



Minutes/Actes:

Meeting No: 46/49
Date: 25 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 13 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, 33. All members of the leadership team were also present.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The 1st VP Aitor Arauz Chapman suggested to replace item 11 “WG on Return to Office” with “CCISUA General Assembly Debrief”. Agenda was adopted as amended with 12 items.

2. Adoption of previous minutes

Minutes for the 47th and 48th meeting of the 46th Staff Council were adopted.

3. Reports by Units

Karina Loktionova (Unit 29) raised some staff concerns regarding the application of the new guidelines regarding working from home country and asked for more information in this regard. She also raised concerns regarding a widespread rumour within her department regarding the discontinuation of the Albano building lease, as well as other annex buildings.

The President explained that a survey on the flexible working arrangements was conducted and is being analysed and its results would be communicated during the upcoming General Meeting tentatively planned for 15 July 2020.

On the annex buildings, the President explained that the idea of discontinuing the leases of the annex buildings was floating for quite some time, given the extensive telecommuting module currently enforced in the Secretariat.

Regarding the different application of the guidelines governing working from home country, the 1st VP stated that the issues seem to be exclusive within the Department for General

Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM). He continued that Executive Offices (EOs) usually play a vital role in the application of such policy, noting that DGACM Executive Officer was recently recruited. He advised DGACM staff representatives to discuss the matter among themselves before escalating it to the EO.

The Deputy Chair Ramona Kohrs inquired about the results of the return-to-work survey which was recently circulated to staff, and asked if these results could be broken down by departments, in which case she would refrain from designing a similar dedicated DGC survey.

Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 06) updated the Council on her meeting with the Pension Fund staff to discuss the effects of the closure of a Pension Fund finance office in Geneva, a matter that she previously reported to the Council. She informed the Council that a resolution in this regard has been adopted during the recent CCISUA General Assembly.

On a different note, Michelle Rockcliffe reported to the Council her constituents' requests to borrow their office chairs and/or standing desks and asked for guidance in this regard.

The President instructed Michelle to discuss the equipment matter with her EO which should have received specific instructions on how such items could be released.

The Assistant Secretary Sarah M'Bodji reminded the Council of the list of focal points for the return to office and asked the staff representatives to start communicating with departments' focal points in this regard. She informed the Council that constituents from her unit were expected to return to the office to service several high level meetings that will take place in-person, and detailed the training they have received, yet she raised concerns about exposure to COVID-19, and thought this matter should also be discussed in more details with the aforementioned focal points.

Sergio Pires Vieira (Unit 24) inquired about the details of phase 3 of the reopening plan, and how staff representatives take part in the design of that last phase, which would affect all staff, and would affect how they work in the future.

The President explained that she requested that the Union be included in the group discussions regarding the design of phase 3, and that management promised to invite Union representatives at that stage.

The Assistant Treasurer Yogesh Sakhardande informed the Council about their unit meeting with DESA staff and raised some of their concerns regarding the working arrangements, telecommuting within the duty station and from home countries.

The President explained that the matter of returning to the offices or to continue telecommuting were being discussed internally within every department depending on the variety of functions performed by different groups of staff.

The 1st VP thought that conversations with the focal points would be vital to ensure proper plans and arrangements for different offices and groups of staff. He emphasized that managers were asked to practice utmost flexibility when it comes to the return to the offices, yet – again – it all depends on the different functions of each group of staff.

4. President's Report and Summary of Communications

The Council decided to move to the next item on the agenda, and to raise questions related to the President's report, if there were any.

5. Executive Board Report

Sergio Pires Vieira praised the creation of a core group to address the racial injustice matters and requested more details in this regard.

The 1st VP explained that the idea was to have internal discussions within small groups within every department, yet there were no specific arrangements for the work of these groups until now.

Michelle Rockcliffe informed the Council about the misbehaviour indicated in the EB report by one of the staff representatives, which she believed was in referral to her continuous requests for proper financial statements, and informed the Council that she received a formal letter from the Chair in this regard and that she replied to that letter.

The Chair explained that the EB report did not point fingers towards specific staff representatives and requested some time to examine the reply she has received and asked to have this matter discussed at the next Council meeting. **It was so decided.**

6. UNSU Finances

The Chair recalled her request to the Treasurers during the last meeting to present all the requested financial statements during the current meeting and wondered why her request has not been fulfilled.

The Treasurer Jaime Garreta explained that himself and the Assistant Treasurer met at the Union's office on Wednesday to retrieve the equipment and data necessary to produce the financial statements and accordingly, they did not have enough time to finalize the requested statements.

The Assistant Treasurer supported the Treasurer's reasoning and called for some appreciation to the work that the Treasurers do, including having to visit the office during a pandemic to satisfy the requests of the Council. In this regard, he expressed

dissatisfaction towards the fact that their efforts were not properly recognized even though the Council agreed to give the Treasurer more time to prepare the financial statements given the current extreme circumstances.

The Chair requested a specific date on which the Treasurers would be able to provide the requested financial reports. The Treasurer promised to present the financial statements at the Council's next meeting. The Assistant Treasurer explained that they would only provide financial statements that cover the period from January to April 2020.

On a different note, Michelle Rockcliffe expressed dissatisfaction towards the fact that the auditing report of the 45th Staff Council accounts was finalized without consultations with Council members and highlighted some factual errors in the circulated report.

An intense conversation took place within the Council regarding this matter, given that the matter was not included to the agenda of the current meeting.

The Chair decided to suspend the meeting for two minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 02:14

The meeting resumed at 02:16.

The Chair asked the Council members to respect the views of each other and to refrain from speaking over each other and requested discuss the auditing report under a separate agenda item.

Michelle Rockcliffe argued that the final report has factual errors that should be corrected before any decision regarding the final payment to the auditing company was made.

The Chair inquired about the auditing process and what were the next steps.

The 1st VP suggested to defer the resolution on the payment to the auditing company until next week to be handled under a dedicated agenda item. **It was so decided.**

7. General Meeting

Michelle Rockcliffe referred to the relevant Union's Statutes and Regulations governing General Meetings and highlighted the fact that the Council's Chair is the only official who is supposed to call for General Meetings.

She also asked the Council members to avail such an opportunity (the General Meeting) to adopt any urgent draft resolutions.

The 1st VP suggested to discuss whatever on the GM's agenda on the Council meeting of 9 July 2020, a week before the General Meeting (potentially planned to take place on 15 July 2020, pending the Council's approval).

The Chair asked the Council to agree on proposed date for the General Meeting.

There were no objections. **It was decided that the General Meeting will take place on 15 July 2020.**

8. Revised Resolution on payment of Audit Company

Item deferred to the next Council's meeting.

9. Training for Staff Representatives

Sergio Pires Vieira reminded the Council about the MS Excel sheet that he shared with the Council members to collect their training needs and thanked all those who contributed to that sheet.

He inquired whether the Council preferred to have the budget training in the form of a large group, or in small focused groups.

The 1st VP preferred offering the training to a large group to reduce the number of training sessions needed. The Chair praised the idea of having a budget training to allow staff representatives to understand what happens during the preparation of their departments' budgets.

10. Legal Advisor

The 1st VP stated that the Union have been in a contractual relationship with Mr. George Irving (the Union's legal advisor) and praised his excellent work. He asked that the 46th Staff Council renew the contractual relationship with him by adopting the relevant draft resolution.

The 1st VP made a similar request towards using the services of an external OIOS expert, who started giving legal advises to staff members involved in OIOS investigations. He admitted the unintentional mistake that took place when the OIOS expert was contracted to work with the Union without proper authorization from the Council.

He eventually presented two draft resolutions, one to retain the services of both advisors, and the other to authorize the payment of the expenses billed by the OIOS expert for the services that she provided.

Simona Chindea (Unit 24) inquired about the reason why to hire two advisors and inquired whether they both offered the same services.

The 1st VP explained that the two advisors covered completely different areas, one on direct litigation matters, and the other only offered services related to ongoing OIOS investigations.

Simona Chindea asked about the details of the OIOS cases for lessons to be learned in this regard. The initiative was welcomed by the 1st VP.

The Deputy Chair asked about the nature of the OIOS cases that has been handled by the expert and asked whether the Organization provided the involved staff members the necessary help in this regard.

The 1st VP explained that the services of the expert revolved around many subjects in which their expertise was very beneficial to identify the rights of staff members when they were called to OIOS investigations.

Michelle Rockcliffe explained that even though she would vote in favour to honour the 1st VP request, yet she questioned the process of selecting external experts. She also reminded the Council that there was a Union's legal committee that was supposed to approve requests for legal services and expressed dissatisfaction towards the continuous practice of reporting expenses after the fact.

The 2nd VP highlighted the importance of having the OIOS expert on board and apologized for the unintentional mistake regarding the proper Council authorization.

Michelle Rockcliffe suggested to amend the first resolution to only cover the retainer of the Union's legal advisor and to prepare a similar resolution with a retainer for the OIOS advisor at the Council's next meeting.

Winryck Ford (Unit 22) supported Francisco's rationale about the importance of retaining the services of both advisors. He suggested to immediately vote on the resolutions.

Even though the Deputy Chair agreed with Francisco and Winryck statements about the importance of retaining the services of the two advisors, yet she also supported the amendments proposed by Michelle Rockcliffe on the first draft resolution.

The 1st VP explained that even though it was a mistake on the part of the leadership team, yet he thought it wasn't appropriate to delay the payments to the advisor any further while the expert was already working on an ongoing cases. He explained to the Council that the next few Council meetings will discuss very important and heavy items and that it would be better to immediately vote on the resolutions.

Jesus Parado (Unit 33) asked about the terms of reference of using the service of the OIOS advisor and inquired about the authority of the Union's Legal Committee in this regard.

Michelle Rockcliffe made a motion to "**vote on the proposed amendments to the first draft resolution, and to postpone the decision regarding the retainer of the OIOS advisor to next week**". The motion was seconded.

The Council moved to vote on the motion.

The motion was adopted with 07 votes in favour, 01 vote against, and 05 abstentions.

The Council moved to vote on the resolution as amended.

The draft resolution was adopted unanimously as RES/STC/46/24, with 13 votes in favour, 0 votes against, and 0 abstentions.

The Chair asked the Leadership to present the resolution on retaining the OIOS advisor services well in advance to be properly adopted next week.

Michelle Rockcliffe suggested to vote on the 2nd draft resolution to allow the Treasurers to pay the billed expenses of the OIOS advisor and requested some amendments to the draft resolution.

The Council moved to vote on the draft resolution as amended.

The draft resolution was adopted as RES/STC/46/25, with 11 votes in favour, 0 against, and 1 abstention.

11. CCISUA General Assembly Debrief

Item was deferred.

12. AOB

Sebastian Cervantes (Unit 22) reported issues with the electronic transfer of funds to the Union's accounts in the United Nations Federal Credit Union (UNFCU) which he experienced to transfer the funds necessary for enrolment in the MetLaw Legal Plans. He requested that the Treasurers urgently look into this matter. The Treasurer explained that the Union's account has a different number than regular members' accounts, and that he will provide the correct information as soon as possible.

The 1st VP apologized to the Council for the miscommunication occurred regarding the retainers of the legal and OIOS advisors and thanked the Council for approving the payments to the OIOS advisor.

The meeting adjourned at 15:25.