



33rd UNOG Staff Coordinating Council 33^e Conseil de coordination du personnel de l'ONUG

Minutes of the 4th meeting

held on 18 May 2015 at 1:15 p.m. in Room XXVII

Council members present: ALMARIO Francis, APOSTOLOV Mario, ASFAW Tensai, BALY Mohamed Chiraz, CHANTREL Dominique, CHAOUI Prisca, DOUMBOUYA-FODE Mohamed, EL GARAH Samira, FUNCK-THOMAZ Samuel, GAZIYEV Jamshid, KALOTAY Kalman, KONE David, NWABUOGU Gloria, PECK ARIF Catherine, POPA Gabriela, RICHARDS Ian, ROUAI Slim, SHAMSIE Syed, STANOVIC Marko, TOUIHRI Mohssen, VILCHES Sandrine.

Council members absent: ATIKI Mounia, JAMES Elizabeth, KELLY Paul, NOBLAT-PIANTA Virginie.

The meeting started at 1:25 p.m.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes as reflected below.

2. Adoption of the minutes of the 3rd meeting

The minutes of the 3rd meeting were adopted without changes as reflected in the Council's records.

3. Report of the Executive Bureau

The Executive Secretary (ES), Mr. Ian Richards (IR), briefed the Council on the activities of the Executive Bureau (EB) since the previous Council meeting, of which details can be found in the EB adopted minutes. Items of discussion included: recent Children's Spring Party, the Joint Negotiating Committee's latest meeting, meetings on the Strategic Heritage Plan, and the rotation policy in Security.

4. Proposal to revoke the mandate of the Vice-President

A proposal signed by 19 Council members was submitted to the Council calling for a vote on the revocation of the Vice-President's mandate. All relevant documents were submitted to the Council as prescribed by its Regulations and Internal Rules on 7 May 2015. The Council deemed unfortunate that the situation had come to this point despite efforts to mediate and resolve the situation. The following facts were presented:

- (1) The proposal refers to a memorandum issued by the ECE Executive Secretary (ECE-ES) dated 2 April 2015 and made public to all ECE staff, whereby the Vice-President (VP) was granted a release of 50% from her official work functions – meaning an additional 30% over the 20% release prescribed by relevant UN regulations (A/C.5/50/64, ST/SGB/274 and ST/AI/293).
- (2) The mentioned memorandum was the result of discussions between the VP and ECE Management, with several parties involved.
- (3) At no time did the VP formally bring to the attention of the EB or the Council that she sought additional time release from the prescribed 20%, nor that she was offered said additional time release.
- (4) As part of the justification for the additional release, the ECE memorandum lists a number of responsibilities that the VP ostensibly carries out; however, several of those include responsibilities of the Council as a whole.
- (5) Following the public circulation of the memorandum, the ES advised the VP through an email exchange and meetings to decline the additional 30% time release. Other Council members advised her similarly. The VP ignored this advice and instead publicly accepted the offer, replying to the ECE-ES in copy once again to the entire ECE staff.

- (6) An informal meeting between some Council members and the VP was held following the 4th EB meeting in an attempt to mediate and explain to the VP the reasons why the additional time release offer was unacceptable and the resignation of the VP was discussed as a possible solution. This resignation could have served as a reason for the VP to forgo the offer of additional time release that she had already accepted. The VP did not take into account this advice but rather sent out emails accusing them of bullying and harassment.
- (7) A formal EB meeting was held on 27 April 2015 to discuss the issue. The VP declined to attend that meeting thus making impossible any meaningful discussion with her within the Council's structures. The EB agreed to the fact that a negotiation was conducted by the VP in order to obtain said additional time release. It had also agreed to reject that arrangement and to recommend to the Council the revocation of the mandate of the VP. Following this, a request to hold the vote on revocation was made.

During the Council meeting, several members regretted the fact that the VP had declined to attend the present meeting and thus the Council did not have an opportunity to hear directly from her. It was noted how regrettable and difficult it was for the Council members to discuss this revocation issue. It was highlighted that the proposal did not relate to the person of the VP, who is known for her contributions in advancing staff issues in general and particularly in ECE, but rather to her persistent refusal to decline the additional release, which had given her, and by extension the Council as a whole, a bad reputation.

IR noted that whoever holds the position of VP has a time release of 20% as per the General Assembly resolution and that if the staff member or Management seeks to go beyond this threshold, this would be against that resolution. He added that the VP had had numerous opportunities to turn down the additional time release, yet had never once done so despite her various all-staff emails. He clarified that in previous communications to ECE Management, he had never requested release for the VP of more than 20%.

Several Council members expressed their view that staff representatives should refrain from negotiating any special treatment with Management, as this goes against the responsibility and ethics of any staff representative, which is to defend staff rights before management.

The President proceeded to a vote on the proposal by show of hands. With 17 votes in favour, 0 against and 3 abstentions, the Council adopted the proposal, and thus revoked the mandate of the Vice-President as per Article 9.6 of its Regulations and Article 15 of its Internal Rules. It was clarified that the vote revokes the office of the VP and not membership of the Council.

It is to be noted that one member of the Council joined the meeting after the closure of the voting procedure and stated that if present they would have also voted in favour of the proposal.

Discussion on the subject continued after voting.

A member inquired on the earlier 2014 agreement for 50% release and whether it was known to other Council members. It was pointed out that at no point the Council was aware of a 50% release during the 2014-2015 period, otherwise it would have taken action. The ES clarified that in 2014 he had sent a memorandum to ECE Management requesting 20% release for the former VP which listed various tasks on which she might take the lead or assist. It may be on that basis that some informal arrangement was made between the former VP and ECE's hierarchy to grant her a 50% time release. The ES continued to explain that in March 2015, he learned from the former VP that she was preparing a draft memorandum with the ECE-ES to establish a formal agreement of 50% time release. He advised against the arrangement. She nevertheless insisted on the arrangement. As soon as the ECE memorandum was issued, he once again advised her against it and asked her to immediately decline the offer.

It was added that as a matter of principle, staff representatives cannot negotiate time release with Management without the knowledge of the Executive Bureau and the Council. It may well be that a staff representative works on Council-related business 50% or more of his/her time, but he/she does not have that right to independently negotiate additional time release as this is unethical.

It was also regretted that the former VP, throughout the discussions held in the previous weeks, has unfortunately maligned her Council colleagues with false accusations of bullying, intimidation, harassment, which is a great disservice to her colleagues and the staff members, in general. She had unfortunately, refused at all times to heed the advice of Council colleagues and remained intractable in resolving the situation.

5. Collection for Nepal

CPA informed the Council that, as of the morning of 18 May 2015, the recent collection organized by staff under the auspices of the Council in favour of the victims of the recent Nepal earthquake raised CHF 23'339.32. The identified beneficiaries are the organizations *Médecins sans frontières* and the *Nepalese Red Cross*. A proposal is therefore presented to the Council to make a contribution that matches the collected amount, as per usual practice. The Council agreed to the above proposal.

6. Outdoor sports facilities

IR informed the Council that following UNOG's outstanding participation in the recent Inter-Agency Games, this brought up the fact that there are sportive disciplines practiced by staff for which there is no adequate space to practice. Following feedback from various clubs and staff, a proposal is therefore presented to the Council to approve funding for the creation of an outdoor gravel/sand surface next to Villa La Pelouse to allow for table tennis, pétanque, and other sports practiced by staff. IR said that exact quotes are yet to be provided but preliminary talks with the gardeners service show that amounts of CHF 3'000 to CHF 4'000 can be expected. The Council approved the above funding, as per the quotes that shall be provided.

7. Renovation of the breastfeeding room

PC noted the renovation of furniture in the breastfeeding room that the Council began when it approved the purchase of a sofa in its previous meeting. She informed that an on-site verification by Executive Bureau members showed the poor state of the current fridges in that room. A proposal is therefore brought up to the floor to approve the purchase of a new fridge for the breastfeeding room up to CHF 500. A brief discussion followed. The Council approved the above proposal.

8. CCISUA General Assembly

IR reminded the Council that the CCISUA General Assembly is scheduled for 29 June – 3 July 2015 in Bangkok. Several important issues are to be discussed, including personnel policy in Security and ICSC compensation review. Given the Council's decision to revoke the mandate of Vice-President, a proposal is brought up to the floor to recompose the Council's delegation to the CCISUA GA. In that sense, following a brief deliberation, the Council agreed that whoever results elected Vice-President, should integrate the delegation in lieu of the revoked Vice-President. Said delegation is therefore composed as follows: Mr. Ian Richards, Mr. Mohamed Chiraz Baly, Mr. Jamshid Gaziyeu, plus the to-be-elected Vice-President.

9. Celebration of the UN 70th anniversary

CPA explained to the Council the concept of the outdoor celebration of staff on the UN 70th anniversary- to be held on 26 June which corresponds with the date of the signing of the Charter. An indoor option is also being reviewed in case the weather is prohibitive for outdoors. The food and drinks are to be provided by Eldora, with the collaboration of the Council in providing outdoor cover, installation/transportation. The Council would also provide decorations alluding to the occasion. Food costs would be minimized as staff will be able to purchase their meals from Eldora in the cafeteria and bring it themselves. IR added that since the UN reflects a global village, that is the concept to be portrayed with this celebration. Following a brief discussion the Council approved to allocate up to CHF 15'000 for the UN 70th anniversary staff celebration.

10. Any other business

- SR recalled the importance of actively helping staff with UN procedures and rules when they have contractual or other work-related issues, especially informing them of their rights and due process, and the availability of resources such as OSLA. A brief discussion followed. MA encouraged the Council to keep in mind and exhort the application of labour rights provided in the ILO conventions.

The meeting closed at 2:50 p.m.