



42nd Staff Union Council 2024-2025

Ref. SU-42-4

Minutes of the 4th meeting

First session held on 28 May 2024 at 1:30 p.m. via MS
Teams

Adopted on 27 August 2024

Council members present: Naima Abdellaoui; Marian Aggrey; Saba Al-Nadawi; Dominique Chantrel; Mohamed Chiraz Bali; Tigest Desta; Cíntia De Lima Cardoso; Philippe Duparc; Marius Gologus; Ursula Hermelink; Cédric Jacquot; Laura Johnson; Jean-Luc La Planeta; Begoña Martínez Alfonso; Rowland Palairet; Catherine Louise Peck Arif; Janet Puhalic; Ian Richards; Bradford Smith; Marko Stanovic; François Subiger; Radouan Tualbia.

Council members absent: Nicole Lewis-Lettington; Philip Thomas, Dan Lin.

The first session of the meeting began at 1:35 p.m. and was adjourned at 3:47 p.m.

The second, resumed session was held on 4 June 2024

Council members present: Naima Abdellaoui; Marian Aggrey; Begoña Martínez Alfonso; Mohamed Chiraz Bali; Tigest Desta; Cíntia De Lima Cardoso; Philippe Duparc; Marius Gologus; Ursula Hermelink; Laura Johnson; Jean-Luc La Planeta; Nicole Lewis-Lettington; Dan Lin; Rowland Palairet; Catherine Louise Peck Arif; Janet Puhalic; Ian Richards; Marko Stanovic.

Council members absent: Dominique Chantrel; Saba Al-Nadawi; Cédric Jacquot; Bradford Smith; François Subiger; Radouan Tualbia; Philip Thomas.

The second session began at 1:30 p.m. The meeting ended at 2:02 p.m.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted as reflected below.

2. Adoption of the minutes of the 2nd and 3rd meetings

The minutes of the 2nd and 3rd meetings were adopted without changes.

A few members raised their concerns on the “selective” mentioning of names in the minutes and inaccurate recording of their remarks and urged that the names should either be indicated consistently or they should not at all. The President of the Council explained that the names were included in the previous minutes to ensure accountability for Council members who made personal attacks against other members. It was also reminded that the minutes should be issued within the specified deadline of 10 days after the meeting. The Council took note of these points.

3. Election of the Vice-President (UNOG Polling Board)

Following the resignation of Pablo Gonzales Silva from the SU, Dan Lin had become a member in accordance with Regulations on representation of the staff of the UNOG, Annex I, Art. 10 (1). A Vice-President of the Council also needed to be elected. Janet Puhalic nominated Catherine Louise Peck Arif; Marko Stanovic and Naima Abdellaoui nominated Rowland Palairet. After several unsuccessful attempts by the polling officers to conduct a ballot, the election was postponed to the resumed session.

At the resumed session the Polling Officers conducted a secret ballot and the results were the following:

- Catherine Louise Peck Arif – 13 votes;
- Rowland Palairet – 5 votes.

Catherine Louise Peck Arif was elected Vice-President of the Council.

4. Report of the Executive Bureau

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

- SMC meeting held from 15 to 21 April 2024 where over 20 papers were discussed:
 - Management submitted several papers including on temporary measures for geographical distribution, on changing the classification appeals process, and special post allowance.
 - Management did not accept all papers submitted by the staff claiming that the UN General Assembly (GA) were inclined to take the decisions that would not be in favor of staff members. Of note, management did not agree with staff-side proposal to amend the Flag Code to lower the UN flag at half-mast when a staff member is killed in the line of duty. The staff representatives lodged an official disagreement with the UN Secretary-General making a final decision on this matter. However, management agreed to consider recommending to the GA the removal of suicide as “misconduct” in the Appendix D of ST/SGB/2023/1 and as a standard practice to continue to consider cases of work-incurred suicide.
 - Management also agreed to set up a working group on facilities for staff representatives.
 - Other staff-side papers were on topics such as flexible working arrangements, induction and exit programs for new/existing staff members, staff rule 4.4, sick leave, reporting lines. An update was requested on whether the General Assembly has considered the issue of the removal of G to P barriers.
 - The report of the meeting would be shared with the Council once released by the UN Secretary-General.
- ICSC working group meetings on compensation review: a meeting took place the previous week on field related benefits. The second meeting to take place the week of 27 May 2024 would discuss dependency-related benefits and the staff representatives would bring up the issues of education grant and special education grant.
- The EB was also dealing with many staff requests resulting from the move to the H and D buildings.

5. Report of the Financial Commission (FC)

The members of the FC informed the Council that, as agreed by the Council in the previous meetings, the SU funds were deposited in the investment accounts. Specifically, CHF 500,000 were invested for 1 year at 0.69 per cent, and CHF 300,000 were invested for 6 months at 0.77 per cent interest.

The Council was also informed that in two weeks a financial audit of the SU’s financial statements and accounts of 2023 would be carried out.

6. UNRWA collection

The FC also informed that the final amount collected for UNRWA was CHF 23,313. The Council decided to match the amount raised up to the ceiling of CHF 10,000 from the SU funds, bringing the total amount of donation to UNRWA to CHF 33,313. A broadcast to staff would be prepared.

7. Report back from CCISUA General Assembly

The CCISUA General Assembly was held from 13 to 17 May 2024 in Kenya. The SU was represented by Laura Johnson (ES), Janet Puhalović (DES), in addition to Ian Richards who attended as CCISUA Vice-President for Conditions of Service.

The Assembly elected a new bureau which is detailed on the [CCISUA website](#). Of note, Nathalie Meynet from UNHCR was re-elected President and Ian Richards re-elected as Vice-President for Conditions of Service; Janet Puhalović was elected to the Procurement Committee.

The discussions focused on the issues that apply to the entire common system. Much of the discussion that time focused on the compensation review – the reports of the working groups on field-related benefits and dependency benefits. There were also discussions with the ICSC team, including its chairperson; with the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security; on conditions of service of national officers and general service categories; mental health strategy implementation, including the adoption of a resolution on the subject; as well as priorities for the next year. The Assembly also drafted and sent a letter to the UN Secretary-General calling for an end to impunity in the killing of UN staff in Gaza. The report of the meeting will be shared with Council and staff members when finalized by the CCISUA bureau.

Naima Abdellaoui stated that the Vice President for Conditions of Service had been in post for the last ten years. She was corrected and told that it had only been for one year. She continued to insist she was right despite not being able to present any evidence to support her claim. Several Council members expressed concern about the constant disruption by Ms. Abdellaoui to the speaking order and to the agenda.

8. UN Today website

The website of the UN Today magazine was created a few years ago and it was suggested to redesign it to improve it and update the look and user experience. It was noted that the magazine was financially sustainable, and the estimated cost of the redesign was up to USD 3,000. EB had recommended support for the website upgrade, and the Council also approved it.

9. AMFI board member

The Council needed to nominate a new board member of the Association des Mutuelles des Fonctionnaires Internationaux (AMFI, International Civil Servants Mutual Associations). AMFI is a non-profit fund exclusive to the UN at Geneva and Specialized Agencies, whose objectives are to promote mutual assistance among staff members, and which is comprised of two entities, La Mutuelle and the GPAFI. The term of the Council representative to the AMFI Board of Directors was coming to an end in June 2024 and the Council needed to nominate a new representative. Ms. Abdellaoui and Mr. Palairat nominated Radouan Toualbia, while Mohamed Chiraz Bali nominated himself. The Council members voted and Mr. Toualbia received 4 votes and Mr. Bali – 10. Mohamed Chiraz Bali was elected the new Council representative at the AMFI board.

10. Update on security shifts and next steps

The Council was informed on the issues security staff were having lately. A year ago, at the request of the Council to the JNC a working group to discuss and resolve the issues related to the Addendum to Appendix B, which was applicable only to security service, was established. However, since the last meeting in February, the security staff had not heard back from administration. The Addendum at the time was a temporary measure implemented in 2016 but was still in force and the majority of security staff did not support it any longer. The working group had met four times and was mainly deliberating on the definition of working hours (working day, break, changing time, etc.) but little or no progress had been achieved due to the partial resignation of administration nominees. The Council was asked to renew its call to the management of the security service and administration to continue deliberations on the Addendum and security staff issues and reengage in working group. It was agreed that the ES would draft and send a letter to the management on behalf of the Council on this issue.

11. Upcoming SMC on special post allowance (SPA)

The ES informed the Council that the next ad hoc SMC meeting would take place the next day. The SPA discussions were deferred from the in-person SMC meeting, where the management submitted a paper to restrict SPA as it was perceived as misused, with staff remaining on SPA for years. The staff side disagreed with some proposals in the paper as the changes proposed unduly penalized the staff member rather than the managers who did not organize a proper recruitment process in due time.

12. Update on the UN Geneva Staff Welfare Partnership

UN Geneva Staff Welfare Partnership is a staff-management partnership to jointly run the International Tennis Club and UN Port (beach club). The new season had kicked off at both clubs with many subscriptions received. Despite some glitches in the beginning of the process, especially for the tennis club that was handed over from previous administration to the Partnership in April 2024, the clubs were well prepared for the new season.

13. Status of reply from the Secretary-General (SG) to the Executive Secretary's letter regarding the Palais closure

The President of the Council pointed out on the recent staff moves to the H and D buildings following partial Palais closures imposed as a result of the liquidity crisis. Many complaints received from staff on working conditions, air quality, meeting rooms and lockers unavailability. Meanwhile, the E building was still functional, and some staff were still able to use it, which raises questions on the amount of funds that measure would help to save. There was a fear among staff that that squeezing of employees into a few buildings could be a pretext to increase income from rent.

ES informed the Council that the [letter](#) to the UN SG had been sent as agreed at the previous Council meeting. In that letter, the SG was informed on Palais closure and the adverse impact it had on the working conditions and staff welfare. A meeting request was also sent to UNOG management. No response from the SG or DG was received by the time of the Council meeting. The SU had also met with the UNCTAD senior management that was also against the move to the H building. UNOG management had replied that only 35 per cent of UNCTAD staff regularly came to work in the office. The UNECE registered only 22 per cent presence in the H building but suggested that more staff would choose to come to the office if they were provided with proper office facilities.

Naima Abdellaoui cast doubt on the veracity of the ES's statement, noting that she hadn't seen proof that the letter had actually been sent to the SG. She requested that all Council or EB members be kept in copy in such communications in the future. The ES informed Ms. Abdellaoui that she could visit the Council office at any time to review correspondence. The President asked Ms. Abdellaoui to stop peddling her usual conspiracy theories.

Council members also questioned the liquidity measures taken by UNOG management and the amount of savings generated by partial Palais closure at the expense of staff wellbeing. It was also noted that even though offices in E building were locked by some staff members, they were found open despite much valuable equipment and personal effects inside.

It was suggested that the matter could be escalated to CCISUA and agreed that the issues could be raised at CCISUA meetings, with the caveat that CCISUA usually dealt only with common system issues. It was suggested that the ILOAT could be involved and clarified that UNOG was not under its jurisdiction. Council members who felt that they had a possible UNDT case were invited to contact OSLA. It was agreed that the EB would request a meeting with UNOG management to discuss move issues and questions regarding open offices in E building as well as plans to close the whole Palais during the summer and that the EB would further analyse health and safety issues in the D and H buildings reported by some staff.

At the resumed session, the ES informed the Council that a JNC meeting would take place on 24 June and the concerns raised on the office space and move would be raised with management. It was agreed that a reminder to the SG with copy to the DG would be sent. Safety and health issues in the H and D buildings would be put on the agenda of the Health and Safety Committee by the Council representatives on that body (Naima Abdellaoui and Philippe Duparc) and the possibility of commissioning relevant studies would be explored. Queries had been made to Security and the administration about specific issues such as the locking of offices.

Council members further deliberated on those issues. Contact details of an ILO safety and health specialist would be shared with the ES to have an expert opinion on the issue in the H and D buildings.

It was suggested to commission an in-depth study and audit of SHP by an independent and non-UN body to learn lessons and find out if the funds had been spent effectively. Other Council members noted that independent and critical audits had already been carried out on SHP and while damning in parts, had not resulted in any action by Member States. It was doubtful that yet another audit would achieve much. Nevertheless, it was agreed that Council members should study the various audits in order to prepare useful content for the JNC meeting and other elements of the campaign.

It was suggested that another Council meeting should be held before the JNC meeting to discuss the position to be taken. It was pointed out that that was the purpose of the current agenda item and that a course of action had already been agreed upon.

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

JNC: Joint Negotiating Committee bringing together the UNOG Staff Union and the UNOG administration

SHP: Strategic Heritage Plan