



**Minutes/Actes:**

Meeting No: 46/36  
Date: 19 March 2020  
Time: 13:15 - 14:30  
Venue: Virtually (Microsoft Teams)  
Quorum: 14/17 Units

## 46<sup>th</sup> Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate at 13:35 with 13 Units present. Staff Council Chair Camille McKenzie chaired the meeting and Secretary Sherif Mohamed took notes. Units present were 06, 13, 17, 18, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33. The three members of the leadership team were in attendance.

### 1. Adoption of the agenda

The following items requested to be added to the agenda: (1) Covid-19 Update, (2) Pension Fund, and (3) Support Networks. The agenda was adopted as amended with 10 items.

### 2. Adoption of previous minutes

Minutes for the 35<sup>th</sup> meeting of the 46<sup>th</sup> Staff Council are pending.

### 3. President's Report and Summary of Communications

The 1<sup>st</sup> Vice president Aitor Arauz Chapman briefed the Council about incidents reported by staff regarding different applications of telecommuting HR policies by different managers, including incidents in which staff were forced to sign telecommuting contracts.

The Council members discussed the different telecommuting practices being implemented in their different units and agreed that a unified message should be sent to all managers to unify the telecommuting practices across the Secretariat.

Karina Loktionova (Unit 29) discussed challenges in DGACM/DD and reported that her constituents had many questions. She explained that she was scheduled to meet with the Director of the Documentation Division and would report back the results of the meeting to the Council. Rama Darwish (Unit 30) also reported an incident in which an email was sent by the Director of the Meetings and Publishing Division which also required staff to

sign contracts with illogical agreements which were not applicable in the case of interpreters, for instance.

The 1<sup>st</sup> VP explained that the signed contract was no longer needed, however it was important to record the periods which staff telecommute in Umoja for liability and insurance purposes and that any staff who previously signed contracts could simply withdraw them.

The Council members discussed different options in measuring productivity and performance of staff in different offices, given that Umoja records are only for attendance purposes but not for performance evaluation. It was agreed that new ways of measuring involvement and productivity of staff were needed and most importantly, managers were supposed to practice the utmost flexibility given the current situation which involve taking care of family members in addition to normal duties.

#### **4. Executive Board Report**

Nothing was reported.

#### **5. UNSU Finances**

Michelle Rockcliffe inquired about the travel to the SMC IX and whether paid airplane tickets and accommodations would be refunded. The 2<sup>nd</sup> VP Francisco Brito explained that tickets and accommodations were purchased for 3 members of the Union's delegation to the SMC. He explained that depending on the final decision on a new date for the SMC there will be different options, whether we'll need to cancel and rebook, or simply change the dates once new dates were confirmed.

#### **6. COVID-19 Update**

The 1<sup>st</sup> VP briefed the Council on the updates regarding the COVID pandemic. He informed the Council that many managers on different levels were in support of the Union's position and efforts in this regard.

He further explained some of the problematic areas since the beginning of the pandemic, including the leadership meeting with senior managers on Friday 13 March 2020 and the meeting outputs. He also described the circumstances surrounded the different messages of the Union and how one led to the other. He also highlighted the positive responses from management to some of the Union's requests such as early pays, roll over AL balances over 60 days.

He also mentioned a live event which OHR organized, in which all the issues raised by the Union in its previous messages were discussed and that most of them were addressed.

Michelle Rockcliffe and other Council members congratulated the leadership and the Union for its successful course of actions in handling the crisis and that many communications were received by different staff representatives, from staff-at-large, thanking the Union for its intervention.

Sindhoora Leburi (Unit 33) inquired whether management should provide compensations to staff for any equipment they had to purchase to be able to telecommute under the current conditions. She also raised concerns regarding news about several staff members tested positive with the Corona virus, and the lack of transparency from management side in this regard.

The President reported the progress of the identified cases to the Council as well as the actions being implemented by management to contain any potential spread of the virus in the Organization's premises. She also explained that she was working on a proposal for one-time compensation for staff to compensate them for many factors related to setting up telecommuting stations at their homes.

Michelle Rockcliffe inquired about the mail operations given its importance to the work of the Pension Fund. She also inquired about cleaning operations given its critical importance in fighting the pandemic.

The 1<sup>st</sup> VP explained that mail operations were one of the essential services that required staff to be physically present and explained that one of the Union's proposals in this regard was to schedule members of such teams in a staggered manners to reduce the risk to the minimum.

The President and Lucelenia Pimentel (Unit 32) confirmed that all cleaning operations and sanitization continued and that the building was being cleaned thoroughly in response to the pandemic.

The issue of "danger pay" for staff who should be physically present on premises was raised by some Council members, and the President explained that she was waiting for the right time to raise this issue with management.

## **7. Pension Fund**

Michelle Rockcliffe mentioned that she sent a letter to the SG and met with the Fund's senior managers regarding the issues she previously reported regarding the Fund's investments. She hoped that the SG will take concrete steps to address these issues given the loss occurred to the Fund's investments as a result of the pandemic.

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## 8. Support Networks

The 1<sup>st</sup> VP explained the idea behind the support network and the help it may offer to staff who might not be able to get necessary food, medicine or supplies. The Assistant Secretary Sarah M'Bodji highlighted similar activities across New York.

The Rapporteur Coralie Tripier explained that she was a part of a similar project in her neighborhood and that it was a big success. She explained that services were being offered to the most vulnerable, as well as anyone with symptoms who isolated themselves at home. She volunteered to be part of this effort. The 2<sup>nd</sup> VP thought the idea was brilliant, except for times when restrictions of movements might be enforced.

After the Council discussed many aspects in this regard, the 1<sup>st</sup> VP suggested to use the existent support networks by sharing its details with staff in the situation reports, and thought it would be more feasible if we work on a support network to connect staff who feel isolated connect with other UN colleagues.

Kathryn Kuchenbrod (Unit 31) raised concerns about the contracted staff in the Secretariat (i.e. cafeteria staff) and called for a collective action to check that these staff have enough resources including the possibility of raising funds to help them in case they were not being paid by their employer. Michelle Rockcliffe mentioned that these workers must be covered under similar policies by their unions and governments.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> VP updated the Council on the capacity of the Cafeteria operations, and that it was agreed with their management that the rest of the staff were sent home with full pay for an initial period of 2 weeks.

## 9. Reports by Units

Simona Chindea raised concerns about different directions governing the telecommuting contracts and, given an e-mail she received from their Executive Office that contradict what was announced by OHR managers in the morning briefing. The 1<sup>st</sup> VP asked her to share the message with him and to be able to follow up on the matter.

## 9. AOB

The 2<sup>nd</sup> VP raised concerns that many staff expected to be reimbursed for the purchase they made to set up their telecommuting stations. Similar concerns were raised by other staff representatives. The President explained that she will discuss this matter in the context of the compensation package she called for as stated in agenda item 8 above.

*The meeting adjourned at 14:35.*

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