



Minutes/Actes:

Meeting No: 46/27
Date: 16 January 2020
Time: 13:15 - 14:30
Venue: Room A
Quorum: 14/17 Units

46th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate at 13:30 with 14 Units present. 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, 29, 30, 31, 32. All members of the leadership team were in attendance.

1. Adoption of the agenda

Agenda was adopted with 8 items including the addition of an item on “the extension of the contract of the Union’s staff assistant” as item no. 6.

2. Adoption of previous minutes

The Secretary informed the Council that he received corrections on the minutes for the 26th meeting from Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 06), the 1st Vice President Aitor Arauz Chapman, and the President Patricia Nemeth. He explained that some of the suggested changes were substantive which he promised to incorporate in the minutes before recirculating to the Council, while he objected other changes to the style and format of the minutes and insisted to keep the style and format which was being used for almost 3 years across 2 Councils.

Michelle Rockcliffe asked to identify in the minutes whether EB members spoke in their capacities as EB members or as staff representatives of their respective units.

The 1st VP explained – in his capacity as a former Secretary of the 45th Staff Council – that statements should be personalized as per the common practice of all deliberative bodies around the world. He further explained that the style he followed in writing meeting minutes as a former Secretary, which was also followed by the current Secretary, simply involved mentioning the names of staff representatives accompanied by their respective units in their initial statements in any given meeting followed by only mentioning their names in any further statements within the same meeting.

The Assistant Rapporteur Shirley Abraham mentioned that she inspected the Robert's Rules and could not find any reference to a specific style of taking minutes especially in terms of how participants' names were supposed to be mentioned.

Katherine Kuchenbrod (Unit 31) suggested that the Secretary create two samples of the two different meeting minutes styles in question and share them with the Council members, so they approve the style they wish to be used for the rest of the 46th mandate.

It was agreed that the amended minutes would be recirculated for adoption in the next meeting. The Secretary will prepare two samples as requested above and circulate to the Council for adoption.

3. President's Report and Summary of Communications

The Chair urged the leadership team to consider submitting the President's report as early as possible to allow the Council members enough time to go over it before the beginning of every meeting.

The 1st VP took note of the request and mentioned that in compliance with the Council's request, the leadership team included short explanations to each item in the report, which was the reason of the late submission of the current report. He promised that the leadership team will do their best to ensure timely delivery of the President's reports.

The Deputy Chair Ramona Kohrs inquired about item no. 5 of the President's report regarding the approval of the Organization's 2020 budget. In particular, she questioned the part which stated that "*the final outcome of the budget levels was generally positive for staff...*" even though budget cuts were introduced in areas such as training and travel which was expected to carry substantial effects on staff.

The president mentioned that initially the budget documents included several damaging paragraphs which were fought against by the Union to mitigate much of their negative effects on staff. Moreover, the 1st VP stated that the General Assembly rejected most of the cuts proposed by the ACABQ, which was a positive indicator that Member State were aware of the negative effects that such budget cuts could have imposed on the Organization's different Departments.

The Deputy Chair inquired about the 7th point of the President's report regarding the outreach session given by the Travel Unit, which was attended by the 1st and 2nd VPs.

The 1st VP explained that the Travel Unit complained that despite having held weekly information sessions regarding the detailed implementation of travel policies, staff kept approaching them with concerns emerged from the lack of knowledge of such policies. He further explained that members of the leadership team attended one of the offered

sessions to support the outreach efforts of the Travel Unit by identifying possible ways that the Union can advertise these outreach activities and to encourage more staff – other than EO staff in charge of processing travel claims – to attend such activities.

Simona Chindea (Unit 24) stated that most of the travel sessions were very technical in nature, and that they focused mainly on the travel of experts to workshops and did not shed much light on the travel of the staff. She suggested that the Travel Unit should consider offering less complicated versions of their outreach activities if they ever wish to attract audience from the staff-at-large.

The Assistant Secretary Sarah M'Bodji inquired whether the most recent Staff Regulations and Rules had any effects on travel. The President confirmed that the most recent Staff Regulations and Rules did not have any effects on the travel policies.

On a different note, the Deputy Chair raised concerns regarding a broadcast that was sent by the Ethics Office as well as a similar iSeek article regarding the participation of UN staff in political activities ahead of a scheduled women's march. In particular, she highlighted that the broadcast seemed to prohibit the use of banners as well as the use of personal social media accounts by UN staff who wish to participate in such activities.

The President would consult with the Ethics Office and to report back to the Council at the earliest.

The Deputy Chair requested that the Leadership update the Council on the status of the work of the Staff Management Committee (SMC) and its different working groups as soon as possible. Her request was seconded by Michelle Rockcliffe who also asked the EB to bring the ST/AI's currently under revision to the Council to agree on a unified Union position.

The President informed the Council about the tensions currently on the rise between the management and the Staff Unions in the context of the work of the SMC, particularly regarding the implementation of the SMC decisions including the recommendations of its different working groups. She explained that UNSU as well as other sister Unions were actively seeking ways to address these tensions and disagreements and promised to update the Council on any developments in this regard.

4. Executive Board Report

Michelle Rockcliffe commented on the EB proposal to hold the Staff Day without a raffle and an evening ball and stated that discontinuing these events would result in an increase to the overall cost of the Staff Day.

The 2nd VP mentioned that the proposal to discontinue the raffle and evening ball was made based on the lessons learned from the 2019 Staff Day and mentioned that the Staff Day

Committee would manage the 2020 Staff Day within the available budget. He also mentioned that the day activities which don't usually incur significant expenses will remain the same.

Katherine Kuchenbrod inquired about the possibility of having the raffle in the daytime. The President emphasized that there were no plans to have neither a raffle nor an evening ball for reasons related to planning as well as reasons related to the high cost that both events incurred in 2019 which was still being negotiated with the concerned Departments.

The Chair criticized the proposed discontinuation of the raffle and explained that it was a good source of income in addition to the fact that it was very popular among staff in the past 3 years.

The Assistant Treasurer Yogesh Sakhardande raised concerns about the low participation rate of the Council members in organizing the different activities of the 2019 Staff Day which discouraged those who were heavily involved in organizing these activities to participate again in organizing an event of that magnitude.

The President added that 2020 Staff Day fell in a very busy month (May) for the leadership and the EB which will affect their abilities to actively participate in organizing such intense events.

The 1st VP added that he could not see the raffle and the evening ball happening unless the Council members were committed to actively participate in organizing such activities. He emphasized that participation of the Council members is essential if we ever wish to revitalize such events.

The Assistant Treasurer Yogesh Sakhardande added that gasoline operated cars, which used to be the grand prize of the raffle for many years, can't be an option anymore. The Rapporteur Coralie Tripier seconded the latter statement and suggested to change the prize to anything else other than a car.

The Assistant Secretary reminded the Council that volunteers who were highly committed to participate in organizing the Day's different events were – in some instances – deprived the necessary time release.

Lucelenia Pimentel (Unit 32) mentioned that the UN was installing charging stations in the 2B and 3B levels of the UN garage, and thought that in this context, an electric car seemed to be a good selling point to increase the sales of the raffle tickets.

The President mentioned that even though she requested time release for the volunteers, managers reached out to her with excuses that prevented them from freeing the staff at times which were critical for properly organizing the Day's events. She thought that such preventions formed obstacles to the proper implementation of all the activities of the Staff Day

Sebastian Cervantes (Unit 22) supported the electric car option and joined Lucelena's voice that such prize would be a good selling point to increase the sales of the raffle tickets. He further emphasized that considering a gas operated car was against the principles of both the Union and the Organization.

The 2nd VP mentioned that all options were possible only if the whole Council decided to work together.

Winryck Ford (Unit 22) thought that the Council should be realistic and use a regular gas operated car as the grand raffle prize. The 2nd VP explained that it was the Council's responsibility to act as a role-model in fighting climate change and thought that management should follow the same approach.

Michelle Rockcliffe mentioned that letters for time release should be prepared and shared with volunteers from the early stages of the organization of the Day's activities to avoid incidents of volunteers not being granted the necessary time release.

The Chair suggested that the Council continue this discussion later under a dedicated agenda item.

On a different note, the President mentioned that organizing a Barbeque Membership Drive exclusively for dues paying members was one of the ideas being considered to increase the numbers of dues paying members. She also mentioned that different events were staggered over the year to enable volunteers to comfortably plan each event.

5. UNSU Finances

The Treasurer asked whether there were any questions or concerns related to the financial statements circulated to the Council members.

Michelle Rockcliffe thanked the Treasurers for their diligent work and highlighted a couple of issues in the statements that she thought were easy to be addressed including a small discrepancy in the Staff Day Income and the classification of all items in the financial statements.

6. Extension of the contract of the Union's Staff Assistant

The Chair asked the Council to decide whether to extend the current temporary contract of the Union's staff assistant, Marian Fadel.

Michelle Rockcliffe inquired about the reasons for the proposed extension. The 1st VP explained that the reason was to involve Marian Fadel in training the new staff assistant on the front desk duties as well as offering a substantive training to the Council members which he thought was one of her strengths, in addition to the possibility of using her

experience in organizing membership drives. He further explained that the proposed extension was not expected to exceed one month.

He also mentioned that more applications were received after the 1-week extension of the TJO which was requested by the Council, and that the Leadership team was reviewing the applications received. He promised to keep the Council updated on developments in this regard.

The Deputy Chair requested that the EB identify the exact duration and amounts associated with the proposed extension based on the duties which Marian Fadel was expected to perform. She also requested that solid steps be taken to convert the temporary post into a regular post at the G5 level.

The President explained that she discussed this matter with USG/DMSPC who explained that the post was expected to be regularized in the 2021 budget.

Michelle Rockcliffe thought that it would have been better to have this discussion after the Learning and Development Committee meeting, which was scheduled later in the week, given the value that Marian Fadel could bring to the training of the Council members.

The 1st VP would have a discussion with Marian Fadel to determine her continued interest and availability for the proposed extension and to discuss the services that she may offer during that extension.

7. Reports by Units

The Chair mentioned that she received questions regarding the ICSC's recent update to the GS salary tables and asked the 2nd VP to learn more about this update and to report back to the Council at the earliest.

The 2nd VP mentioned that in the new tables, staff would notice a reduction to their gross salaries and an increase to their net salaries which reflect a reduction in the amounts of their "staff assessments". He mentioned that the increase was due to the fact that the two GS salary scales eventually merged and that those changes were introduced to implement the increased net salaries of the GS staff resulted from the aforementioned merge.

The 1st VP mentioned that among the facts which were explained by the ICSC senior managers during the ICSC latest information session, was the fact that staff assessments are added to the net salaries to obtain the amounts of the gross salaries, not the other way around. He called for continued efforts in following-up this important matter.

8. AOB

Simona Chindea asked whether there were any updates on the status of the delivery receipts of the Council's resolution regarding the Pension investments. The 1st VP said the Leadership would provide receipts at the earliest.

The meeting adjourned at 14:50.
