



36th UNOG Staff Coordinating Council 36^{ème} Conseil de coordination du personnel de l'ONUG

Draft minutes of the 6th meeting

held on 30 August 2018 at 1.15 p.m. in Room S4

Council members present: ALMARIO Francis, APOSTOLOV Mario, BALD Ian, BALLY Mohamed Chiraz, CHANTREL Dominique, CHAOUI Prisca, DUPARC Philippe, JAMES Elizabeth, KALOTAY Kalman, MEYER Olivier, NWABUOGU Gloria, PECK ARIF Catherine, POPA Gabriela, RICHARDS Ian, RUHANA-MUKAMUSONI Angelique, STANOVIC Marko, TAPORAIE Amos.

Council members absent: BEN AYED Slim, EL GARAH Samira, FUNCK Thomaz Samuel, GAZIYEV Jamshid, KELLY Paul, ROUAI Slim, SMITH Bradford, TOUIHRI Mohssen.

The meeting started at 1.20 p.m.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The draft agenda was adopted without changes.

2. Adoption of the minutes of the 5th meeting

The minutes of the 5th meeting were adopted with changes as recorded in the Council secretariat.

3. Report of the Finance Commission

The Council was briefed about the results of the meeting of the Finance Commission held on 27 August 2018, at which the FC decided to close three inactive bank accounts and consolidated into the main current account, which would save on bank charges. It was recalled that at least three candidates need to be nominated for the position of internal auditors as per the Council's Regulations, to be by-elected at a Council. The Council was also informed that a revision of the budget was recommended to reflect the fact that Swiss authorities levied a 25% tax on the contribution of SAFI to the Council, thus reducing such income line by 25%. The Council agreed on the above recommendations.

The question was raised as to the reason for Mr. Smith's absence from the referred FC meeting, and was informed that Mr. Smith had been invited but had to excuse himself as he was in session. It was further raised that the Benevolent Fund should receive funds from the Council, to which it was replied that the Fund so far had sufficient funds in its account for its current needs, but the Council would stand ready to look at contributing in the future if needed.

Council members asked why the Council had not contested the taxation of SAFI income. It was highlighted that tax was levied on SAFI as a Swiss association and it had contested the tax in its own name, where the case was still ongoing. A discussion on the status of SAFI ensued. As a point of order, it was pointed out that the item on the agenda was the Council's Finance Commission and budget, not SAFI. A suggestion was raised to add the status of SAFI to the agenda of the next Council meeting to allow time for preparing concrete proposals on the subject. The Council took note of his proposal.

4. Report of the Executive Bureau

The EB reported on its activities since the previous Council meeting, notably on the following subjects: (1) the pay cut campaign (the legal procedure following its course); (2) the situation of the Reference Unit, which will be ceased by the end of the biennium in 2019 (Ms. Chaoui and Mr. Mayer would follow up the case); (3) the 33rd General Assembly of CCISUA in Bangkok (29 May-1 June 2018) at which Mr. Baly, Mr. Richards, and Mr. Kalotay represented The Council with Mr. Silveira as rapporteur (its report will be distributed to Council members); (4) the ongoing harassment survey, initiated by UNOG and then carried out with the help of CCISUA at the global level (its results will be shared with Council members); (5) rumours of downsizing at the Medical Service; (6) downsizing at OCHA (a global townhall will be held on the subject); (7) miscellaneous questions such as the Garden Party (a big success), the revival of the UN Port, benches in the park, and the working group at SSS on tattoos (where a solution had been found).

A query was raised for information about the lawsuit against UN Special for allegedly unpaid wages, to which it was replied that the case had been dismissed by the Court.

5. Report on SMC

The Staff-Management Committee held its 7th session from 18 to 25 June in New York, where the Council was represented by Ms. Chaoui, Mr. Richards and Mr. Gaziyev. It was mentioned that UNOG had taken the lead of the discussion on two topics: temporary contract and staff rule amendments on conflict of interest (where UNOG proposals were accepted). Geneva delegates were also very active in other issues, such as the question of rules for flexible working arrangements, G to P career, GSDM and management reform. The final report of the SMC meeting will be distributed to Council members soon.

6. ICSC reform

The Council was reminded that CCISUA was taking the lead in the campaign for ICSC reform. In Geneva, the Council produced "ICSC Reform" pins that needed to be distributed widely at which Council members were invited to help, and a broadcast would be issued explaining the situation and new developments to staff. A discussion followed on the use of the funds earmarked for the campaign, where some members expressed their opinion that the Council had been able to exert influence on the pay cut issue (e.g. the pay cut became smaller than originally foreseen) and ICSC Reform. It was recalled Management had lately agreed to the need for ICSC reform. It was further said that given the strength of the forces against which staff had to fight, they can be proud of their actions.

7. GSDM and management reform

The Council discussed latest development related to GSDM and management reform. It was noted that both of them are in process, and there are many uncertainties surrounding their final concours. Representatives of the Council actively lobbied to mitigate the impacts of the former, for example drawing the attention of Francophone countries to the lack of French speaking locations on the short list. It was also noted that decision on GSDM will take place longer than originally foreseen, and that will also affect the timing of management reform (the latter can start later than originally planned). As for the potential impact of GSDM in Geneva, 46 posts have been identified as subject to elimination. The Council was working closely with Administration in finding solutions for the staff affected. According to most recent information from Ms. Myronenko, for most staff affected some solution has been found (re-training, cross-assignments etc.). There is still a need to set up a working group in Geneva to look at the question.

8. SHP

The Council recalled that, although the General Assembly decided to have flexible working arrangements, interpreted as hot desking, in the new building, it should seek all types of measures mitigating the negative impact on staff. Members evoked that in a recent broadcast, the Council referred to a Harvard study highlighting the perverse effects of hot desking, plus gathering more evidence by testing hot desking in La Dépendance building. In general, the Council agreed on its need to ensure that there are at least as many workplaces as people, reducing the stress of looking for empty slots, and to ask practical questions such as the implications of hot desking for IT services targeted to individual staff.

In the debate that ensued, it was noted that hot desking is mostly a political, and not a practical decision, and needs to be treated such a way. Caution was raised on the need to set priorities right since however bad hot desking is, it may be a lower priority than more dramatic developments such as staff losing their jobs or suffering harassment.

9. Pension Fund

The Council was briefed on the actions of staff representatives in the Pension Fund Board and recent developments at the Board meeting in July 2018 in Rome. Reference was made to governance problems of the Pension Fund and the OIOS report on this matter, which although refuted by the majority of the Board, staff representatives called for looking at them carefully. An argument was reiterated for Pension Fund reform, noting one of the obstacles is its unbalanced composition (where specialized agencies less interested in reform hold the majority of seats, although they represent only a minority of contributors). Issues raised included serious oversight and conflict of interest problems at the Fund, and a proposal to put it in a "no man's land" legal status by removing it from the purview of UNAT. Moreover, late payment of pensions was said to continue being a problem.

A question was raised as to what had happened to the re-election of the CEO, contested by staff representatives. It was replied that the majority of Board voted for an extension of three years of his mandate, instead of the five years originally proposed. However – it was said – since then he had been inactive and is expected to be replaced soon, noting other high-level managers who seemed to be on their way out due to various problems.

10. Council investments

The Council was reminded that new, concrete proposals for Council investments are still welcome, and that so far no decision on any project had been taken. Also, that a detailed briefing session on the potential investment in holiday apartments in France had been organized at which Council members were able to attend and ask their questions about all aspects of the project, noting many members were absent from that meeting.

A question was asked as to the legal basis for investment of Council funds, an argument raised that the funds should be spent on staff welfare instead of being invested, and reference was made to a recent staff survey of the Staff Alliance list that showed a negative opinion of the holiday apartments project. Further doubts were raised adding that a feasibility study of the latter was yet to be presented, and that spending on staff welfare meant more concrete things such as financing a gym or giving meal tickets to staff at the end-of-year staff gala. A debate ensued where it was highlighted that the mandate of the FC explicitly included investments. It was also highlighted that the briefing on the referred project already provided many elements on its financial feasibility, and the terms of reference of any investment project would include the need for serving the benefit of the staff. Some members also questioned the value of the Staff Alliance list survey (due to the limited number of responses), and found that in the past the same list did not fully exclude the possibility of investing of Council funds for the benefit of staff.

A motion was put to the floor for a nominative vote on organizing a Council survey on the chalet. The idea was refuted by the majority on the grounds that the Council cannot exclude another potential project before they are all listed in a comparable format. It was suggested to collect all detailed proposals and set them for comparison at a later stage.

11. SCC missions and duty travel

A proposal was raised for establishing a practice of submitting individual mission reports after each official mission on Council business. It was mentioned that meetings' reports were already available at the Council office, and in the case of the recent CCISUA and SMC meetings they would be distributed to Council members. It was further suggested that the planning for missions should also be discussed by the Council. A member was of the opinion that the suggestion was superfluous as the EB and the Council always discussed and approved future missions in advance. Note was taken of the proposals.

12. UN Children's Christmas Party 2018

The Council was reminded of a proposal by some members to reinstate a children's Christmas party and was invited to vote on it, warning that a third party would be asked to be involved if there was lack of support. A previous agreement was recalled whereby the submitters would first provide a detailed proposal, including a programme and a budget. Seeing the detailed information had not yet been provided, the Council would not take a decision on the matter.

13. Staff associations and sports groups

A request was raised to provide the Council with a detailed report on financial assistance so far provided to associations and clubs. It was recalled that all decisions on financial support followed the same transparent procedure, whereby the EB decided on a subsidy request and informed the Council, or referred the case directly to the Council depending on the amount; related information could be found in EB reports of the Council and the Council's Annual Report.

14. Joint Negotiating Committee

A request was raised to share the minutes of the last two meetings of the JNC to verify who asked for the closing of the Staff Alliance e-mail account. It was said the title of the agenda item under discussion was misleading as it should have been made clear that the discussion would be about the Staff Alliance e-mail matter. A discussion ensued in which it was asked to be noted in the minutes that the case was in the hands of the Arbitration Commission, whose job would be to establish the facts and judgment.

15. Any other business

No other business was raised.

The meeting ended at 3:05 p.m.