurer mentioned some of the different practices related to the application of the FWA policy, including reducing the maximum duration from 3 days to 2 days or even 1 day in some instances. He mentioned that staff were also requested to obtain approvals which was not mentioned in the ST/IC/2019/15.

The 1st VP explained that the FWA issue was complicated and that it needs to be handled carefully bearing in mind the special operational needs of every Department. He mentioned that a blanket approach might not be the best option to address this issue. He finally mentioned that the leadership team was aware of similar issues in DGACM, DGC, and DESA, and asked the Council members to report any similar issues as they arise.

9. AOB

The 1st VP informed the Council members that the Union's annual report was being prepared and promised to share it with the Council members for their input hoping to have it endorsed in the upcoming EB meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 14:50.
