35th UNOG Staff Coordinating Council
35ème Conseil de coordination du personnel de l'ONUG

Draft minutes of the 11th meeting

held on 18 January 2018 at 1:30 p.m. in Room IX

Council members present: ALMARIO Francis, APOSTOLOV Mario, BALY Mohamed, BEN AYED Slim, CHANTREL Dominique, CHAOUI Prisca, GAZIYEV Jamshid, KALOTAY Kalman, KELLY Paul, NWABUOGU Gloria, PECK ARIF Catherine, POPA Gabriela, RICHARDS Ian, STANOVIC Marko, TAPORAIE Amos, VESTERMAN Claire.

Council members absent: ALMEIDA Patricia, ASFAW Tensai, FEGLI Catherine, FUNCK Samuel, JAMES Elizabeth, MELLET Johnny, NOBLAT-PIANTA Virginie, ROUAI Slim, TOUHIRI Mohssen.

The meeting opened at 1:35 p.m.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted with changes as reflected below.

2. Adoption of the minutes of the 10th meeting

The minutes of the 10th meeting were adopted without changes as recorded at the Council's secretariat.

3. Report of the Finance Commission

The Council was informed that the CCISUA receivable had been collected at the end of November 2017, and that there were discussions with CCISUA on how to cover the bank foreign exchange charges that had been imposed.

The Council was also informed that the external auditors were in the process of conducting their review of the accounts and would issue their report before the upcoming staff General Assembly.

The Finance Commission recommended to the Council to look into investing Council reserves (on which the discussion followed under a separate item below).

4. Report of the Executive Bureau

The Executive Secretary reported to the Council plenary on the work and discussions of the EB since the 10th meeting on items not set for separate discussion under agenda items below. This included:

- Long service medal awards ceremony, scheduled for 13 February 2018, noting 25+, 30+ and 35+ years of service will be recognized;
- New retirement age at 65, where staff with acquired rights of retiring earlier will be able to maintain them, on which subject a townhall meeting was scheduled for the following week;
- The Catering Committee, at which it was accepted that those with prepaid cards may have a discount at the cafeteria;
- Issues on parental leave, on which a townhall was held in December 2017 with all staff and a subject which will be discussed at the ad-hoc SMC in February;
- The issue of sexual harassment to be discussed with Management under the broader issue of harassment.

5. SMC delegation

The Council was reminded that the upcoming ad-hoc SMC will take place on the week of 5 February, and that due to the very important issues to be discussed mainly management reform, the EB had recommended ensuring a strong presence by increasing the delegation of the Council to three staff representatives – the cost of two of them being borne by the Administration and the third by the Council. The Council agreed.

6. UN Port

The Council recalled that important improvements are required on the children's water playground at UN Port to ensure health and safety, and that it had already agreed in principle on an expenditure of up to CHF 60'000 for that purpose. Following said agreement, the Council was informed that several companies were invited for bids of which two presented a quote, and a third one declined as it would require to engage an architect for the project which would render the latter prohibitive due to augmented costs (as Council members had already been informed via email). The EB recommended to the Council to select the quote from the company Aqua-Piscine for CHF 59'990.08, as it held more value-for-money than the alternative. The Council agreed with the EB's recommendation and approved said expenditure.

7. UN budget

The Council recalled that a draft budget had been looked at during December which included alarming cuts affecting all staff. It was noted that a CCISUA delegation led by Mr. Richards travelled to NY and met with delegations to show why cuts would hurt what Member States feel is important in the UN such as multilingualism, and harm programme efficiency. The Council noted with satisfaction that the actual adopted UN budget for the 2018-2019 biennium did not contain such cuts and that impact on staff was kept at a minimum with no posts cut in Geneva, yet regretting certain post cuts in the Division of Management in New York.

8. GSDM

The Council noted that GSDM's focus is mainly on delocalization and centralization, and that at this stage the Administration is looking at how to implement it and where to install service centres. It was said that the working group on GSDM is looking at measures that can protect staff throughout the process, which may include extending external hiring freeze from G4 to G7, investing in training and skill building, allowing the redeployment of GS staff to other duty stations and offering "farewell packages".

A proposal was raised to engage a consultant to conduct a study that would look into whether Administration's reasons for GSDM are sound, the broader impact of the project, and the effects of certain issues with Umoja. It was also said that such study could also look at technology as an alternative to GSDM without it necessarily affecting number of posts thanks to attrition. Concerns were raised about the need for a discussion on the specifics of the terms of reference of the consultant before moving forward with the initiative – discussions which could be held at the Council's following meeting. It was counter argued that the timeline was pressing; the GA will decide on GSDM in May 2018 which required such study to be ready by March. Following a discussion, the Council agreed on an expenditure of up to CHF 15'000 for the abovementioned study, for which it delegated on the EB the elaboration of the TOR due to the time constraints.

9. SHP

The Council recalled the GA's decision to implement "flexible work space" in the new building, which meant a ratio of 4 places per 5 staff. However, this is implemented based on projections that may not necessarily prove accurate, mainly because the Gensler study may be questionable and because the Administration still does not have a definitive number of staff being brought to the Palais, thus – the Council noted – incertitude remains. The Council also noted that Management had requested additional funds to also install FWS in the older buildings (mainly to install the acclimatisation that would be required and tear down walls), but this was refused and therefore FWS will not be installed in the older buildings. This was noted to be so thanks in great measure to the lobbying of staff at the GA. Ideally – it was said – departments with more operational tasks would remain in the old buildings whilst those with work that is more intellectual would move to the new one. A discussion followed on the implications for several departments.

Concerning clubs, they were noted to be satisfied with the space that SHP will allocate to their various activities, which includes a gym.

Council members were informed that the SHP team has been asked to communicate clearly to staff where the project stands, and to ensure that every department is involved in the decisions that concern them individually. It was said that at the SMC level a working group was put in place to discuss all renovation projects in all duty stations, and it is putting in place general principles to respect in that regard. Finally, it was recalled that SAFI is expected to be moved to a new location in the E building.

10. Pay cut

The Council recalled that the final percentage of the pay cut derived from the ICSC will be known precisely by mid-February, also taking into account that the remuneration for United States civil servants in Washington D.C. is currently under review, which may affect positively UN staff. It also recalled a recent UNDT judgment where acquired rights of staff were upheld vis-à-vis the latest review of salaries and remuneration of staff in the P category, which may support to the staff case against the pay cut.

Regarding next steps, the Council was informed that legal measures will be taken in February once the pay cut is finally implemented, for which the Council will continue to engage an external lawyer as it has done so far on the matter. It was clarified that all new P staff arriving since August had been put on a scale that was approximately 4% below current pay but that they would get a pay rise in February, bringing them to the same level as all other staff.

11. Auditors

The Council noted that only two internal auditors were identified, and that Regulations require the Council to appoint at least a third one. Following his nomination, Mr. Hamed El Kady was appointed internal auditor without opposition. It was recalled that although the Council had agreed to carry out an external audit for the 2016-2017 financial year, the EB had recommended to ask the internal auditors to carry out their review as mandated by the Regulations.

12. Crèche

It was called to mind that currently CHF 1.6 million reserves had been set aside for the crèche project, which has been under study and preparations since 2012. The Council then briefly recalled the evolution of the project until the present date: a high demand from staff had been identified and a number of feasibility studies carried out, yet after discussions with the Administration it was not possible to build a crèche inside the Palais; efforts to acquire rights on an external crèche were unfruitful; eventually the Administration invited the Council to re-explore the possibility of having the crèche on Palais grounds, at which time different land proposals were looked at, yet security issues and building costs associated to them were prohibitively high.

The Council was informed of the EB’s disappointment, as the project always found a fundamental obstacle and it felt the Administration had never been truly clear about its intentions on the matter. It was mentioned that there may be a possibility for the international school to incorporate a crèche in the context of SHP.

Mr. Kelly left the meeting at this point.

Following deliberation, <u>the Council agreed to close the crèche project</u>, noting that any use of the earmarked reserves had to be focused on staff welfare, taking into account the need to diversify income foreseeing a possible reduction of income from SAFI in the next few years. A suggestion was made to move the reserves to the MEC in the meantime, where it could earn the Council a higher return. Another suggestion was made to set up a working group that would look into investment options. <u>The Council agreed to set up a Working Group on Investments</u>, tasked with analysing investment possibilities under the criteria of staff welfare, diversification of income and passive management.

13. Referendum

The Council was presented with a proposal to hold a referendum amongst staff to increase the mandate of elected Council members to two years (applicable to the following Council), with the purpose of avoiding the disruption that an election every year entails in its work programme – which harms the Council’s ability to plan in the long term, bringing the Council in line with other staff unions. Counter arguments to the proposal were also raised, in that it was in the interest of staff to keep the term at 1 year as staff could thus vote every year on the Council's performance, and that such term does not thwart the Council's capacity to plan in the long term.

Mr. Stanovic and Mr. Taporaie left the meeting, at which point quorum was lost.

14. General Assembly

Item not discussed due to lack of quorum.

15. Any other business

Item not discussed due to lack of quorum.

The meeting closed at 3:10 p.m.