38th UNOG Staff Coordinating Council
38ème Conseil de coordination du personnel de l'ONUG

Minutes of the 7th meeting

held on 23 November 2020 at 11 a.m. via MS Teams

Council members present: ABDELLAOUI Naima; ALEKSANDROVA Anna; ALMARIO Francis; APOSTOLOV Mario; BALD Iain; BALI Mohamed; CHANTREL Dominique; CHAOUI Prisca; DUPARC Philippe; GAZIYEV Jamshid; JACQUIOT Cédric; KHAN Anjum; LIN Dan; MEYER Olivier; NOVIKOVA Alina; PECK ARIF Catherine; RICHARDS Ian; SHELDON JOHNSON Laura; SMITH Bradford; STANOVIC Marko.

Council members absent: DAWADI Niraj; JAMES Elizabeth; KALOTAY Kalman; KELLY Paul; MONNET Aminata.

The meeting opened at 11.05 a.m.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted with changes as reflected below.

2. Adoption of the minutes of the 6th meeting

The minutes of the 6th meeting were adopted without changes as recorded in the Council secretariat.

3. Report of the Finance Commission

The FC reported that the 2018-2019 audit report was submitted by the internal auditors, and comments were provided. It was to be circulated to all staff via broadcast. The FC also reported on the income and expenditures of the Council so far in the 2019-2020 financial year.

4. Report of the Executive Bureau

The EB reported on its various activities undertaken since the previous Council meeting:

- A townhall was held the week before and was attended by over 550 staff who were updated on various ongoing issues including: plans for Uber-style - agile contracts, changes to the selection and mobility policy, equal pay campaign, situation at the Pension Fund, changes to the performance management system.
- Fixed term (FT) contracts: many colleagues were confirming their FT contract renewals were being granted for 1 year or less. This triggered a review by the administration following inquiries from staff representatives, which confirmed lengths of renewal differed between entities. An instruction was expected from New York capping contract renewals at 2 years, which was worrying as it denied staff the possibility to be given 5-year extensions as currently provided for in relevant policies.
- Continuing contracts: it was noted to management that the methodology to identify the number of continuing contracts available was being wrongly applied. Subsequently the administration adjusted it, which at least allowed a slightly larger envelope of available continuing appointments for GS staff and decreased the negative gap for P posts.
- The Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) held a meeting the week before, where the following issues were discussed:
    - *UNOPS contracts at UNOG* (Library, ICTS): management identified a number of staff working on UNOPS contracts in ICTS that should be placed on regular contracts given the ongoing nature of their functions; a limited number of vacancies would be opened shortly. The staff representatives argued these staff should be given priority during the selection process if they met the requirements. In the meantime, staff on UNOPS contracts would be granted 3 to 6 months

extensions. Management agreed to come back to the Council on the number of regular posts that would be created.

  - *Uncertified sick leave (USL) days when in Covid-related quarantine:* staff representation argued that it was not correct to deduct USL days when it was not possible for staff to telework due to the nature of their functions (an issue mostly present in SSS and CSS). Management raised that this was a Secretariat-wide instruction from New York, and Special Leave With Pay was only granted in exceptional cases. The administration would be providing the staff side with statistics on the number of staff who had had to use USL in case of quarantine in order to assess the overall impact of the issue.
  - *Renewal of legitimation cards (CDL):* the Administration clarified that the Swiss mission had not changed its policy on issuance of CDLs, but that it was asking for a justification from those who, having had the right in the past, had never applied for one.

- OCHA staff were being impacted by a relocation and downsizing exercise with 23 posts moving to Istanbul, and the abolishment of 7 GS posts. Staff representation met multiple times with OCHA management from Geneva and New York and sent a letter to the OCHA USG from whom a reply was yet to be received. A follow-up message would be sent to confirm whether the moves to Istanbul were temporarily suspended and reaffirm the need for senior management to address all OCHA Geneva staff at a townhall meeting.
- Transfer of HR functions from UNOG to OHCHR: the latter was undertaking plans to withdraw from UNOG-provided HR services to handle it on its own under the prerogative of the recently expanded delegation of authority. Staff representation asked the SG to look into ways to halt these plans which would create an unnecessary duplication of HR functions in OHCHR and have an impact on the t budget and posts at UNOG (so far impact at UNOG HR was the possible need to abolish 8 posts as a result). Should a transfer of HR functions to OHCHR finally occur, staff representation would push for the affected staff at UNOG to be transferred to OHCHR along with the functions they were performing at UNOG.
- Language Services (LS): a message was sent to LS staff concerning the outcome of the LS meeting with the USG.
- Security and Safety Service (SSS): the recent survey conducted among SSS staff circulated showed that the staff were concerned with a lack of transparency in the work planning of the Service. A meeting with SSS senior management was requested to address the issues revealed in the survey.
- The CCISUA midterm meeting was recently held, where the federation discussed various issues, namely the ICSC's cost-of-living survey in principle expected for 2021, future of work, and other items covered (herein) under separate agenda items.
- eVoting: In view of the Covid situation, Polling Officers had expressed their intent to introduce a system of it eVoting. The EB discussed it and agreed that, in line with the Regulations and the independence of the activities of the Polling Officers, the Council should remain outside of any decision on the eVoting mechanism except for the funding. Polling Officers would send to the Council their choice of mechanism/company and explanation of why it was selected by them and the procedure. The envelope required for the expenditure would be at least USD 2,000 per year, which the EB recommended to approve.

A discussion followed. Concerning eVoting, the urgency to agree on a concrete proposal was highlighted given the proximity of elections. The amount of USD 2,000 was deemed perhaps too low. The independence of the Polling Officers was recalled and that Council members should not influence the running of elections in any way, shape or form – hence why it was for Polling Officers to decide on the proper provisions and for the Council to only discuss the funding. By providing funds for eVoting, the Council would be facilitating Poling Officers a tool so they could carry out their mandate, with total independence on the use of that tool. Decision on the amount would be reached upon discussion on the adoption of the next Council budget.

5. Future of work

The Council was informed that the issue of future of work (the review by management of contractual arrangements that signalled the introduction of precarious contracts) was raised at CCISUA by the Geneva staff representation. CCISUA agreed to get an external advisor assist in setting up a campaign to raise awareness

and engagement among staff, to allow the unions to put pressure and take action (which would likely start with a survey). A working group was put in place at the ICSC to look at the extent to which the organisations were implementing the current contractual arrangements (two staff representatives from the federation would be allowed in the working group). It was noted that the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) recognized the need to discuss the issue further and include staff representation in the discussions (following pressure from staff unions). The HLCM was expected to issue a report on future of work by end of 2020.

6. Pension Fund

The Council noted that the Fund's board continued to focus on reforming the Fund's governance to adapt it to the changing circumstances and the considerable size of the Fund. A new head of investments was recruited by the Pension fund recently. The actuarial situation of the Fund was noted to be balanced following a positive performance of markets.

Concerning the Pension Fund's Geneva office, the board decided at its latest meeting to request management to conduct a cost analysis review before going ahead with the closure of its Geneva finance office, which was still providing direct assistance to pensioners in the Europe and MENA regions. Staff representatives would be contacting the head of the Fund to follow-up on the matter, keeping up hope that the pressure of the Geneva staff union would bear fruit and prevent the closure of said office along with maintaining effective provision of Pension Fund services to its main clients in the regions.

7. Staff Management Committee

The Council was informed that discussion on various issues continued at the SMC level, notably on fixed-term/continuing appointments (as reflected above), the new policy on downsizing which was still to be issued, and changes to the mobility and selection policy (the relevant working group was expected to resume its discussion soon). Discussions were also ongoing concerning a new performance management system proposed by management on which staff unions would be submitting comments despite management's refusal to bring the issue officially to the SMC. Whilst the staff side viewed positively certain points such as the introduction of a 365-degree review (including performance of managers), management's new "agile" system did away with many safeguards already in place for staff (for instance, the diminishing of the work plan simply to informal emails), which could open the door to abuse and retaliation against staff by managers.

8. Equal pay campaign

Council members discussed how the scope of the equal pay campaign had shifted more under CCISUA as the matter of the cost-of-living (COL) survey came into play. Whilst it was always the position of the Council to push for such survey as soon as possible – as a means to end the two different salary scales in Geneva – it had become unadvisable to carry out a COL survey in 2021 (based on UN statisticians' advice) in light of the greatly distorted consumption patterns due to the Covid context. This was the position Geneva staff reps made clear to the fellow unions at CCISUA; the potential risk for staff suffering a further pay cut because of that distortion was too important. The ICSC, very likely under pressure by Member States seeking to cut on personnel costs, was still planning to go ahead with the survey. Although it was regretfully noted that at the ICSC's recent session the federation did not oppose the COL survey - which was expected to begin in 2021 with New York - the CCISUA members agreed at the recent mid-term meeting to pressure for the postponement of COL survey. Should the survey go ahead nonetheless, Council members noted, as a potential last resort mechanism, the survey could be eventually boycotted by staff, thus ensuring that the required 30% participation was not obtained (according to the methodology) and the results would be void.

9. Strategic Heritage Plan (SHP)

The Council was informed that the SHP working group (staff representatives and SHP Transition Team) had been meeting regularly. The staff position was always made clear at those meetings that it cannot accept staff moving into the new building under the current pandemic. Management replied there was no solution apart from increasing distance among staff that were due to occupy the building. With OCHA in the process of reducing its Geneva workforce, it was already known occupancy would in principle be reduced. The staff side also raised that studies showed Covid-19 was spreading through air drops (aerosol), making the ongoing presence of several people working in open office space a high risk in itself, but management refused to take

those concerns into account. The Council agreed to conduct another survey among staff by early 2021 based on those studies.

When management was questioned about how they intending dealing with staff shortly set to move to swing space in the new building due to allow for the other building renovations, they said those who refused to move into new building due to Covid fears would be asked to telecommute. The staff side expressed its disagreement with such approach, as it was up to the employer to provide safe work environment for all employees and not to send staff work from home because of its inability to do so.

A discussion followed. The argument of 'duty of care' was raised as a legal tool to be used in case staff were actually forced to go to the new building despite of Covid risk. A suggestion was made to write to the Director-General to make her aware of the potential risk for the organisation, notably reputational damage as it was for management to prove that staff could move safely. Concerning health safety conditions, it was said the medical service should also be involved.

A wait-and-see approach was also suggested, as upcoming developments in 2021 were still unknown, namely Covid vaccination, evolution of the overall virus spread, etc., which could possibly make 'moving into the building in light of Covid' a non-issue.

The possibility of organizing a townhall meeting with SHP was raised (or requesting SHP to organize one), so the SHP team could explain the situation to staff and reassure them of the safety of the workplace, as was their duty. Such townhall was asked to be open without any restriction or censorship on comments. Regrettably, SHP had already refused to organize any townhall as they preferred to keep discussions and feedback limited to 'transition measures' within departments. For the Council to organize a townhall on the subject and to write to the DG remained open options that the EB would be considering as the situation evolved.

10. By-election of internal auditors

As per Annex I, Article 6.2 of the Regulations, the following 5 candidates were nominated for internal auditors: Lisa Neddoff Smith, Sonia Perez Ordono, Ying Liu, Fatoumata Ciss-Diallo, and Bin Lai (all with finance backgrounds). The nominations filling the number of empty seats, were accepted without opposition. Having filled all internal auditor vacancies, the Council noted it could fulfil the auditing mandate of the Regulations and did not need to resort to engaging an external firm.

11. Adoption of the 2020-2021 budget

Council members were presented with the draft budget for the financial year 2021-2021 and went through its different lines. A CHF 5'000 envelope for eVoting was noted to have been included, which triggered a discussion whether it should be higher, but finally kept tentatively at CHF 5'000. No envelope was allocated for 'legal representation of staff', but it was clarified that the EB and Council could evaluate such potential expenditure when presented, as well as for any cultural event. One single line for 'Campaigns' of up to CHF 10'000 would cover multiple campaign expenditures as they evolved (equal pay, future of work, SHP, etc.).

The Council adopted its 2020-2021 budget as annexed to the present minutes which, as per the Regulations, would serve as maximum envelope for expenditures approved by the EB in representation of the Council.

12. Any other business

No other business was raised.

The meeting was adjourned at 2.20 a.m.

ANNEX: Budget 1 December 2020 - 30 November 2021

All figures are expressed in Swiss Francs

Adopted during the 7th meeting of the 38th Council on 23 November 2020

REVENUES

	Adopted budget
Membership dues	**47,000.00**
Staff magazine	**70,000.00**
TOTAL REVENUE	**117,000.00**

EXPENDITURES

STAFF REPRESENTATION

Affiliations

PSI annual membership	**3,500.00**
CCISUA annual membership	**20,000.00**

Campaigns

Equal pay campaign general expenditures	**10,000.00**
Equal pay campaign travel to ICSC sessions	
Equal pay campaign PR advisory services	
Equal pay campaign legal fees	
Other campaigns	

STAFF WELFARE

Subsidies to UN clubs & associations

Grants to clubs	**3,000.00**
Inter-Agency games subsidy	**5,000.00**
Sports room maintenance	**500.00**

Staff magazine

Staff magazine operational expenses	**67,000.00**

ADMINISTRATION

General administrative expenses

General administrative expenses	**1,000.00**
Software licenses and hosting	**1,000.00**
e-Voting	**5,000.00**

Financial services

Bank charges	**900.00**

Miscellaneous

General miscellaneous expenses	**2,000.00**
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	**118,900.00**
NET RESULT	**-1,900.00**