



**40<sup>th</sup> Staff Union Council**  
**2022-2023**

**Ref. SU-40-7**

**Minutes of the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting**

held on 6 December 2022 at 1.15 p.m. via MS Teams

*Adopted on 19 January 2023.*

**Council members present:** Mohamed Bali (*Deputy Executive Secretary*), Dominique Chantrel, Prisca Chaoui, Philippe Duparc, Jamshid Gaziyeu, Ursula Hermelink (*Vice President*), Laura Johnson, Nicole Lewis-Lettington, Dan Lin, Begoña Martinez Alfonso, Olivier Meyer, Catherine Peck Arif, Viera Pejchal, Ian Richards (*President*), Bradford Smith (*Executive Secretary*), Philip Thomas.

**Council members absent:** Naima Abdellaoui, Mohamed Assi, Hélène Fabiani, Jean-Luc La Planeta, Hilary Nwokeabia, Rowland Palaret, Gerald Pioda, Maria Almudena Rueda Melendez, Radouan Tualbia.

*The meeting began at 1:20 p.m.*

**1. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted without changes as reflected below.

**2. Adoption of the minutes of the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting**

The minutes of the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting were adopted without changes as recorded by the Union secretariat.

**3. Report of the Executive Bureau (EB)**

The EB reported to the Council on its activities since the previous Council meeting as follows:

- a. **General Service:** staff were informed via broadcast of the increase in their salaries by 2.9 percent implemented in October and applied retroactively since September, in line with inflation data and as a result of the ICSC methodology for which the CCISUA staff union federation, to which the UNOG Staff Union belonged, played a key role.
- b. **Meeting with USG Pollard (DMSPC):** staff were informed via broadcast of the meeting between staff representation and USG Pollard (DMSPC) where they discussed rosters, retaliation, the Staff Engagement Survey, the situation of translators and revisers, and collective bargaining, among other issues.
- c. **Meeting with DGACM management:** staff representation and DGACM management discussed over a meeting earlier in October: (1) the implementation of new behaviors and values in the performance evaluation process and recruitment which would be suspended for this cycle and commence for the 2023-2024 cycle; (2) update on mobility discussions at the SMC; (3) reasonable accommodation (awaiting promulgation of the policy from NY); (4) update on forthcoming meeting on disability; (5) training; (6) DCM statistics; and (7) DGACM workforce planning.
- d. **ITC:** (1) There continued to be no news on discussions between ITC and UNOG administrations to standardize ITC badges for access into the Palais des Nations. (2) A survey on prohibited conduct within ITC had been recently launched and would stay open until the following week. Engagement with ITC management would follow based on the results.
- e. **OHCHR:** (1) Staff representation followed-up on complaints by OHCHR staff on the rostering exercise at the Professional level. Clarifications were sought from management who provided answers and these were broadcasted to OHCHR staff. (2) OHCHR recognized having budget issues but confirmed they would not cut any posts in 2022 and were actively looking for funding to try avoiding cuts in 2023. The EB would continue to follow-up on this.
- f. **UNCTAD:** staff representation met with UNCTAD HR to discuss an alleged harassment/abuse of authority case where several staff came forward with allegations against a manager. A request was sent to the UNCTAD SG asking for information on actions taken to implement a zero-tolerance policy on prohibited conduct and an update was sent to UNCTAD staff. Further, a general broadcast was sent to all staff on harassment and abuse of authority and tools to report.

- g. **Pension Fund (PF):** staff representation met with PF management earlier in October and discussed their 2023 budget, floor space, future of work, temporary assignments. For Geneva, it was signaled that the H building noise problem and signage had improved.
- h. **Ethics Office:** staff representation met with representatives of the Ethics Office at the end of September to discuss the need to raise awareness among staff on the Ethics Office's role, broadening the scope of retaliation policy, and follow-up on UNDT/UNAT cases to ensure accountability.
- i. **Racism working group:** the WG's recommendations to the DG to implement the Strategic Action Plan were being finalized through five focus groups.
- j. **WG Staff Well-being:** a townhall meeting on access to mental health resources had taken place recently where staff representation was the lead organizer.
- k. **SMC WG on Administration of Justice:** a briefing session took place on 5 October involving the Ethics Office and OIOS to have their reviews on the retaliation policy, ways to improve it and limitations. Subsequent meetings took place on the staff side.
- l. **Mobility:** staff were informed via broadcast in October of the results of the global survey on mobility.
- m. **Case management:** staff continued to approach the Union for support and the EB was currently assisting and/or following-up with seven staff members on recruitment, performance, contract and entitlement issues.

#### 4. Report of the Finance Commission (FC)

The FC reported to the Council that it had met to review the draft budget for 2023-2024 that had been previously reviewed by the EB. The FC noted that while SAFI operations seemed to be recovering from the pandemic, it was safer not to assume any income from SAFI for the new financial year. Bearing this in mind, as well as Palais infrastructure constraints due to renovations, Union expenditures would continue to exclude a number of traditional items such as the staff gala and children's party with the view to keep expenditures at a moderate level. The expected net result was slightly negative but the Union's reserves remained strong and were able to absorb it. Nonetheless, it was for the Council and the EB to oversee and determine actual expenditures throughout the year as cautiously as possible while bearing in mind staff representation and welfare objectives.

A suggestion was made to push for a stronger and more active campaign to increase the number of dues-paying members, starting with encouraging any Council members who were still not dues-paying members to contribute. It was noted that, in general, unions would normally require dues-paying membership for anyone running for elected membership or seeking help from the union and that the Bureau should examine this.

Another suggestion was made for the FC to look into possible savings certificates and zero or non-risk funds where the Union's cash positions could be invested in the short term.

#### 5. 2022-2023 budget

The Council reviewed the proposed budget that had previously been reviewed by the EB and the FC. The Council adopted the proposed budget by consensus, i.e., the expected income and envelopes of expenditure. The adopted budget is annexed to the present minutes.

#### 6. CCISUA mid-term and lobbying

The Council recalled the CCISUA mid-term meeting that took place in New York from 8-11 November plus subsequent lobbying efforts with Member States. The mid-term was noted to have been an excellent opportunity to meet with heads of other unions, coordinate strategies, and meet senior management on multiple issues related to the ICSC, human resources, the Pension Fund, safety and security of staff members in the field, mental health, mediation upon conflict, and the response of the Organization to sexual exploitation and abuse. Lobbying efforts included meetings with a number of delegations such as the USA, China, the European Union, the current president of G77 (Pakistan), and other Member States in regional groups such as the G77, North Africa, and Latin America. Consensus was noted among Member States on ICSC proposals being discussed at the level of the GA (e.g., parental leave), and translation matters but

the positions of Member States still remained uncertain on certain issues such as the jurisdictional set up and ICSC statutes.

It was noted that CCISUA had recently sent a letter to SG expressing strong concerns on his proposal to the GA to reform the UNDT statutes to remove jurisdictional substantive review of administration decisions related to misconduct, particularly because of the lack of consultation with staff representation. The federation would ensure follow-up of this issue at the level of SMC.

## **7. Languages Service**

Since the last Council meeting, LS staff representatives from the four DGACM duty stations sent a letter to the SG asking him to intervene to avoid the deterioration of translators' work conditions, pointing out his own commitment to staff well-being and his mental health strategy. The SG replied saying he had been informed by DGACM management of the situation and they were going to train translators to work faster by 1st of January.

The matter was raised with Member States over the recent lobbying efforts of Council members in New York. Member States overall made a point whereby translators' workload was not much a direct concern of theirs, but they had indeed heard from management and staff representatives that there was increasing stress among DGACM staff. Member States did show particular concern over the high vacancy rates in DGACM. Informal indications hinted that Member States were not planning any further workload increase and that there were concerns about quality.

A final meeting of DGACM departmental consultation had recently taken place, this time with the participation of the USG who had not attended before. The USG delivered management's final answer reiterating their position to go ahead with measures that would see an increase in translators' workload. Staff were informed of the escalation of the matter to the SMC for which a paper would be submitted by the staff representatives at an ad hoc SMC meeting taking place the following day. Council member Laura Johnson would be attending for Geneva to present the paper.

It was further noted that management released a report on the DGACM departmental consultations that took place. Staff representation was deeply disappointed to see that such report was not presented in the traditional way of indicating the different arguments raised by each party but was rather a recount of management's views and the limits they saw to what staff representation was entitled to do.

## **8. Staff facilities**

### International Tennis Club

The Council was informed of issues pertaining to the International Tennis Club which was legally constituted as an external legal entity under Swiss law. The Club was noted to be very appreciated by UN staff as well as by the international Geneva community. It had moved to UN-owned land some 10 years ago under an arrangement whereby UNOG would not charge any rent to the club for a decade, an arrangement that was further extended. Now that such an arrangement was coming to an end and the club would be required to start paying rent and at a significant level (despite previous requests from the staff union to keep the rent low), this would likely render the club unsustainable. UNOG had therefore extended the current Club's lease one final time until early spring 2023.

In order to preserve this important staff facility, discussions arose between the current Club leadership, UNOG, and the Union, to study the possibility of putting together a different structure that would ensure the Club's survival. The baseline proposal was to internalize the facility in partnership with the Staff Union, under a similar arrangement to that of UN Port (a joint staff-management structure), and thus bringing it under the UN umbrella. This needed to be done before the expiration of the Club's lease.

The Union would formally propose to UNOG management to begin an orderly transition in line with what had been mentioned. This would eventually require a change to the UN Port statutes to create an entity to oversee both the Port and the Tennis Club. Changes to the statutes, which would formalise the new arrangement and structure, would be brought to the Council for approval by February. The Council agreed with this approach and looked forward to the next steps.

## UN Port

Council members noted there was a pending case before the Arbitration Commission concerning whether the UN Port Partnership agreement between the Staff Union and the UNOG was valid.

They recalled that UN Port Statutes had been approved by the Council since 2018. Following legal advice by the UNOG and an external legal counsel, a number of legally required changes were introduced resulting in the current UN Port Partnership agreement. The Council had acknowledged the modified statutes (now renamed Partnership agreement) since the text was circulated in the context of discussions during its 2nd (resumed) meeting of 27 April 2022.

For clarity, and to dissipate any doubt as to whether the UN Port Partnership agreement was duly adopted by the Union, the Council members expressly and unanimously confirmed they approved all the changes made to the previous UN Port statutes in the form of the document that now constituted the UN Port Partnership agreement. This confirmation included the approval of three out of four members of the Finance Commission who, as Council members, were present at this meeting. The Council therefore considered the agreement, signed by the then President of the Council and the UNOG Director-General on 21 January 2022, as duly subscribed and adopted by the UNOG Staff Union.

### **9. Long Service Awards**

The Council was informed that the organization of the 2022 Long Service Awards was well underway, jointly with UNOG HRMS. Two ceremonies would be held to that effect on 12 and 13 December with the participation of the UNOG Director-General.

### **10. Rebuttal Panel members**

Council members were informed that UNOG HRMS had reached out, noting that the number of members appointed by the staff to the UNOG rebuttal panel was insufficient to allow the proper functioning of the rebuttal panel system. Management therefore requested staff representation, in line with the administrative issuance ST/AI/2021/4 on Performance Management and Development System, to designate three additional members apart from the three already elected, i.e., **Naima Abdellaoui**, **Gabriela Popa**, and **Dominique Chantrel**.

It was noted that the administrative instruction did not mandate holding elections for such appointments but rather provided for the application of local practice. While Geneva would normally hold elections for such appointments, direct appointment by the Union in urgent cases was not deemed excluded by its local practice. Bearing in mind the ultimate goal of ensuring the staff right to effective review of their performance documents, the Council considered it appropriate in this instance to appoint members to vacant rebuttal panel seats, and highlighted the importance of ensuring as much as possible the availability of candidates for such seats in future elections.

A call for volunteers to serve on the UNOG rebuttal panel had been previously sent by email to Council members, where the following six responded to the call: Maria Almudena Rueda Melendez, Mohamed Assi, Prisca Chaoui, Nicole Lewis-Lettington, Begoña Martinez Alfonso, Rowland Palaret, Viera Pejchal, and Catherine Louise Peck Arik.

Noting there were more candidates than places to fill, the Council members were asked to reconfirm their interest, where finally the following three additional members were appointed to the UNOG rebuttal panel: **Nicole Lewis-Lettington**, **Begona Martinez Alfonso**, and **Viera Pejchal**.

The need for training of rebuttal panel members was highlighted. It was confirmed that management would normally be inviting them for training at the beginning of their mandate. It was further noted that, under the revised performance appraisal mechanism, the only element of performance documents that could actually be subject to rebut was the grade.

### **11. Motion to request a referendum**

The Council took note of a written request by nine of its members to hold a referendum with the view to change the way EB members are appointed/elected. The current text of the Regulations established that every electoral list with at least 15% of the votes would be entitled to appoint one EB seat, where any remaining seat would be elected by the Council. In summary, the motion intended to seek a referendum to

change that system and have each electoral list appoint an EB member per each tranche of 15% of the vote they received during elections – effectively meaning to distribute EB seats by proportion of the vote.

The sponsors of the motion were asked to take floor to provide further explanations to their motion and on their reasoning, but none did as none of them were present at the meeting. It was noted that the motion's sponsors had said they would boycott the meeting and indeed were not present.

The sponsors' absence was deemed regrettable by the Council members present; not only was it the established practice for the sponsor(s) of motions to be present to explain and support their motions, but their absence also made it impossible for questions to be raised and issues to be discussed and clarified. A merely written proposal was not deemed sufficient by Council members to allow its full understanding.

Based on the limited information provided only in writing by the sponsors of the motion, doubts were raised concerning the viability of the proposal, both in mathematical and practical terms. Given the sponsors' absence, the Council members were prevented from raising questions and asking for clarifications in the official and proper context of Council meetings that form an integral part of the Council's decision-making process. Therefore, with no support for the motion, it was unanimously rejected.

## **12. Motion to correct the Regulations**

The Council took note of a written request by nine of its members to make corrections to the Regulations on representation of the staff of the United Nations at Geneva. In summary, the proposal argued that, following the 2022 referendum, erroneous changes were introduced to the text – namely that the approved overall terminology shift from “UNOG Staff Coordinating Council” to “UNOG Staff Union” should not have taken place because of how the question was formulated in the referendum.

The Council recalled the full question submitted to staff via referendum in March 2022:

*To raise the standing of staff representation in Geneva vis-à-vis management and other parties, the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council proposes to change its name to that of a fully recognized staff union of the UN. This name change has no substantive effect on the Regulations.*

*Do you agree to change the name of the “UNOG Staff Coordinating Council” to the “UNOG Staff Union” throughout the Regulations?*

As clarification, it was noted that the Regulations, before they were recently amended, did not differentiate between the staff representation entity and its governing body (the Council), which were by default called the same. Given the clear mandate of the referendum question as to its non-substantive effect on the Regulations, the Council as a governing body would obviously be remaining in place. However, the Council itself was not the Union, rather its governing body. Technical corrections were therefore called for to differentiate throughout the text of the Regulations whether a particular paragraph of sentence meant the Union as an entity or the Council as governing body. Those corrections in no way, shape or form were substantive. On the contrary, they cemented the mandate that the staff expressed in the referendum to make their staff representation entity “a fully recognized staff union of the UN” keeping the Council intact.

As to the wording of the referendum question, bearing in mind its full extension which included the introductory text, there was no doubt that the scope of the term “UNOG Staff Coordinating Council” would also refer to any synonyms throughout, such as “Co-ordinating Council” or simply “Council”. Further, it was noted that the official French name of UNOG was “Office des Nations Unies à Genève” (see UNOG website <https://www.ungeneva.org/fr>) and the French version of the Regulations was technically adjusted to reflect this in the title (replacing the word “Organisation” for “Office”).

Having provided the above clarifications, again as in the previous agenda item the sponsors of the motion were asked to take floor to provide further explanations to their motion and on their reasoning, but none did as none of them were present at the meeting. It was noted that the motion's sponsors had said they would boycott the meeting and indeed were not present.

The sponsors' absence was deemed regrettable by the Council members who were present; not only was it the established practice for the sponsor(s) of motions to be present to explain and support their motions, but their absence also made it impossible for questions to be raised and issues to be discussed and clarified. A merely written proposal was not deemed sufficient by Council members to allow its full understanding.

Based on the limited information provided only in writing by the sponsors of the motion, doubts were raised concerning the allegations of erroneous changes to the text of the Regulations, as well as a lack of substantive proof of the allegations. Given the sponsors' absence, the Council members were prevented from raising questions and asking for clarifications in the official and proper context of Council meetings that form an integral part of the Council's decision-making process. Therefore, with no support for the motion, the Council unanimously rejected the referred motion.

### 13. Any other business

- A question was raised whether there was any update concerning the application of Appendix B of the staff rules in the Security and Safety Service (SSS). It was noted that it had been reviewed in 2016 but an evaluation by management on the effect of its changes was still pending. SSS staff had been surveyed by the Union on the matter. The EB would discuss on further engagement with management to push for their proper follow-up.
- Concerns were raised regarding early retirement penalties imposed by the UNJSPF as per its rules and regulations for staff who joined after 2014. The matter would be subject of discussion at a future Council meeting.

*The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.*

## ANNEX

United Nations  
Office at Geneva  
STAFF UNION



Office des Nations  
Unies à Genève  
SYNDICAT

## Budget 1 December 2022 - 30 November 2023

*Adopted by the UNOG Staff Union Council on 6 December 2022*

*All figures are expressed in Swiss Francs.*

<b>REVENUES</b>	
Membership dues	47,000.00
Staff magazine	100,000.00
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>147,000.00</b>

### EXPENDITURES

#### STAFF REPRESENTATION

##### Affiliations

PSI annual membership	500.00
CCISUA annual membership	23,000.00

##### Missions and representation

Official travel: CCISUA GA	15,000.00
Official travel: CCISUA mid-term	16,000.00

**Campaigns**

Equal pay campaign general expenditures	5,000.00
Equal pay campaign travel to ICSC sessions	
Equal pay campaign PR advisory services	
Equal pay campaign legal fees	
Future of work campaign	
Other campaigns	

**STAFF WELFARE****Subsidies to UN clubs & associations**

Grants to clubs	1,000.00
Inter-Agency games subsidy	11,000.00

**Events**

Garden party	2,000.00
Long service awards (actual expense)	10,000.00

**Staff magazine**

Staff magazine operational expenses	90,000.00
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**ADMINISTRATION****General administrative expenses**

External audit of accounts	3,800.00
Software licenses and hosting	1,300.00

**Financial services**

Bank charges	750.00
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**Council elections**

Electronic voting fees	6,000.00
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**Miscellaneous**

General miscellaneous expenses	500.00
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<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>185,850.00</b>
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<b>NET RESULT</b>	<b>-38,850.00</b>
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