



**Minutes/Actes:**

Meeting No: 46/65  
Date: 12 November 2020  
Time: 13:15 - 14:30  
Venue: Virtual  
Quorum: 13/17 Units

## 46<sup>th</sup> Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate at 13:25 with 09 Units present. The Deputy Chair Ramona Kohrs chaired the meeting and Secretary Sherif Mohamed took notes. Units present were: 06, 14, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 27, 28, 30, 31, 33. The leadership team was in attendance.

### 1. Adoption of the agenda

The Deputy Chair Ramona Kohrs welcomed members of the executive board of the Polling Officers: Chair, Daniel Casanova Vazquez; Deputy Chair, Miriam Gartenberg; and Secretary, Eva Font Mendiola.

The agenda was adopted without changes with 09 items.

### 2. Adoption of previous minutes

Minutes for the 63<sup>rd</sup> and 64<sup>th</sup> meetings of the 46<sup>th</sup> Staff Council remain pending.

### 3. Introduction of the polling officers

The Chair of the Polling Officers Daniel Casanova Vazquez explained the process of electing their executive body to the Council members, and what the polling officers were currently doing in preparation of the elections of a new Arbitration Committee.

The Deputy Chair of the Polling Officers Miriam Gartenberg and the Secretary of the Polling Officers Eva Font Mendiola introduced themselves and their past experience and looked forward to working with the Council.

Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 06) asked about the timeline of the elections process. Daniel Casanova Vazquez explained the process of the elections of the members of the Arbitration Committee and thought 6 weeks would be a reasonable time to have it completed.

Regarding the by-elections, Michelle Rockcliffe thought that a full by-elections exercise at the moment was not feasible, yet she highlighted that there had been occasions when polling officers accepted uncontested applications from members nominated by an unrepresented unit.

The Secretary Sherif Mohamed thought the Council should carefully study the feasibility of having a full-by election exercise, bearing in mind the that the mandate of the 46<sup>th</sup> Staff Council would expire by April 2021, as well as the training needs of new staff representatives.

#### **4. Draft resolution on workplace accommodation**

The President Patricia Nemeth informed the Council members that she learned about high level discussions regarding the possibility of selling the UNITAR building and moving its occupants to DC1 and DC2 buildings, and that no other plans were being considered regarding any of the other annex buildings.

The 1<sup>st</sup> VP Aitor Arauz Chapman thanked the President for the updates she shared, however he thought that these updates were not formally communicated, and he found the present resolution to be useful as a reminder to the administration to involve staff representatives in meaningful consultations before making such major decisions. He thought that - based on these updates - edits could be introduced to the resolution while maintaining its fundamental request to get staff representatives involved in meaningful consultations. This opinion was supported by Michelle Rockcliffe, who proposed edits to the draft resolution.

The Assistant Secretary Sarah M'Bodji did not support the present draft resolution and explained that there were more pressing priorities like downsizing and safeguarding staff jobs which should be considered before adopting a resolution on issues with office spaces. She also thought that it was important to give the administration the opportunity to consider ways to cut costs other than staff jobs. She finally reminded the Council that staff moved to these "swing spaces" with the understanding that they would return to the Secretariat, which never happened.

The Secretary Sherif Mohamed called for generalizing the resolution, instead of focusing on specific buildings, and to direct the main focus to the call for administration to get staff representatives involved in meaningful discussions related to any proposed changes to the conditions of any building that UN staff occupy.

The Council members introduced a few changes to the draft resolution, which were incorporated by the 1<sup>st</sup> VP.

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

**The draft resolution was adopted as RES/STC/46/32, with 09 votes in favor, 01 vote against, and no abstentions.**

## **5. Reports by Units**

The Deputy Chair reported to the Council that staff members who approached the Medical Services for medical care was sent back with the excuse that the Medical Services only handle COVID-19 related cases, and asked the Staff Representatives if they had heard about similar incidents in their respective areas.. The President informed the Council members of other and similar complaints about the Medical Services and promised to check these matters with senior management.

Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) informed the Council that it was brought to her attention that a vacancy announcement in the Fund had been cancelled, with an excuse that no female applicants applied, which demotivated male staff from applying to other posts knowing that they have no chance to compete with female candidates, and explained the adverse effects of such practices.

## **6. President's Report and Summary of Communications**

The President called for staff representatives to invite their constituents to attend the Staff Union Townhall which is planned to take place on Wednesday 18 November from 13:00 to 14:30. She also called for staff representatives to share the Union's most recent Staff Pulse Survey with their constituents.

The Deputy Chair asked for more information regarding the leadership's meeting with the Ethics office. She also asked about what changes had been made in the context of the review of the core competencies of the Organization.

The 1<sup>st</sup> VP informed the Council that the leadership team had a meeting with the head of the Ethics Office exclusively to discuss matters related to retaliation cases reported from one of the Secretariat offices. The discussion included definitions of activities protected against retaliation, their formalities, and the differences between protection from specific acts of retaliation and "protected whistle-blower" status, which is not available under the UN system.. He thought the conversation was good and helped adjust several misconceptions, yet he thought the system governing the protection against retaliation was not perfect and it needed a lot of work.

The 1<sup>st</sup> VP briefed the Council on the background of the review of the competencies, the positions of our Union and other Unions in this regard, and how, in joint meetings with the

administration, it was explained that there were no problems with current competencies as they stand, and that problems were associated with the application of these competencies during recruitment processes and/or performance management. He explained the new proposals coming from management and highlighted the distinction between core values and core competencies, which was the basis for disciplinary action for breach of core values (on the one hand) and for performance evaluation based on core competencies (on the other). The review process was ongoing, and the Unions would remain involved.

The Council members exchanged views regarding the review of the competencies in different aspects, yet no decisions were made in this regard.

## **7. Executive Board Report**

The 1<sup>st</sup> VP reported to the Council the discussions that took place during the most recent EB meeting, including the situation with the Office of the Special Advisor for Africa, the cost of living surveys and their feasibility at this point given the changes in real estate markets because of COVID-19, as well as CCISUA midterm meetings which are scheduled to take place next week.

## **8. UNSU Finances**

Nothing was reported.

## **9. AOB**

Sebastian Cervantes (Unit 22) asked for more information about the tracing process after a positive COVID-19 case were confirmed in the Secretariat. The President referred to the recent communications from the Department of Safety and Security and from the Secretary General in his letter to staff on 4 November 2020, which contain information and figures related to the confirmed cases and their relevant tracing activities.

The Secretary called for the Council members to consider the time limits of each agenda item to avoid very long meetings, which were the trend of the past few meetings, and highlighted its negative effects on participants. Michelle Rockcliffe recalled that staff representatives were granted time release that they should use to represent their constituents in such meetings.

*The meeting adjourned at 15:16.*

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