



Minutes/Actes:

Meeting No: 46/77
Date: 25 February 2020
Time: 13:15 - 14:30
Venue: Virtual
Quorum: 13/17 Units

46th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate at 13:28 with 09 Units present. In the absence of the Chair, The Assistant Secretary Sarah M'Bodji chaired the meeting. The Secretary Sherif Mohamed took notes. Units present were: 06, 14, 17, 20, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31. The 1st and 2nd vice presidents were in attendance.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted with 9 items.

2. Adoption of previous minutes

Minutes for the 76th meeting of the 46th Staff Council were adopted. Minutes for the 74th meeting remain pending.

3. Election of Deputy Chair

The Secretary Sherif Mohamed nominated Sebastian Cervantes (Unit 22) for the position of the Deputy Chair. Sebastian Cervantes accepted the nomination. No more nominations and no objections were made and therefore the Chair announced Sebastian Cervantes as the new Deputy Chair of the 46th Staff Council.

4. Reports by Units

Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 06) reported the continuing appointments situation at her unit, including the many staff members who have been eligible for continuing contracts for more than 5 years. She questioned the reasons of the delay in this process, including the fact that Pension Fund staff were excluded from the annual envelope exercise that determines the number of the available continuing appointments at the Secretariat. She finally questioned the obstacles to granting her eligible constituents their long due continuing contracts and expressed dissatisfaction that United Nations staff members were deprived such essential rights.

The 1st VP Aitor Arauz Chapman explained that the envelope is managed by OHR and not separately by each department. He briefed the Council members on the problematic areas that surround the calculation of the number of available envelopes, among other issues. He inquired about the duty station of the Pension Fund staff who are eligible for continuing appointments, and advised that affected constituents in Geneva reach out to Mr. Ian Richards, a Geneva staff representative, who is also a member on the Pension Board, who might help further in this regard.

The Assistant Treasurer Yogesh Sakhardande shared his personal experience with the continuing appointments which also involved heavy delays because of heavy backlogs from the OHR side which delayed the conversion of his contract into a continuing contract for many years.

Sergio Pires Vieira (Unit 24) raised concerns regarding overloading staff as a result of the ongoing hiring freeze and reminded the Council members that the SG directions related to the financial crisis were to re-plan the workload to correspond to the lack of the necessary financial resources. He inquired whether such directions were ever shared in writing. He eventually asked whether the hiring freeze was lifted, or will be lifted soon, and approximately when.

The Assistant Treasurer thought his constituents - including himself - also suffered from being overworked and gave several examples regarding the negative effects of the hiring freeze on his team and other teams in his department.

Sergio Pires Vieira revisited a previous question regarding the eligibility to apply for new openings in the Organization for a staff member who is 1-year away from retirement age. The 1st VP asked for more information regarding this specific case and promised to follow up with Sergio on this matter. The 2nd VP thought there was a rule regarding the maximum age to apply to certain positions. He promised to update the Council on this matter.

The 2nd VP Francisco Brito informed the Council members that directions regarding lifting the hiring freeze were sent from the Controller to all heads of entities and advised council members to report any suspicions related to reluctance in recruitment.

The Secretary thought that this news about lifting the hiring freeze contradicts recent statements made by USG/DGACM and USG/DMSPC in which they announced that hiring freeze was still forced.

The 1st VP mentioned that mixed messages are being received in this regard. He expected that such mixed messages are direct results of the application of the new delegation of authority framework. He thought that directions were shared with senior managers to lift the hire-freeze, however, they were associated with specific spending limits which might also be the reason of such confusion.

The Assistant Treasurer raised a concern regarding a staff member who is currently on an FWA from outside the duty station and wishes to extend the duration of their FWA and

asked about the best way to do so in light of the 6-month limit. He inquired if compelling personal circumstances could be accepted to make such extension and called for the Council members to consider discussing this matter at the Council's upcoming meetings.

The 1st VP mentioned that the 6-month limit could be extended for further 3-month period and encouraged the staff representative to facilitate the communications between the managers responsible for this decision and the staff member.

Karina Loktionova (Unit 29) updated the Council members on a recent meeting between DGACM staff representatives and the Department's senior managers, in which the Department's budget proposal for 2022 was discussed. She explained that the proposal includes a number of post cuts with no effects on current staff, among other issues.

The Assistant Rapporteur Shirley Abraham informed the Council about a recent townhall meeting between DMSPC staff representatives and senior managers, which was moderated by the staff representatives and informed the Council members about the feedback they received from their constituents regarding the format and management of the meeting and that the cooperation between the staff representatives and senior managers was highlighted by the staff.

5. President's Report and Summary of Communications

Nothing was raised.

6. Executive Board Report

Michelle Rockcliffe asked for more information regarding the election of Gender Focal Points. The 1st VP informed the Council about a specific case that involve an elected Gender Focal Point, whom their eligibility was questioned at a later stage, and eventually was dismissed from that position. He explained the Tribunal's ruling in this case, which concluded in favor of the staff member. He advised the Council members to learn more about their Gender Focal Points and to get more involved in the election of such important appointments to ensure independency and efficacy of their incumbents.

The Assistant Secretary thought that the Gender Focal Point in DGACM was appointed by management and have been serving for over 5 years. She did not recall any elections of gender focal points and called for more involvement in this regard.

7. UNSU Finances

Nothing was raised.

8. Consultation on Phase 3 “Next Normal”

The 1st VP informed the Council members that no important updates have emerged since last week, and that reports by the different groups’ coordinators were expected soon before proceeding with the dialogues.

9. AOB

Michelle Rockcliffe inquired about the G to P training that the Union used to facilitate as well as the elections of the upcoming Council.

The 1st VP encouraged the Council members to organize something in this regard if the Council wishes so. Michelle Rockcliffe thought that due to the Leadership’s access to historical information and the ability to broadcast that it would be led from the Union with assistance from the Council as in the past. The Council members involved in a discussion in this regard.

On elections, the 1st VP updated the Council that the Polling Officers received the list of staff and is currently working on the apportionments, and called asked the Council members to nominate staff from their perspective units for the membership of the Arbitration Committee which needs to be complete prior to the beginning of any elections.

The Secretary inquired how to nominate someone for the membership of the Arbitration Committee. The 1st VP mentioned that nominations should be sent to the Chair of the Polling Officers, Mr. Daniel Casanova Vazquez.

The 1st VP informed the Council members that Emmanuella, the Union’s Staff Assistant was called back to her original post in DMSPC, and that a new TJO (150122) was advertised to fill the post. The Council members thanked Emmanuella for her efforts with the Union and wished her the best of luck in her future endeavours.

Michelle Rockcliffe expressed dissatisfaction towards the fact that the position of the Union’s team assistant was still being advertised as a temporary job opening, and thought it was not proper that a Union keep appointing people temporarily on such an important post. The 1st VP promised to work on transforming the post into an established post as soon as possible.

Michelle Rockcliffe finally repeated her call for the Council members to take solid steps towards selecting the best possible candidates for the membership of the Health and Life Insurance Committee (HLIC).

The meeting adjourned at 14:50.