



Minutes/Actes:

Meeting No: 46/57
Date: 10 September 2020
Time: 13:15 - 14:50 PM EST
Venue: Virtual (MS Teams)
Quorum: 14/17 Units

46th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate at 13:20 PM EST with 14 Units present. Staff Council Deputy Chair Ms. Ramona Kohrs chaired the meeting and Secretary Mr. Sherif Mohamed and Assistant Secretary Ms. Sarah M'Bodji took notes. Units present were: 06, 13, 14, 17, 18, 21, 22, 24, 27, 26, 29, 30, 31, 33. All members of the Union leadership team were present.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The First Vice President Mr. Aitor Arauz Chapman suggested to remove the item on “reports of the ombudsman and internal justice council” from the agenda with the understanding that a dedicated meeting will be organized for interested staff representatives. It was agreed to remove the item, and to plan for the dedicated meeting.

The agenda was adopted as amended with 7 items.

2. Adoption of previous minutes

Minutes for the 3rd Emergency Meeting (EM) and for the 52nd through the 56th meetings of the 46th Staff Council remained pending.

The Secretaries and the First Vice President Mr. Aitor Arauz Chapman promised to meet internally to resolve and revise all the outstanding minutes and get back to the Council.

The Assistant Secretary apologized to the Council citing the seasonal annual leave overlap and thanked the Council again for their understanding.

3. Reports by Units

Ms. Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 06) gave some background regarding some flexibilities in the conversion from G to P jobs being practiced in the UNJSPF and that some of these flexibilities might not be used properly. She mentioned some cases staff found suspicious in the application of these flexibilities. Staff in the Office of Investments (OIM) have been questioning why these flexibilities were not extended to all Fund staff equally, even though

management had received these flexibilities based on an assertion of a specialized (pension) office and that they were granted for the long-serving staff of the UNJSPF.

Ms. Mita Sen (Unit 26) raised questions regarding (1) the transition from AWA to FWA; (2) when would the extraordinary procedures to face the financial crisis end; and (3) when is it expected to have a revised FWA policy?

Regarding the case of the UNJSPF flexibilities, the First VP Mr. Aitor Arauz Chapman thought that it would be better to start by identifying what flexibilities are being practiced and design our response based on what's in the best interest of staff.

Regarding the austerity measures, Mr. Aitor Arauz Chapman said that the Controller had stated that staff salaries were secured until November 2020, however, it was important to keep working with the austerity measures to ensure the availability of funds. He also mentioned the dilemma that the management must balance the austerity measures and the full spending of the budget to avoid budget cuts.

Regarding the FWA guidelines, Mr. Aitor Arauz Chapman said he believed there was a second version of the guidelines being prepared by management but were not yet consulted with staff representatives.

President Ms. Patricia Nemeth commented on the AWA/FWA. Ms. Nemeth explained that the AWA were created to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, while the FWA is governed by an ST/SGB. AWA would be suspended on September 15 and staff would have to request FWA if they wished to work from home.

Ms. Mita Sen (Unit 26) explained that the confusion happening in her area was about the timing of the transition from AWA to FWA and the approval process. Would AWA previously approved beyond 15 September be honoured or would staff have to re-apply for FWA?

The Treasurer Jaime Garreta mentioned a query that they received from staff members complaining that their temporary (or fixed term) appointments were extended for only one year and asked if there were any similar incidents elsewhere. The President said that similar incidents were observed in different departments, including staff members who received notifications that their contracts won't be renewed beyond October 2020 and that we should keep an eye on any incident related to staff appointments and contracts.

The Deputy Chairperson Ms. Ramona Kohrs (Unit 21) spoke in her capacity as the staff representative of Unit 21 and mentioned an incident regarding the preparation of the YPP examinations and the absence of experts from the library in the YPP team which would lead to the absence of library related questions, meaning that eventually there will be not enough library professionals on the rosters to fill in any vacancies in the library.

4. President's Report and Summary of Communications

The Deputy Chairperson Ms. Ramona Kohrs (Unit 21) inquired about the membership of the SG's task force to address racism.

President Ms. Patricia Nemeth explained how the membership from the staff side was arranged and promised to update the Council regarding the final membership and mentioned that there were no specific TORs so far.

First Vice President Mr. Aitor Arauz Chapman explained the membership of the task force is as follows: The group will be chaired by USG DMSPC and will comprise senior level staff from OHR, OMS, EOSG, OLA, OHCHR, DGC, OIOS, DCO, OCT, UNAMI, UNSOS, MONUSCO, Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen, UNOAU, UNON, ECA, Office of the Resident Coordinator in Uzbekistan, UN-Women, the United Nations Youth Envoy and a staff representative from the Staff-Management Committee (SMC).

The Deputy Chairperson Ms. Ramona Kohrs (Unit 21) thought that the Task Force on addressing Racism was heavily occupied by senior managers and that extra staff representatives were strongly needed for balancing the membership.

Ms. Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) thought that not much would be achieved in this task force, especially with a membership consisting mainly of senior managers. She suggested that the Union's Second Vice Francisco Brito be nominated as an alternate representative for staff on this group.

Regarding the SMC Working Group on Administration of Justice, the First Vice President announced that he had been designated as a co-chair and gave the Council members a background of the next few steps on matters regarding Internal Justice.

The Deputy Chairperson Ms. Kohrs pointed out the downsides of the current legal services available to staff, including the inequality of arms. She contrasted this with how the Administration and the SG are defended by a team of lawyers, while staff members relied on OSLA, which had very limited resources. With 2 vacancies frozen in OSLA, the situation was now even more dire for staff seeking legal representation, who may now resort even more to representing themselves. The judges are not in favour of staff representing themselves as this often results in inefficiencies and delays in the legal process.

5. Executive Board Report

There was no EB meeting this week.

6. UNSU Finances

Nothing was reported by the Treasurers.

7. AOB

A discussion regarding the introduction of advanced technology in the work of the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF), including the introduction of face recognition and block chain were discussed.

The President asked the Council members to share the Union's broadcast sent this morning regarding the seizure of personal devices during OIOS investigations. The 1st VP summarized the Council on the background of this matter including the importance to distinguish between personal and official devices.

The Deputy Chairperson Ms. Ramona Kohrs mentioned in this context that the staff rules and related administrative instructions were often written in vague language that led to various interpretations, a fact that even the tribunal judges have commented on in the past.

The Assistant Secretary Ms. M'Bodji (Unit 31) briefed the Council on a UN Disability Focal Point Network meeting held the previous week. Ms. M'Bodji requested the Council members to share their feedback or staff experiences, and ideas on disability inclusion. She elaborated this was in preparation of the EOSG collecting inputs for the upcoming Annual UNDIS SG report. Ms. M'Bodji called for staff to reach out or email feedback and inputs on UNDIS within the next week.

The meeting adjourned at 14:50 PM EST
