



39th UNOG Staff Coordinating Council
39^{ème} Conseil de coordination du personnel de l'ONUG

Le Bureau exécutif | The Executive Bureau

Minutes of the 15th meeting

held on 19 August 2021 at 9 a.m. via MS Teams

Members of the Executive Bureau	BALI Mohamed	Absent
	DUPARC Philippe	Absent
	JOHNSON Laura	Present
	KALOTAY Kalman	Absent
	MEYER Olivier	Present
	RICHARDS Ian	Present
	SMITH Bradford	Present
President of the Council	CHAOUI Prisca	Present
Vice-president of the Council	PECK ARIF Catherine	Present

The meeting began at 9.05 a.m.

Point 1 Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted with changes as reflected below.

Point 2 Adoption of minutes of the 14th meeting

This item was postponed until the following meeting.

Point 3 OCHA

The EB recalled that a meeting had taken place with the OCHA USG, Mr. Martin Griffiths, the previous week during his visit to Geneva, with the following outcome:

- Concerning OCHA's decentralization process already set in motion, the USG confirmed that he could not stop the process that had started but made clear he did not foresee further decentralization exercises after the ongoing one was completed.
- About the importance of the role of the Geneva office, the USG committed he would strengthen it by appointing a head of office and suspending the decision to transfer the D2 position from Geneva to New York.
- On contractual stability, staff representation mentioned the inappropriate use of the temporary contract scheme that has led to situations where some staff have been on TJOs for many years and the precarity of their situation. It insisted on the importance of revisiting and discontinuing this practice and ensure TJOs are only used as originally intended. It also raised the concern on the restrictiveness of some job openings depriving staff from opportunities of career advancement. The USG promised to look into these issues.
- Regarding the "culture of fear" reported to the Council in numerous occasions, the USG reaffirmed the importance of changing the negative work environment in OCHA as he was convinced of the necessity of ensuring that staff feel comfortable and are able to express their views freely at the workplace.

Point 4 UNECE

EB members noted that 6 September was the expected date for a next meeting with UNECE senior management. Many issues were listed to be raised; the list would be revised to make it manageable. It was also noted that OIOS was already taking a misconduct case forward.

Point 5 OHCHR

The EB discussed the approach on the appointment of the OHCHR Gender Focal Point and how management was dealing with the issue. Following discussions with the local staff committee and OHCHR management in recent weeks, EB members noted that management was now keen on holding elections. The EB agreed to send communications to the Deputy High Commissioner and to all OHCHR staff noting the results of the survey on the subject (where a majority staff expressed their preference to hold elections to appoint a Gender Focal Point) and the Council's appreciation of management's intention to hold them in line with the relevant SGB.

Point 6 H-building

The ES and President of the Council attended a meeting earlier in the day called by the Director of Administration, who shared his dissatisfaction that the Council intended to share with staff via broadcast the recent memorandum of the Joint Committee on Health and Safety at the Workplace which deemed that "the impact of the working conditions in the H building was detrimental to staff health and safety".

The Director of Administration raised that some of the contents of the memorandum could be tantamount to slander and that it should be amended, notably considering the building was declared safe to occupy before its opening by the Swiss authorities. Staff representation agreed with the Director to hold back the broadcast temporarily whilst the Administration looked into the matter, but that the Council stood firm on the principles of transparency with staff and non-intervention on Committee decisions.

A discussion followed. EB members expressed concern over interference by the Administration in the work of an elected joint working group which was not composed of simply lay persons but included the Medical Service. The need to be transparent with staff was highlighted, especially when it concerned an official document pertaining to their wellbeing and safety. At the same, it was pointed out that some valid points were raised by management over the content of the memorandum.

The unanimous view of the EB was that the memorandum should be circulated to staff. It was agreed to give the Administration 4 working days to look into the matter, after which the Council would insist in the issuance of its broadcast.

Point 7 Languages Service

On the legal case pertaining to the translators' workload increase, the EB was briefed on the possible appeal of the UNDT judgment which dismissed the case, where the external lawyer noted the judge overlooked certain elements and it was worth appealing. The legal representation cost to appeal on behalf of Geneva staff would be 2'500 USD, which is covered under the same envelope already approved by the Council (Council members were already informed by email). The EB agreed to proceed with the appeal.

Concerning the new working group that would discuss the issue at DGACM, staff representation in New York were working on a survey. The EB noted that whilst it was confirmed by the USG that staff would be asked to nominate a representative, it had not been the case yet. The ES would follow-up with management on said nomination.

Point 8 Next Council meeting

The EB agreed to call for a Council meeting on Tuesday 7 September at 1 p.m.

Point 9 Staff-Management Committee (SMC)

The EB recalled that the next SMC meeting was scheduled for 4-9 October 2021 in Bonn and would in principle be an in-person meeting with the participation of 2 representatives from each staff union. The EB nominated Brad Smith and Ian Richards to attend on the Council's behalf given their background and experience on issues to be raised.

The deadline to submit papers to the SMC was noted to be 6 September.

Point 10 Any other business

- The second discussion on racism in the workplace was scheduled for 14 September with the presence of the OHCHR diversity advisor. Staff would be invited via broadcast.
- The next Joint Negotiating Committee was noted to be upcoming. The EB would discuss agenda items at its next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9.50 a.m.