



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

Minutes of the 5th meeting

held on 11 November 2021 at 1.15 p.m. via MS Teams

Council members present: ABDELLAOUI Naima; ALEKSANDROVA Anna; ALMARIO Francis; APOSTOLOV Mario; BALI Mohamed; CHAOUI Prisca; COLANGELO Roberto; DAN Lin; GAZIYEV Jamshid; HERMELINK Ursula; JACQUIOT Cédric; JOHNSON Laura; KHAN Anjum; LEWIS-LETTINGTON Nicole; MEYER Olivier; NGUYEN Ngoc; PECK ARIF Catherine; RICHARDS Ian; SMITH Brad.

Council members absent: ALLEK Meriem; BATAC Cecilia; CHANTREL Dominique; DUPARC Philippe; MONNET Aminata ; POPA Gabriela.

The meeting began at 1:05 p.m.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda of the meeting was adopted with changes as reflected below.

2. Adoption of the minutes of the 4th meeting

The minutes of the 4th meeting were adopted without changes as recorded in the Council secretariat.

3. Report of the Finance Commission

The FC reported on the financial statements for the period 1 December 2020 to 30 November 2021 that had been circulated to the Council in advance. With regard to income, it was highlighted that membership dues had remained stable but had not increased and that the UN Today did very well that year with respect to income from advertisements. Expenditures were also highlighted including on charges for negative interest. Following a review of the balance sheet of assets and liabilities, there was a question on the negative interest charges and what could be done to mitigate against such charges. One Council member suggested approaching UNFCU. The Treasurer explained that he had contacted several banks in order to see which one would offer the best solution for the Council's funds, and that UNFCU accounts were in USD involving exchange rates and other fees, which would also be a risk to Council funds which are in Swiss francs.

4. 2021-2022 draft budget

The draft budget was presented by the Treasurer which had been circulated to the Council in advance. There was a discussion on investments with one Council member suggesting investing in Bitcoin. Another Council member stated their opposition to investing in anything speculative. It was noted that the EB had a meeting with a financial adviser and was still looking at investment possibilities. The EB invited the Council to submit proposals in writing in this regard. It was also explained with respect to the budget line for creation of a legal entity, that the Council was facing difficulty with respect to its legal standing to open bank accounts and this would also impact its ability to invest. As such, a budget line was included for legal advice to establish the Council as a legal entity under Swiss laws. In this regard, it was mentioned that the Regulations would need to be reviewed and revised. One Council member also expressed the view that the Regulations needed to be overhauled. The budget was adopted as circulated and without any changes by consensus.

5. Report of the Executive Bureau

The report of the EB was circulated in advance of the meeting. The Executive Secretary provided a comprehensive overview of all of the meetings, broadcasts and other activities of the EB (see annex "Report of the Executive Bureau"). Following the briefing, one Council member highlighted the need to do more to

protect staff against retaliation and that this was the main reason why staff are afraid to come forward with complaints of misconduct or harassment. The comment was noted by the Executive Secretary.

6. Update on SMC

The Executive Secretary briefed on the SMC Ad Hoc Meeting on 21 October 2021, the SMC Plenary Meeting held in Bonn from 4 to 9 October 2021, the SMC Staff Side Meeting on 21 October, the SMC Ad Hoc Meeting on 27 October and the SMC Ad Hoc Meeting on 10 November (see annex "Report of the Executive Bureau"). There were no interventions on this agenda item.

7. Future of work

The President of the Council provided updated information on the Future of Work and Flexible Working Arrangements. It was noted that the CEB had adopted a framework for Flexible Working Arrangements but that it would have no impact on UNOG staff as we already have a very progressive Flexible Working Arrangements policy. The discussion on the new "agile" contract are continuing. At a meeting of the Working Group on Contractual Arrangements with the global staff federations, it was agreed that there was no reason to change the current contractual framework. One member of the Council supported the agile contract for those entities that rely heavily on voluntary contributions. It was explained by the President of the Council that while the Council understands the particular needs of these entities, it cannot support the "agile" contract as it weakens the contractual framework for the staff at large. There were no further comments on this point.

8. Language service

Laura Johnson, President of the Sectoral Assembly, briefed the Council on the results of the survey agreed to by the affected global unions on the increased productivity standards and the meeting of the SMRG (Staff Management Relations Group), which met on 27 October. A summary of the issues discussed is contained in the Report of the Executive Bureau. There were no interventions on this agenda item.

9. Strategic Heritage Plan

The Executive Secretary reported that a broadcast was issued on 23 Sept 2021 in which the Council requested additional feedback from staff on the move to the new H building. Another broadcast was sent out on 22 October updating staff on measures taken by management to address concerns regarding noise, temperature and humidity, hygiene and potentially hazardous conditions. The broadcast included the response from Mr. Clemens Adams, Director of the Division of Administration, to the Joint Committee on Health and Safety in the Workplace. There were no interventions on this agenda item.

10. Audit of 2020-2021 accounts

It was agreed by the Council by consensus to procure an external auditor for the review of the 2020-2021 financial accounts.

11. Any other business

No other issues were raised.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Executive Secretary Report (11 November 2021)

Here is a summary of meetings, broadcasts and other activities since the last Council meeting held on 16 September :

Meeting with USG Pollard: The UNOG SCC met with USG Pollard on 30 September. A summary of the meeting was broadcasted to all staff on 19 October. The following issues were discussed:

- **Future of work and contractual arrangements:** The Staff Council expressed its concerns regarding the proposed “agile” contracts stating that the current contractual arrangements adequately serve the interests of the Organisation. The USG responded that some entities, many of which are heavily dependent on voluntary funds, would like more flexibility for certain types of jobs. She confirmed that the current contractual arrangements would remain in place but that Management is looking into a more flexible and financially sustainable contract arrangement to meet certain needs. Management is looking to come up with a transparent framework for the system which will need to be approved by the ICSC and the General Assembly.
- **Combating Racism in the Workplace:** The Staff Council confirmed its commitment to this initiative and requested that Management provide support and direction to ensure that this initiative produces concrete results. We mentioned that UNOG has established a Working Group on combatting racism in the workplace. The USG confirmed that the Task force on racism will shortly issue recommendations in this regard. The USG stated that an accountability framework exists but that staff are not coming forward to lodge complaints about instances of racial discrimination. She highlighted the need for staff to come forward and to use the confidential complaint procedure of OIOS so that instances of discrimination can be investigated.
- **Delegation of authority:** The Staff Council also raised the issue of abuses in the context of delegation of authority and the need for overarching oversight to ensure the implementation of coordinated policies and interpretation thereof across entities. We also raised the issue of possible abuse by managers and the lack of oversight of certain entities where a climate of fear persists. The USG emphasized again the need for issues related to abuse of authority and misconduct to be investigated by OIOS, emphasizing that Management can only take action if staff come forward.
- **Return to office and vaccination:** The Staff Council asked whether a policy would be forthcoming on this issue, mentioning that the Staff Council conducted a survey of staff in Geneva to obtain their views on vaccinations in the context of returning to office. The USG confirmed that the issue is being carefully reviewed by the administration together with the Medical Directors, noting that neither the WHO nor the network of UN Medical Directors have yet pronounced on the concept of across-the-board mandatory vaccinations. However, the Secretary-General has determined that certain categories of staff are required to be vaccinated in order to safely carry out their duties, with some exceptions on medical grounds. In such a case, remedial measures would need to be found to accommodate that staff member.
- **Lessons learnt from Afghanistan:** The Staff Council raised the issue of national staff in the context of the current political situation in Afghanistan and the need for better contingency measures by the United Nations to face similar situations. The USG recognized that the system wasn't fully equipped to face such situations and mentioned the need to draw lessons from what happened.

- Dynamics of SMC: The Staff Council mentioned that SMC is not fully functional and that real consultations are for the most part not taking place. The USG mentioned her commitment to ensure a functional SMC. Future of work and contractual arrangements.

Afghanistan:

Letters to OHCHR and OCHA: As a follow-up to letters addressed to the Secretary-General from CCISUA, the staff federation to which the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council belongs, we also addressed letters to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, and to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Martin Griffiths in which we expressed our concern about the safety of all staff members remaining in Afghanistan and requesting information on the measures that have been put in place by both entities to mitigate risks to staff, as well as plans to relocate and evacuate affected staff and their families.

We received responses from both the OHCHR and OCHA. Both letters highlight that both entities are following the security situation closely and have taken measures to increase security measures, relocate staff to safer areas and evacuate staff. OHCHR reported that one-third of UNAMA's national human rights staff are now "in a position of safety". OCHA indicated that national staff and their families who are at unacceptable risk "...have been, and continue to be, supported in leaving Afghanistan."

This information was broadcasted to all staff on 17 September 2021.

We also discussed these concerns with the High Level Committee on Management (HLCM). It was also raised at the SMC meeting (4 to 9 October) and will be raised at the CCISUA Mid-Term Meeting in November, where Prisca, as President of CCISUA, will also request a meeting with the SG. In light of the recent events in Ethiopia, staff concerns will also be raised in that context.

SMC:

We had a SMC Ad Hoc Meeting on 21 October with the HLCM in presence of the USG-DSS, which focused on Afghanistan. This information was conveyed to CCISUA for follow-up: The USG-DSS reported as follows:

- Many incidents of harassment and intimidation are being reported. The authors are either from the Taliban or other groupings that are active in Afghanistan. Staff are being asked to report these incidents through a platform. They usually trigger a security assessment that can lead to a recommendation to the SG for evacuation. 40 national staff members with their dependents have been evacuated and 60 are still waiting to be evacuated. The number of international staff physically present has been increased to 150.
- Air bridges and safe roads are being secured and MedEvac capacities are now available.
- Staff who are in PC1 and PC2 have been sent back to their duty stations outside Kabul. This concerns mainly staff working in humanitarian assistance.
- Factors such as ethnicity and gender aren't taken into account for evacuation purposes. There should be a proof that staff are being targeted because of their work at the UN.
- Regarding female colleagues, they won't be treated differently as there is a need for female staff working in Afghanistan.
- For staff who would have to be back physically to Afghanistan, if they refuse to do so they won't be treated as being downsized as their positions haven't been abolished to justify a placement or transfer.
- For staff from UNHCR who voluntarily relocated from Mazar to Kabul, they are all back to Mazar except for two and they are looking into the possibility of paying them the relocation grant.
- Staff counselling capacities have been increased to assist staff.

- DSS intends to commission an independent inquiry into the way the situation was managed. Version 3.0 of the guidelines will soon be out.

The Staff-Management Committee Plenary Meeting was held in Bonn from 4 to 9 October for its first face-to-face meeting in two and a half years. It discussed a large number of topics and for some was able to reach agreement. The summary and report were broadcasted to staff on 26 October and was provided to the Council on 14 October:

- **Continuing contracts:** Staff representatives requested an update on the delay of the review since 2017. Management confirmed that the 2015 continuing appointment review is underway with an expected finalization by March 2022. They indicated that for the 2015 exercise, there are no available slots for P staff. For GS staff, there are 636 available slots and 294 potentially eligible GS staff. Management is exploring the possibility of proceeding with the 2016 exercise as soon as feasible after the conclusion of the 2015 exercise.
- **Flexible working arrangements:** Staff representatives expressed disappointment that their earlier proposals to ensure a fairer application of the flexible working arrangements policy were not implemented and regretted the delay in reviewing ST/SGB/2019/3. Management confirmed its intention to review the policy taking into consideration the feedback provided by the staff representatives.
- **Career stagnation:** Staff representatives noted issues with career stagnation at all levels, highlighting particularly the situation of P2 staff placed through the NCE/YPP programmes and the relatively high number of resignations due to career stagnation and lack of career support. The staff representatives proposed measures to address career development issues for YPPs and also requested disaggregated data for all staff on the number of years that staff stay at each grade. Management indicated that career development is a shared responsibility and that data on staff serving at P2 level indicates that two-thirds of staff progress in their careers within five years of service at P2 level. Management informed that an evaluation of the YPP is in the early stages of planning.
- **Rosters:** Staff representatives expressed concern that some roster memberships are still expiring despite the suspension of the mobility policy (ST/AI/2016/1), and highlighted their position that expiration of roster membership should not be reintroduced. Management confirmed that ST/AI/2016/1 has been suspended and that any expiry of roster membership will be lifted for all currently rostered candidates and will be aligned with the indefinite roster membership period as per ST/AI/2010/3. This change will be reflected in Inspira accordingly.
- **Clearer rules in case of downsizing:** Upon request by staff representatives for an update on the administrative issuance on downsizing, management confirmed that its issuance is a priority and will be shared for final review with the aim to issue it by the end of first quarter of 2022.
- **Gender:** The staff unions acknowledged the progress towards gender parity but underscored the need to improve representation of women from underrepresented countries and regions, as well as considering the legitimate career expectations of men. They reiterated the importance of merit in any selection decision. Staff representatives raised the importance of retaining and enhancing career prospects for currently serving female staff, including in the field versus external candidates. They requested continued engagement on this issue, including on data gathering and analysis and outreach at senior levels. With regards to the requirement to seek exceptions from the SG's office to select men, staff representatives were informed that these were being granted when properly justified. The SMC agreed to establish contact points within SMC.

- **COVID:** There were a number of issues discussed under this item, including payment for quarantine costs for travel on home leave, vaccinations and return to premises. Management agreed to the staff representatives' proposal to pay for mandatory quarantine costs during home leave, education grant and family visit travel back-dated to 1 January 2021. It was also agreed that UNLPs may be used for official travel including home leave, education grant and family visit travel under conditions to be established by management. Staff requested an update on plans for disclosure of medical data and mandatory vaccinations and clear guidelines from the Secretary-General with minimum standards for all duty stations. Management clarified that general guidance on these matters needs to remain flexible to allow global and system-wide application. They confirmed that guidance has been issued for New York HQ on mandatory vaccination when mitigating measures may not be possible and similar guidance will soon be issued for all entities. The decision to mandate vaccinations in certain circumstances has been made by the Secretary-General under his authority to ensure all necessary safety and security arrangements.
- **Delegation of authority:** Staff representatives raised numerous concerns about the SG's policy of delegating authority to department heads on how they interpret the rules. This included differences in implementation resulting in a fragmentation of policies across the system and issues related to accountability. Management confirmed that delegation of authority remains the prerogative of the Secretary-General and that the ST/SGB on delegation of authority is not subject to consultation.
- **Unemployment insurance and other insurance issues:** Staff representatives highlighted the plight of staff members separated from service and the need to provide coverage to help in mitigating challenges posed by disruption of income and loss of social security coverage and the insufficiency of the termination indemnity. Management agreed to explore separate insurance coverage for unemployment insurance and health coverage for children over the age of 25 years and secondary dependents noting that the scheme would be separate from the ones provided to serving staff members, that participation would not count towards eligibility for ASHI and that it would be entirely financed by participants.
- **Remote simultaneous interpretation and health impact on interpreters:** Staff representatives reiterated the health issues affecting interpreters in the context of RSI and requested that the recommendations as contained in the RSI Taskforce Report be implemented, in particular relating to the use of ISO-compliant platforms. Management stated that they were taking this matter very seriously and were addressing the concerns. Points of disagreement remained in particular regarding the DHMOSH risk assessment that the staff representatives viewed as flawed.
- **Administration of Justice:** Staff representatives proposed an amendment to the Statutes of the United Nations Dispute Tribunal (UNDT) which would have provided for reinstatement of a staff member in the case of wrongful termination in lieu of paid compensation unless the Secretary-General could provide satisfactory evidence to the Tribunal when opting for the payment of compensation in lieu of reinstatement that the latter is not feasible due to compelling reasons. Staff representatives highlighted that reinstatement provides real justice by putting the staff member in the place that they would have been but for the wrongful act and promotes accountability. Management rejected the proposal.
- **OIOS:** Staff representatives requested management to expedite the establishment of the working group on ST/AI/2017/1 agreed to at SMC VIII and requested stronger protection of staff members against investigations that are based on allegations made in bad faith. Staff representatives also raised concerns about the effectiveness, quality and consistency of fact-finding panels, particularly in the field. Management recalled that ST/AI/2017/1 in conjunction with Section 7 of ST/SGB/2002/7 delineates the framework in which

investigations take place and reminded that all staff members are subject to the legal framework of the Organization. OIOS' representative briefed the SMC.

- **Updates were provided in the work of various working groups:** With respect to the Working Group on Staff Selection and Mobility, the staff representatives expressed concerns that the delegation of authority was leading to fragmentation in the application of staff rules and related policies. It was agreed that the second interim report of this Working Group would be discussed at an SMC ad-hoc meeting. Regarding the Working Group on General Service career prospects, it was agreed, inter alia, to reactivate this Working Group and to update its composition as well as expand the terms of reference to include the issue of the G to P barrier.

As a follow-up to the SMC Plenary Meeting, a SMC Staff Meeting took place on 21 October to review the report for follow-up action by SMC Staff Side and to fill vacant positions in various WGs of SMC with staff representatives from the global unions. These WGs include Staff Selection and Mobility, Performance Management, Administration of Justice, Delegation of Authority, GS Career Prospects, AI/2017/1 on Unsatisfactory Conduct, Investigations and the Disciplinary Process, and Parental Leave. Another meeting was held on 26 October to discuss organizational issues and to prepare for the Ad Hoc SMC Meeting on 27 October.

SMC Ad Hoc Meeting: There were two items of the agenda at the SMC Ad Hoc meeting held on 28 October, which was also provided to the Council on 28 October and broadcasted to all staff on 11 November:

- Home leave lump sum:
 - Management introduced a paper on establishing a fixed lump sum per home leave destination for 12 months at a time. Rates would be published at the start of each year. They said this was to address variations in calculation methods applied by each office. They also noted that some staff were buying their tickets before getting the lump sum offer and were unpleasantly surprised.
 - Staff representatives raised a number of concerns including that air fares vary considerably during the year and in and out of school holidays. Staff taking home leave during peak travel periods may be at a disadvantage. Currency fluctuations also needed to be factored in. We also noted that the current system provided the best way of linking the lump sum to reality in an agile manner and in line with the General Assembly resolution. Issues of inconsistencies could be easily addressed by improving the guidelines. There were questions on how the new lump sum would be calculated and it was agreed to suspend this topic to allow management to come back with examples of the new calculations and more information.
 - Separately we noted that there is currently a proposal before the General Assembly to increase the lump sum from 70 percent of the least restrictive economy fare to 75 percent.
- Draft career satisfaction framework: Management introduced a publication entitled Career Satisfaction: A Support Framework for Staff of the UN Secretariat, which explains the organizational approach and support towards helping staff navigate their own "career journeys". Staff representatives commented that staff do not feel supported in the careers and that many are stuck at the same level, which affects overall career satisfaction. Staff representatives agreed to the overall framework document but another meeting will be held to discuss implementation of the framework.

JNC: We informed staff through a broadcast dated 28 September regarding the outcomes of the JNC meeting held on 7 September as follows. The JNC brings together the UNOG Staff

Coordinating Council and the administration in Geneva to examine and resolve issues relating to “staff welfare, including conditions of employment and of work specific to Geneva, general conditions of life and other personnel policies”. The issues discussed include:

- Return to office: The Council inquired about plans regarding the return to office and vaccination protocols. Management indicated that for the moment being, the situation remains unchanged, i.e. unless their functions require on site presence, no staff are being obliged to report physically to the office as the situation is rather fluid. All staff are encouraged to get vaccinated and to report their vaccination status in the [EarthMed portal](#). They also highlighted that, in line with the advice of medical directors of the common system, managers have the right to ask staff about their vaccination status as this is not confidential. Management is looking into the issue of a vaccination certificates issued from outside of Switzerland, which are not recognized by the Swiss authorities. The Council recalled the importance of having a clear policy in terms of vaccination and COVID passes to be communicated to staff as the issue is very sensitive. Management confirmed that if there are any changes, staff would be given ample notice.
- Working Group on Racism: As per our past communication, the Director-General has agreed to establish a Working Group on Racism. The [Terms of Reference](#) have been established and it was decided that a joint call for staff interested in participating in the Working Group would be issued. The broadcast requesting volunteers was sent out on 13 September. Since the meeting, candidates have been vetted and notified. A follow-up meeting was held on 29 September.
- UNOPS contracts at ICTS: Management informed us that of January 2022, UNOPS contracts will be used for project activities. We thanked management for this development and expressed the importance of considering favorably staff who have been on UNOPS contracts and who will go through the selection process to the extent possible.
- Safety and Security Section: The Council recalled the importance of paying the overtime for official holidays in Geneva (which had been put on hold due to the liquidity crisis) in 2021. Management was open to submitting a recommendation in that regard to the UNOG Director-General. The Council raised the issue of lack of career advancement for staff at the G3 levels and asked to consider the option of automatic promotion or to reclassify posts to the G4 levels. Management mentioned that no duty station is there an automatic promotion to the G4 level and that the requirements for the G3 and the G4 posts were different. Management agreed to look into the distribution of grades within SSS to see about possible career advancement.

ICSC: An ICSC Town Hall meeting was held on 20 October where the cost-of-living adjustment survey was discussed. Staff expressed their concern about holding a survey that will have long-term affects given the Covid context and abnormal consumer spending patterns. It is clear that the post adjustment may very well be reduced given the lower than normal consumer spending due to Covid and so staff will need to be very careful how they answer the questions. By email dated 3 November, we communicated with the Council the latest developments on contractual arrangements in the context of the ICSC Working Group on the review of contractual arrangements.

CCISUA: The Council was briefed by a communication dated 3 November on the latest developments regarding important subjects for the UNOG SCC and other global trade unions on contractual arrangements:

- At the recent ICSC Working Group on the Review of contractual arrangements, the WG concluded that the current contractual arrangement was fit for purpose and that there was no need to come up with a new type of contractual arrangement. The lengthy discussions focused

on the main concern of the Organization relating to the unpredictability of the funding sources, with more and more entities relying on XB funds.

- A worrying trend that was revealed during the discussions relates to the fact that some Organizations, e.g.: WHO, are discontinuing the continuing contract arrangement with the agreement of their Executive Board. This trend is very disconcerting as the same Members States are sitting in the boards of different organizations and we have to remain vigilant in the near future.
- For the UN secretariat, the entities insisted on recommending to the ICSC to increase the number of annual leave days for temporary contract holders to 2.5 days instead of the current 1.5. days. The three federations expressed their concerns that this might give the green light to entities to have more staff on temporary contracts, but at the same time we could not object to this proposal as the harmonization of the leave entitlement between staff has been one of the claims of many staff unions for many years now.
- In addition to the ICSC working group, the last HLCM session was seized of a report (not public) that deals with the contractual arrangements. In this regard, the staff federations took issue with the following : “31. Consultations with staff federations have continued through several meetings and the workstream is committed to continuing to engage with identified focal points for feedback and input on a regular basis. Some of the concerns of the staff federations that are addressed by the workstream include the sequencing of efforts between the Task Force and the ICSC working group, mobility in the UN system, as well as social protection for the UN workforce.” This paragraph does not reflect the concerns of the staff federations as expressed in various meetings. The staff federations intervened during the HLCM and made it clear that this was not the position of the staff federations.
- The ICSC plenary will be seized of the report of the Working Group in March and will decide what to recommend to the GA and the HLCM workstream on contractual arrangements will continue its work. The staff federations will continue to exert the necessary pressure to “kill” the discussion if possible and to show that the funding issue should not be resolved through more precarious contracts for staff.
- Our federation, along with the other two federations, are currently working with two consultants who are preparing a paper regarding the contractual framework so that we can use it in different fora in order to have our position framed in a clear and explicit manner. This issue will also be discussed at the upcoming CCISUA Mid-Term Meeting in November.

H Building: A broadcast was issued on 23 Sept 2021 in which the UNOG SCC requested additional feedback from staff on the move to the new H building. Another broadcast was sent out on 22 October updating staff on measures taken by management to address concerns regarding noise, temperature and humidity, hygiene and potential hazardous conditions. The broadcast included the response from Mr. Clemens Adams, Director of the Division of Administration, to the Joint Committee on Health and Safety in the Workplace.

DCM-Languages Service

Survey: Messages were sent to translators and revisers on 21 September along with a survey that was agreed to by the affected global unions on the increased productivity standards since 1 May 2021. This was the second survey sent. The results of the survey on the new workload standard was communicated to DCM staff on 3 November 2021.

SMRG Meeting: The SMRG (Staff Management Relations Group) met on 27 October and discussed various issues of interest for DCM staff. Below is a brief summary of the issues discussed:

- Return to the Office, effective 1 November 2021 and requests for working away from the duty station: The Director stated that she expects staff to return to the Office two days per week, in accordance with the latest announcement from UNOG. HR noted that there are exceptions for protected persons, adding that information on this category and the medical reports required were included in the latest broadcast. The Director indicated that telecommuting away from the duty station would continue to be considered within the framework that UNOG has established, i.e. for two weeks in conjunction with annual leave and for very exceptional circumstances. HR also indicated that the registration of vaccinations in the Earth Med portal is very low and it was agreed that another communication would go out encouraging staff to register their status through the portal, which is confidential, to allow UNOG to plan accordingly.
- Performance Management and forthcoming implementation of the People Management Index (PMI) or so called “360 feedback” for D-1s and above and briefing on the impact of the new UN Values and Behaviours Framework: A discussion followed on the new Performance Management System (ST/AI/2021/4) and the new PMI exercise which is being rolled-out system wide for D-1s and above. Staff Representatives indicated that this was a positive initiative which they pushed for. It was discussed that HR would organize a town hall meeting to explain the new framework and performance management system. As the mid-term review has been replaced with “milestone conversations”, it was agreed, in particular in light of the new workload standards, that DCM would have all managers organize “milestone discussions” with staff to assess performance, using a template to be developed in conjunction with HR and Staff Representatives.
- Mandatory Training timelines for new staff: According to the relevant ST/AI new staff members have six months to complete the mandatory trainings. The Director suggested that new translation staff should be given a week of non-productive time to complete the trainings before being given any substantive assignments. It was agreed that this would be a good initiative to allow staff to settle in and become quickly familiar with many of the UN values, as contained in these mandatory trainings, prior to delving into substantive functions. Regarding the United For Respect training, which is not mandatory, HR noted that DCM’s participation is very low and encouraged staff from DCM to take part in these trainings.
- Presentation of the results of the recently conducted global survey of translation staff and discussion on accommodating both the interests of the service as well as of its staff, while acknowledging that NY remains the decision-making entity: Laura Johnson (President of the Languages Service Sectoral Assembly) noted that many staff were afraid of being identified by their comments in the survey indicating a trust deficit. Laura indicated that the comments are now being anonymized and that the survey results would be shared shortly. She then provided an overview of the recent survey results on the new workload standards noting that staff in general are having difficulty coping with the recent increase in workload standards and are working longer hours to meet their targets. She also noted that staff are feeling more tired and stressed, are less motivated and do not feel that their work is valued. She also noted that the new workload standard is having a negative impact on work/life balance. The Director noted the comments and indicated that the feedback was worrisome. She asked whether the survey requested feedback from staff on how to address these concerns. Laura indicated that currently “reprise” is being credited at 100% but staff are very concerned about what will happen next year. The Director noted that the standard “reprise” for Geneva was lower than for other duty stations and queried how the “reprise” was calculated in other duty stations. The Director suggested that a study be

undertaken to look at the productivity using the old calculation to see how many staff would fall below their targets. Staff Representatives noted that it understands that New York has set the policy but that implementation is the responsibility of Geneva and that the resolution can be interpreted in a way to meet the new standard as contained in the GA resolution and also taking into consideration the concerns of staff. The Director suggested that, after the survey results are published, a follow-up discussion will be held on the results.

- What is being done to encourage delegates to come back to the meeting rooms and Management support when suspending interpretation due to poor sound quality: The Director indicated that, effective November 1, UNOG is returning to holding meetings using remote simultaneous interpretation (RSI) platforms with unlimited remote participation for only two hours, instead of three (as was done from July through October), which has caused some problems with substantive secretariats and delegations. Interpretation for in-person meetings is for three hours and so this is a big incentive to return to in-person meetings. DCM has also been focusing on communication packages about best practices for remote participants, so delegates are informed of the technical requirements for hybrid meetings. Another Note Verbale on the technical requirements for delegations will be going out shortly. This information has also been provided to substantive secretariats. OICT is holding a global procurement exercise for RSI platforms to ensure that they are ISO compliant. In order to support interpreters and manage the expectations of remote participants, DCM has also instructed sound technicians to inform remote participants during the on-boarding that, if the sound quality is not good, interpretation may not be possible. Interpreters also have the option to stop interpreting, if the sound quality is not good, and the Director supports them in this regard. The Director has met with delegates and substantive secretariats to explain the challenges with respect to hybrid meetings and the technical limitations and will continue to emphasise this point in future meetings.
- Proposed 2022 budget for DCM: The Director mentioned that they will be meeting with the Fifth Committee shortly on their 2022 budget (A/76/6 (Sect. 2)), which includes abolishment of three vacant GSOL Editorial and Desktop Publishing Assistant positions and move of one occupied GSOL post from subprogramme 4 to programme support (the Indico.UN team). Consequently impact of Division staff is expected to be minimal.

Interpreters: Interpreters met with Staff Unions on 22 September. In short, the meeting with the ASG (townhall) was very disappointing. The health issues were dismissed and it was felt that the DHMOSH report was not serious and no input from the interpreters was taken into consideration. Possible options include conducting an independent study by experts; raising it at SMC, HRM Network, High Level Committee on Management, ISCS and Pension Board.

UNOG SCC Town Hall: Staff at UNOG were invited to a town hall meeting by broadcast dated 27 September. A summary of the meeting was also broadcasted to all staff on 8 October: The main issues discussed include:

- Agile contracts: We provided an update on the latest regarding the management proposals for a new, “agile” contract, how it might affect you, and what we are doing to push back on them. The issue is being considered at the Chief Executives’ Board and ICSC and we are making sure to make your concerns heard, especially following our [survey](#) on the topic.
- Upcoming post adjustment survey: We briefed you on preparations for the ICSC cost-of-living survey, which will normally determine post adjustment for the next five years. We expressed reservations on conducting a survey during a transition period when we are not

yet back to office. We also identified how the survey would be affected if completed by staff living in France or who had telecommuted over the last year from another location.

- **Strategic Heritage Plan:** We reported how we had raised your concerns numerous times about the open-space design of the new H Building, and in particular in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, based on the results of the survey that has been conducted to gather staff [concerns](#). We also mentioned the memo that has been addressed to UNOG management regarding practical measures to be taken in the H building to respond to legitimate staff concerns. We will continue to gather feedback from staff and will follow-up.
- **Staff-Management Committee:** We reported that several ad hoc SMC meetings were held and various issues were discussed, namely the flexible working arrangements and the need to clarify the notion of “personal compelling circumstances” in the current policy on FWA, the mandatory learning programmes and the need to delink it from granting annual leave in case of non-completion, overly restrictive job openings, the safety of staff mainly national ones in Afghanistan as well as Delegation of Authority. We also mentioned the [items](#) that are put before the SMC meeting which is taking place this week in Bonn.
- A number of questions and comments were made following the briefing. Staff with individual concerns were advised to contact the Staff Council for follow-up.

UNECE : A [communication](#) was sent to UNECE staff on 21 September as a follow-up to our meeting with UNECE management in which we suggested that having a sectoral assembly for UNECE would ensure regular communication between UNECE staff representatives and management on issues of concern. Unfortunately, following two calls by the Polling Officers to establish a sectoral assembly, very few staff came forward.

On 12 October, we sent another [communication to UNECE Staff on our meeting with the Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, Catherine Pollard](#), on 30 September to discuss a number of issues, including those raised by UNECE staff in general, particularly in the context of delegation of authority and accountability. In that meeting, USG Pollard underscored that Management can only act based upon well-documented cases of wrongdoing and that staff should avail themselves of the available administrative, legal and oversight tools provided by the Organization, including the MEU and OIOS. We provided information on OIOS, MEU, UNAT, UN Ethics Office and the Ombuds and Mediation Services. Following this message, we received several calls from staff and assisted one staff member with filing another OIOS complaint. We assisted another staff member with filing a legal change on a recruitment process which came out favourably for the staff member. We are additionally looking into conducting a staff satisfaction survey.

We sent another [communication to UNECE staff on 13 October](#) on feedback received from the UNECE Executive Secretary and Management on a number of issues raised at our meeting on 6 September. This information was also communicated to the Council on 13 October. I also met with the Ombuds on 14 October regarding this matter:

- **Regular meetings:** It was agreed that given the current absence of a UNECE sectoral assembly that UNECE Management and the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council (SCC) would meet on a regular basis to ensure that issues addressed to the SCC are brought to the attention of Management in a timely manner. As such, we would request that staff continue to contact us with their concerns. As mentioned in my previous email, staff may also avail themselves of the various tools provided by the Organisation to resolve work-related issues and report wrongdoing/misconduct, including OIOS, MEU, the Office of the Ombuds and the Ethics Office. It would also be appreciated if SCC could be kept informed of such matters and, as mentioned, we are available to discuss and assist in this regard.

- ECTD: Regarding the seven-step training course on civility in ECTD as suggested by the Ombuds, the Director has reached out to the Ombuds's office to schedule this training. SCC will be following-up with the Ombuds as well.
- Staff morale: With respect to issues relating to morale and relations between staff and some managers, the Executive Secretary assured that she is fully committed to continue to work with us to improve UNECE in this area. She mentioned that in 2019, a consultant was engaged in this regard, which, "amongst other initiatives, led to the internal mobility programme".
- Regarding gender parity, the Executive Secretary noted our comments and assured us that "UNECE adheres to the principles set out in ST/SGB/2018/1, regulation 4.2, which states "The paramount consideration in the appointment, transfer or promotion of the staff shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity." The Executive Secretary has instructed managers, "in line with the General Assembly request, to undertake efforts to reach as wide a geographic pool of candidates as possible, and, in line with the Secretary General's System Wide Strategy on the Achievement of Gender Parity, to seek to achieve gender parity at those levels where we are currently under represented". The Executive Secretary also noted that she has "been emphatic that these criteria should never be applied as a filter on recruitment, and that, in accordance with regulation 4.2, securing the highest standards of efficiency, competency and integrity is the paramount consideration in every recruitment process". The Executive Secretary noted that "each Division at UNECE currently has a Gender Focal Point, and that these focal points are in turn coordinated by the Departmental Focal Point". The Executive Secretary confirmed: "Information is available to all staff on gender parity and geographical representation, and that all UNECE staff have access to the Executive Office Administrative Portal, where monthly reports are available at the Division and Entity levels by grade.
- Regarding the issue of internal and external candidates, "UNECE will continue to adhere to the standards set forth in ST/SGB/2018/1, regulation 4.2, whereby, "The paramount consideration in the appointment, transfer or promotion of the staff shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. Due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible.""
- Regarding staff development, the Executive Secretary noted our concerns and stated that they "will continue to ensure that this is fully supported".
- With respect to various recruitment issues and allegations of wrongdoing, the Executive Secretary requested more detailed information to respond. If staff are not comfortable in raising specific issues directly with Management, the SCC is available to assist. We have assisted staff in filing complaints with OIOS and have also requested clarification from OHR in New York on a recruitment procedure.
- With regards to the complaint surrounding the recruitment process for the D-1 in ECTD, the Executive Secretary clarified that this post was kept vacant from 1 December 2018 through 31 January 2020, "primarily due to the liquidity crisis and the Controller's request to slow spending and ongoing recruitment processes to the maximum extent possible in support of the Organization's overall liquidity management efforts. While there were internal applicants at the P-5 level from within UNECE, in line with Secretariat policy, I have worked to ensure that the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity are secured through each recruitment exercise. In this instance, this resulted in the selection of a candidate external to UNECE."
- "In relation to the D-1 post in the Programme Management and Support Services Division, please note that per GA resolution A/RES/75/252, UNECE was approved to establish a new Division under the Office of the Executive Secretary effective 1 January

2021. This Division is headed by a D-1, Principal Administrative Officer, for which ACABQ concurrence was sought and received regarding establishment of this position. The vacancy announcement was published in Inspira (JO #145459) on 21 January 2021, and a candidate was selected from the roster on 26 January.”

- Regarding Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA), the Executive Secretary noted that “requests by staff to telecommute from outside of the duty station are always submitted to her office for approval. The Delegation of Authority in this regard is clear and lies with the Head of Entity.” To her knowledge, “all requests received for two weeks of telecommuting outside the duty station combined with annual leave have been approved”.
- Regarding the Mobility Initiative, the Executive Secretary noted the comments regarding the 2021 voluntary mobility exercise launched by UNECE. As discussed during our meeting, UNECE expects to include XB staff in the future.
- Regarding comments with respect to RB staff dedicating 100% of their time to XB activities, she confirmed that this is not acceptable nor in line with her instructions to Senior Managers and that, in contrast, she has explicitly stated that “any fundraising done by Directors or Senior Managers must ensure that the budget assigned to the project is sufficient to cover all extrabudgetary project activities, including staff costs. The UNECE Resource Mobilization strategy document details that RB funded staff should not be used to subsidize the management of extrabudgetary projects, and any time allocated to such activities should be proportionate to the size of the project and kept to a minimum.”
- Regarding the possible misuse of funds, the Executive Secretary stated that such matters must be referred to her office or OIOS immediately. She noted that “all funds managed by UNECE strictly adhere to the terms and conditions as set forth in respective donor contribution agreements and the UN Financial Rules and Regulations. Programme managers are entrusted with this responsibility, with oversight by their respective Division Directors, and Certifying Officers.”
- The Executive Secretary agreed with our comments “regarding the purpose and use of the performance management function. The UNECE Executive Office has organised the provision of orientation sessions for first reporting officers and for all staff on the new Performance Management module and will continue to do so during its implementation.”
- The Executive Secretary also agreed “that the United Nations Dispute Tribunal (UNDT) is a part of the internal justice system to help settle disputes over administrative decisions, and that staff members who have appealed to UNDT should not be harassed or retaliated against in any way. If there is a specific instance of this, I would appreciate being informed so that I can address the issue with any manager who may be engaging in such practice.” SCC is also available to advise and support in this regard.

Covid Vaccinations:

By broadcast of 28 September, the UNOG SCC informed staff of the new Swiss Covid requirements (Switzerland now requires proof of vaccination, recovery or negative test (through the pass sanitaire) to enter restaurants, cultural and activity/leisure centres and indoor events.) and solicited views through a survey.

The results of the survey were provided to Management and broadcasted to staff on 1 October. We also followed-up with a communication dated 2 November to the DG informing her that more staff are approaching us with concerns in relation to the return to office with no proof of vaccination, test or recovery being requested. We reminded the DG that an increasing number of international organizations are requesting this type of proof, while maintaining multilateral meetings. As Geneva-based delegates have access to the Swiss vaccination programmes and

delegates have to undergo PCR testing in order to travel to Geneva, these organizations do not feel that imposing proof of vaccination/testing requirements to enter the premises will have an impact on meetings. In this context, we underscored that the position of UNOG does not follow the same line of reasoning.

Based upon the concerns of staff and the fact that multilateral meetings are taking place in other entities with stricter requirements, we expressed concerns that UNOG is not providing the same duty of care towards its staff members and others on UNOG premises. This is particularly disconcerting given that the coronavirus situation has worsened in the last few weeks in Geneva with a 27% increase in new cases reported in the last week alone. We requested that to ensure a safe return to office for all staff that UNOG reconsiders its position and imposes stricter safety measures in line with other international organizations in Geneva.

Miscellaneous:

- Broadcast dated 5 October encouraging all General Service (GS) staff to take the survey being launched by the UNOG Centre for Learning and Multilingualism (CLM). The objective of the survey is to assess ways to make GS staff feel more valued, to make their jobs more fulfilling, and to improve career advancement.
- Broadcast on 6 October on a series of events on staff wellbeing in all its aspects, including mental health.
- Meeting held with JIU regarding WG on racism and the ways that we could collaborate on moving this agenda forward.
- Long Term Service Awards: Several broadcasts were issued in this regard and event was held virtually on 25 October.
- Brad Smith took a training on 29 October for facilitators as part of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Racism in the Organization by Fadzi Whande, the OHCHR Senior Adviser on Diversity. I followed-up about a possible training for the UNOG WG.

UNOG Staff Coordinating Council
Budget
01 Dec 2021 - 30 Nov 2022
All figures are expressed in Swiss Francs

<u>REVENUES</u>	
Staff magazine	100,000
Membership dues	46,000
TOTAL REVENUE	146,000

<u>EXPENDITURES</u>	
STAFF REPRESENTATION	
Affiliations	
CCISUA annual membership	19,000 *
PSI annual membership	500
Missions and representation	
Official travel: CCISUA mid-term	20,000
Official travel: CCISUA GA	6,000
STAFF WELFARE	
Staff magazine	
Staff magazine operational expenses	80,000
Events	
Long service awards	5,000
ADMINISTRATION	
General administrative expenses	
External audit of accounts	4,000
Software licenses and hosting	800
General administrative expenses	200
Financial services	
Negative interest rate on liquid assets	10,000
Bank charges	1,000
Council elections	
Electronic voting fees	3,000
Legal fees	
Review for the creation of SCC legal entity	5,000
Miscellaneous	
General miscellaneous expenses	2,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	156,500

NET RESULT	CHF -10,500
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* Equivalent amount to US\$20,000