



## 37<sup>th</sup> UNOG Staff Coordinating Council 37<sup>ème</sup> Conseil de coordination du personnel de l'ONUG

### Minutes of the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting

held on 19 November 2019 at 1.15 p.m. in Room Concordia IV

**Council members present:** ALMARIO Francis; BALI Mohamed; CHANTREL Dominique; CHAOUI Prisca; DAN Lin; DUPARC Philippe; GAZIYEV Jamshid; JAQUIOT Cédric; KALOTAY Kalman; KELLY Paul; MEYER Olivier; PECK ARIF Cathy; RICHARDS Ian; RUHANA MUKAMUSONI Angelique; SAMA ITOUA Nzété Da; SMITH Brad; STANOVIC Marko; TAPORAIE Amos.

**Council members absent:** APOSTOLOV Mario; BALD Iain; BULYCH Yaroslav; JAMES Elizabeth; LEONI Brigitte; POPA Gabriela; RIOUKHINA Evelina.

*The meeting opened at 1.20 p.m.*

#### 1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted with changes as reflected below.

#### 2. Adoption of the minutes of the 8<sup>th</sup> meeting

The minutes of the 8<sup>th</sup> meeting were adopted with changes as recorded in the Council secretariat.

#### 3. Report of the Executive Bureau

The EB reported on its activities since the previous Council meeting, namely on the following items not covered separately by an agenda item below:

- JNC: a meeting took place the day before and several issues were raised by staff and management: UNOG work performed under UNOPS contracts; cash conservation measures (accessibility to the Palais before 7.30 Nations, use of elevators); changing shifts and working hours in SSS giving way to official work time not being paid; ways to increase collaboration on issues of common interests through joint townhalls.
- UN Special and the new magazine: the decision to separate from the "UN Special" partnership with WHO was recalled; one publisher accepted the cahier des charges for the new magazine, and whose application was accepted; the new magazine would begin as of January 2020 and its name would be discussed.
- End-of-year events: preparations for the children's party were under way and it was reminded that only one registration channel was available as broadcasted by the Council to staff; preparations for the staff gala were also under way.
- Wellbeing group meeting discussed policy on return-to-work of staff on extended sick leave, harassment prevention, annual/sick leave issues.
- Crèche: an offer from a local chain of crèche has offered exclusive places for children of UN staff through the auspices of the Council.
- Dedicated Summer camp for children of UN staff provided by an external service provider: preparations would begin for 2020.
- Staff engagement survey: the Administration had sent two broadcasts and letter from the SG asking staff to participate, and it asked the Council to assist in the circulation of the survey. The Council reaffirmed the EB's position that it did not consider it as a useful initiative as it was deemed nothing of significance came out from it for staff. Staff would be advised that if they took the survey, they should raise the issue of the pay cut in it.

A discussion followed on the Children's end-of-year party noting the name children's Christmas party was not being used. Several members present raised that the name was more neutral and proved to be more conscious in respecting diversity. The Council was also reminded that the broadcast had actually already been issued with the title "End-of year". A proposal was raised to rename it to "End-of-year holiday party" and a nominative vote was called on the proposal which resulted as follows: in favour: Stanovic Marko, Taporaie Amos, Brad Smith. Against: Almario Francis, Bali Mohamed, Chantrel Dominique, Chaoui Prisca, Dan Lin, Duparc Philippe, Jaquiot Cédric, Kelly Paul, Meyer Olivier, Peck Arif Cathy, Richards Ian, Ruhana Mukamusi Angelique, Sama Itoua Nzété Da. Abstention: Kalotay Kalman. The proposal was not carried.

#### **4. Report of the Finance Commission**

The FC stated that after 30 November the financial accounts would be finalized and submitted to the auditors. The Council would discuss the 2019-2020 budget under following item.

#### **5. Behaviour of Council members**

The Council took note of the publication by Staff Alliance on their website and social media forums concerning certain Council Office holders. The publications had been considered by the EB to be defamatory, in breach of Swiss defamation laws and against the Code of Conduct for international civil servants.

The Council was informed that the EB had decided based on the principle of duty of care towards its staff (including its own Council members), taking into account the urgency of the matter as information on the internet can spread rapidly risking to tarnish the reputation of the Office holders and the Council itself, plus the gravity of the contents to engage an external lawyer, knowledgeable of correct procedures, to contact the members of the Staff Alliance list requesting them to cease and desist in the publishing of all alleged defamatory articles against other Council Members. The EB decided that this cost should be covered against the Council-approved Miscellaneous budget line.

A Council member from Staff Alliance said that they had not received any complaint concerning the content published online, that they had not been requested by any Council member to remove the articles, and that there was no evidence that SA had actually published the articles in question. The President of Staff Alliance then took the floor, where he expressed his apologies if anybody was offended by the said articles, noting that this was not the intention of the Staff Alliance list. He stated that the list has already removed the said articles from the Staff Alliance website. After a comment was made from the floor that the old links to the articles still remained on Staff Alliance's Facebook and Twitter pages, the President said that he will ask the list to remove these links as well. The President however stated that the Staff Alliance list did not consider the subject articles to be defamatory and has reaffirmed the right of Staff Alliance to criticize.

The Staff Alliance member further argued that the Council was attempting to suppress the right to freedom of expression and that the Council should not be bearing the legal costs of the above-mentioned lawyer's fees. He considered the letter received from the lawyer harassment and intimidation of Staff Alliance members.

Other Council members counterargued that the defamatory articles had appeared on the Staff Alliance website and the Facebook page actually showed the name of the owner of the site, and there was no doubting Staff Alliance's role in publishing the information. They further argued that they recognized freedom of expression as a right, but it should be used responsibly, honestly and in accordance with the law.

Council members further discussed the email exchanges that followed the letter received from the lawyer to Staff Alliance members, noting it inappropriate by Staff Alliance to have included the UNOG Administration in the exchange, as this was a matter internal to the Council. It was also brought to the Council's attention that the letter had been photocopied multiple times and distributed in mailboxes in various places in the Palais. The President asked it to be placed on record that this had been done neither by the ES nor himself, nor any of the EB members, leading to the conclusion that it could only have been placed there by Staff Alliance members. The President also informed the Council that two of the Staff Alliance list had informed in writing that they were disassociating themselves from the articles and SA as a whole.

An argument was made that the Council should be able to recover the cost of the legal fees deriving from having to protect its office holders, whilst undertaking official Council business and that the Staff Alliance list should reimburse the Council for these costs.

The President of Staff Alliance then took the floor, where he expressed his apologies and stated that he had already removed the offending articles of the Staff Alliance website. He further agreed to remove the articles from the other social media websites but reaffirmed the right of Staff Alliance to express criticism. The Council agreed on the right to express criticism, but that it should always remain respectful and honest. The Council agreed to accept the apologies and absorb the legal cost but, on the understanding, that public apologies appear on all the sites where the articles had been published and that the articles be removed within two days.

The Council further agreed that if a similar situation arose in the future with articles published by Staff Alliance, it reserved the right to demand Staff Alliance cover the above-mentioned legal costs.

The Council concluded the discussion on the need to draft and issue a code of Conduct for Council members.

#### **6. Adoption of 2019-2020 budget**

The Council went through the Finance Commission's proposed budget for the 2019-2020 financial year. Following a discussion, the budget was adopted as reflected in the present minutes.

## **7. Request for legal assistance**

The Council was presented with a recommendation of the EB to cover the costs of legal assistance up to CHF 5'000 in a case of a staff member, for the submission of a case to UNDT, which had been deemed important by the Council's Legal Committee as it related to the consequences of delegation of authority and was therefore relevant for all staff. Having been briefed on the case, the Council agreed on the EB's recommendation and approved the expenditure.

## **8. Mission report: CCISUA mid-term GA, lobbying**

The Council was briefed on the recent mission of a number of Council members to New York. Three Council members attended the CCISUA mid-term GA where various issues were discussed, including: actions related to the Equal Pay campaign (having obtained the support of practically all unions) and Geneva pay cut issue in light of the recent ILOAT judgment; local salary survey; parental leave; SMC consultation process; meetings with UN and ICSC senior management; review of the ICSC's consultative process; investment issues in the Pension Fund; meeting with the Ombudsman; CCISUA progress report; discussion on the financial situation of the federation.

The second week, Council members focussed on lobbying efforts at the General Assembly, mostly on the issues of equal pay in Geneva, the state of the Pension Fund, GSDM, having met with 14 Member States or groups of Member States.

## **9. Equal Pay Campaign**

A letter was addressed to the SG requesting to meet staff in Geneva, which was supported by UNICEF and UNEP staff unions. They were also disseminated in New York among Member States. This triggered an answer from Management to the letter. Efforts will be focused on keeping staff engaged as much as possible, including activity on social media.

As for following steps, the plenary expressed its hope that the UNDT judgment would be issued as soon as possible. During discussions held in New York with ICSC senior management, the ICSC President promised that the Geneva cost of living survey in 2021 would be advanced to 2020 and committed for the process to be open to scrutiny by the Organisations' statisticians. Council members agreed that such a measure could only be accepted if the revision of the methodology was completed before, and caution was advised especially in light of the Organisation's cashflow situation which may be used to justify certain issues.

*Paul Kelly, Lin Dan, Amos Taporai, and Ruhana-Mirindi Mukamusoni left the meeting at this point.*

## **10. Update on SMC**

The Council plenary was informed of concerns regarding the SMC mechanism, notably the way the Administration was seemingly circumventing the process and disagreement between the staff unions on certain issues.

## **11. Update on SHP**

Council members were briefed on the mock-up session held previously that day for the evaluation of furniture options before a vendor was selected for the UN for the following 10 years. The plenary thanked those Council members who volunteered and attended, although it expressed its reservations on the relevance of the exercise. A meeting with the SHP team had been requested, possibly for on early December. The Council regretted that the SHP team did not consult staff on its Report to the SG on SHP, and it feared Management was not listening at all to concerns of staff since the beginning of the project. Having shown initial resistance from the Division of Administration, it finally agreed to move into the new building. It was also noted that renovation works had diminished considerably the parking places available to staff and was becoming an issue of concern.

*Catherine Peck Arif left the meeting at this point.*

A discussion followed on the experience at the mock-up session.

## **12. Situation in the Pension Fund**

Council members were informed that, during the recent mission in New York as mentioned earlier in the meeting, participant representatives at the Pension Fund met with its senior management. The issue of abuse of authority in Geneva was raised as well as the transfer of two senior positions from Geneva to New York. The said positions were deemed a potential abuse of the system should the exercise be used as a way to terminate

the incumbent contractors in Geneva reopening the same positions in New York. It was agreed to circulate to staff the minutes of said meeting.

Further discussion in New York touched on the issue of investments of the Pension Fund, noting participant representatives were worried about increasingly risky investment strategy.

### 13. Situation in the Security and Safety Service

The Council was informed that a townhall would be held in the coming days with SSS staff to inform them and gather feedback on recent criticized developments, notably concerning the modification of work hours, rotation.

### 14. Limitations on Palais services

this agenda item had been covered already under the Report of the Executive Bureau (JNC).

### 15. Representation of staff located in the IEH

A proposal was raised to the Council to invite staff working in the International Environment House to join the constituency of the Council should they wish (namely UNITAR, UNDP and UNEP). It was recalled UNEP staff in Geneva was represented by its headquarters' staff union in Nairobi, whilst UNDP-Geneva and UNITAR, which were not in the UN secretariat, and had recently decided to create their own staff associations. It was also noted that the Regulations on staff representation already established that staff represented by another union could not be represented by the Council. The Council agreed to consider any request by a group of staff wanting to join the scope of the Council's representation, if it was in line with the regulations.

### 16. Any other business

No other business was raised.

*The meeting was adjourned at 3.45 p.m.*

## ANNEX: adopted budget 2019-2020



**UNOG | ONUG**

Staff Coordinating Council

Conseil de coordination du personnel de l'ONUG

## Adopted Budget

Adopted on 19/11/2019

### 1 December 2019 - 30 November 2020

*All figures are expressed in Swiss Francs*

#### REVENUES

Dues-paying membership revenue	46,000.00
SAFI contribution	100,000.00
Advertisement	3,200.00
Children's party registrations	3,000.00
UN Special contribution	18,000.00
New staff magazine	80,000.00

<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	<b>250,200.00</b>
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#### EXPENDITURES

**STAFF REPRESENTATION****Affiliations**

PSI annual membership 4,000.00

CCISUA annual membership 20,000.00

**Missions and representation**

Official travel 20,000.00

**Training**

Tuition fees and travel for training 1,000.00

**Equal Pay campaign 45,000.00**

Travel to ICSC session

External legal fees

PR advisory services

**Legal representation**

Legal representation in staff cases 5,000.00

**Ordinary General Assembly**

Translation of annual report 2,000.00

Hosting of OGA 300.00

**STAFF WELFARE****Subsidies to UN clubs & associations**

Sports room maintenance 800.00

UN Club subsidy 6,000.00

Inter-Agency games subsidy 13,000.00

**Events**

Staff Gala 40,000.00

Children's party 30,000.00

Garden party 2,500.00

Long service awards 10,000.00

**New staff magazine**

Editorial assistance 30,000.00

**ADMINISTRATION****General administrative expenses**

General office expenses 500.00

External audit of accounts 4,000.00

Software licenses and hosting 850.00

**Financial services**

Bank charges 750.00

**Miscellaneous 10,000.00**

General miscellaneous expenses

Legal fees

Council visibility through staff clubs

**Closure of Council projects**

Closure real estate investment project  
in France 3,500.00

**TOTAL EXPENDITURES 249,200.00**

**NET RESULT 1,000.00**

