



42nd Staff Union Council 2024-2025

Ref. SU-42-3

Minutes of the 3rd meeting

held on 11 April 2024 at 1:30 p.m. via MS Teams

Adopted on 28 May 2024

Council members present: *Naima Abdellaoui; Marian Aggrey; Begoña Martínez Alfonso; Dominique Chantrel; Mohamed Chiraz Bali; Tigest Desta; Cíntia De Lima Cardoso; Philippe Duparc; Ursula Hermelink; Laura Johnson; Nicole Lewis-Lettington; Rowland Palairet; Catherine Louise Peck Arif; Janet Puhalic; Ian Richards; Bradford Smith; Marko Stanovic.*

Council members absent: *Saba Al-Nadawi; Marius Gologus; Pablo Gonzales Silva; Cédric Jacquot; Jean-Luc La Planeta; François Subiger; Radouan Toualbia; Philip Thomas.*

The meeting began at 1:35 p.m.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted as reflected below.

2. Adoption of the minutes of the 2nd meeting

The minutes of the 2nd meeting had not been finalized and it was decided to adopt them at the following meeting.

3. Report of the Executive Bureau

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

- Preparations for the SMC meeting to take place from 15 to 21 April 2024 were ongoing and the staff side were to meet the same day.
- The Internal Justice Council is a body established to help ensure independence, professionalism and accountability in the administration of justice system of the UN. It is composed of five members consisting of a staff representative, a management representative and two distinguished external jurists, one nominated by the staff and one by management, and chaired by a distinguished jurist chosen by consensus by the four other members. The staff unions should nominate their representative and jurist soon.
- Survey on prohibited conduct and abuse of authority: EB was working on the development of the survey questions, which would be considered at the following EB meetings.
- Unrepresented staff: Every staff member has the right to be represented by a staff union, which was not the case at project or satellite offices with a small number of staff that were reporting to Geneva. The EB agreed to identify the entities with non-represented staff in satellite locations and discuss with polling officers on the ways to have them included in the electoral process by the SU.

Ms. Abdellaoui asked if there was a way to share the complete list of voters with all electoral lists. The ES suggested she contact the polling officers directly. Ms. Abdellaoui alleged that the Hope Team list had a special relationship with the polling officers and therefore exclusive access to the list of voters. Mr. Chiraz Bali informed Ms. Abdellaoui that the Hope Team list did not have access to the list of voters. In his opinion Ms. Abdellaoui had once again tried to deceive her colleagues on an important issue. He challenged her to provide proof of her allegations. Ms. Abdellaoui said that she was not required to substantiate her allegations except if interviewed in an official investigation. Mr. Stanovic said he sometimes had coffee with the President of the polling officers.

4. Report of the Financial Commission

The members of the FC informed the Council that the new FC had not met yet and that there was nothing to report at that stage.

5. Course of action on Palais closure

A staff town hall was held on 4 April 2024 to listen to staff concerns on the measures taken by the administration to address the liquidity crisis. Many staff members called for collective action against the current plans for building closures; others emphasized the need for management flexibility and a few urged caution. Staff representatives had called the present ad hoc Council meeting to discuss a way forward.

Council members noted that the United States was planning to pay part of its arrears soon and, in this regard, the implementation of those measures and lifting them after a few weeks would be disruptive to the staff work. The squeezing of the staff mostly in the H building would impact staff health and productivity, and would lead to overcrowding and stress. Moreover, many frozen regular budget posts would lead to a decrease in services that would directly impact Member States' activities.

The Council stated that one of the reasons for the current liquidity crisis was the shift from biannual to annual budgets in the UN Secretariat and the SU could send a letter to the UN Secretary General (SG) urging him to shift back to biannual budgets and inform him that the measures taken were not consistent with recommendations made to the UN organizations. The SU could also inform the Member States present in Geneva on the negative consequences the liquidity crisis and the measures taken by the administration might have as some States might not be aware of the situation or might not have the full picture.

Some members pointed out that there might be other reasons for the building closures: that it could set a precedent to rent out vacant buildings and start implementing controversial hotdesking throughout the Palais.

The members agreed that calling for a strike was not appropriate at this stage as not all staff supported that idea during the townhall but also as many staff would be teleworking from 22 April 2024, the date when many buildings would be closed and most of staff would have to move to building H and telework.

The Council agreed to conduct a staff survey to inquire staff on the closures and how the closures would affect their work. It was also agreed to send letters to the SG and the Member States to inform about the liquidity crisis and its negative consequences and urge SG to shift from annual to biannual budgets. The EB would also request a meeting with the administration to convey staff concerns and urge a reversal of the decision on Palais closures.

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

Acronyms and abbreviations:

SU: Staff Union of the UNOG

EB: Executive Bureau of the Staff Union

ES: Executive Secretary of the Staff Union

DES: Deputy Executive Secretary of the Staff Union

SMC: Staff-Management Committee

FC: Financial Commission of the Staff Union

CCISUA: Coordinating Committee of International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System