



42nd Staff Union Council 2024-2025

Ref. SU-42-7

Minutes of the 7th meeting

held on 11 November 2024 at 11:00 a.m. via MS Teams

Adopted on 20 January 2025

Council members present: *Naima Abdellaoui; Mario Apostolov; Dominique Chantrel; Mohamed Chiraz Bali; Tigest Desta; Cintia De Lima Cardoso; Marius Gologus; Ursula Hermelink; Cédric Jacquot; Laura Johnson; Dan Lin; Rowland Palairet; Catherine Louise Peck Arif; Janet Puhalic; Ian Richards; Maria Almudena Rueda Melendez; Bradford Smith; Marko Stanovic; Radouan Tualbia.*

Council members absent: *Marian Aggrey; Philippe Duparc; Jean-Luc La Planeta; Nicole Lewis-Lettington; Begoña Martinez Alfonso; Philip Thomas.*

The meeting began at 11:05 a.m.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted as reflected below.

2. Adoption of the minutes of the 6th meeting

The minutes were approved with the addition of an item on the importance of UNOG translators' and interpreters' continuation of teaching in training the next generation of interpreters and translators.

3. Report of the Executive Bureau

The ES and DES reported on behalf of the EB on its activities and recent developments:

- ICSC out of area survey: An information session was held to encourage staff participation, explaining implications, and ensuring inclusivity. Efforts have been put to ensure all eligible entities, including ITC and the Pension Fund, were invited to participate in the survey.
- CCISUA Mid Term meeting in NY: The upcoming meeting to start the week after would address key issues such as mental health strategy, field security, and updates from senior UN officials. Internal discussions would focus on these topics alongside other common system challenges.
- Visit of Catherine Pollard, Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, to Geneva: The visit included a meeting with the staff union, where issues like step determination for temporary staff, delays in investigations, and responses to staff deaths in the Middle East were discussed. A broadcast was sent to share these updates.
- SMC meetings: Ad hoc meetings were carried out where topics on regional diversity (balancing recruitment criteria), due process concerns (e.g., UNRWA terminations without apparent due process), and performance management improvements were discussed. A draft policy aiming to consolidate temporary, fixed-term, and continuing appointments was shared by the management for staff representatives' inputs. Staff side provided significant feedback, and management was asked to clarify its intent and plans for implementation. A paper on departmental consultations would be discussed in the upcoming meetings.
- JNC updates: Discussions at the last JNC meeting covered reasonable accommodation workflows (ensuring formal justifications for denials), air quality concerns in various UNOG buildings, and planning for necessary investments in the UN Port amid a liquidity crisis.
- OHCHR survey: A survey for OHCHR staff highlighted concerns about restructuring, voluntary relocations, and job opportunities. Staff stressed the need for clear communication regarding changes and their timelines. Those concerns were conveyed to the OHCHR change management team during a meeting on the issue.

- Long Service Award 2024: The ceremony was well-attended and positively received by staff, and a cocktail was provided by the SU. A follow-up meeting with HR found little need for significant changes in future iterations.

Council members emphasized the need to use "killings" rather than "deaths" when discussing Middle East staff casualties, urging management to prioritize justice over procedural justifications. Naima Abdellaoui raised concerns about UNRWA's fragmented judicial system affecting UN credibility; managers having final say on accommodations, even against medical recommendations; increasing managerial discretion in hiring.

4. Report of the Finance Committee

The finance commission reported on successful completion of the SU audit, confirming that all assessments and records were in order. Appreciation was expressed for the collective effort involved in ensuring compliance and transparency during the audit process.

5. Joint Bodies

The President of the Council informed the members that some Joint Bodies lacked staff representatives as the number of nominations in the elections was fewer than positions. A temporary solution was proposed, nominating interim members until elections could be organized, possibly in March or at the same time with the SU elections to maximize operational effectiveness. Some members raised concerns about this approach, arguing that it would violate SU regulations requiring elections for staff representation, while others emphasized that this would leave some bodies either unable to function or required to operate with more management representatives than staff representatives. The Council eventually voted to organize elections within a reasonable period of time and appointed temporary observers until then. It also decided that it would nominate the following observers to temporarily cover the vacant positions, support the representatives who were elected, and to ensure that staff interests are fully protected pending new elections:

- SAFI Management Board: Laura Johnson
- Staff Benevolent Fund (alternates): Marko Stankovic, Bradford Smith
- Rebuttal Panel for Performance Management and Development System: Catherine Peck Arif
- Joint Committee on Catering Services: Dominique Chantrel, Janet Puhalic, Marie-Rose Gérard

For the reasonable accommodation working group, which was not a joint body, Cíntia De Lima Cardoso, Janet Puhalic and Naima Abdellaoui were nominated and approved by the Council.

6. Official holidays 2026

The Council reviewed the proposed list of 2026 holidays, which included standard holidays and one floating holiday coinciding with an official holiday. A suggestion was made to replace that floating holiday with Jeûne Fédérale (September 21), as it aligns with local holiday requirements. The proposed 2026 holiday schedule was accepted.

7. Lebanon collection

The Finance Committee reported that the funds collected for Lebanon totalled 16,720 Swiss francs. It was proposed to top it up by a maximum of 10,000 francs, which was approved by the Council without objections.

8. Tennis club

The members of the Tennis Club Management Committee informed the Council on the plans to modernize the club by transforming it into a broader racket sports facility, incorporating paddle courts, pickleball, badminton courts, and ping-pong tables to attract a diverse membership. That approach aims to cater to international preferences and generate more income. The proposal was still in development, and further details will be shared in the next meeting. Naima Abdellaoui suggested to align club interests with staff rights and well-being, emphasizing secure employment and salaries as key to sustaining club membership.

9. UNCTAD issues

A survey at UNCTAD revealed concerns about blocked posts, unclear frozen positions, and harassment issues. A meeting with the UNCTAD Secretary-General led to unfreezing 40 positions, advancing selections, and addressing harassment issues. A director accused of misconduct was removed from managerial duties pending an investigation. The UNCTAD staff was informed on those developments via SU broadcast. The SU leadership also attended the UNCTAD townhall on office moves. The Council emphasized maintaining productive relationships with the UNCTAD leadership in order to address systemic issues while updating staff on progress.

10. Security issues

The Council was informed on the management decisions taken as a result of Appendix B Working Group discussions. The administration decided to implement 9-hour shifts with guaranteed lunch breaks and consistency across staff. The time for preparing and closing workstations as well as uniform changing times would be considered part of working hours. The management would also prepare a new document by the end of that year to replace the previous addendums, with input from staff representatives and health experts addressing concerns such as extended night shifts. Further action on the developments would wait until clear policies and responses were provided by the management.

11. SHP

DES updated the Council on the SHP Transition Board meeting that took place on 4 November. Union concerns included parking and communication issues. Key points from the SHP update:

- Building closures and openings remain inconsistent, with frequent timeline changes.
- Some S1 meeting rooms lack hybrid meeting capabilities due to budget constraints, and the Assembly Hall is unavailable until March.
- Building E glass replacements are delayed by over a year.
- Relocation efforts for OHCHR are causing disruption among smaller entities in H building.
- Standard office equipment policies are restrictive, with no locks, keys, or individual items provided by UNOG. However, the entities occupying the office spaces may itself decide to procure those items.
- Staff will be surveyed post-move by UNOG for feedback, while union representatives would be keen to obtain the results to actively address the challenges.

Council members were urged to inform the ES and DES if major issues regarding moves and SHP were identified to convey to the Administration.

12. AOB

- OCHA update:
 - A new Under-Secretary-General (USG) for OCHA had been appointed and the SU aims to discuss challenges, especially shrinking humanitarian funding, which is at unprecedented lows. A 5% funding freeze had been already affecting positions, with more downsizing projected.
 - Decentralization issues: The aftermath of the 2019 decentralization remains contentious. A consultant was hired to assess it, but trust issues persist. Potential relocations of some staff from Istanbul to Panama add to staff concerns.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:50 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

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

SHP: Strategic Heritage Plan