



40th Staff Union Council 2022-2023

Ref. SU-40-3

Minutes of the 3rd meeting

held on 3 June 2022 at 1.30 p.m. via MS Teams

Adopted on 1 September 2022

Council members present: Naima Abdellaoui, Mohamed Assi, Mohamed Bali (*Deputy Executive Secretary*), Dominique Chantrel, Prisca Chaoui, Philippe Duparc, H  l  ne Fabiani, Jamshid Gaziyev, Ursula Hermelink (*Vice President*), Laura Johnson, Nicole Lewis-Lettington, Dan Lin, Bego  a Martinez Alfonso, Olivier Meyer, Hilary Nwokeabia, Rowland Palairet, Catherine Peck Arif, Ian Richards (*President*), Maria Almudena Rueda Melendez, Bradford Smith (*Executive Secretary*), Philip Thomas, Radouan Toualbia.

Council members absent: Jean-Luc La Planeta, Viera Pejchal, Gerald Pioda.

The meeting began at 1:30 p.m.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes as reflected below.

2. Adoption of the minutes of the 2nd meeting

The Executive Secretary raised a proposal for the Council to produce summarized minutes of its meetings. The Council agreed, maintaining adherence to Article 7 of the Council's rules of procedure whereby proposals made and their authors should be mentioned. The adoption of the minutes of the 2nd meeting was postponed in order to adjust them accordingly.

3. Report of the Finance Commission

The FC reported that it had tried to organize a first face-to-face meeting but was not possible due to conflicting schedules. It would strive to organize one as soon as possible.

4. Report of the Executive Bureau

The Executive Secretary reported to the Council on the Bureau's activities since the previous Council meeting, noting summaries of each of the issues had been previously circulated to the Council members. Issue included: ICSC meeting in March in New York where CCISUA represented the Staff Union's interests; HLCM meeting in May where our federation also attended, and no changes were brought about on the current contractual framework to advance management's proposal for agile contracts; the different activities of the UNOG working group on racism; clarifications on the optional biometric access at the new Peace Gate; the recent decrease in Geneva post-adjustment as a result of exchange rate fluctuations that had had no impact on take-home pay; a recruitment case in OHCHR under follow-up; engagement with management on a range of issues (e.g. flexible working arrangements, performance appraisal, performance rebuttals, rosters, medical transfers, duty of care; negotiated offers of summer camps for children of UN staff; and allocation of space for clubs.

5. CCISUA

The Executive Secretary introduced the issue and noted that the CCISUA General Assembly (CCISUA GA) was held between 16-20 May 2022 in Geneva; the report would be circulated once finalized. Salient issues discussed during the CCISUA GA included: amendment of CCISUA statutes; cost-of-living survey and GS salary methodology; review of the compensation package; jurisdictional set-up; evacuation of national staff; racism; contractual arrangements; national officers; social dialogue at the UN; Pension Fund issues. It was noted that Prisca Chaoui was reelected President of the federation by consensus. CCISUA adopted resolutions on a number of the issues discussed.

The question of Staff Union representation at CCISUA meetings was raised, noting that only a limited number Executive Bureau members attended the CCISUA GA. It was argued that all Bureau members should be able to attend these kinds of meetings. At the same time it was mentioned that there was no automatic right for all Bureau members to attend all meetings or missions, and that the practice that the Council and Bureau had followed for many years was to base the composition of delegations on the skills and contributions that members can make, regardless of membership to the Executive Bureau. Confidence and trust were also said to be elements to take into consideration when nominating Council members to delegations.

Comments on the general question of representation at meetings with management were expressed whereby confidence/trust should not play a role, but rather the Staff Union needed to give the opportunity to members to gain experience in said meetings, for example with a rotational system. The confidence had already been expressed by the electorate, and an electoral list should be allowed to have delegates at meetings/missions to represent the view of the electorate that voted for them. These comments were opposed in subsequent interventions noting that when Staff Union officials expressed views, they did so on behalf of all staff, not the particular group of staff that voted for individual Council members. Meetings with management were essentially negotiation meetings where the Staff Union needed to present a unified position, not the diversity of views. Said views should be discussed within the Council and the Council-elected officeholders would attend meetings and present the one position of the Staff Union. This was said to not often be the case and a demand was made to ensure such positions were properly discussed by the Council before meetings took place.

The importance of the jurisdictional set up was raised. Clarifications were sought on the nature of the mandate from the General Assembly to review the set up and the proposals submitted by management so far, and whether they included a possible merger of the ILOAT and UNDT/UNAT systems which would be deemed contrary to UN staff interests. It was clarified that the federation opposed any jurisdictional review and was in favour of maintaining the status quo. Discussions on the functioning of the UN's internal justice system were ongoing at the Internal Justice Council and it strived to make efforts and issue recommendations towards improvement.

A member suggested staff representatives should try to push for the UN to move away from its own internal justice system towards the ILOAT as it was regarded as truly impartial compared to the UN's, as well as less costly. This was noted to be very unlikely to happen because the General Assembly had already established an internal justice system for the UN, but it was constantly being monitored and open for improvement.

6. Proposal to increase the UNOG SU contribution to CCISUA

The Executive Secretary presented a request to increase the 2022-2023 contribution of the Staff Union to its federation by CHF 4,000 (from CHF 19,000 to CHF 23,000) to contribute to its expenses approved at the CCISUA GA. It was recalled the federation had important work ahead in the current year, mainly to engage with the ICSC and CEB bodies on staff work conditions and entitlements, for which the expenses were required. The Council agreed it was important to raise its contribution as other unions did to contribute to CCISUA's work, and thus agreed unanimously on the proposed increment.

7. Celebration event for the Union's 40th anniversary

The Council members recalled it had previously discussed that the union's 40th anniversary could be celebrated with both substantive and festive events. The EB continued to wait for proposals on substantive elements. The Council President proposed a festive event at UN beach to mark the occasion, with a budget of CHF 7'000. A discussion followed on the particularities of holding such an event at the UN beach, including spatial needs and entrance fees.

Having been put to a vote, seeing 19 votes in favour and 1 abstention, the Council agreed to approve a CHF 7'000 budget for festive celebrations of the Staff submit a request to the UN Port Committee, should it prove practicable, to exonerate the constituency of the Staff Union of entrance fees should a festive event be organized at the UN beach.

8. Request of the UN Volleyball Club for financial assistance

The Council members took note of a request for financial support from the UN Volleyball Club for CHF 1'000 (as per documents previously circulated). Upon review, it was noticed that the Club did not have the required number of dues-paying members among its membership. Given the Covid-19 context, the restart of activities in the Palais, and as a way of encouraging club activities, a suggestion was made to approve the grant on an exceptional basis noting the Club should encourage its members to adhere to the Staff Union as dues-paying members. A discussion followed. Questions were asked for clarification on the financial and membership situation of the UN Volleyball Club. Caution was raised on making exceptions to avoid them becoming precedents, given that equal treatment should be given to all clubs.

The Council decided to provide the CHF 1'000 grant to the UN Volleyball Club despite the lack of 15 dues-paying members among its club members (as per the established guidelines) on an exceptional basis. The exception would apply only for the current year which saw a transition period out of the Covid-19 context. The abovementioned grant would be provided under the condition that the Club encouraged their members to adhere to the Staff Union. The Staff Union would be available to all clubs to provide any necessary logistical assistance to allow them to resume their activities and get more members.

9. Staff-Management Committee

The Executive Secretary recalled the Staff-Management Committee that had taken place in April 2022. A summary of main points had been broadcast to all staff. A subsequent ad hoc meeting was held in May on working methods, possible amendments to the rules of procedure, and the issue of mobility. The working group on mobility remained actively discussing proposed policies although there was still no sight of agreement. Discussions had also taken place within the working group on the use of rosters, mainly focusing on updating and making them more attractive for managers to use.

A number of comments were raised by Council members on the issue of rosters, mostly noting the opaqueness of its use and abuse, e.g. how unethical managers could be when often making very selective use of rosters, thus creating tension and animosity and within teams; the large disparity of roster uses between recruitment at headquarters (too infrequent) and the field (much more frequent); favoritism when it came to selection through roster; the lack of a consistent approach between merit and seniority upon recruitment.

The SMC staff side had requested and was waiting for data from management on the use of rosters in the Secretariat. Caution was raised on managing staff expectations, noting that being rostered meant a central review body had cleared someone to be suitable for a post, without any legal right to being selected for one. The importance of ensuring consistency was highlighted to avoid abuse of managerial discretion, as well ensuring job descriptions were generalized Secretariat-wide.

10. Languages Service

Laura Johnson briefed members on recent developments concerning the translators' workload increase. A global townhall of all LS staff took place at which comments from staff supported taking strong action including work stoppages if the situation warranted it. A communication was addressed to DGACM senior management and staff were allowed to express support for the letter. A timetable was set out by management for what they called "consultations" concerning various reports in isolation of each other, which staff unions collectively declined as there was no meaning in discussing interlinked issues separately. Staff unions expected management to call for it in the coming weeks.

The Council took note of a recent open communication by DGACM which referred to work accomplished on conferencing where the efforts of staff and the service they provided was not even referenced, but rather pointing to the usefulness of automation and IT tools. A suggestion was made to protest this as management was giving the impression that human beings were no longer needed to provide conference services.

The Council further noted that efforts were ongoing to draft terms of reference for an eLuna audit. Different leads were also being pursued to identify consulting firms that could carry it out.

11. Pension Fund Administration

The Executive Secretary briefed members on positive developments of working conditions at the UNJSPF, noting a number of consultants would have the chance of being regularized upon the creation of posts. Following independent surveys, the Pension Fund Administration had also taken initiatives to improve the quality of the work environment, namely concerning gender strategy, education, staff engagement, staff induction. It was noted, however, that working in the H building still remained an issue for Pension Fund staff, especially because an open office plan environment posed confidentiality problems. Staff engagement was noted to continue being necessary on a number of other areas, although overall, this seemed to be a good example of management taking on the views of staff and acting accordingly, something about which staff overall seemed satisfied.

12. Motion concerning the Polling Board

Naima Abdellaoui submitted a motion to issue an official communication to the Polling Board in light of the delays in holding a number of due elections and highlighting the importance of the matter. A discussion followed on the best approach to take. Council members were reminded that the Staff Union was statutorily mandated not to interfere with the business of the Polling Officers or other statutory bodies as they were independent. A softer approach was suggested to invite the Polling Board for a meeting to listen to their concerns and inquire if there were any issues that the union could help them overcome. It was agreed for officeholders to reach out to polling officers informally to see how the Staff Union could help improve the situation of electoral timetables.

13. Any other business

No other business was raised.

The meeting was adjourned at 3.25 p.m.