

Languages Service Sectoral Assembly (LSSA)

Minutes of the third meeting of the Bureau¹

Held via videoconference on Thursday, 15 September 2022, from 2.30 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Attendees: Hassan Harrafa (ATS), Marine Acker (FTS), Joanna Bartlett (ETS), Asma Belfalah (ATS), Antia Collazo Ageitos (STS), Laura Johnson (President), Denis Komarov (RTS), Romina Merino (SDPU), Lyndsay Nash (ES) and Cristina Parrondo (STS).

1. **The President** briefed the Bureau on the postponement of the staff-management consultations until after reprise discounting was due to be introduced on 1 October and the announcement that reprise would not be calculated using eLUNa but a brand-new and untested system. She reminded the Bureau that there would be a global townhall meeting the next week.
2. **An eLUNa focal point** briefed the Bureau on the new system, explaining that it would initially only work for source documents in English, despite the GA resolutions calling for the equal treatment of all languages.
3. **The Bureau members** agreed to ask about the new Secretariat-wide mobility policy, whether any policy on remote working for temporary staff existed, the vacant posts in DPUs, the delay in the rollout of gdoc 2.0 and the fact that some sections had been assigned fewer seats than the number of staff members under the SHP.

Minutes of the meeting with the Director of DCM and the Chief of LS

Held via videoconference on Thursday, 15 September 2022, from 3 to 4 p.m.

Attendees: Marine Acker (FTS), Joanna Bartlett (ETS), Asma Belfalah (ATS), Antia Collazo Ageitos (STS), Laura Johnson (President), Denis Komarov (RTS), Romina Merino (SDPU), Lyndsay Nash (ES), Cristina Parrondo (STS), Michelle Keating (Chief LS), Kira Kruglikova (Director DCM).

The meeting took the form of a question-and-answer session.

Mobility

In response to questions about the new mobility policy, under which language staff would no longer be exempt, the **Director** stated that some aspects of the policy were not clear, including the retroactive nature for newly promoted staff. She would seek clarification from HRMS and update staff at a future town hall.

The President asked whether the Chief and Director agreed that mandatory mobility did not make sense for language staff given that the overwhelming number of posts were in New York and Geneva and that it would simply introduce extra costs. If so, would they have a chance to express their disagreement with HRMS?

¹ Unless otherwise stated, the opinions reflected herein represent staff suggestions and views collected by their representatives and are aimed at promoting communication between management and staff. In order to avoid misunderstandings, any comments or requests for corrections to the minutes should be submitted to the President of the LSSA only, for inclusion in the minutes of the following meeting.

The Director stated that mandatory mobility could make it easier to recruit to Nairobi and that there was value in moving between duty stations. The new policy should not be as costly as the previous interchange programme, as that had involved moving twice in two years.

The Chief said that mobility reduced the chance of developing silos. She recalled that previous mobility policies had failed and been cancelled. She expected only a small minority of LS staff to opt in to the voluntary exercise.

Strategic Heritage Plan

The President requested an update on the SHP and asked the fact that some sections had been assigned fewer seats than the number of staff members under the SHP, which effectively made telework mandatory.

The Chief said that the move to the new building had been delayed because the contract to dismantle the E building had not been signed. She had requested that LS be the last to move. She had asked the section chiefs to state how many seats they needed. One section had been assigned an office of 12 people; she and the Director agreed with the section chief that this was not satisfactory and were looking to resolve it before the move. It had been suggested that staff could be offered additional days of teleworking in such unsatisfactory circumstances but not enough staff wanted that so a different solution was being sought.

The Director said that the move would probably be delayed again. E building would not close until the other renovated conference rooms could reopen. Staff would have two months' notice and managers were trying to find ways to make the move less stressful.

Temporary assistance policy

The President asked whether any policy existed on remote vs. on-site work for temporary staff, given that some international organizations had imposed mandatory off-site work and in view of the fact that fully remote work for temporary staff sometimes created additional work for in-house staff.

The Chief said that there was no LS policy, although onsite work did create additional costs such as software licences and phones. Since the pandemic, many temporary staff no longer agreed to travel to Geneva to work.

gDoc 2.0

The President asked whether the reason for the delay in the roll-out of gDoc 2.0 was related to technical problems and, if so, whether they would be fixed in time.

The Director said that the request to delay had come from New York and Geneva had not objected. Work was being done to develop the new reprise calculator. Geneva staff and management had been very vocal in raising concerns about gDoc 2.0 and had been thanked for their contribution to its development. She understood the frustrations and the difficulties involved in switching between systems. A townhall would be held before the rollout and she would make sure that staff knew who to approach for support.

The Chief said that there were positive aspects to the new system. Leave would no longer have to be entered in both gDoc and Umoja. A self-assignment module in which staff would be able to choose a document to work on had been requested for the future.

Vacancies in DPUs

The President asked about the long-standing vacant posts of Chief of the Spanish and Arabic DPUs. In addition, several of the DPUs reported never receiving temporary assistance although they were overstretched.

The Chief said that all DPUs could make use of temporary assistance and suggested that the staff contact the Chief of MTS, who had been informed that TJOs could be advertised to allow staff to use their accumulated leave.

The Director said that the two DPUs had acting Chiefs who would be paid special post allowance until the end of the year. A pilot project to recruit a P-3 as Chief of Text Processing was planned. If that happened, it was unlikely that every DPU would continue to have a G-7 as Chief.

Energy crisis

The President asked for information about the plans to handle the energy crisis, particularly measures that would affect staff such as reducing the temperature in buildings.

The Chief said that a UNOG working group on the energy crisis had been set up. It was possible that the Swiss authorities would recommend reducing the temperature to 19°C and UNOG would have to decide what to do in that case.

The Director said that if the Swiss authorities made such a recommendation, it would be very difficult for UNOG not to follow it. If necessary, for example if the buildings became very cold or parts of them were closed down, the flexible working policy would be adjusted accordingly.