



Minutes/Actes:

Meeting No: 46/62
Date: 22 October 2020
Time: 13:15 - 14:30
Venue: Virtual
Quorum: 12/17 Units

46th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate at 13:24 with 10 Units present. Staff Council Deputy Chair Ramona Kohrs chaired the meeting and Secretary Sherif Mohamed took notes. Units present were: 06, 18, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33. The 1st and 2nd vice presidents were in attendance.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The Assistant Treasurer Yogesh Sakhardande requested to move item 6 (financial matters) up to be item no. 3 on the agenda and renumber the rest of the items. The agenda was adopted as amended with 09 items.

2. Adoption of previous minutes

Minutes for the 60th and 61st meeting remain pending.

3. UNSU Finances

The Treasurer Jaime Garreta reminded the Council that he re-circulated the financial statements for the period May to September 2020, as requested. Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 06) questioned the lack of consolidated financial statements for the whole period and called for the Treasurers to generate these consolidated reports and share them in MS Excel format. The Deputy Chair joined the call for proper financial reporting.

The Treasurer highlighted and condemned the contradicting requests by a certain Council member, which was supported by the Assistant Treasurer.

In this regard, and for the record, the Treasurer informed the Council that he was quite positive that the repeated and contradicting requests made by a certain Council member were personal, intentional, and in a bad faith, and now regretted that these requests were supported by the Deputy Chair. He continued that he refuses to be in the position when he is forced to comply to the instructions of only one member. He further referred to the

fact that nothing in the Union's financial rules specifies a format for financial reporting and thought that his reports were clear and detailed enough. Eventually, the Treasurer called for the Council members to speak-up against the humiliation that the treasurers have to face on weekly basis.

Michelle Rockcliffe thought that the requests were in line with the requirements of the relevant rules and regulations and explained the format in which she wanted to see the financial reports and mentioned that the persistent requests were the direct result of an ongoing improper reporting. Regarding her requests for the MS Excel files, Michelle Rockcliffe explained that she needed the MS Excel files simply because the PDF versions didn't show all the tabulated data, and she found it much easier to verify the statements in MS Excel formats.

The 2nd Vice President Francisco Brito called for the Council members to work as one, and to give space for understanding before jumping into judgements or conclusions. He also called for the Treasurers to meet with him to discuss the requested formats and work together to reach common grounds. The Deputy Chair supported this approach and requested that Michelle Rockcliffe be invited to this meeting.

The Assistant Secretary Sarah M'Bodji also welcomed this initiative and called for the Council members to get together and set aside interpersonal problems and to strive for common grounds. However, she stressed that these efforts should not consume the Council time.

The Assistant Treasurer thought that the initiative was irrelevant given the assumption that the initiative is the result of personal repeated attacks, in which the treasurers were being subject to continuous accusations week after week. He refused to be the victim of such attacks and called for the Council members to put an end to this never-ending argument or else he would resign his position as an assistant treasurer.

The 1st VP Aitor Arauz Chapman thought that even though proper financial reporting was needed, yet he did not suspect any mismanagement of the Union's funds. He called for the Treasurer not to take this issue personally and to try to work this out. He called for all parties involved in this question to deal with the situation in a respectful and constructive manner.

On a different note, Michelle Rockcliffe asked about the status of the relief funds for Beirut colleagues, and gave an example of some detailed expenditure reports related to similar funds and - given the amount allocated for this purpose – she called for similar reports. She also asked about the status of the GoFundMe campaign to support Beirut colleagues.

The 1st VP informed the Council that the amount for Beirut fund was successfully transferred from the GoFundMe account to the Relief Committee's UNFCU account. He

reported that colleagues from ESCWA Staff Union have been working hard to put together detailed reports of the needs to be covered by the funds. Once received, a relief committee would be formed to authorize the release of the funds. This would be done by an internal transfer between UNFCU accounts, which should be very straightforward.

4. Reports by Units

Karina Loktionova (Unit 19) informed the Council that staff representatives of translation services from all duty stations had a meeting with the Mr. Movses Abelian, the USG of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGAMC), which she found fruitful and listed some important points that can be used as basis for future cooperation.

Mita Sen (Unit 26) asked about the mechanism of reporting and tracing COVID-19 positive cases and how to be better informed in the workplace, given the functional diversity of buildings such DC1 and DC2, and that different offices don't necessarily receive the same communications and that these communications might not be clear enough to be used for such critical purpose.

The Rapporteur Coralie Tripier asked for more information about the translators meeting with the USG. On a different note, she asked if there were any updates concerning the UNITAR building. She also asked whether the G4 visa renewal process was resumed and whether staff with expired visas can now travel and have their visas renewed. She also inquired about the status of a DGACM working group that used to address issues of language professionals and called for revitalizing the work of this WG.

On the G4 visas question, the Deputy Chair assured the Council members that the Visa Office opens daily and is currently issuing visas.

On the reporting and tracing of positive cases, the 1st VP did not know exactly how the mechanism of communicating such information works but he noted that in the case of annex buildings, communications were supposed to be coordinated with annex building's managers to ensure proper delivery of such information, bearing in mind the necessary confidentiality.

In this regard, Lucelena Pimentel (Unit 32) explained how the Medical Service reacts - once a positive case was confirmed – including communicating this information to all staff in the concerned areas, whether they were in a headquarter or an annex building, and start a tracing process from there. However, she thought the process was not comprehensive, as it pays no attention to a staff member, for instance, who has a confirmed COVID-19 case in the household, as long as the staff member is not also reported positive. She finally called for a more comprehensive process that takes all factors into consideration.

The Deputy Chair underscored the importance of tracing the contacts of the positive cases to identify any potential risks on others, and seconded that this process should be enhanced to ensure the safety of everyone.

Regarding the UNITAR building, the 1st VP thought that the building was safe in terms of continuity as it is the property of the UN. However, it was obvious that the building was in a bad condition, and it was not clear whether or not it will be renovated.

In the same context, the Assistant Secretary Sarah M'Bodji reminded the Council that the occupants of annex buildings like UNITAR and Albano were promised to return to the Secretariat buildings, which never happened.

Regarding the DGACM working group on the conditions of service of language staff, Karina Loktionova explained that the WG wasn't recently active and thought that reviving this WG would be a good idea to ensure including more language professions to its scope of work.

The Deputy Chair, in her capacity as the representative of Unit 21 informed the Council that she learned about a restructuring exercise taking place in the Social Media area of the Department of Global Communication (DGC), without prior consultations with the area's staff representatives and with no clear explanation communicated to concerned staff. She asked the leadership to take note of this potential restructuring.

Sebastian Cervantes (Unit 22) asked, considering the deteriorating economic situation, and in light of potential restructuring, how would the upcoming budget affect the staff?

In this regard, the Deputy Chair referred to a recent report on the financial situation of the Organization ([A/75/387](#)) and called for the Council members to consider reading it.

5. President's Report and Summary of Communications

Nothing was raised.

6. Executive Board Report

Nothing was raised.

7. Draft Resolution on Audit Services

The 1st VP briefed the Council about the auditing process of the 45th Staff Council accounts and the reasons why we received a bill with a higher amount than approved. He called for the Council to approve the adjusted final amount, as shown in the revised draft resolution

circulated earlier, and highlighted the importance of a timely action by the Council to allow the Treasurers to make the payment and subsequently allow the EB to meet with the auditors and initiate the auditing for the 46th Staff Council's first year.

Michelle Rockcliffe recalled that the 45th Staff Council allocated an amount of 15,000 USD for the auditing of its accounts, which were later refunded to the Union's reserves. She inquired how this amount is shown in the records and called for the auditors to hold a meeting with the Council so Council members learn more about the auditing process and to be able to raise questions about their reports.

The 1st VP thought that, since the allocated 15,000 USD were refunded to the reserves, our efforts now should be focused on paying what we owe so we get move forward with the auditing.

Michelle Rockcliffe suggested an additional paragraph to the draft resolution.

The Secretary made a motion to end the conversation and to move to vote on the draft resolution as submitted. The motion was seconded. The motion was approved by 11 votes in favour, 01 against, and no abstentions.

The Council moved to vote on the revised draft resolution, as submitted. The draft resolution was adopted as RES/STC/46/18/Rev.1 by 11 votes in favour, no votes against, and 01 abstention.

8. New Management Proposal on “Agile” Performance Management

The 1st VP briefed the Council on the work of the SMC WG on the subject matter and how the Unions were in shock given the substantial changes brought to the table by management, including the introduction of a proposal for an “agile” performance system after six months of work on the WG and two weeks past the official deadline for completion of the WG's report. He explained that the new proposal had two main components. The first was the introduction of a 360-performance management system initially rolled out for D1s and D2s, which was something the Unions had been calling for many years. The second aspect was a proposal to remove staff member's annual work plan and mid-term review from the Inspira platform. The proposal made no sense and would severely undermine the integrity of the performance management system. He referred to the current performance management policy ([ST/AI/2010/5](#)), which he found to be a good policy. He re-assured the Council that the members of the WG were well coordinated and would keep pushing back against this unreasonable request.

The Assistant Secretary inquired about an iSeek article on “New UN Competency Framework”. The 1st VP explained that management was engaged in consultations to

consider a new framework, which would be brought to the Staff Management Committee in due course.

Michelle Rockcliffe doubted the effectiveness of the 360-degree evaluation as was currently proposed by management, which only called for evaluation by a few immediate subordinates. given that staff would be cautious when making negative comments about their immediate managers, knowing that it would be easy their managers would recognize them which makes them subject to retaliation. The 360 degree should be done by all staff who fall under the said manager instead. The 1st VP assured her that these suggestions would be transmitted to the WG.

The Assistant Secretary thought that performance management was a very important accountability tool and that 360-performance management systems could be one tool towards an accountable performance management system.

9. AOB

Nothing was raised.

The meeting adjourned at 15:24.
