

The 43rd Council of the UNOG Staff Union



Year in Review

2025-2026

January 2026

Preface

This has been one of the most challenging years for the UN system in decades. That made it one of the most important for staff representation. We certainly have not been able to prevent every negative consequence of this onslaught on international organizations. However, the extremely high engagement from staff in all the meetings we called in an attempt to fill the information vacuum has inspired us to continue fighting for the fair treatment of all UN staff during this crisis. I would like to thank you all for your contributions and for the trust you have placed in the Union.

Laura Johnson
Executive Secretary

This has been a calamitous year for international organisations, as they have faced a crisis in funding, questions about their usefulness and relevance and concerns about overlapping mandates. The answer to this crisis should be a serious questioning of past decisions and strategic directions and leaders held to account. Instead, the pain has fallen squarely on the staff, those who sacrificed stability and family life to move around the world, operate in dangerous and difficult locations, and bring their leading expertise to complex situations. The history books won't look back kindly on this period. As a union we have benefited from your support, energy and ideas to push back on many of the most egregious attempts to weaken our terms and conditions of employment, our rights and futures. We have attempted, with some success, and against strong opposition, to shift the spotlight back to where it should be. In these difficult times, our collective work shows why unions like ours matter. And we thank you for your support.

Ian Richards
President

Composition of the 41st UNOG Staff Union

Elected staff representatives:		
<i>President</i>	Ian RICHARDS	
<i>Vice-President</i>	Janet PUHALOVIC	
<i>Executive Secretary</i>	Laura JOHNSON	
<i>Deputy Executive Secretary</i>	Mohamed CHIRAZ BALI	
<i>Other members of the Executive Bureau</i>	Naima ABDELLAOUI Philippe DUPARC Nicole LEWIS-LETTINGTON	Nataliya OLIYNYK Philip THOMAS
<i>Other Council members</i>	Marian AGGREY Julien BORNON Dominique CHANTREL Cíntia DE LIMA CARDOSO Cédric JACQUIOT Ysabel FOUGERY Marius GOLOGUS (<i>from April 2025</i>) Berengere LABAYE (<i>until March 2025</i>) Jean-Luc LA PLANETA (<i>from March 2025</i>) Begoña MARTINEZ ALFONSO	Clint O'CONNOR Gregory Alex PARKER (<i>until October 2025</i>) Rowland PALAIRET Catherine PECK ARIF Gerald PIODA (<i>from October 2025</i>) Bradford SMITH (<i>until April 2025</i>) Frederic SACQUET Marko STANOVIC Radouan TOUALBIA

Polling officers:	
Divya SRINIVASAN (President)	Tissa PERROUD
Alexander KONSTANTINOS HOC (Vice-President)	Ralf PETERS
Djurabek ARIPOV	Auditor:
Richard CHAMBERS	Septimu Andrei MISAILA
Benjamin JESUDOSS (<i>until January 2026</i>)	

I. Summary of work programme implementation

To protect pay, jobs and promote careers, the Staff Union will:	Status
Work to protect and promote job security and minimize terminations in any downsizing situation	Minimization of job losses and involuntary separations has been the focus of Union activity throughout the year. The Union formally requested timely activation of the downsizing policy with the relevant entities as soon as it became clear cuts might be necessary. Our advocacy helped lead to the early separation programme and global reassignment exercise, which should greatly reduce involuntary separations. It also helped ensure that the downsizing policy is used, rather than entities simply allowing fixed-term contracts to expire as we had feared. Through the Staff-Management Committee (SMC), we logged a disagreement with the Secretary-General over the administration's restrictive interpretation of the scope of the policy. At the extraordinary session of SMC, we logged a further disagreement regarding circumvention of the downsizing policy through the expiration of fixed-term appointments and fought for a whole range of mitigating measures and a consistent Secretariat-wide approach.
Address the increase in consultancy, the use of temporary appointments for ongoing functions and the reduction in duration of fixed-term appointments	We have monitored the situation in all entities to ensure that the reduction of consultancy and temporary appointments is correctly used as a mitigating measure in line with the downsizing policy and that a consistent approach to temporary appointees is applied, including pushing for consideration of special circumstances such as security concerns resulting from UN work where appropriate. Although we were not able to prevent the introduction of a one-year limit for fixed-term appointments, in some cases we have successfully pushed back on extremely short contract renewals, e.g. for one month at a time.
Actively engage heads of entities to advocate for career opportunities for existing staff as much as possible, raise any issues of great importance to staff during these financially challenging times	Along with the prevention of terminations, opportunities for existing staff has been our top priority. We are pushing for the maximum number of staff to be able to be reassigned through the global exercise and, in the case of relocations, for staff willing to move to be able to take the place of those who cannot. We have fought the Secretary-General's decision to introduce roster expiry through all possible means, including by supporting legal action. We are still pushing for the extension or expansion of flagging in the context of downsizing or other ways of tracking and helping separated staff to return to the Organization. We have continued to insist on protections for staff required to work at a higher level in the planned new policy on special post allowance. A new SMC working group on YPP has been approved, with a view to improving how the programme works to provide opportunities to this group of staff.
Work to protect remuneration, entitlements, and pensions, in particular through advocacy within the ICSC, including by achieving the best possible outcome from the compensation package review and preparation for the local salary survey in Geneva	We have continued to participate through our staff federation CCISUA in the compensation package review, highlighting the need to attract staff to field-based positions, the importance of protecting the tertiary education component of the grant and finding a solution for the inadequate level of the special education grant in Geneva. The groups have come to some positive conclusions, including that a special childcare subsidy should be offered separately to any education grant. However, the rhetoric of some Member States is putting new pressure on our salaries, entitlements and pensions. There were attempts to make cuts directly through the common system and budget resolutions at the end of the year. Through CCISUA and as the UNOG Staff Union, we engaged in in-person advocacy in New York and produced a series of position papers for delegates. Ultimately and as a result, no cuts were made. However, there were directives for ICSC to consider UN80 in the compensation review and for the Pension Board to consider moving away from our current defined benefits scheme. This will

	necessitate sustained work in the coming year. In view of the upcoming local salary survey, the Union funded training on the methodology for some of our Council members.
Continue to advocate for equal leave for staff on temporary appointments	We continue to raise this matter at ICSC through CCISUA. However, any increase in entitlements is extremely difficult to achieve in the current context. It is also essential to reduce the use of temporary assignments for ongoing functions and we have advocated with those entities that make inappropriate use of them to learn from the current situation in which they must be reduced as a mitigating measure.
Improve the consultative process regarding new policies impacting working conditions of staff	As soon as UN80 was announced, we asked the Secretary-General for Union involvement in the process itself. This was flatly refused. Management has recognized the extraordinary situation this year by calling an additional in-person session and many extra ad hoc meetings of SMC. Some mitigating measures we have called for such as agreed terminations and inter-entity reassignment have ultimately been adopted. However, the Organization has clearly used the existence of these discussions over mitigation to claim that staff have been consulted. We have had to communicate directly with Member States to correct this and other misconceptions. We have also had to argue hard at every stage for consultation on budget proposals and oversight of processes related to downsizing and relocations.
Advocate for merit-based and non-discriminatory staff selection and promotion processes, including giving priority to internal candidates, diversity and removing the G to P barrier with a view to rewarding hard work.	A new working group on career prospects for GS staff has been set up under SMC, in order to find new solutions despite the General Assembly's failure to agree to remove the G to P barrier. We are fighting hard to ensure that any vacancies that do exist will be filled through reassignment of existing staff and still hope to find a solution for extended flagging to promote their re-employment.
Advocate for greater independence of, and other improvements to, the internal justice system, including through the IJC	The Internal Justice Council holds an annual meeting with the Staff Unions and requests written comments to feed into its report. This year we provided input on possible reforms to OSLA and union support of legal services to staff.
Advocate for paid internships and promote geographic diversity amongst interns, and interns from developing countries	We have continued to support the Fair Internships Initiative. This year we amplified their call for a global strike in favour of paid internships in advance of the proposal before the General Assembly, which was unfortunately deferred. We also broadcast their UN interns survey. Our Council now has a focal point for interaction with intern groups, to coordinate our support for their actions.
In working towards the above objectives, work with other unions and relevant bodies to coordinate positions to protect and promote the rights of staff, including through the SMC, ICSC and CCISUA	The Union continues to coordinate globally with our fellow CCISUA members and the other Secretariat unions for SMC. We continue to play an important role through membership in the CCISUA Bureau and the SMC 3x3 Contact Group. The Union's communications are read throughout the UN system and by delegates.

To improve the work environment and support staff welfare, the Staff Union will:	Status
Limit the impact of the liquidity and funding crises on staff well-being	Most importantly, we have tried to concentrate on filling the information gap through frequent communications and concentrated on ensuring continued employment for the maximum number of staff who need it. Finally this year, management has admitted that there is no more "doing more with less". We have sought to ensure that "doing less with less" is actually applied at all levels.

Address any impact on the health and wellbeing of staff resulting from increased workloads	We have been seeking a fairer deal on shift patterns for Security staff as well as rest periods after missions outside the duty station. Despite our advocacy, the General Assembly has just approved a workload increase for all language staff. We are currently involved in organizing a global DGACM meeting to coordinate on this issue.
Continue fighting misconduct, promote more effective investigation mechanisms, and ensure that appropriate measures are taken for accountability purposes	We have continued to advise staff on making formal complaints with OIOS and followed up with management on the extreme delays to the cases we are aware of.
Promote a workplace in which staff are treated equally regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, religion, class, sexual orientation and ability	This year, our main anti-discrimination focus has been ensuring fair consideration of personal circumstances, including sexual orientation and family constraints, in any relocation decisions. We have also pointed out the disproportionate impact on various categories of staff of cutting posts mainly at lower levels.
Improve work-life balance, including by ensuring that flexible working arrangements are applied fairly and as intended	We have been mostly successful in preventing new restrictions on flexible working arrangements, which were planned to be implemented as a panic reaction to Member State concerns relevant only to New York. For Security staff, the fight for fair shift patterns has continued.
Work to ensure a safe and secure workspace in the context of SHP and “space optimization” plans, including adequate and fairly distributed office space, and to improve facilities at the Palais	We have continued to follow up on issues related to SHP and office space through JNC, on the Transition Board, at the Building User Groups and through assisting individual complaints. We were asked to meet the Board of Auditors in their review of Facilities Management Service and were briefed on the SHP presentations to the General Assembly. We continue to push for better bike parking arrangements through the Green Mobility Group.
Support the development of staff facilities such as UN Port, the Tennis Club as well as strengthen the outreach for clubs	With a loan from the Staff Union, the UN Geneva Staff Welfare Partnership was able to install new padel, pickleball and badminton courts at the International Tennis Club. Feedback from members has been positive. Club activity has continued to slowly increase and a number of classes are now offered in the space in Dépendance La Pelouse. Clubs can receive support in communications and logistics.
Pursue growth in Staff Union funding through membership dues, including from all Council members, the staff magazine UN Today and other sources.	Uncertain times have meant a steady stream of new dues-paying members signing up throughout the year, resulting in an increase of income. UN Today has continued to be a steady source of income for the Staff Union and some income is made from low-risk investments.

To keep staff informed and involved, the Staff Union will:	Status
Hold regular townhall meetings and inform staff through frequent broadcasts and other channels, including the staff magazine UN Today.	We have sent over 60 broadcasts over the past year, on a wide range of topics of interest to all staff, in addition to entity-specific communications where necessary. We published articles in UN Today on subjects such as our concerns with UN80. Given the heightened concerns among staff, we increased the frequency of townhall meeting we held on a range of topics. In addition to the thematic presentations, we held townhalls with general updates on UN80. At an Extraordinary General Assembly, the staff voted no confidence in the Secretary-General, USG Guy Ryder and UN80.
Organize social events for staff	Reduced opening hours at the Palais continue to make social events more difficult. However, in response to staff demand, the Council has agreed to support a summer event this year.
Organize thematic presentations to staff	We have held staff townhalls with Guy Ryder on UN80 and on what staff can do about the State of Palestine with Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese. We have also held briefings on the internal justice system with the OSLA Chief, in both French and English, on the Pension Fund and on the Secretariat downsizing policy.

Survey staff on key issues and developments

Through our staff federation, CCISUA, we conducted a major survey on UN80, the results of which fed into our advocacy with Member States.

II. United Nations Common System Issues

1. Coordinating Committee of International Staff Unions and Associations (CCISUA)

CCISUA is the federation of global staff unions to which the UNOG Staff Union belongs. This year, UNOG Staff Union attended the General Assembly from 12 to 16 May 2025 in Rome, which provided an opportunity to discuss issues of concern among the global staff unions in order to establish agreed positions as well as to meet counterparts. Discussions were held on a number of issues, including the establishment of a campaign against UN80 cuts, the ongoing compensation package review, the financial crises, a study on unemployment insurance and pension fund matters. Meetings were held with the ICSC Chair and the ASG for Human Resources, as well as with the two other staff federations. Ian Richards, a member of the UNOG Staff Union, was elected Vice-President for Conditions of Service by consensus. Resolutions were adopted on the UN80 campaign and to send a letter regarding the situation at the International Criminal Court.

The CCISUA mid-term meeting was held in New York from 18 to 21 November 2025. It provided an opportunity to meet with heads of other staff unions as well as senior management on a number of issues, including human resources and ICSC matters, the internal justice system, mental health, communication and outreach, pension fund issues, security of staff in the field and downsizing. Meetings were held with the USG for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources, the ICSC Chair, the Under Secretary-General for Policy, the Chief of OSLA, the Acting Representative of the Secretary-General M at UNJSPF and the Assistant Secretary-General for Safety and Security, as well as the head of another other staff federation.

During and subsequent to the mid-term meeting, a UNOG Staff Union delegation met with a wide range of Member State delegates, from both major contributors and G-77 countries, to put forward our views on UN80, including cuts and relocations, and the common system, pushing back strongly against misconceptions regarding our salaries.

This year, CCISUA supported a May Day demonstration in Geneva in solidarity with UN staff facing job cuts, wrote to Member States asking them to take control of the UN80 process, arranged a survey on UN80 and called a Geneva gathering in solidarity with our colleagues killed in Gaza. After hearing that UN staff were experiencing severe hunger from the famine created by the blockade on Gaza, it wrote to the Secretary-General to request that UN colleagues be included in humanitarian access and protection plans, reiterating these calls for solidarity in a statement issued on World Humanitarian Day.

2. International Civil Service Commission (ICSC)

CCISUA participates in meetings of the ICSC and of the Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions and ICSC working groups. This year, CCISUA attended all working group meetings related to the compensation package review, pushing to defend the tertiary education grant, improve special education grant coverage in high-cost duty stations like Geneva and ensure that any childcare subsidy does not replace the education grant, as well as recalling the need to improve the attractiveness of field locations.

III. Global Secretariat issues

1. Staff-Management Committee (SMC) - annual meeting

SMC is the main forum for staff-management consultations at the Secretariat level. UNOG Staff Union participated in the annual in-person meeting in Vienna, held from 8-12 April 2025. This year, both sides agreed that the focus should be on issues relating to the current crises facing the UN: the UN80 initiative, the impact of the financial situation on staff and the downsizing policy.

During a frank discussion on UN80, management did not shy away from stating that the initiative was driven by cost reduction considerations and would include proposals to move services away from more expensive

duty stations. They also acknowledged the similarities with the Global Service Delivery Model proposal, which was ultimately rejected by member states. However, they believed that this time it would work for various reasons, including that a broader range of states had become focused on cost savings. Staff of course were extremely concerned that the proposals would negatively affect both mandate delivery and staff.

As soon as staff representatives were briefed on the initiative they asked to be included, writing to the Secretary-General through the staff federation and as SMC unions. However, as he stated in response, only senior managers would be included in the task force and working groups. In Vienna, staff once again insisted on the need to have a seat at the table, pointing out that the terms of reference of the task force itself stated that it must work “in close consultation with the representatives of staff”. Management reiterated that staff representatives would not be on the task force but would be consulted through SMC on the proposals and proposed to hold an additional ad hoc meeting for this purpose.

Another focus was the downsizing policy. Management interpreted it as only applicable when contracts will be terminated. Staff took the position that management was trying to evade its responsibilities by letting fixed-term contracts lapse instead to reduce staff, which also enabled management to avoid being bound by fair and objective criteria, creating openings for arbitrariness and preferential treatment. Staff took the position that this was ethically wrong and would advocate against it in various ways. In Vienna, we formally registered a disagreement with management’s position.

The current crisis spilled into discussion of seemingly unrelated agenda items. For example, in a discussion on performance ratings, we highlighted that the “exceeds expectations” performance rating had a real impact on job security as it was used to decide continuing appointments and downsizing, while some managers and departments continue to apply arbitrary rules on whether it can be awarded. In a discussion on the LGBTQI strategy, we asked whether management had considered the impact of asking staff with same-sex partners to move to a duty station where their relationship would not be recognized.

We received some important updates, including on the new step determination guidelines, which affect the maximum steps that can be awarded to new staff and temporary colleagues and were to have some retroactive effect. A long-awaited policy on part-time employment, which should make it easier to request in certain circumstances, including return from parental leave or sick leave, was also said to be an HR priority.

Other vital discussions, on rosters, artificial intelligence, flexible working arrangements and more had to be deferred to future online meetings.

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2. Extraordinary SMC meeting

An extraordinary in-person session was held in Pristina from 24 to 28 June 2025. It was entirely focused on UN80-related matters. Staff made strong statements in relation to the attempted intimidation of staff representatives and the absolute failure to consult on the substantive aspects of UN80, while also using the occasion to inform Member States that consultations were taking place. Most of the meeting was however dedicated to securing mitigating measures, pushing back hard on entity-level consultations, equality for staff on all funding sources, extended flagging periods for downsizing, the availability of special leave without pay and flexibility on relocations. Discussions on these issues continued after the meeting, with varying levels of success.

3. Ad hoc meetings

In between the annual in-person meetings, “ad hoc” online meetings were held. The number of ad hoc meetings increased this year, with many devoted to further discussions on UN80. Additional meetings were held on a wide range of other subjects, including performance management, equitable access to life insurance

coverage, compensation for loss and damage, rosters, special post allowance, appointments policy, updates to the anti-racism policy and YPP

4. SMC working groups

UNOG Staff Union participates in all the SMC working groups. Those which remained active or were agreed to this year this were the Working Group on Administration of Justice Working Group, the Mobility and Staff Selection Working Group, the Working Group on GS Career Prospects and the new YPP Working Group.

IV. Geneva issues

1. Joint Negotiation Committee (JNC)

The main forum for staff-management consultations at the Geneva level is JNC. Topics discussed this year include UN80, budget cuts and downsizing, SHP, Security issues and the upcoming local salary survey.

2. Entity specific issues and meetings

We have sought meetings with the heads of entities for all staff that we represent, mainly focusing on the impact of budget cuts in each entity and whether it would be necessary to activate downsizing. The Union position has consistently been to activate the policy where necessary and to advocate for the widest possible scope to maximise order of retention. Major entity-specific concerns have included the ongoing discussions of Security shift patterns, adherence by ITC on the Staff Rule relating to downsizing and the management of relocations in OHCHR.

3. Host country issues and solidarity

We have organized humanitarian collections following the earthquake in Myanmar and re-opened our previous collection for Gaza. A new fundraising policy means that by default we transfer money to OCHA's country-based pooled funds, where we are confident the money will be well used in accordance with UN values. In solidarity with our colleagues in the State of Palestine, we supported the CCISUA demonstration at Place des Nations and heard from Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese on how UN staff should uphold ethical procurement and other internal policies. Following the tragic death of a construction worker on the Portail des Nations site, we sent condolences and flowers to his widow on behalf of staff. We are currently in discussions with other Geneva-based staff unions on how to advocate for bike safety in the Nations area following the fatal accident of an ILO colleague, for whom a commemoration ceremony will shortly be held.

V. Supporting staff welfare activities

1. Clubs and societies

Club and society activities have continued to steadily increase after a long period where many ceased because of the pandemic. Many classes are now held in the temporary space in Dépendance La Pelouse. We continue to liaise with the administration regarding the future space after the completion of SHP.

2. Staff magazine UN Today

The UNOG Staff Union has continued to produce its staff magazine UN Today. Carrying on the legacy of former magazine UN Special since 1949, all 10 issues of the magazine were published in 2025, serving as a platform to voice staff concerns and shed light on the delicate and controversial issues that affect the UN and its staff. The magazine provides a regular income for the Union through its advertising revenues.

3. UN Geneva Staff Welfare Partnership

The UN Geneva Staff Welfare Partnership, a collaboration between the UNOG Staff Union and UNOG Administration manages the UN Port and the International Tennis Club. This year, thanks to a loan provided by the UNOG Staff Union, new padel, pickleball and badminton courts were opened.

4. Long Service Awards

The 2025 Long Service awards took place on 28 October at a joint ceremony organized by the UNOG Staff Union and UNOG Administration at which hundreds of staff members received certificates of achievement for having served the Organization for 10 years or more and medals and certificates for having served for 25 years or more. Attendance was particularly high this year, with many staff mentioning the importance of recognizing their service in these difficult times.

5. Inter-Agency Games (IAG)

The IAG 2025 were held in Rennes, France. In accordance with established practice, the Union agreed to subsidize the participation of its dues-paying members.

6. Special offers for staff

As part of its mandate to promote staff welfare, the UNOG Staff Union maintained partnerships with local vendors in order to offer discounts to UN personnel. Please refer to our [website](#) for more detailed information.