



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

Ref. SU-41-EB-15

### Executive Bureau Minutes of the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting

Held on 19 July 2023 at 9 a.m.  
via MS Teams

*Adopted on ...*

#### Members of the Executive Bureau:

ABDELLAOUI Naima	<i>Present</i>	GONZALEZ Pablo	<i>Present</i>
BALI Mohamed	<i>Present</i>	HERMELINK Ursula	<i>Absent</i>
MARTINEZ Begoña	<i>Absent</i>	JOHNSON Laura	<i>Present</i>
DUPARC Philippe	<i>Present</i>		

#### President of the UNOG SU:

RICHARDS Ian *Absent*

#### Vice-President of the UNOG SU:

SMITH Bradford *Present*

*The meeting began at 9 a.m.*

### 1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted with changes as reflected below.

### 2. Adoption of the minutes of the 14<sup>th</sup> meeting

The minutes of the 14<sup>th</sup> meeting were adopted without changes as recorded in the Union secretariat.

### 3. Space optimization/transition board

The EB was briefed on the ongoing exchange with the Director of Administration on the matter of “space optimization” in the context of the SHP Transition Board. Management was aiming towards a desk ratio of 6.4 per 10 permanent positions across the entire Palais which would effectively introduce hotdesking in the historical buildings, following a recommendation by the Board of Auditors (BoA) in a letter that was yet to be made available to the Union.

Arguments by staff representation had been raised through email exchanges and at the Board against the broad implementation of hotdesking and noted that recommendations of the BoA were not of mandatory adoption. It was up to UNOG to communicate with stakeholders, including Member States, that changed occupation patterns did not mean the space was used inefficiently or did not serve its purpose. The economic rationale of introducing broad hotdesking was put into question. A broad introduction of hotdesking was deemed to be in detriment of staff wellbeing, especially with increasing summer temperatures and no air conditioning planned for the historical buildings. Such measure would likely bring about increased use of flexible working arrangements (FWA) and defeat the purpose of seeing fewer empty desks.

The written response received from the Director was deemed vague and not reassuring as it lacked assurances that the Union would be the privileged counterpart in consultations; the Director-General at least confirmed that the Union’s status on the Transition Board would be upgraded from consultative to full member. Staff representation reiterated its position that one desk per position was a necessity to ensure Palais remained a thriving place. So far meaningful engagement had been refused and the Union should push for it. The suggested next step was for the Union to increase staff engagement on the subject to increase staff awareness and keep them informed as part of the strength of the Union in upcoming consultations. A first broadcast would be issued to that effect.

A discussion followed. Management’s rationale on space optimization was put into question and it was noted how broad hotdesking would be damaging to staff wellbeing and make the workplace less comfortable, where more staff would want to avail themselves of increased FWA. The EB agreed on the suggested next step.

#### **4. Study on interpreters and RSI**

The EB recalled that interpreters had formed a staff working group looking at the effect on their hearing related to remote interpretation who conducted a survey in 2020 and discussions had continued. The working group found a professor at the University of Milan who was willing to direct a more scientific study than the previous one which was just a questionnaire by staff, for which funding would be needed, and the three large unions representing interpreters (Geneva, New York, Vienna) were being asked to evaluate their willingness to co-share the costs. A meeting would be organized between the unions and the working group to discuss the project, after which the unions would decide whether to bring the matter to their councils for approval.

#### **5. Proposal by the Finance Commission (FC)**

The EB was informed of the proposal by the FC to carry out a long-term investment (12 months) on a UBS certificate of deposit for a suggested amount of CHF 700,000, which would yield an approximate 1.47 percent interest. This was deemed a very low risk, liquid investment, where funds could be withdrawn at any time. This could at least ensure some return on Union funds currently making no interest. The EB agreed to submit this proposal to the Union Council for approval.

The EB was further informed that the FC had agreed, as per Annex II, Article 6 of the Regulations, to proceed with a short-term (6 months), very low risk, liquid investment in a UBS certificate of deposit for an amount of CHF 350'000, which would yield an approximate 1.34 percent interest, where funds could be withdrawn at any time.

The EB recalled the difficulty of investing in real estate noting the unclear legal status of the Union under Swiss law and more so under French law.

#### **6. Survey on prohibited conduct in UNOG**

A proposal was raised to carry out a survey on prohibited conduct at UNOG similar to the one conducted in ITC. It was argued that comments concerning harassment were commonly heard from staff; the need to tackle the root causes of mental health issues was highlighted, as well as engaging with senior management on these issues.

A discussion followed. EB members agreed that conducting such a survey would be very positive to advance the agenda of staff wellbeing, however it should be scheduled for after the summer to ensure the highest levels of participation possible; the proposal should be resubmitted to the EB then for discussion of the details.

The former joint board on harassment prevention was recalled having ceased to function years before, mainly stemming from the changes in harassment prevention framework and the new internal justice system in 2009. It was suggested to remind staff via broadcast of the various tools and mechanisms available to tackle and denounce prohibited conduct as well as best practices to document it. It was suggested that any cases of prohibited conduct raised by staff should be forwarded to Union officeholders so they could be defended institutionally.

#### **7. Job opening for Administrative Assistant position**

The EB recalled that the position of Administrative Assistant would become vacant as of September and that a recruitment exercise would be carried out with an initial temporary job opening. The Executive Secretary was engaging UNOG HRMS on the operational details.

The EB thanked the outgoing incumbent, Froylan Silveira, for his dedication and valuable contributions to the Union for the past 10 years.

#### **8. Any other business**

No other business was raised.

*The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 a.m.*