



## **41<sup>st</sup> Staff Union Council 2023-2024**

**Ref. SU-41-2**

## **Minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting**

held on 20 March 2023 at 1 p.m. via MS Teams

*Adopted on 4 May 2023*

**Council members present:** ABDELLAOUI Naima; AJAYI Ayobamidele; APOSTOLOV Mario; BALI Mohamed; CHANTREL Dominique; DUPARC Philippe; GOLOGUS Marius; GONZALEZ Pablo (Deputy Executive Secretary); HERMELINK Ursula; JACQUIOT Cédric; JOHNSON Laura (Executive Secretary); LA PLANETA Jean-Luc; LEWIS-LETTINGTON Nicole; MARTINEZ Begoña; NWOKEABIA Hilary; PALAIRET Rowland; PECK ARIF Catherine; PEJCHAL Viera; PUHALOVIC Janet; RICHARDS Ian (President); RUEDA Maria Almudena; TOUALBIA Radouan.

**Council members absent:** GAZIYEV Jamshidbek; JAUHAN Khanam; SMITH Bradford (Vice-president).

*The meeting began at 1:05 p.m.*

### **1. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted with changes as reflected below.

### **2. Adoption of the minutes of the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting**

The minutes of the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting were adopted without changes as recorded in the Union secretariat.

The minutes of the last meeting of the 40<sup>th</sup> Council could not be adopted because they pertained a previous Council term whose members were not all part of the 41<sup>st</sup> Council. This was noted to be a recurrent issue at every turn of tenure and the Council mandated the EB to think of proposals to address this.

### **3. Executive Bureau report**

The Executive Secretary reported on behalf of the EB on its activities and recent developments:

- a. A townhall meeting with the DG took place just after the recent Council elections about which a broadcast was sent to all staff.
- b. With the deadline for staff to submit comments on the eligibility for a continuing contract fast approaching, management had not informed staff apart from a single message. An information townhall meeting had taken place in New York but the invitation did not reach Geneva staff. A broadcast was sent out with a reminder and instructions on how to submit comments.
- c. The EB nominated ES, Laura Johnson, and VP, Brad Smith, to attend the upcoming SMC XI in April, to be held in Brindisi. Travel costs would be borne by management.
- d. The EB nominated ES, Laura Johnson, DES, Pablo Gonzalez, and President, Ian Richards, to attend in representation of the Union to the upcoming CCISUA GA in May, to be held in Budapest. Travel costs would be borne by the Union under the approved budget line "CCISUA GA". Also, as per CCISUA statutes, the Union would cover the travel costs of former EB member, Prisca Chaoui, in her capacity as President of CCISUA.
- e. Management issued the new policy on parental leave but did not keep its the retroactive effect as had been agreed with unions. A global discussion among SMC-staff side unions was underway on possible actions to take, including potential legal challenges. A broadcast was sent out to all staff in this regard. The matter was expected to be raised at the upcoming SMC XI meeting in Brindisi.
- f. Meetings with heads of entities were being prepared to review departmental issues with them and ensure ongoing staff-management communication and consultation. A first meeting with the Director of Administration of UNECE had already taken place.
- g. OHCHR management announced another organizational review "effectiveness 2.0". While its scope was yet to be made known, it would likely affect staff working conditions and careers for which consultations would be required. The OHCHR staff committee met with UNOG SU leadership to work out formal coordination and both agreed to send a joint request to meet with the High Commissioner to seek clarifications on the new organizational review.

Seeing no objections, the composition of the delegations for SMC XI and CCISUA GA were so agreed. The Council would be briefed in due course on all discussions and outcomes of SMC XI.

Concerns were raised regarding lack of transparency in the continuing appointments exercise. The EB would be exploring ways to reach out to OHR in New York and UNOG HRMS for information and updates.

#### **4. Outgoing Finance Commission report**

The outgoing FC recalled the positive audit report of 2022-2023 accounts. Payments were being processed as usual the implementation of the budget as approved by the Union for the 2023-2024 financial year was confirmed to be on track. Issues to be reviewed by the new FC would include the placement of liquid assets in light of rising interest rates and possible investments.

#### **5. Election of Finance Commission members**

The Council was informed that, in line with the Regulations, the EB had appointed **Pablo Gonzalez Silva** as FC member.

Following nominations, the Council also appointed the following staff representatives as Finance Commission members and signatories to the Council's bank accounts: **Catherine Peck Arif, Dominique Chantrel, and Mohamed Chiraz Bali.**

#### **6. Appointment of the UN Today Editorial Board**

As per the terms of reference of UN Today, the Council renewed the two-year mandate of the Editorial Board members with changes following the retirement of one of them and ad hoc additions. The new term was to begin immediately and last for two years in line with the terms of reference.

*Voting members:* Prisca Chaoui (Editor), Ian Richards (Deputy Editor), Alex Mejia, Christopher Mason, Paola Deda, Christopher Mason, Julian Ginzo.

*Ad hoc members:* Valérie Coutarel, Anyuli Gonzalez, Gemma Capellas.

#### **7. Adoption of the 2023-2023 work programme**

The Council was presented with the draft work programme as reviewed by the EB. Following an overview, the work programme was adopted as presented.

#### **8. Composition of the SSS working group**

The importance of the working group for SSS was highlighted, especially in light of the necessary review of Appendix B policy (work hours and shifts). In order to overhaul discussions and results of the working group, the Council renewed the mandate of its representatives in the working group, i.e., Philippe Duparc, Marius Gologus, Radouan Tualbia, Laura Johnson, and Ian Richards.

#### **9. Humanitarian collection for Syria/Türkiye**

Council members were informed that a total of CHF 32'355.27 was collected among staff for humanitarian relief in Syria and Türkiye following the February earthquake. In line with the relevant guidelines, the EB recommended for the Council to contribute CHF 10'000 to the collection in recognition of the effort made by staff. Seeing that the majority of international aid was being destined for Türkiye, the EB also recommended to allocate two thirds of the total funds for Syria and one third for Türkiye. The identified beneficiaries who would best serve the concerned populations were OCHA for Syria and the IFRC for Türkiye. The Council approved the EB's recommendations.

#### **10. ST/AI on downsizing**

The Council was presented with a proposal to revise the recently promulgated policy on downsizing at the SMC level. Arguments to that effect had been circulated by email to Council members prior to the meeting, and a discussion followed. An argument was made whereby there were still a number of points and issues to be clarified for which the EB was a better suited initial forum of discussion before being put to the consideration of the whole Council, which would allow Council members to take a more informed decision. It was further noted that the policy was already a great advance for all staff and particularly beneficial for entities that were more at risk of downsizing, notwithstanding possible room for improvement once the policy had been tested. Further arguments gave merit to holding on any decision while the matter

was more carefully reviewed, particularly since there was no urgency because the deadline to submit SMC papers for the annual SMC meeting in April had already passed; therefore if raised at SMC level it would fall under 2024 discussions. A number of Council members, however, insisted that all elements had been provided for the Council to discuss and decide on the proposal at the present meeting.

The Council was asked to vote on referring the matter to the EB for further review. Seeing 14 votes in favour and 7 votes against, the matter was referred to the EB.

A complaint was raised whereby Council members had not been made aware of the deadline to submit SMC papers. It was noted that SMC meetings would always take place in spring and deadlines be set consistently in line with such timing, and issues could be raised at any time.

### **11. Joint bodies**

The Council was presented with a proposal to ask staff representatives in joint bodies to submit an activity report to the Council, and for them to meet with the Council to receive directives on how they would represent staff in those bodies. Arguments to that effect had been circulated by email to Council members prior to the meeting, and a discussion followed.

It was noted that the Regulations (Article 11.3) already provided for a communication channel between elected joint body staff representatives and the Union via the EB. A suggestion was made to ask the EB to implement it correctly and systematically, where the EB remained as main point of contact with joint bodies. The Council agreed.

### **12. Security and Safety Service**

With regards to the recent publication of a job opening for the recruitment of 17 G3 posts in SSS, the Council was presented with a proposal to request SSS management to implement more strict job opening requirements, expand the geographical scope of the recruitment exercise with preference for women, and approach under-represented Member States through their missions in Geneva to advertise the job opening more broadly. Arguments to that effect had been circulated by email to Council members prior to the meeting, and a discussion followed.

A clarification was made whereby G posts were subject to local recruitment, hence the geographical scope was restricted as per the staff rules and regulations. SSS issues were being discussed at the EB and a communication had already been sent to SSS management and UNOG HR raising concerns about the broadening of the experience requirement, namely noting that private security experience was now also accepted after it was usually limited to police and military background. This development had already occurred in New York and denounced by UNSU, where management retracted from broadening experience requirements. Regarding continuing appointments, staff representation had already raised at the highest level in UNOG (DG) the need for G3 posts to be reviewed/reclassified, and this would continue to be raised with SSS management.

The Council agreed that all SSS-related issues should be coordinated by the working group for SSS matters, with the support of the EB, keeping the Council duly informed of any developments.

### **13. Any other business**

A suggestion was made to carry out Council meetings in person seeing all Covid-related restrictions had been lifted. However, it was noted that staff representatives would often be traveling or under flexible working arrangements and there were access restrictions for staff representatives who worked outside the Palais des Nations. Additionally, reference was made to some Council members having medical workplace accommodations that made remote attendance easier. Hence, virtual meetings ensured quorum and broader participation. Hybrid meetings were also suggested as an option to meet but were also noted to be subject to limitations, i.e., meeting room availability in light of building closures and renovations.

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