



Minutes/Actes:

Meeting No: 46/64
Date: 05 November 2020
Time: 13:15 - 14:30
Venue: Virtual
Quorum: 14/17 Units

46th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate at 13:20 with 12 Units present. the 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, 33. The leadership team was in attendance.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The latest version of the agenda shared by our Staff Assistant Emmanuella Rene was adopted with 11 items, including an additional item (item 2) for an introduction by the polling officers.

2. Introduction of the polling officers

The 1st VP informed the Council that the polling officers have elected their executive body, including a chair, and that they were ready to address the Council.

The Chair welcomed Daniel Casanova, the Chair of the Polling Officers, who introduced himself and his relevant experience and informed the Council that the Secretary of the Polling Officers could not attend the meeting. The Chair inquired whether next week's meeting would be suitable for the polling officers to address the Council, and no objection was made by the Chair of the Polling Officers. The Chair of the Polling Officers and the members of its executive board were therefore invited to address the Council at its 65th meeting.

3. Adoption of previous minutes

Minutes for the 63rd meeting of the 46th Staff Council were pending.

4. Reports by Units

Karina Loktionova (Unit 29) raised the question of the accumulating annual leave balances that staff were accumulating for more than a year and if the exception that took place last

year would be extended so staff continue to be allowed to carry over their annual leave balances over 60 days, beyond the 31 March 2021 threshold.

She also raised an issue that one of her constituents faced during the process of renewing a G4 visa, and pointed out that information communicated by an HR partner referred to the fact that the host country's Department of State wasn't accepting renewals of G4 visas except in the case of travels for compelling reasons.

The President Patricia Nemeth mentioned that the issue of the accumulating annual leaves was raised with the ASG/OHR, Marta Helena Lopez, who did not provide a concrete response, however the matter was now being considered on a larger scale to find the best way to address this issue.

Regarding the G4 visas, the President explained that the host country limited the issuance of such visas, owed to their limitations associated with COVID-19, except in limited number of cases where travel is necessary. In this regard, she called on staff to avail the opportunity to renew their G4 visas at a US consulate at their respective countries.

The Deputy Chair Ramona Kohrs informed the Council that her the Department of Global Communications (DGC) created an Action Team composed of 5 working groups (WG) to identify ways to address issues highlighted by staff in the Staff Engagement Survey, and that the WGs have concluded their work and presented their reports with actionable recommendations in many areas that the Staff Engagement Survey covered.

Michelle Rockcliffe informed the Council that the Office of Investment Management reached out to her regarding the OIOS recommendation to address the hostile working environment in the office, and that a document was shared with her regarding ideas how to address such environment. She considered the initiative to be a positive one in Staff Management relations

5. President's Report and Summary of Communications

Michelle Rockcliffe asked for information regarding the Racism Task Force which was initiated by a call by the Secretary General. The 2nd VP Francisco Britto informed the Council that he recently attended the 2nd meeting of the Task Force and that the 1st meeting was mainly introductory and covered procedural matters, however he could present a number of comments related to the results of the survey which was well accepted by the members of the Task Force. He mentioned that an event is being planned for raising awareness in this regard, including the establishment of a dedicated iSeek page to receive input from staff and update them on developments of the work of the Task Force. He also explained the structure of the Task Force and its Working Groups and the different areas these working groups cover.

The 1st VP Aitor Arauz Chapman informed the Council that a budgetary method called “revised estimates” was being used by the Office of the Special Advisor for Africa to implement a restructuring exercise of the Office, which he found very dangerous as the “revised estimates” were normally only used to make adjustments to an approved budget document in terms of equipment and similar expenses, and that setting such precedent might be dangerous in the future and that the matter was being closely monitored, given its seriousness. He finally called for staff representatives to pay attention to similar attempts by management in their areas to implement changes to approved budgets using similar or different irregular budget method.

6. Executive Board Report

Nothing was raised.

7. UNSU Finances

The Assistant Treasurer Yogesh Sakhardande informed the Council that the funds for the Beirut Staff Relief Committee have been transferred. He invited Rama Darwish, the lead of this effort, to address the Council. Rama Darwish (Unit 30) briefed the Council about how the funds were to be distributed on the cases received, depending on the level of damage of each case, as reported by the ESCWA counterparts, and mentioned that two severe cases had received an additional assignment, in addition to other amounts allocated to less severe cases. Rama Ahmed eventually reiterated that the assessments and distributions of the funds were made based on the level of damages reported in each case.

After several interventions, the Council decided to move forward given that a report by the relevant Staff Relief Committee would be presented to the Council in the future under a dedicated agenda item.

8. Resolution on Staff Legal Assistance

The 1st VP introduced the draft resolution and informed the Council it was drafted as requested by the Staff Legal Assistance Committee and reported that the Committee members have met twice to analyse the cases and made recommendations on each case based on these analysis.

The Chair invited members of the Staff Legal Assistance Committee to take the floor. Michelle Rockcliffe presented the draft resolution to the Council, which she described as being drafted on the principles of supporting staff best interest by adopting resolutions and implementing actions and following up on the implementation of these actions and called for the Council members to consider the resolution.

The Deputy Chair Ramona Kohrs suggested to attach a document that was referenced in the draft resolution, however, reminded the importance of confidentiality in this regard, and that the document should be inspected carefully before it became public. In this regard, the Secretary Sherif Mohamed suggested to remove certain parts of the text for confidentiality reasons. It was decided that the resolution would be published with no attachments.

The Deputy Chair also enquired about the funds available for this purpose under the budget. The Treasurer verified that sufficient funds were available in the biennial budget.

The Council finally decided to vote on the resolution as presented.

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

The resolution was unanimously adopted as RES/STC/46/31 by 12 votes in favour, no votes against, and no abstentions.

9. Draft on Workplace Accommodation

Karina Loktionova (Unit 28) briefed the Council of the situation behind the draft resolution and that edits to the draft resolution were introduced by the 1st VP, who shared the draft resolution with the Council members and thought the resolution was a good opportunity for the Union to request being involved in any changes to the contractual status and/or conditions of annex buildings.

In response to questions raised by the President, Karina Loktionova explained that news has been spreading among occupants of Albano and UNITAR buildings that changes to their contractual and/or ownership status might change in the near future, which would place hundreds of staff members in limbo.

Edits were suggested by Michelle Rockcliffe and the Deputy Chair who requested to consider the draft resolution next week to introduce some important edits. The Deputy Chair's request was seconded. The Council decided to defer the adoption of the draft resolution to next week.

10. Legal Assistance from Legal Counsel for Security Staff

The President Patricia Nemeth briefed the Council on a meeting that took place with the Department of Safety and Security (DSS) managers to discuss the concerns of the security officers reported last week by Patel Noble (Unit 14) and elaborated on the discussions and communications that took place in this regard, and eventually supported the request made by the security staff representatives for legal support to challenge the unfair managerial decisions imposed on security staff.

The Chair, in her capacity as staff representative of Unit 13, explained further to the Council the rationale behind the different shifts being currently practiced in DSS, as well as the rationale behind the management decision to charge 1 day of sick leave (or even annual leave) as 1.5 days, given the 12-hour shifts. She detailed the many issues caused because of this managerial decision and why it was important to challenge such decision.

Interventions made by Patel Noble, Michelle Rockcliffe, Patricia Nemeth shed more light on the case under consideration. The 1st VP advised that an MEU case be filed by one of the security staff who have been charged 1.5 days of leave instead of one, and which falls within the time limits of the MEU process, and if eventually the request for evaluation was turned down, the requestor should proceed to tribunal, and in that case he assured the concerned staff representatives that the Union's legal advisor would be more than happy to assist.

The Chair thanked the President for standing up for the rights of the staff and for the positions and interventions she made during a recent meeting with DSS management, an appreciation that was shared by Patel Noble and the Assistant Secretary Sarah M'Bodji.

11. AOB

Nothing was raised.

The meeting adjourned at 15:11.
