

The 42nd Council of the UNOG Staff Union



Year in Review

2024-2025

January 2025

Preface

Every year is busy in staff representation, and this one has been no exception. The liquidity crisis has hit hard and one of the major impacts was on your office space. We began to hear rumours of a Palais closure in March, and spent much of the year seeking information and transparency, campaigning against closures and for the lifting of austerity measures, seeking compromises and finding solutions to problems caused by the closures in conjunction with disruption caused by the Strategic Heritage Plan (SHP).

This year also saw the start of a compensation package review for Professional staff, which has required a high level of cooperation through our staff federation to achieve the best possible outcomes. That cooperation will stand us in good stead when it comes to the local salary survey for General Service staff, due for 2026.

Like for all unions, our strength comes only in numbers and from the staff we represent. I really appreciate all your engagement!

Laura Johnson
Executive Secretary

What a year it's been, as this report attests. This year our focus was very much on issues within entities: fighting harassment and mismanagement, freeing up posts to support career development, ensuring better consultation in restructuring, and supporting staff in precarious positions. At the same time we had to deal with the effects of a liquidity crisis and multiple moves due to the renovations, which hasn't been easy for staff. We have worked to ensure issues and concerns are resolved as far as possible and the staff voice is heard.

Globally this year marked the start of the compensation review of P and D salaries and we have been helping to shift the narrative on UN salaries and benefits, showing how they must be improved in order to remain competitive.

Finally this was an important year for staff welfare with the launch of the International Tennis Club, which many colleagues have been taking part in.

I would like to thank everyone who took part in staff representation this year and who attended our council meetings – we made things happen!

I hope you will enjoy reading this report as much as we enjoyed representing you this year.

Ian Richards
President

Composition of the 41st UNOG Staff Union

Elected staff representatives:		
<i>President</i>	Ian RICHARDS	
<i>Vice-President</i>	Pablo GONZALEZ SILVA (<i>until April 2024</i>) Catherine PECK ARIF (<i>from April 2024</i>)	
<i>Executive Secretary</i>	Laura JOHNSON	
<i>Deputy Executive Secretary</i>	Janet PUHALOVIĆ	
<i>Other members of the Executive Bureau</i>	Naima ABDELLAOUI Philippe DUPARC Cédric JACQUIOT	Nicole LEWIS-LETTINGTON Begoña MARTINEZ ALFONSO
<i>Other Council members</i>	Marian AGGREY Saba AL-NADAWI (<i>until June 2024</i>) Mario APOSTOLOV (<i>from November 2025</i>) Mohamed CHIRAZ BALI Dominique CHANTREL Cíntia DE LIMA CARDOSO Tigest DESTA Hélène FABBIANI (<i>June 2024</i>)	Rowland PALAIRET Almudena RUEDA (<i>from July 2024</i>) Bradford SMITH Marko STANOVIC Francois SUBIGER (<i>until November 2024</i>) Philip THOMAS Radouan TOUALBIA

	Marius GOLOGUS Ursula HERMELINK Jean-Luc LA PLANETA DAN Lin (<i>from April 2024</i>)	
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Polling officers:	Auditors:
Divya SRINIVASAN (President)	
Djurabek ARIPOV (Vice-President)	
Richard CHAMBERS	Assistant to the Council: Iskandar KHOLLOV
Alexander KONSTANTINOS HOC	
Mohan KUMAR GUPTA ANNA	
Ralf PETERS	

I. Summary of work programme implementation

To protect pay, jobs and promote careers, the Staff Union will:	Status
<p>Work to protect and promote job security, address the increase in consultancy and the use of temporary appointments for ongoing functions.</p>	<p>Our meeting with USG Catherine Pollard focused on the long-term use of temporary appointments, which she confirmed was contrary to the contractual framework. In our interactions with heads of entities, including through JNC, we have advocated for the issuance of five-year fixed term contracts when possible and warned against the increased use of temporary appointments during the liquidity crisis. At SMC, we discussed lessons learned from the continuing appointments exercise and secured a commitment from management that they would not wait many years before completing an exercise again. Following our advocacy and a General Assembly resolution on the subject, the forthcoming appointments policy will be tougher on the misuse of temporary appointments for ongoing functions.</p>
<p>Work to improve career opportunities for all staff.</p>	<p>We have pushed back against the overly restrictive mobility requirements for promotion in the new staff selection policy, raising this with senior management. As transitional measures are in place for currently serving staff, these will be reviewed nearer the end of the period.</p>
<p>Work to protect remuneration, entitlements, and pensions, in particular through advocacy within the ICSC.</p>	<p>Through CCISUA, UNOG Staff Union has been very active in the ICSC working groups on the ongoing compensation review for Professional staff, advocating with ICSC and among Member States on the need to ensure the UN compensation package is competitive in a changing labour market. We particularly been advocating for improvements to the Special Education Grant for high-cost duty stations like Geneva. We organized an information session on the out-of-area survey and helped ensure no Geneva staff were excluded. We are in discussions with ICSC to advocate for improvements to the methodology for local salaries when this is next reviewed. The CCISUA federation has raised concerns about the toxic atmosphere and firings of whistleblowers in the Pension Fund Office of Investment Management, which finally seems to have improved.</p> <p>We advocated for fair step determination procedures throughout the year, through a General Assembly resolution and various iterations of guidance issued by OHR. There have been positive developments in a new General</p>

	<p>Assembly resolution, which should allow higher steps for at least some staff. We are currently clarifying the scope with management.</p>
<p>Continue to advocate for equal leave for staff on temporary appointments.</p>	<p>The different number of leave days for temporary staff is part of the contractual framework and in the Staff Rules and so will need to be accepted by the General Assembly upon recommendation of ICSC. Following advocacy from CCISUA, ICSC made the recommendation two years ago but it was rejected. CCISUA continues to raise this issue every year with ICSC. years ago.</p>
<p>Continue to demand the implementation of collective bargaining and the inclusion of ILO standards and labour rights, including the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, in how our conditions of service are set and improve the consultative process regarding new policies impacting working conditions of staff.</p>	<p>The General Assembly does not recognize the right to collective bargaining for staff of the United Nations. In its resolution 67/255, it forbade the Secretary-General from engaging in collective bargaining. It instead recognized the importance of continued informal interaction with staff representatives on human resources management issues and requested the Secretary-General to revise the SGB on the Staff-Management Committee, in line with the existing staff regulations. The revised version of the bulletin (SGB/2011/6/Rev1) speaks about staff-management consultations at entity and Secretariat-wide level, which take place at SMC. Discussions with delegates indicated that the General Assembly is not open to changing its position. However, it is important to note that the introduction of real collective bargaining would remove the automatic indexing of salaries to inflation and the US civil service; salaries would instead have to be negotiated.</p> <p>We successfully resisted attempts to reduce staff participation at the in-person SMC as an austerity measure. We raised the issue of departmental consultations at SMC to seek proper representation in cases when senior management is based in other duty stations.</p>
<p>Protect the current contractual framework and continue to push back on the introduction of new flexible contracts, protect jobs from arbitrary downsizing and unnecessary outsourcing, and monitor delegation of authority in selection and promotion processes to ensure accountability.</p>	<p>Through SMC, we are currently scrutinizing a proposed consolidated appointments policy to ensure that existing contractual rights are protected. Through ICSC, we have firmly opposed proposals to introduce remote contracts, which would weaken staff rights by eliminating the concept of duty station. We have worked with entities at threat of downsizing, intervening with senior management, including at UNRISD and OIOS. We have advised staff on case law precedents regarding selection processes and raised questions regarding certain decisions.</p>
<p>Advocate for merit-based and non-discriminatory staff selection and</p>	<p>A proposal on removal of the G to P barrier, which was the outcome of an SMC working group, was put to the General Assembly at the spring session.</p>

promotion processes, including giving priority to internal candidates, removing the G to P barrier with a view to rewarding hard work.	Unfortunately and despite our forceful advocacy, they failed to take action on the proposal. We addressed the implementation of geographic and regional diversity targets through SMC, the latter of which are applied in certain entities in unclear and non-transparent ways.
Demand greater independence of, and other improvements to, the internal justice system, including through the IJC.	The membership of IJC was renewed this year and the staff side devoted significant time to ensuring that good nominations were secured. IJC members met with staff representatives for a mutual question and answer session.
Maintain our solidarity with the “Fair Internships Initiative”, advocate for paid internships and promote geographic diversity amongst interns, and interns from developing countries.	Paid internships have been introduced in non-Secretariat entities, including at ITC in Geneva. However, the General Assembly needs to approve it for the Secretariat. It has requested a review of the programme, including possible payments, due for spring 2025. At JNC, we raised issues concerning the treatment of interns and arrived at some recommendations for supervisors on good practices.
In working towards the above objectives, work with other unions to coordinate positions to protect and promote the rights of staff, including through the SMC, ICSC and CCISUA.	Staff side cooperation among unions as part of the SMC staff side and CCISUA has remained excellent. As part of the SMC 3x3 coordination group and the CCISUA Bureau, UNOG Staff Union plays a leading role in coordinating positions.

To improve the work environment and support staff welfare, the Staff Union will:	Status
Address any impact on the health and wellbeing of staff resulting from increased productivity requirements.	An agreement was reached at SMC on a framework for overtime, which has previously been effectively unlimited. The details remain to be worked out at a future ad hoc SMC. In Languages Service, staff representatives have called for “work-to-rule” measures, that is not striving to meet the increased standards during the transitional period.
Support staff in speaking out against misconduct, promote the improvement of investigation mechanisms, and ensure that appropriate measures are taken for accountability purposes.	We intervened with heads of entities in harassment cases involving senior managers affecting large numbers of people to encourage staff to come forward and advocate for expediting investigations. We raised delays in OIOS investigations with management and discussed how to encourage staff to initiate formal complaints.

<p>Combat all forms of discrimination and advocate for a more inclusive workplace in which staff are treated equally regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, class, sexual orientation, ability, and gender.</p>	<p>On disability inclusion, we are working on improvements to the reasonable accommodation workflow among other interventions. We argued at SMC in favour of accepting a broad range of partnerships for personal status purposes, which disproportionately affects same-sex couples. We are currently reviewing changes to the SGB on harassment and discrimination to ensure that the new definitions of racism and racial discrimination are able to be applied effectively in practice.</p>
<p>Improve work-life balance, including by ensuring that flexible working arrangements are applied fairly and as intended.</p>	<p>We have pushed back, often successfully, whenever managers or heads of entities place unnecessary restrictions on flexible working arrangements. With the squeeze on office space, we have also had to intervene when staff were pressured to use them. With Security staff, we continue to work on finding the fairest possible shift system and are pushing for compensatory time off after missions.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>SHP-related matters, in conjunction with the liquidity crisis, meant that workspace was a major issue over the past year. In addition to campaigning hard against building closures, advocating with Member States to save the E building and arguing for alternative working arrangements when necessary, we helped with fixing the ongoing issues with renovated historical buildings and the H building, at JNC, on the Transition Board, at the Building User Groups and through assisting individual complaints.</p>
<p>Limit the impact of recurrent liquidity crises on staff well-being</p>	<p>We pushed back against wide-ranging leave restrictions for staff. We fought hard against the closure of large parts of the Palais due to the liquidity crisis and achieved an additional building remaining open. We argued for the use of alternative working arrangements in such situations, which eventually led to improved guidance on the subject. We consistently advocated for transparency in the application of recruitment restrictions and clear guidance on which mandates should not be fulfilled to mitigate the impact on staff. We argued for the lifting of performative measures. We met with the Board of Auditors to relay staff view on the impact of the liquidity crisis.</p>
<p>Support the development of staff facilities such as UN Port and the Tennis Club, and ensure support to clubs</p>	<p>The newly established UN Geneva Staff Welfare Partnership took over the Tennis Club in time for the new season. Feedback from members has been good and a proposal has been put to develop new facilities, including padel courts. Club activity has slowly been increasing following the pandemic and we have provided the clubs with support in communications and logistics. We are continuing to monitor the plans for club space in the context of SHP and advocate for the needs of club members.</p>

Pursue growth in Staff Union funding through membership dues, including from all Council members, the staff magazine UN Today and other sources.	Income from membership dues has slightly increased over the past year. UN Today is now a steady source of income for the Staff Union and some income is made from low-risk investments.
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To keep staff informed and involved, the Staff Union will:	Status
Hold regular town hall 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 held a special town hall on building closures on the liquidity crisis and an information session on how to complete the out-of-area survey. We hosted UNSMIS for a meeting on health insurance and moderated a listening session with the administration on the renovated buildings.
Survey staff on key issues and developments.	We conducted a survey with a high response rate on the Palais closures, as well as entity-specific surveys in OHCHR, UNCTAD, ECE and OCHA.

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 13 to 17 May 2024 in Kenya](#), 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 ongoing compensation package review, local salary surveys, the security of staff in the field, the review of the code of conduct of international civil servants, mental health issues and pension fund matters. Meetings were held with the ICSC Chair and with the Chief of the UN Compensation and Classification Section, 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 pension fund and on mental health.

The CCISUA mid-term meeting was held in New York from 19 to 22 November 2024. 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 and the situation in the Middle East. Meetings were held with the USG for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources, the ICSC Chair, the ICSC Chief of Statistics, the Chief of OSLA, a representative of the Office of Investment Management at UNJSPF and the Assistant Secretary-General for Safety and Security, as well as the two other staff federations.

Following the mid-term meeting, a UNOG Staff Union delegation remained in New York to meet with a wide range of Member State delegates, including the G-77 in a dedicated meeting, to put forward our views on issues including the compensation review, the updating of allowances and the Strategic Heritage Plan (see more in workplan above).

This year, CCISUA wrote to the Secretary-General to call for an end to impunity for killings of UN staff in Gaza and intervened to protest against the summary dismissal of UNRWA colleagues after an investigation which did not meet the standards of proof usually required, which is an attack on the due process rights of all UN staff. CCISUA also wrote to express concerns over the firing of Pension Fund whistleblowers.

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 for the protection of entitlements and arguing for the UN to remain a competitive employer. CCISUA has particularly focused on the needs of staff with dependents with disabilities, as well as the need to improve field-related benefits.

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 in Nicosia, held from 16-21 April 2024. Four papers from management and 24 papers from the staff representatives were considered, including two papers prepared by the UNOG Staff Union. A number of agreements were reached on the papers submitted by staff representatives including on a revision of the Inspira screening question for locally recruited staff, which had led to eligible candidates in Geneva being excluded, a review of the guidance on flexible working arrangements in view of issues raised by staff representatives, including failure to appropriately use alternate working arrangements, a framework to ensure more equitable overtime management, the amendment of the Staff Rules to end classification of suicide as misconduct (this will need General Assembly approval) and a revision of ST/AI/149/Rev.4/Amend.1 to allow lump sum payments in situations where a large number of staff have personal effects that are lost or damaged (e.g. Sudan).

The staff side raised concerns about many other issues, including the continuing appointments exercise, the classification of duty stations, learning and training, the Secretary-General's decision to discontinue many roster memberships, the lack of guidance and a central website on Appendix D compensation claims for occupational death, injury or illness, abrasive and toxic behaviours at work, and the rules on recognition of civil and domestic partnerships for the purpose of entitlements.

Of the papers submitted by management, the one with most impact for current staff concerned special post allowance (SPA) and proposals to limit extensions. On the one hand, staff representatives agreed with management that positions should be regularized, but on the other hand they did not see any

guarantee to prevent staff from fulfilling higher level functions without compensation if the duration of SPA was limited. There was so much debate over this item that it was deferred to another meeting, following which we were assured that our concerns had been taken into account.

One disagreement over the Flag Code was sent to the Secretary-General for arbitration. The staff side had proposed amending the Code to ensure that colleagues who died in the line of duty would be honoured by lowering the UN flag. The aim was to ensure that it would never again be necessary to put pressure on the Organization to do so, like when over 200 staff members were killed in Gaza. However, the Secretary-General agreed with management that the amendment is not necessary and that this can continue to be done under the provision for “other special circumstances”.

2. SMC ad hoc meetings

In between the annual in-person meetings, “ad hoc” online meetings were held. At ad hoc meetings this year, topics discussed included the appointments policy, departmental consultations, geographic diversity, the Organization’s response to the liquidity crisis, potential austerity measures at the next in-person SMC, departmental evaluations, SPA, alternate working arrangements and ways to honour fallen colleagues.

3. SMC working groups

UNOG Staff Union participates in all the SMC working groups. Those active this year were the Working Group on Administration of Justice Working Group and the Mobility and Staff Selection Working Group. The Staff Selection Working Group produced a report on non-financial incentives to mobility, primarily the use of flexible working arrangements and assistance for spousal employment. The Working Group on Administration of Justice continues to review measures on retaliation. Agreement was reached to establish a new working group on facilities for staff representation.

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 the liquidity crisis, building closures and building moves, the issuance of five-year fixed-term contracts, the implementation of Appendix B of the Staff Rules, the reasonable accommodation workflow, the official holidays for 2026 and the UN Port, among other topics.

2. Entity specific issues and meetings

We had meetings with the senior managers of UNOG, OHCHR, DCM, ECE, UNCTAD, UNOGSSS, OCHA and UNRISD to raise specific and cross-cutting issues. We have worked in cooperation with sectoral assemblies and their equivalents across UN Geneva. We have organized a number of entity-specific town hall meetings, including for OCHA and the Safety and Security Service. We are participating in the Appendix B working group on Security shift patterns, launched at the request of UNOG Staff Union and have sent various entity-specific broadcasts. In UNCTAD, we conducted a survey on staff morale. The results led to a number of actions by the leadership including accelerating the removal of a director accused of harassment and the release of 40 positions that had been

frozen. In ECE we focused on differing interpretations of FWAs. In OHCHR we represented staff in contesting the lack of consultation in a major restructuring and ran a survey showing low morale and high stress.

3. Host country issues and solidarity

We have kept staff informed of campaigns to improve voting rights and access to naturalization that would affect UN staff. We supported a successful campaign to improve road safety near the UN Port, following the tragic death of a colleague. At the request of Geneva staff, we launched a fundraising collection in support of UNRWA operations and humanitarian collections following the attacks on Lebanon and the flooding in Valencia.

V. Supporting staff welfare activities

1. Clubs and societies

Club and society activities have continued to increase after a long period where many ceased because of the pandemic. This year, the Staff Union assisted a number of clubs with finding space to resume their in-person meetings. We have established a focal point for discussions with SHP, to ensure that clubs, including those with specialist needs, can have adequate space following the Palais renovations.

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 2024, 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 now provides a regular income for the Union through its advertising revenues.

3. UN Geneva Staff Welfare Partnership

The UN beach (also known as UN Port) has been a staff welfare, non-profit facility since 1947 and is co-managed between the UNOG Staff Union and UNOG Administration. This year saw the Partnership's takeover of the International Tennis Club and the development of proposals to improve facilities there.

4. Long Service Awards

The 2024 Long Service awards took place on 15 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. A broadcast was issued to staff about the ceremony.

5. Inter-Agency Games (IAG)

The IAG 2024 were held in Lloret del Mar, Spain. In accordance with established practice, the Union agreed to subsidize the participation of its dues-paying members. We were able to secure the participation of a staff member with a disability, who was initially told by the organizers she would not be able to participate.

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.