



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

Minutes of the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting  
held on 19 September 2013 at 2:00 p.m. in Room XII

**Present:** Ian Richards, Mohamed Chiraz Baly, Elizabeth James, John Gillies, David Koné, Catherine Peck-Arif, Rajamani Ramasamy, Mounia Atiki, Syed Shamsie, Gloria Nwabuogu, Slim Rouai, Dan Lin, Zhongchao Hua, Ahmed Ghailan, Vladislav Chouvalov, Marko Stanovic, Mohamed Doumbouya-Fode, Samuel Funck Thomaz.

*The meeting started at 2:00 p.m.*

### **1. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted unanimously without changes as reflected below.

### **2. 1 minute of silence following the recent passing of the previous Vice-president of the SCC Mr. Abdelkader Boubakeur**

1 minute of silence was observed by all Council members present.

### **3. Adoption of the minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the 31<sup>st</sup> Council**

The Council decided unanimously to adopt the minutes of its 5<sup>th</sup> meeting without changes.

### **4. Report of the Executive Bureau**

The Executive Secretary, Mr. Mohamed Chiraz Baly, reported to the Council on the different activities and actions taken by the Executive Bureau since the previous Council meeting, as can be observed in detail in the minutes of the Executive Bureau which were made available to the Council. Regarding the Children's party, Mr. Marko Stanovic inquired on the possibility of using a different room in the Palais for that event, given that the usual room used for it which is the Assembly Hall will be closed for renovations. It was clarified that the Assembly Hall is the only suitable room and therefore the best course of action is to postpone the Children's party until Easter 2014. Mr. Ramasamy noted there would be two Children's parties in 2014, the one carried forward from 2013 plus the regularly scheduled Children's party of 2014. He also suggested to look into the Host Country agreement and relevant treaties regarding the UN insurance issue to be discussed at the upcoming JNC meeting. Ms. Lin Dan made reference to the hiring of a consultant and company bid, pointing out that while the Council follows its own regulations, UN internal rules and regulations may provide a good reference to carry out such processes and the Council may act properly by following them.

### **5. Photo opportunity**

The President, Mr. Ian Richards, invited the Council members present to pose for a group photo holding banners, to be used in the campaign to reinstate UN staff negotiate rights. While some Council members supported the initiative agreeing that it is important to show support in a graphic way and reiterate the Council's position, other members cautioned about the content of the banners and how and whether the photo would really achieve the desired purpose. Following the discussion, any Council member who wished not to appear in the photo had the chance to abstain from doing so. Two Council members excused themselves.

Mr. Ghailan left the meeting after the photo opportunity.

## **6. SMC issues**

Mr. Richards briefed the Council on recent SMC issues events and actions taken since the previous Council meeting. Among those were: legal cases presented before MEU for Management Evaluation and further legal action; Memorial Service to commemorate the attack on UN premises in Bagdad in 2003, where compelling statements regarding the link between staff rights and security were delivered and had significant media coverage; attendance to TUC Congress in the U.K. on which a mission report was circulated to Council members; upcoming Leadership Summit of UN staff unions to be held in New York, where further strategy on staff-Management relations will be decided. Mr. Baly made reference to an earlier meeting with the ILO Staff Union, where a discussion took place on several possible actions to take given that said Union has relevant experience.

A discussion followed, where inquiries were made about the strategy to be adopted. Ms. James mentioned certain actions as reflected in the TUC Congress mission report. Several Council members congratulated the President on the strategy and made remarks such as the need for a roadmap, collective good will, a common voice and common use of resources. A former Executive Secretary (retired, guest at the meeting) Mr. Jaques Vignes, argued in favour of addressing a complaint to Member States through the channels of the ILO.

Mr. Richards commented that the current focus is to target those people with power of decision, along with those with interest but no such power, and those with influence on the people with power of decision. Key messages and how to deliver them are being studied and decided among UN staff unions. He said the idea is to share costs between unions, so richer ones are being asked to contribute accordingly.

Ms. Lin Dan then left the meeting.

## **7. UN Day (medals ceremony, clubs)**

Mr. Baly informed the Council that requests have been received from staff members to hold a commemorative ceremony for staff who have been working over 25 and 30 years in the UN where medals are to be awarded accordingly, as done in recent years. This event would take place on UN Day (24 October) along with an exhibition of clubs where staff members can have the opportunity to meet and interact with club organizers/members. Preparations thus require financial approval from the Council since it was not originally budgeted. The amount expected to cover the purchase of the medals is CHF 10.000, plus CHF 5.000 for a cake for all personnel and CHF 5.000 for refreshments at the expo-clubs.

Mr. Ramasamy pointed out that during the previous commemorative ceremony the actual expenditure surpassed the budgeted amount (which was less), therefore a total of CHF 20.000 seemed reasonable. He also inquired about the possibility of returning unused medals to the manufacturer if any were left on stock after the event. Mr. Baly said the idea of keeping the extra stock was for staff members who do not attend the ceremony but as experienced showed come later on to the Council requesting their medals. The Council approved unanimously a budget line of up to CHF 20.000, as distributed above.

## **8. Chinese earthquake fund**

Ms. Peck Arif informed the Council that following the initiative of two interns, the Council sponsored a collection on 17 May in benefit of a project in China for the victims of the Ya'an earthquake. This project is administered by a Chinese NGO, which has been looked at and seems to be a rightfully established organisation. The collection amounted to CHF 902.80. The Council is requested authorization to release such funds, considering the past practice where the Council contributed by doubling the amount collected. Following brief arguments of Council members in favour, the Council unanimously approved a contribution of CHF 2000.

## 9. Dues-paying members and revision of membership amount

Mr. Baly requested approval from the Council to increase the amount to CHF 10 regardless of staff category. This takes into account inflation and the objective of non-discrimination between categories. Mr. Richards mentioned CHF 10 is still very economic compared to other Unions in the international, public and private sectors. A discussion followed where it was highlighted some benefits received by dues-paying members. A suggestion by Mr. Gillies called for augmenting the proposed increase of CHF 10 (up to possibly CHF 20 to CHF 30) considering it still a very low amount. Mr. Stanovic argued against increasing the monthly dues since it may prove to be counterintuitive and inappropriate as the Council may not be in need of extra income from its dues-paying members, and funds remain available in the Council's bank accounts. He recommended lowering the current lowest amount, i.e. \$5 for all dues-paying members. Following further exchange of comments on whether the increase may be beneficial or not, the Council voted to approve the increase to CHF 10 by 14 votes in favour and 1 vote against.

Mr. Zhongchao Hua left the meeting halfway through the discussion on this item.

## 10. Report of the Financial Commission

- The Treasurer, Mr. Ramasamy, briefed the Council on the recent movement of funds between accounts approved by the Executive Bureau, including CHF 400.000 to be moved to the "Crèche" account as an earmarked expenditure subject to Council clearance.
- He informed the Council on the new guidelines for the granting of financial support to clubs, which have been already preapproved by the Financial Commission and Executive Bureau, and are now subject to the approval of the Council.
- Mr. Ramasamy acknowledged receipt of the 2012 Audit Report, not having yet the opportunity to meet with the auditors to review their observations, which will happen at a meeting soon to be convened. The report will be made available to all staff following said meeting.
- He mentioned that a survey on the satisfaction of staff members with services provided by UBS is currently being prepared by him.

Mr. Stanovic supported the idea of seeking the opinion of staff on UBS services and observed as important to discuss with UBS the financial charges billed to the Council for its operations. Mr. Richards took note of the comments and suggested the constitution of a Working Group on bank services led by Mr. Ramasamy.

The Council unanimously accepted the 2012 Audit Report.

The Council unanimously approved the new guidelines for financial support to clubs.

The Council unanimously agreed to delegate in the Financial Commission the power to approve individual grants to clubs, following the previously approved guidelines, for the same amount as delegated by the 30<sup>th</sup> Council of CHF 3.000, over which Council approval shall be sought.

## 11. Any other business

- The Council unanimously approved to allocate a ceiling of CHF 5.000 to the development of a more interactive website for the SCC.
- Mr. John Gillies remarked the importance of keeping a close relation and working together with other international staff unions.
- Mr. Baly reminded the Council that training is available to all interested members (International Administrative Law conference, UNITAR courses, etc.) who are encouraged to apply. He mentioned that those interested should register using their own credit card -as the Council does not have a corporate card- then inform the Executive Bureau and submit the receipt for reimbursement.

- Mr. Ramasamy left the meeting at this point.
- Mr. Stanovic brought the Council to the attention of a former staff member and the possibility of a financial aid to the person. He mentioned that the case had already been brought to the attention of the Executive Bureau. Mr. Baly reminded Mr. Stanovic of the agreement reached along with him at a previous E.B. meeting that the person concerned should approach the Benevolent Fund for assistance or that Mr. Stanovic could organize a collection but on a personal basis, not on a Council's decision. Mr. Stanovic stated that he was worried that a collection would not raise enough funds. Mr. Baly said that a collection was purely on a voluntary basis and that anything collected would be the amount chosen by each person to donate. Mr. Stanovic then suggested for the Council to double the amount raised in said collection as was done in the current meeting for the Ya'an earthquake collection. Mr. Baly replied that the Council only does this for humanitarian disasters and not individuals.

*The meeting ended at 4:15 p.m.*