

UNITED NATIONS STAFF UNION
SYNDICAT DU PERSONNEL DE L'ORGANISATION DES NATIONS UNIES

45th STAFF COUNCIL/45ème CONSEIL DU PERSONNEL

Minutes/Actes

Meeting No: 45/67
Date: 1 November 2018
Time: 13:15
Venue: Room F
Quorum: 20/27 Units

45th Staff Council Meeting Minutes

The meeting was quorate at 1:30 pm with 15 Units present. Martin Pickles (Unit 29) chaired and UNSU Secretary Aitor Arauz Chapman took notes. The meeting was recorded and a copy deposited with the UNSU Administrator. Units present were: 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 37, 39.

1. Adoption of the agenda

Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) requested to move the report of the HLIC up to number 4. The agenda thus amended was adopted.

2. Adoption of minutes

Minutes of meeting 66 were adopted.

3. Executive Board report, President's report and summary of communications

The President had circulated her summary of communications. Rosemary Lane (Unit 23) reiterated a question first made via email regarding a meeting between the President and Member States. The President intended to submit a full report on all interactions between Leadership, Pension Fund Reps and Member States. Michelle Rockcliffe rejected the idea and recalled that the Agenda item was "President's report". The President would revert at a later date in writing with inputs from Leadership as a whole.

The President requested to be excused in order to attend a presentation on DOS restructuring. Sherif Mohamed (Unit 27) suggested that the President decline invitations to other briefings when they clashed with the Council. He enquired about a "joint statement" on behalf of a group of Unions that did not include UNSU and had not been supported by the President at the ad-hoc SMC. The President explained that she had been kept out of the loop on the joint statement. Michelle Rockcliffe asked why the statement had not been supported. The First Vice-President Patricia Nemeth explained that the statement was a long document with positions from all Unions circulated over the weekend for a meeting on Monday. She had not supported the statement merely because there was not sufficient time to consult with the Council.

4. Report from members of the HLIC

Michelle Rockcliffe (Unit 6) introduced Michael Zilberg who, along with Robin Dellarocca, were the three members of the Health and Life Insurance Committee (HLIC), who represent staff. Michael Zilberg was invited to address the Council. The HLIC was established under SGB/275 in the early 90s. Mr. Zilberg had served on the committee over various periods and had a long institutional memory. He wished to speak of the structure and governance of the HLIC. The Committee was essentially relevant to the Secretariat, however it also included observers from UNDP, UNICEF and retirees. HLIC recommended the design of the health insurance contracts for everyone who worked for the UN, with the exception of Geneva and locally recruited staff at Duty Stations away from HQ. The HLIC reports to the JNC, a staff-management body of the Secretariat, mostly in cases where the Committee cannot reach consensus. The Committee designs, oversees and makes proposals on what the health insurance looks like (Aetna and BCBS in NY, plus a third legacy plan, which had been closed to new participants because it did not cover travellers). The Committee also oversees the international insurance plan applicable to all DS internationally-recruited staff, with the exception of Geneva (Cigna International, formerly Van Breda). The field has expressed dissatisfaction over their underrepresentation on the Committee. The last SMC made proposals to make changes to the Committee's structure and reporting lines. Non-NY unions at SMC wanted to change the HLIC's reporting line from the Secretariat to a sub-committee of SMC. This would allow UNICEF and UNDP to participate in Committee deliberations with full voting rights. The difficulty here is that if there is a disagreement in the HLIC that requires to be escalated to the SMC instead of the JNC, a SMC would have to be convened, with potential delays, along with scant awareness on the part of colleagues in other DSs about the US healthcare market. A second concern was the weighting of voting (by organisation, by numbers of participants or by their proportional usage of the insurance programme?). The insurance programme currently costs about USD 500 million and there was significant and ongoing pressure to contain costs. At a JNC in November he had distributed a document explaining why representation should be proportional to the usage of the programme, and why the current reporting-lines of HLIC should be maintained, while finding a solution to the representation needs of staff in the field, UNDP, UNICEF and the retiree community. The Secretariat (including retirees) contributed and consumed about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the programme. He regretted that no UNSU position was presented at the debate within the SMC. He emphasised that we needed a position on the part of the Council on the composition and governance of the HLIC.

Michelle Rockcliffe had made efforts to allow Michael Zilberg to speak at the SMC and to attempt to delay the decision. She regretted that the UNSU President had seemed to support the move simply for the sake of change.

François Charlier (Unit 3) asked, as the UN healthcare plan is self-funded and two providers are just dealing with the administrative part, would it not be more economical to have one type of coverage with only one insurance company to cover the administrative part? He also pointed out some specific loopholes in the coverages (both CIGNA and Blue Cross Blue Shield) that did not meet the NY State mandatory coverage requirements. That situation is made possible because the UN self-funded plan can decide of what is included or not in its coverage. Michael Zilberg replied that the two plans were slightly different, with different benefits and levels of reimbursement for procedures, as well as different costs. Our population was not big enough to have much clout on what the insurance companies decided, but we did design our own plan. The insurance companies were administrators of that plan, on the basis of their institutional arrangements with in-network providers. Choice of the insurer would depend on each staff member's circumstances. With time running out, Michael Zilberg said he

remained available to answer questions from Council members at any time. Mériem Harbi (Unit 28) suggested an open briefing on the matter. The Council thanked Mr. Zilberg for his briefing and for his hard work on behalf of staff.

5. Election to the Executive Board

Camille Beydon (Unit 26) introduced a draft resolution on *Elections in the Executive Board*. The motivation was twofold: the initial election of officers had been slightly messy. Many were left with the impression that they had not made a fully informed decision. She felt it was fair to start over, with new members being afforded the opportunity to be involved. The second motivation was that the Council's work could be a lot more effective if the EB were more efficient and did the leg-work in advance. The proposal was to vote now to recall the EB, with effect two weeks later, at which time the Council would elect the new composition. She thanks members who had suggested amendments the circulated draft.

William Bly (Unit 23) suggested that candidates be nominated by a peer, which in itself would be a good show of support. Thomas Chacko (Unit 30) raised an objection to preliminary paragraph 7 which he felt was an editorial opinion. He felt there was no place for it in the resolution. He supported the objective or revitalising the EB, which could be achieved without subjective statements. Kenneth Rosario (Unit 39) expressed concern about the lack of precedent and also requested that the paragraph in question be removed. The proponent agreed to removing the controversial paragraph and pointed out that the Resolution did not exclude the possibility of nominations, which could be arranged on the week of the elections.

Kenneth Rosario asked the opinion of the incumbent EB members. The Secretary replied that he felt the EB was not living up to its potential because some members were not able to commit the full 45 hours of monthly time release. As stated in the Resolution, this was an important resource allocated to the Union as a whole, which we could not do without. Personally, he was not offended by the request to step down as long as the resolution resulted in a stronger and more active EB. The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer concurred.

María Renée Luque (Unit 19) requested evidence that the EB members who were not contributing enough hours had been contacted to remedy the situation before of replacing them.

The First Vice President said that in general she needed EB members to be available to support Leadership's work. Turning up to meetings was all good and well, but we needed people who could also do some work.

On a motion from the floor, the draft resolution was put to the vote with amendments to reflect the suggestions made in the course of the debate.

The resolution was adopted by 15 votes in favour with two against and no abstentions as RES/STC/45/49.

The EB was thus recalled but would remain in place until 15 November.

The meeting adjourned at 14:30