



30th UNOG Staff Coordinating Council 30ème Conseil de coordination du personnel de l'ONUG

Minutes of the 8th meeting
Held on 11 January 2013 at 2 p.m. in Room 9

Present: Council members: Nazir Kohealtee, Gloria Nwabuogu, Mohamed Doumbouya-Fode, Marko Stanovic, Ian Richards, Mohamed Chiraz Baly, Rajamani Ramasamy, Elizabeth James, Maria Jose Orellana, Ahmed Ghailan, Kerstin Meister, Mohssen Touihri, Vladislav Chouvalov.

Non-Council members: Serguei Kouzmine, UNECE Sectoral Assembly

The meeting started at 2:20 p.m.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted with the addition of the following points:

- Legal case
- Collaboration with UNITAR staff representatives
- Training

2. Adoption of the minutes from the 7th meeting of the 30th Council

The minutes were adopted unanimously.

3. Report of the Executive Bureau

• Joint Negotiation Committee (JNC)

The Executive Bureau engaged in discussions with Administration in the context of a Joint Negotiation Committee, which materialized in two consecutive meetings (20.12.2012 and 03.01.2013). The topics of this JNC were the following:

- *Budget cuts:* the Executive Bureau is actively working to ensure that all possible steps are being taken to safeguard the interests of those staff members whose posts are affected vis-à-vis upcoming budget cuts.

- *General Service hiring freeze:* the Executive Bureau supports and encourages the application of a general service external hiring freeze, particularly in the context of Geneva, as a measure to provide better chances of relocation to other posts to those staff members affected by budget cuts.

- *Inter-agency games 2013:* the Executive Bureau continues to advocate for the right of those staff members who are organizing the Inter-agency games 2013 to be entitled to release that would allow them to take the proper time to organize such event.

- *Crèche:* the Executive Bureau advances in the planning and organizing of the crèche project. The location where it is to be built and service connections are currently being discussed with Management. The latter has proposed several locations within UN grounds and it is still waiting to receive confirmation from HQNY as to whether the crèche will be considered a UN activity.

• UBS Shares

As delegated by the Council during its 7th meeting, the Executive Bureau is currently undertaking the process of liquidating its holdings of UBS shares.

- Council's pro rata contribution to the staff representatives' elections to the United Nations Staff Pension Committee (UNJSPF)

The pro rata cost for the UNJSPF staff representatives' elections held during December 2012 that corresponds to Geneva (the Council) is approximately 12% of the total cost. **The Council approves unanimously a contribution between CHF 2'000 and CHF 3'000.**

- Asset inventory of the Council

The asset inventory of the Council, updated as of 31.12.2012, was submitted to the EB for their review and record.

- Farewell event of David Winch

As approved by the Council during its 7th meeting, the Executive Bureau is currently organizing a farewell event for Mr. David Winch with a maximum budget of CHF 500.

- Secretary-General Townhall meeting

(See point 10.)

4. **UN Special Interagency Committee (IAC)**

The draft new statutes of the UN Special magazine, as drafted and agreed upon by the UN Special Intersessional IAC, are submitted for approval to the Council. This draft improves the current statutes by introducing the following:

- More clarity;
- Code of ethics;
- Financial authorizations;
- Co-deputy Editor.

Different suggestions were raised during the discussion that followed the presentation of the draft, particularly (a) to make the contractual relation with the publisher subject to performance, (b) to have the articles of the magazine be preapproved by both UNOG and WHO staff councils before they are published, (c) to have the translated language of any article (either English or French) be published in the Intranet; (d) to take into consideration the points of view and possible contributions of the current editors; and (e) to include in article 2.13: "However it may be organised following the annual meeting should the sponsoring associations agree to it".

It was clarified that the draft statutes introduce certain improvements but essentially retains the structure and spirit of the current one. The article regarding the contractual relation with the publisher remains unchanged, still allowing the possibility, regardless of the reasons or timing, to revise the relation with the publisher. It was noted that there should be a balance between the content control of the articles and the editorial freedom of the editors, in order for the UN Special Interagency Committee not to become a censor of information; regulations regarding specific sensitive content remains in place in the draft statutes. It was remarked that language issues may be raised in the context of the Intersessional IAC, acknowledging the right of interviewed persons to have their interviews be published in the original language of the interview. It was made clear that the present draft is the result of a discussion during the Intersessional IAC and was submitted to the Editor for comments.

The Council agreed unanimously to add the following phrase in article 2.13: “However it may be organised following the annual meeting should the sponsoring associations agree to it”.

The Council approved the draft UN Special Statutes by 12 votes *in favour* and 1 vote *against*.

5. Purchase of new ballot boxes for the polling boards

The Council unanimously approved a budget of CHF 1300 to purchase 5 new ballot boxes.

As the Polling Board is an entirely separate entity from the Council, **the Council has agreed such entity must be the one responsible for holding these boxes in their stocks.**

6. Organization of the Annual General Assembly

The Council has unanimously agreed to call for the Ordinary General Assembly on Monday 28 January 2013.

7. Legal case

The Council received a request for monetary contribution to a staff member to cover the costs of legal assistance before Geneva courts (estimated in CHF 20'000) regarding the calculation of crèche fees by the Crèche de Versoix. The calculation of these fees included the UN Staff Assessment as part of the staff member's revenue, thus being levied on revenue which is not actually received.

During the Council's discussion, reference was made to a similar situation: the taxing of retired UN staff members by Swiss authorities, which entails parallel arguments that may encourage the Council to support this request. It was noted that staff members should not be discriminated according to where they live. It was mentioned that by acting in favor of this staff member, the Council may be acting in benefit of all the staff.

It was enquired whether the staff member was aware that crèche fees would be charged in such way, for if he/she was, then the legal case may have an increased probability of losing. However, it was noted there are institutions involved in this case in favour of the staff member's position, such as the Swiss Mission to the UN. It was also suggested that a contribution of 20'000 CHF seemed a high amount.

It is proposed that the Council contributes up to 75% (CHF 15'000) of the total expenditure incurred by the staff member. **The Council approves, by 12 votes in favour and 1 vote against, to contribute CHF 15'000.**

8. Collaboration with UNITAR staff representatives

Geneva-based UNITAR staff representation is not part of the Staff-Management Committee (SMC). It was noted that, on grounds of solidarity, an informal agreement has been reached with UNITAR staff representation so that the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council may act on its behalf during SMCs. A Memorandum of Understanding will be drafted in the future.

9. Inter-Agency Games 2013 (IAG) and CCISUA General Assembly (GA)

In relation to the previous request by the Sports Commission to contribute financially to the IAG in order to cover the deficit of their budget, the most recent budget presented by the Sports Commission shows no deficit to be covered.

Since Geneva (the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council) is in charge of organizing 2013's CCISUA GA, it is noted there may be a good opportunity to save costs by celebrating the CCISUA GA just after the IAG at the same location (Valencia, Spain), taking advantage of negotiations in place to gain access to infrastructure and services which are already being provided to the IAG. The current proposal is to merge the closing event of IAG with the opening event of the CCISUA General Assembly. Such closing and opening events would both take place on 28 April 2013.

In order to take advantage of synergies, given that the organization of the CCISUA GA may benefit from the infrastructure and services already in place for the IAG, it is proposed that the Council contributes to any one specific event of the IAG (including the financing of two missions of members of the Sports Commission to Spain to further negotiate on behalf of the Council with Spanish authorities and venues) up to a maximum of CHF 30'000. It is also proposed that the Council approves a budget of up to CHF 5'000 to be used by the Council for the organization of the CCISUA GA.

Due to lack of quorum at the time of voting, the decision was postponed until the 8th meeting of the 30th Council reconvenes.

10. Secretary General Townhall meeting

The Executive Bureau attended the Townhall meeting of the Secretary-General held on 10 January 2013. Several points were raised during this meeting regarding recent staff-management consultations in Geneva: (a) Mobility of staff, with particular attention to the priority of internal staff, (b) budget cuts and actions taken to safeguard the interests of affected staff members, and (c) staff-management relations, with particular attention to JIU's recommendation of collective bargaining and application of International Labour Organisation agreements.

The Secretary-General acknowledged the points raised by Geneva and encouraged to strengthen staff-management relations.

It is suggested that since many terms in staff-management relations may be unclear for staff members, a broadcast be sent to better explain these different terms.

11. Further budget cuts

The Council is set to organize consultations regarding the USD 100 million cut planned for 2014/2015, requested by the Member States.

12. Travel

Recent complaints have been received about staff members being persuaded to downgrade the class of their travel in order to reduce expenditures. The floor was opened for discussion on this regard.

It was pointed out that the Council should think about different ways to reduce expenditures, such as the use of accumulated miles. It was also suggested to enquire how Management calculates certain expenditures. It was advised that the Council should find out how staff members are being pressured into downgrading their class of travel and to bring up specific cases to Management if deemed appropriate.

End of the meeting at 4:00 p.m.
Due to lack of quorum, the Council members are invited to reconvene
on 17 January 2013 at 2:00 p.m. in room VIII (Palais des Nations)