

## **Staff Coordinating Council**

### **Languages Service Sectoral Assembly (2016-2017)**

#### **Report on the activities of the LSSA Bureau**

- 1- From April 2016 to January 2017, the LSSA Bureau held eight plenary meetings. The meetings covered a wide range of issues of concern to LS staff. After the election of the President, and in accordance with the “Rules governing elections to the Bureau of the Languages Service Sectoral Assembly”, volunteer election officers (VEOs) were identified and elections were held for all sections/units that had put forward more than one candidate.

#### **I. Organization of work and identification of main issues during the mandate**

- 2- Even though a survey had already been run in the previous year to identify issues that LS staff wanted the Bureau to address, it was decided to conduct a new one. Each representative asked the question to their respective sections/units, and the following issues were identified:
  - Productivity-related pressure;
  - Part-time work;
  - Regulation of compensatory time off for P-staff.
- 3- During the course of the mandate, other issues were identified, including:
  - Discontinuation of eRef;
  - Survey on overtime put in by P-staff;
  - Steering Group recommendations and decisions.
- 4- During its first meeting, the LSSA Bureau decided to convene its meetings, subject to consultation and room availability, on the first Thursday of each month, either in the morning or in the afternoon. In line with the rules of the Bureau approved in the previous mandate, Mr. Ahmed Ghailan (ATS) was appointed Vice-President of the Bureau.
- 5- During that meeting, the Bureau decided that the minutes would continue to be drafted in English, with note-takers rotating according to their availability. However, during the course of the mandate, it was decided that the pool of note-takers should also include non-English speakers, that the minutes could be drafted in French and that an action point format be introduced. Since the general feedback received by the LSSA President on the new format was positive, it was decided to continue using it for subsequent meetings.
- 6- Also during that meeting, the Strategic Heritage Plan (SHP) delegation set up during the previous mandate was dissolved because it was felt that relevant discussions should be held with the Bureau as a whole.

## **II. Productivity-related pressure**

- 7- The LSSA Bureau and the LSSA President noted in various forums, including the Staff Management Relations Board, that a large share of staff members were feeling increasingly under pressure to meet their productivity standards, especially TPU assistants, who, in some cases, were subject to daily scrutiny of their productivity by their FROs, which put a tremendous amount of stress on them. Two ad hoc meetings were organized with TPU representatives and the Chief of the Translation and Editorial Support Section (TESS), Ms. Anne Aboh-Dauvergne, in order to remedy the situation and to harmonize practices among TPUs.

## **III. Part-time work**

- 8- After a discussion between the LS Chief, Ms. Michelle Keating, the LSSA President and FTS representatives, the LS Chief recalled that all staff members are permitted to request part-time work, in any configuration; however, the feasibility of such arrangements is decided at the section or unit level. If a request is denied, the chief should provide a reasoned explanation and, where possible, prospects for accommodation at a later date.

## **IV. Regulation of compensatory time off for P-staff**

- 9- A request was put forward by the LSSA Bureau to the LS Chief to establish a framework to formally compensate P-staff working substantial or recurrent periods of overtime in special circumstances, such as the delivery of services during international conferences, a possibility that exists under staff rule 3.11(b).<sup>1</sup> The relevant framework is yet to be finalized.

## **V. Discontinuation of eRef**

- 10- The LSSA Bureau expressed its concern about the discontinuation of eRef, a tool that was highly valued by most UNOG translators, without a proper alternative in place, since the string recognition feature in eLUNa is still at the development stage and does not yield the same results. In this regard, the LSSA Bureau insisted that, should similar changes in the working methods of the Reference Unit take place in the future, they should be duly and timely communicated to its staff in order for them to prepare for those changes. After a request put forward by the DCM Director and the LS Chief, a three-month extension was granted for eRef.

## **VI. Survey on overtime put in by P-staff**

- 11- During a meeting of the LSSA Bureau, it was decided to draft a survey on the amount of overtime put in by staff. The survey is in the process of being finalized and will be run by the Staff Coordinating Council.

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<sup>1</sup> ST/SGB/2016/1 reads: "Should the exigencies of service permit, and subject to the prior approval of the Secretary-General, occasional compensatory time off may be granted to staff members serving in the Professional and higher categories who have been required to work substantial or recurrent periods of overtime."

## **VII. Steering Group recommendations and decisions**

12- The LSSA Bureau voiced its concern about Steering Group decisions being taken without formal consultation of staff representative bodies. While welcoming the initiative launched by the LS Chief to organize a series of lunch-time lectures in order to explain in detail the scope of the decisions, the LSSA Bureau stressed that, should a similar process be undertaken in the future, it should formally involve the staff representative bodies. After a recommendation to change the *reprise* calculation was circulated to the Working Group on Translation, the representatives of translation sections and the President convened several ad hoc meetings in order to agree on a position paper. The paper was sent to the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management, Ms. Catherine Pollard; the Director of the Documentation Division in UNHQ, Ms. Cecilia Elizalde (who had put forward the recommendation); the DCM Director; and the LS Chief (cf. “Memo LSSA Bureau UNOG Dec 2016”). In the paper, language staff at UNOG strongly opposed any changes to the existing method for calculating *reprise*, since they would be incompatible with the highest degree of quality expected by Member States for the translation of United Nations documentation, as expressed in several recent General Assembly resolutions.

## **VIII. Other matters**

13- The LSSA Bureau reminds LS staff that there is a link to the LSSA on the website of the Coordinating Council (<http://staffcoordinatingcouncil.org/index.php/uncategorised/351-language-service-sectoral-assembly>), where all the minutes and LSSA-related documents are regularly uploaded.

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