



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

Minutes of the 7th meeting

held on 8 November 2013 at 2:00 p.m. in Room XXVII

Council members present: Baly Mohamed Chiraz, Doumbouya-Fode Mohamed, Funck Thomaz Samuel, Gaziyevev Jamshid, Ghailan Ahmed, Hua Zhongchao, James Elizabeth, Koheeeallee Nazir, Lin Dan, Peck Arif Catherine, Richards Ian, Rioukhina Evelina, Stanovic Marko, Vilches Sandrine.

Guests: Sulstarova Astrid, Vignes Jacques.

The meeting started at 2:00 p.m.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted unanimously without changes as reflected below.

2. Adoption of the minutes of the 6th meeting of the 31st Council

The Council adopted unanimously the minutes of its 6th meeting, with changes as reflected in the Council's records.

3. Election of a member of the Financial Commission

With the presence of Mr. Astrid Sulstarova, President of Polling Board, Mr. Ian Richards called for nominations to elect a new member of the Financial Commission following the resignation of Mr. Rajamani Ramasamy from the FC. Ms. Elizabeth James nominated Ms. Sandrine Vilches given her background in finance, who accepted the nomination. Seeing no other nominations and no objections, Ms. Vilches was elected by acclamation.

Mr. Sulstarova left the meeting at this point.

4. Report of the Executive Bureau

Mr. Mohamed Chiraz Baly, Executive Secretary, reported to the Council on the work of the Executive Bureau since the Council's 6th meeting. Mr. Baly thus briefed the members present on the following: (a) actions taken to address issues in the Security section; (b) options to become a duly recognized Swiss union; (c) UN Day celebrations; (d) UN Special IAC meeting and renewed Editorial Board; (e) outstanding amounts owed to the Council; (f) purchase of Council flags as part of the visibility and communication strategy of the Council; (g) election of staff representatives for the UNOG rebuttal panel; (h) possible changes to the Swiss law on nationality under discussion at the Swiss Parliament; and (i) issues regarding new rules on French social security and its effect on Carte de Légitimation holders.

Regarding UN Special IAC meeting and renewed Editorial Board, Mr. Baly recognized the many years of hard and dedicated work of the outgoing Editor-in-Chief, Mr. Christian David. He suggested that an article could be submitted for the January edition of the magazine to publicly recognize and thank Mr. David for his efforts, and asked Ms. Evelina Rioukhina if she would be willing to write it. Also, Mr. Baly suggested to organize a small reception in the Council's offices in recognition of Mr. David. Ms. Rioukhina accepted and suggested that the article be based on an interview of Mr. David, which she agreed to try to organize. She also agreed to initiate the organization of the reception. The Council agreed to host such a reception, and approved a budget of CHF 500 for that purpose.

In order to fill the remaining position of Deputy Treasurer of UN Special, which as decided by the IAC is for the Council to elect, Mr. Baly called on the members present to bring forth nominations. Ms. Elizabeth James nominated Ms. Catherine Peck Arif given her background in finance, which she accepted. Seeing no other nominations and no objections, Ms. Peck Arif was elected by acclamation.

Concerning the purchase of Council flags as part of the visibility and communication strategy of the Council, the Council is asked to vote on the Executive Bureau's proposal to purchase three flags (containing the Council's logo in the centre) with their respective poles and bases for a total approximate amount of CHF 1.800. Ms. Rioukhina mentioned that flags may not be enough to potentiate the visibility of the Council and enquired on the possibility of having flyers and posters. Mr. Richards said that Ms. Lin Dan has kindly helped the Council in the past with the printing of flyers and posters, yet clarified that at the moment the proposal of the Executive Bureau is only for flags. Ms. Lin Dan also enquired about restrictions on using the UN logo. It was clarified that the flag will bear no UN symbols, but only the Council's, and therefore no prior approval from Administration is required. The Council approved the purchase of flags as proposed by the Executive Bureau.

Regarding options to become a duly recognized Swiss union, Mr. Baly said that the Executive Bureau will soon be having a fact-finding meeting a representative of the *Syndicat suisse des services publics*. He noted that liaising with national/external staff unions is a concern of federations grouping the different UN system organizations. Also, that contact with the global trade union federation *Public Services International* (PSI) is being established through CCISUA.

5. Legal cases and assistance

Mr. Baly informed the Council that Executive Bureau received a request for legal/financial assistance from a former staff member whom the Council has assisted in the past, which it endorses. This request comes in the context of a legal case pending before the UN Appeals Tribunal regarding a retaliation case on grounds of ethics, which is of general interest to all staff. The incumbent asks the Council to cover legal expenses for approximately CHF 3.000 (to be confirmed upon presentation of final bills) which were incurred for the transcription of court audio files to assist in the preparation of the case by the legal counsel.

A discussion followed where Ms. Lin Dan supported the request on moral grounds. Mr. Ghailan asked for clarification on whether the assistance required is based on legal costs for transcriptions of hearings exclusively, which was then confirmed and clarified that such work was undertaken by private individuals. Mr. Richards further clarified that the person would receive the assistance only after providing to the Council the final bills. Ms. Lin Dan referred to and suggested to apply the previous practice where staff members who received such assistance from the Council would refund it following an award of compensation. Mr. Richards noted, however, that such practice could not necessarily be applicable as it would depend on the actual amount awarded as compensation to the applicant.

Following a vote of 11 in favour and 3 abstentions, the Council approved the request of legal/financial assistance as presented and endorsed by the Executive Bureau for an approximate amount of CHF 3.000, provided that final bills are presented.

6. Training budget

Mr. Baly reminded the Council that the approved budget line for "Training" totals CHF 15.000, and informed that as it currently stands it is overspent by CHF 733. He also informed the Council that the Executive Bureau pre-approved a reallocation of CHF 10.000 from the "Solidarity assistance" budget line (originally approved for CHF 30.000) to the "Training" budget line, given that no expense is currently envisaged under the first. Thus, Mr. Baly asks the Council for its approval of such reallocation.

Mr. Richards noted that under IPSAS, funds that are not expected to be used should not be kept allocated, which in fact would mean the Council should close that budget line. Ms. Lin Dan expressed her non-support to such a closing. Ms. Rioukhina enquired about reports on trainings, to which it was said that the Executive Bureau receives all mission reports on a regular basis.

Mr. Stanovic informed the Council that he met with the Staff Counsellor's office and was told that the Benevolent Fund has not received financial means from the Council in the past two years. He mentioned he invited the representatives of the Benevolent Fund to the next Financial Commission meeting. Mr. Baly noted that in order for the Council to approve funds for the Benevolent Fund, an official request must be received.

Ms. Elizabeth James suggested to consider engaging with the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU) in order for them to provide trainers that would come to train the Council on specific topics, thus reducing training costs.

Following the discussion, a motion was brought up for the Council to vote on assigning CHF 10.000 for "Training", to be taken from non-allocated funds without affecting the approved "Solidarity assistance" budget line. The Council thus approved the motion by 10 votes in favour and 4 abstentions.

7. SMC update

Mr. Richards referred to the information shared with staff at the latest Townhall. He briefed the Council on how communication has been established with different national trade unions (mainly in the UK, Germany and the USA), who in turn are able to approach their governments directly. Several unions have shown their support to the cause of negotiating rights for staff in the UN. Mr. Richards noted that 17th November marks the anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the resolution which endorses the principles proclaimed in the Declaration of Philadelphia (1947). In that regard, actions will be taken to increase media coverage of this key date.

Mr. Jacques Vignes addressed the Council to inform that a letter of support was sent to the Secretary-General by the President of *Union syndical suisse*. He offered to continue engaging with delegates of governments at the ILO governing body to inform them the situation of UN staff and their withdrawn negotiating rights. Mr. Richards thanked him for his efforts.

Mr. Richards informed the Council that, in the context of General Assembly meetings in UNHQ, travel to New York is envisaged for him and Mr. Baly in order to meet stakeholders regarding issues of GA 5th Committee-related matters and others. The Council approved this mission for a maximum of ten days for each person, partially overlapping.

A discussion took place between the different members present. Further actions regarding SMC issues was suggested, with visibility and mobilisation of staff as crucial elements. The Council agreed to take action vis-à-vis upcoming key dates.

Mr. Baly noted that CCISUA has pledged USD 20.000 for SMC-related action, as well as UNOV between EUR 10.000 and 15.000, to serve as payment of related bills.

It was noted that a Council-sponsored Human Rights Day event on 10 December 2013 was held, where representatives of Geneva-based and international trade union and staff associations addressed UN staff in support of their rights.

8. Any other business

No other business was brought up to the floor.

The meeting ended at 3:50 p.m.