



Minutes/Actes:

Meeting No: 46/45
Date: 21 May 2020
Time: 13:26 – 15:02
Venue: Virtual (MS Teams)
Quorum: 14/17 Units

46th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate at 13:26 PM EST with 14 Units present. Staff Council Deputy Chair Ramona chaired the meeting and Assistant Secretary Sarah M'Bodji, and Emmanuella René, UNSU Staff Assistant took notes.

Units present were: 06, 14, 17, 20, 21, 22, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33.

All members of the leadership team were in attendance.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted with a suggested change in the order of items. Assistant Rapporteur Ms. Shirley Abraham made a motion to move the item "Reports of Units" to position 3 permanently. Ms. Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) seconded the motion. Ms. Kathryn Kuchenbrod (Unit 31) suggested voting on the motion. The Chair suggested clarifying if a permanent change to order of items was permissible under Robert's Rules of Order.

2. Adoption of previous minutes

Minutes for the 43rd meeting of the 46th Staff Council were adopted. 1st Vice-President Mr. Aitor Arauz suggested that the 44th meeting minutes required a few editorial edits, and he commended and thanked Ms. Emmanuella René for her support in the previous meeting processing of meeting notes.

Ms. Sarah M'Bodji also thanked the Staff Assistant for her support and efforts.

The Assistant Secretary asked that Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) edits be shared on the draft with the Secretary, the Staff Assistant and herself by email, for effective use of meeting time and the Council agreed that these minutes of the 44th meeting would be adopted at the next meeting

3. Reports by Units

Ms. Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) informed of challenges reported by staff and her difficulties with obtaining staffing tables for her unit.

Mr. Sergio Vieira asked the Council to discuss working hours and overwork during teleworking due to COVID-19. He pointed out this was a challenge for all but enquired specifically about the Professional category who were expected to work at all hours now, without any overtime. He sought clarifications on the applicable rules.

Mr. Aitor Arauz Chapman confirmed that Professional staff were not entitled to overtime payment and could be required to work extended hours in extraordinary circumstances. The issue at hand had to do specifically with the expectation that staff be available around the clock, which was not sustainable. The Executive Board had discussed the message issued by UN Women. It would be raised at the next Joint Negotiations Committee (JNC) the Office of Human Resources (OHR) to address.

UN Women's social media message was shared again by Assistant-Secretary Ms. Sarah M'Bodji (Unit 31), for reference of the council members.

Ms. Sarah M'Bodji reported on Unit 31's newly formed Working Group for Future of Meeting Serving Unit (WG-FMSU) progress in their organization, Terms of Reference (TOR) drafting and training on Teams. She spoke of the support provided by direct managers of MSU and the Department for General Assembly Conference Management (DGACM) USG for the voluntary work of staff members.

Ms. Shirley Abraham (Unit 17) reported on challenges at DMSPC and overworked staff in payroll, and addressing their Mental Health, stating it was paramount. She further elaborated that especially challenged were staff with families, with the extra pressure from supervisors to produce and "prove ourselves".

Ms. Karina Loktionova (Unit 29) reported on the DGACM initiative of the DGACM's Mental Health Strategy Working Group (MHS-WG) and suggested others could adopt strategies to engage senior management and obtain support from their USG.

Mr. Aitor Arauz Chapman and others thanked Ms. Shirley Abraham (Unit 17) for moving up the item of "Report by Units", and he further stressed leadership's need to hear from Units about staff's concerns.

Mr. Sebastian Cervantes (Unit 22) reported on Department of Global Communications (DGC) units, stating they had pushed hard for meetings with their Executive Office and USG, not quite successfully. He reported on a survey about return to work they were engaging with staff on locally. He reported on concerns regarding flex space, as well as the specific situation of the library staff and tour guides. He asked for leadership support in facilitating meeting with their USG

The Assistant Secretary underscored the importance of better working hours and she suggested all manager needed Mental Health awareness at this time of adapting to work from our homes. She further suggested that Senior Management could remind all Heads of Department of ST/SGB/274 whereby all USGs and heads of office are required to meet quarterly with their staff reps. The Assistant Secretary further suggested that leadership support facilitating these mandated dialogues, to empower those staff reps challenged with communication and those whom may have not had any virtual meetings.

The Assistant Chair inquired about the Staff Council by-elections. The first Vice President reaffirmed this is still in process with the Chair of the Unit Chairpersons.

4. President's Report and Summary of Communications

Ms. Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) asked for clarifications of the details in paragraph 2 of the Report, regarding downsizing. She requested upcoming events be included in the weekly reports for Council information. She asked for updates on next week's activities

The first Vice President answered the downsizing question explaining that the working group is in discussion phase, reporting that good progress has been made and bargaining is still ongoing. Aitor Arauz Chapman thanked Emmanuella René for her support with the Communications and President's report.

The Assistant Chairperson asked for clarifications about staff reps' input for returning to work. She urged Council members for more involvement.

The President clarified that each department has a focal point for the return to office plan. She further elaborated that each focal point will be required to liaise with their department staff reps.

The first meeting of focal points was scheduled for the following day, and she did not yet know who each department's focal point was. She would report back. She reiterated her request that Council members could provide input or guidance as necessary

It was discussed there was, and meeting scheduled for 28 of May, with the Secretary-General on site and Member States connecting remotely. Meeting Service staff and interpreters would also be on site.

It was confirmed that the high-level meeting next week would be used as test-run for future meetings based on a hybrid model of onsite and off-site participants. It was clarified that for staff this is entirely on voluntary basis. Cleaning had been enhanced, PPE would be provided to staff as required and antibody testing was available at the Medical Service.

The first Vice President wanted to highlight the release of the draft annual budgets for each department. He strongly urged all council members to read them. He offered the Leadership's support to staff reps in this exercise.

Assistant Chairperson highlighted the SG's report on Budget procedure in framework of reform.

The Assistant Secretary underscored staff engagement and discussion urging all staff reps to hold virtual meetings, reminding the council that Unit 31's virtual meeting was the highest ever attended.

5. Executive Board Report

There were no comments.

6. UNSU Finances

The Treasurer replied to Ms. Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) regarding the inquiry about MetLife procedures while working from home. He elaborated that Staff Assistant Ms. Emmanuella René would be supporting this effort.

7. 2021 Budget

The Assistant Chair explained that the budget documents needed to be examined by the reps in each department.

The Assistant Secretary suggested a dedicated meeting with staff reps with those whom have more experience about how to read these documents.

It was suggested that experienced reps such as would possibly be good candidates to support this effort.

Mr. Francisco Brito was organizing a training session with an expert from the budget division.

8. Rules of meeting Procedures

Since the meeting was out of time, the Assistant Chair suggested that procedures according to Robert's Rules and shared some relevant documents, asking Council members review the "Roberts Rules cheat sheet" and that the document be reviewed at the next meeting to adhere to good procedural practices.

9. AOB

There was a motion to move item 10: "AOB", up on the agenda and replace adopted item 9: "Working Group on Return to the Office".

The motion was seconded with no objections.

Ms. Shirley Abraham (Unit 17) explained that she required more training as an inexperienced staff rep and wanted more knowledge transfer and support. She wanted feedback on how to improve her work and knowledge as staff reps.

The Assistant Chair acknowledged the Council's Working Group on training was suspended suggesting this be reinvigorated.

Ms. Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) replied that under the item of training she would suggest the Union Lawyer Mr. George Irving could possibly guide a training on fiduciary duties of Staff Representatives and suggested that other experienced staff reps from previous council's regarding items the current council could specify.

10. WG Return to Office

Ms. Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) clarified that this was placed on the agenda by Mr. Jesus Parado Unit 33). It was agreed to table and move this item to next week after President's report regarding meeting of Working Group focal points.

The meeting adjourned at 15:02.