



Minutes/Actes:

Meeting No: 46/47
Date: 11 June 2020
Time: 13:15 - 14:30
Venue: Virtual (MS Teams)
Quorum: 15/17 Units

46th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate at 13:20 with 15 Units present. Staff Council Chair Camille McKenzie chaired the meeting and Secretary Sherif Mohamed took notes. Units present were: 06, 14, 17, 18, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33. All members of the leadership team were in attendance.

1. Adoption of the agenda

Agenda was adopted without a change with 12 items.

2. Adoption of previous minutes

Minutes for the 44th, 45th, and 46th meetings of the 46th Staff Council were adopted after edits introduced by Council members were incorporated.

3. Reports by Units

Jesus Parado (Unit 33) reported an issue that a retiree had with the *After-Service Health Insurance* (ASHI) which he previously shared with the leadership team and requested an update in this regard. The Deputy Chair Ramona Kohrs informed the Council that an agenda item on ASHI already existed and **asked the Council to have this discuss under the relevant agenda item.**

Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 06) raised a concern of her constituents regarding changes to the organization of the pension fund including the closure of a finance office in Geneva without consultations with staff representatives, as well as the conversion of the duties of this closed office to staff in other areas and highlighted the negative results of such reallocation of duties on the well-being of affected staff. She raised serious concerns about the effects of such structure changes on the beneficiaries and the future of the Pension in general.

Sebastian Cervantes (Unit 22) reported regarding his meeting with his Department's Under Secretary General (USG) and Executive Office (EO). Sebastian Cervantes praised the positive atmosphere of the two meetings in terms of how views and ideas were

exchanged. He also praised the enabling conversations regarding the return to the offices. He added that “*New Normal*” was also discussed in which the USG seemed to be reasonable and understanding, which he also identified as a positive indicator. He eventually thanked the leadership team for their support in this regard.

The Deputy Chair also added that the staff representatives of the Department of Global Communications (DGC) received the detailed staffing tables of the whole department and that they had meetings with the department’s senior managers dedicated to discussing the results of the staff engagement survey.

The 1st VP Aitor Arauz Chapman thanked the staff representatives who raised reports from their units and asked Michelle Rockcliffe to keep an eye on the structural changes taking place in the Pension Fund and to report back any updates to the Council. He congratulated the DGC staff representatives on their involvement with their senior managers and appreciated the positive outcomes. He eventually offered his support regarding the results of the staff engagement survey.

Jesus Parado added that he brought a big number of staff to fill the staff engagement survey and that he has been looking for concrete results interpreted into actions on the ground to satisfy the urgent needs of the staff as identified in the survey results.

The 1st VP suggested to have a dedicated conversation regarding the survey and its results. **It was so agreed by the Council.**

4. President’s Report and Summary of Communications

Michelle Rockcliffe expressed her dissatisfaction towards the fact that the Union’s latest town hall meeting - which took place last week - was not planned in advance with the Council and that the leadership team did not satisfy the purpose of the meeting by standing for the rights of the staff as well as by firmly raising the issue of racism. She thought the leadership team was dodging away from the objectives of the Council and that their actions do not only represent them but represent the whole Union. She also expressed dissatisfaction towards how the staff questions were filtered.

The President Patricia Nemeth explained that the timing of the townhall was decided under critical and urgent conditions, and that even the SG received his own invitation only two days before the meeting. She thought that she satisfied the purpose of the meeting and properly raised the concerns of the staff.

The 1st VP explained that he was the person responsible for the filtration of the questions and that he did so in a way that categorized all the similar questions into groups to avoid redundancy and give opportunities to the most challenging issues to be introduced.

The Deputy Chair mentioned that the President apologized to the Chair and Deputy Chair for the conflict between the timing of the town hall and that of the Council meeting. Michelle Rockcliffe thought that such apologies should have been extended to the whole Council who should have been consulted in the first place. She added that the questions were filtered in a biased way and that questions backed with the most likes were totally ignored, which was a matter of concern to her.

The President explained that she brought the right audience to the meeting to discuss issues directly related to their mandates and emphasized that during the conversation she was able to deliver the staff messages which eventually translate into actions that support the interests of the staff.

Patel Noble (Unit 14) shared most of Michelle Rockcliffe's concerns regarding the town hall meeting and added that he was concerned about the lack of an apology to the Council regarding the timing of the town hall. He thought the Council should have been informed about the meeting and that the Council's insights should have led the conversation. However, he recognized the work of the leadership team during the meeting and thanked them for their hard work. He also highlighted that good reputation of the Union and praised the fact that the Union was well recognized by all parties. However, he thought that the team still have its own shortcomings and he called for more openness and transparency in communications between the leadership team and the Council to allow all Council representatives to contribute to building the desired strong Union.

The Assistant Treasurer Yogesh Sakhardande explained that the issue was discussed at the EB at length and explained how tight the time was. He thought the apologies should have been sent to the whole Council and identified the mishap as a lesson learned. However, He highlighted the positive outcomes of the meeting as interpreted in the reversal of the management's decision regarding the rights of the UN staff to participate in public events/demonstrations.

Simona Chindea explained that even though she got surprised with the invitation to the town hall meeting yet she described it to as a well-organized meeting which was professionally managed by the members of the leadership team and eventually praised the positive outcome of the meeting.

The 1st VP thanked everyone for their feedback on the meeting and thanked Patel Noble in particular for raising his legit concerns which he described as "the kind of feedback he was looking for which was presented in good faith and with the intention of enhancing the Union's overall performance". He justified that the purpose of the meeting was not to call for staff to participate in protests but to highlight the actions of the decision makers in this regard in an attempt to reverse any decisions that limit the basic rights of the staff members, which was eventually achieved.

The 2nd VP Francisco Brito explained that we all make mistakes and that they learned from this experience and called for continuous constructive feedback. **He also reminded the Council of the draft administrative instructions (ST/Ais) under review and called for them to incorporate their comments on these ST/AIs.**

The Deputy Chair called for the Council members to read the notes of the SMC ad-hoc meeting and raise any matters that might grab their attention out of these discussions.

Michelle Rockcliffe raised the question of the remote internship statement signed by several UN staff unions, but not by our Union and asked for updates in this regard. The 1st VP explained that this matter was recently raised but was overlooked because of the accelerating events. He gave a background on this matter explaining that it was a management's proposal to address the travel limitations that affect interns' chances to join the UN – a proposal that was opposed by the Unions in general. However, he referred to some local immigration rules that complicate the process of completing a full internship at the UNHQs and that remote internship could be a good option in such cases.

In this regard, Michelle Rockcliffe expressed her views that she thought internships was the modern way of slavery and that the leadership should have shared the question with the Council before making the decision whether or not the Union should have joined the other Union's statement.

The 1st VP explained that the Union had only 48 hours to sign a petition that was not well studied and explained that given the views expressed by Council members regarding the internship concept in general, he thought that the matter should be discussed in a wider debate.

The Deputy Chair supported the decision not to sign the joint statement and called for the leadership team not to sign any similar documents without carefully studying them and properly consulting them with the Council.

5. Executive Board Report

The EB report was retracted and therefore the item was deferred.

6. UNSU Finances

Michelle Rockcliffe repeated that the Council's decision to suspend the financial rules regarding the financial statements was unlawful and called for this decision to be retracted and also called for the Treasurers to retrieve the necessary equipment/data from the Union's office and start adhering to the financial rules enshrined in the Union's Statutes and Regulations and provide the proper financial statements timely.

The Assistant Treasurer Yogesh Sakhardande replied that he was planning to meet with the Treasurer for an office visit and to prepare the requested statements. The Deputy Chair inquired about the work of the auditing company and the Secretary replied that the company was in the process of finalizing the auditing documents and that the Council should expect the auditing report anytime soon.

7. Staff Participation on Peaceful Marches

Sergio Pires Vieira (Unit 24) warned that decisions similar to the one which was reversed by the ethics office regarding staff participation in protests were a source of concern and called for more clarity from the Ethics Office regarding the interpretation of rules governing the ethical code of the UN staff.

The Deputy Chair supported Sergio's call and highlighted the opinions made by legal experts in the news that the UN leadership should have led similar protests against racism, not prevented them.

The Council discussed the matter of the right of staff members in expressing their views and a number of ideas emerged in this regard, including a call for a UN dedicated protest to be designed in compliance with the relevant safety and security measures. Jesus Parado suggested to have such a planned protest on June 26th in observance of the UN Charter Day. Council members asked to include this subject on the agenda of next week. It was so decided.

8. Council Training Committee

The Assistant Rapporteur Shirley Abraham requested to revitalize the work of the Training Committee and to move ahead with the necessary training for the Council members. The Deputy Chair called for the 2nd VP to follow-up on the budget training which was being planned in the past. Michelle Rockcliffe supported the budget training. The 1st VP explained that the chosen candidate to present the budget training was not available anymore and asked the Training Committee to identify other candidates for this training. He also called for the experienced staff representatives in areas of budget and finances to think of the possibility of designing a joint training for the benefit of the staff representatives.

9. Training for Staff Reps

Item was deferred.

10. Discussion on ASHI

Michelle Rockcliffe asked to add the item to next week's meeting.

11. WG on Return to Office

Item was deferred.

12. AOB

Nothing was reported.

The meeting adjourned at 15:00.
