



31st UNOG Staff Coordinating Council 31e Conseil de coordination du personnel de l'ONUG

Minutes of the 4th meeting
held on 24 May 2013 at 2:00 p.m. in Room V

Present: Mr. Ian RICHARDS, Mr. Mohamed CHIRAZ BALY, Ms. Elizabeth JAMES, Mr. Jamshid GAZIYEV, Mr. John GILLIES, Ms. Catherine PECK-ARIF, Mr. Rajamani RAMASAMY, Mr. Mohssen TOUIHRI, Ms. Mounia ATIKI, Mr. Mohamed DOUMBOUYA FODE, Ms. Ginette RAKOTOBÉ, Ms. Dan LIN, Ms. Evelina RIOUKHINA, Mr. Zhongchao HUA, Mr. Ahmed GHAILAN, Mr. Vladislav CHOUVALOV, Mr. Nazir KOHEEALLEE, Mr. Marko STANOVIC.

The meeting started at 2:00 p.m.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted unanimously as reflected below.

2. Adoption of the minutes of the 3rd meeting of the 31st Council

The Council decided unanimously to adopt the minutes of the 2nd meeting with changes, reflected accordingly in the Council records.

3. Report of the Executive Bureau

The Executive Secretary, Mr. Mohamed Chiraz Baly, explained to the Council the different ideas discussed at the JNC on 15 May 2013: (1) Administration is studying the establishment of open work space areas; (2) Administration informed us it is in the process of drafting a new policy on Appendix B (working hours), which will be brought forth for consultations when finalized; (3) Messengers and colleagues from the Printing Section have been either relocated or sent on secondment to acquire further skills.

Mr. Baly also reported that the 28th CCISUA General Assembly organized by the Council can be considered as an absolute success, as noted by the thank you letter and testimonies received. Also, that Mr. Richards and him have attended the GFTU G.A. in representation of CCISUA, from 19 to 21 May 2013. It was explained as well that the Executive Bureau continues its efforts to gather all relevant documentation to proceed with the regularization of UN Special's assistant.

Following the E.B. report, Ms. Lin Dan asked why only 5 Bureau meetings had taken place in 3 months. Mr. Baly clarified that 6 meetings had already taken place, with a seventh scheduled for 27 May. Ms. Lin Dan also suggested that all relevant documents should be sent prior to meetings.

4. Staff-Management Committee (SMC)

Mr. Baly pointed out that the documents for the SMC still continue to arrive in batches, and that they would be circulated once all are received. The Executive Bureau puts to the consideration of the Council the addition of a third member to the Council's delegation to the SMC, Mr. Jamshid GaziyeV, to advise it on legal matters given his contributions in such area. A brainstorming session was encouraged to discuss the Council's position for the various topics.

It was pointed out that up to the present date the SMC agenda has not been forwarded to the Council members and that every piece of information should be transmitted to Council members as it is received. The Executive Secretary assured the Council that further

attempts will be made to get all the documents from Administration for distribution as soon as possible. It was also said that common positions must be established in advance in the Council. The position of the Council for the SMC was suggested to be put in writing but this was said to be unproductive because it would likely undermine the negotiation process. A meeting will be called for all Council members to discuss common positions.

Ms. Lin Dan proposed to the Council that Mr. Ahmed Ghailan is also included in the delegation on grounds of list representation. An argument was made to show that the diversity of the lists' points of view should be reflected in the delegation. On the other hand, it was suggested that a common, coordinated position may be more important than the names or the size of the delegation. Since the present discussion was the same as for the delegation to the 28th CCISUA General Assembly, it was argued that the same criteria should prevail and that those Council members who produced added value to the delegation may join it.

With 14 votes in favour, 3 abstentions and no votes against, **the Council approves the inclusion of Mr. Gaziyeu in the delegation**, which includes covering the respective financial costs.

With 5 votes in favour, 3 abstentions and 9 votes against, the Council does not approve the inclusion of Mr. Ghailan in the delegation.

5. Purchase of financial software

The Deputy Executive Secretary, Ms. Catherine Peck Arif, proposed the Council to purchase a financial software (CRESUS) for CHF 492 to make financial bookkeeping more IPSAS compliant. During the discussion, Mr. Rajamani Ramasamy argued that it is not known whether the new auditors will accept this new software. Also that the small frequency of the Council's financial transactions may not justify the purchase, and that the Financial Commission did not clear the software before coming to the Council.

Ms. Catherine Peck Arif explained that the Auditors have urged the Council to improve its compliance of financial practices with current best practices, which is the goal of acquiring the new software. The Council's Assistant, to ensure continuity and consistency in following Councils, will be trained to use it and input information. The implementation of the software will give the Financial Commission a tool to operate better, making accounts easy to manage and facilitate the auditing process. Mr. Ramasamy further commented that data entry from someone who is not a member of the Financial Commission may bring about a possible problem regarding responsibility for the report generated. Mr. Ahmed Ghailan requested more detailed information about the software, suggesting it is necessary to look carefully into it before a decision is taken.

With 14 votes in favour, 1 abstention and 1 votes against, **the Council approved the purchase of the CRESUS software.**

6. Situation of members of the Council who are not paying dues

The President of the Council, Mr. Ian Richards, encourages all of those Council members who are not yet dues paying members to become so, supported by Ms. Lin Dan.

7. Report on the Inter-Agency Games (IAG)

To the satisfaction of all Council members present, members of the UN Geneva Sports Commission exposed to the Council the achievements of the latest IAG 2013 held in Spain.

8. Cultural activities at the Beach Club

This agenda item was postponed for the next Council meeting.

9. Training at the GFTU

The Vice-president of the Council, Ms. Elizabeth James, reminded Council members that the catalogue of GFTU sponsored courses was distributed and that all concerned may communicate their interest in participating in the courses.

10. Situation of GPAFI

Ms. Peck Arif conveyed to the Council that UNOG Administration informed GPAFI that it should anticipate a decision to convert the contracts of the GPAFI staff into contracts governed by Swiss law. Contradictory information has also been received as to the possibility of GPAFI being able to remain within the Palais des Nations. The reasons for this sudden change have not yet been explained. During the discussion it was said that such actions may also have implications on other entities, i.e. the Mec, etc, and that this should not become a precedent for Administration to move out entities that give services to staff. Support from staff may be sought through a survey. **The Council unanimously decided to support that all necessary steps are taken accordingly.**

11. Update on efforts to have tax free pensions in Switzerland

The Council was briefed by Mr. Marko Stanovic on several facts: in general terms, the Host Country Agreement establishes UN salaries as tax exempt. Since 1952 they have been so recognized by Swiss courts. However regarding pensions, the "rule" that they are taxable is not explicit, and the UN has never expressly agreed to such thing. During the discussion some suggestions were made: (1) meet with OSG to clarify these points; (2) a legal case in Switzerland may need to be prepared; (3) counsel from the Director-General's legal advisor can be sought. It was noted that "staff assessment" is a form of indirect tax and that law professors may be better suited to approach this issue than a regular legal advisor. **The Council unanimously agreed to submit this matter to the DG's legal advisor to ask for his opinion and report it back to the Council.**

12. Update on the Memorial Association

Ms. Evelina Rioukhina briefed the Council on the Memorial Association initiative. She noted the difficulties it has faced. Solidarity has been shown world-wide by different staff associations, although no comments or reactions have been received from Administration in New York. **The Council unanimously decided to continue engaging with Administration and to address in writing the highest authorities in New York.**

13. Update on the running trail

Mr. Zhongchao Hua briefed the Council on the running trail initiative. Some proposals are being prepared: (1) To flatten a certain ground somewhere in the compound; (2) possibly build a separate road for runners in some areas; (3) purchase sportive outdoor equipment to be put along the running trail, and (4) to renovate certain staircases. An approximate budget for the project is thought to be between CHF 40'000 and CHF 50'000. UNOG Administration will require a feasibility study. Mr. Hua agreed to continue making preparations for the feasibility study.

The meeting ended at 5:00 p.m. according to article 2 (2) of the internal regulations.

The 4th meeting of the Council is reconvened for Thursday 30 May, at 2:00 p.m.

The items left for discussion are:

14. Report of the Financial Commission

15. Any other business