

STAFF UNION BULLETIN

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FIRST SESSION

26 February 2015

Record of Decisions

The Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee opened the first session of the Annual General Meeting and welcomed the participants. She underlined that this ordinary session of the AGM would be brief as it would be followed by a Town Hall Meeting on contracts policy. The latter was not a statutory meeting and would not lead to any decisions.

1. Election of the Chairperson

The Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee reminded the participants that it was customary for the Chairperson of the Annual General Meeting to be elected for both sessions held in the course of the year. Following a call for nominations, ***Simon Steyne was elected by acclamation.***

2. Adoption of the agenda (doc. SU/AGM/2015/1/D.1)

An additional item was placed under Any Other Business (point 5 of the agenda) on changes in the Swiss citizenship law and implications for international civil servants posted in Geneva. ***The Annual General Meeting adopted the agenda as amended.***

3. Discussion of the draft Programme and Strategy of the Staff Union for the year 2015 (doc. SU/AGM/2015/1/D.2)

The Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee presented the draft Programme and Strategy for the year 2015. She noted that the priority areas of action were the same since the launching of the ONE ILO campaign in March 2013. The year 2014 marked significant progress in a number of priority areas of action while some matters took longer than others to conclude in order to ensure a good negotiation and outcome. Two collective agreements had been signed on Recruitment and Selection in the ILO (March 2014) and an ILO anti-harassment policy (December 2014). Moreover, an IDGS on mobility had been issued in December 2014 following negotiations with the Staff Union as a

complement to the collective agreement on recruitment and selection. Finally, an amendment to the collective agreement on travel had been signed in November 2014. The Administration had still not published the revised Office Procedure on Travel which was the result of the negotiations. This document provided for non-negligible improvements aimed at ensuring sufficient time for rest and recuperation during long missions. Finally, a collective agreement on maternity protection in the ILO had been signed last February 2015 with the Administration. This progress helped set the stage for the negotiations on the major issue of contracts policy.

At this stage, two boxes were ticked on a board depicting the priorities of the ONE ILO campaign to reflect the progress made in the areas of harassment and mobility.

The Chairperson congratulated the elected Staff Union representatives for these advances.

The Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee recalled that negotiations would not be possible without the commitment and support of staff and that a high membership and participation rate accounted for the force of the Staff Union and helped achieve tangible results in the framework of negotiations. Of course a great deal remained to be done but the headway made so far provided reasons to be optimistic.

The Chairperson of the Staff Union went on to present the priorities for 2015 in relation to the ONE ILO campaign (first part of the report). She referred in particular to Objective No. 1 on ensuring equal treatment among staff. The Chairperson of the Staff Union referred to the longstanding issue of the review of the classification of staff positions in the field which did not advance despite the patience and good faith shown by staff in the field. The Staff Union was in the unfortunate position to have no information to share on this topic with the members. More pressure needed to be exerted in this area.

She then turned to Objective No. 2 on promoting a “fair deal” with the staff, building motivation, confidence and trust. Progress had been made on recruitment and selection and mobility. The next step was the implementation of the recent collective agreement on recruitment and selection through the Recruitment, Assignment and Mobility Committee (RAMC) in which the Staff Union was a member. In this framework, the Staff Union would aim at concrete advances such as the regularization of staff on TC via their recruitment on regular budget posts and the granting of special consideration to TC staff vis-à-vis other external candidates; the promotion of mobility of staff who have spent a number of years in the field; and the creation of adequate career opportunities for all staff.

In addition, Objective No. 2 had to do with promoting transparency in a context where, despite progress made, it was still common practice to pass in silence a number of important issues, instead of sharing information and communicating with the Staff Union at an early stage.

This issue was linked also to Objective No. 4 on rebuilding trust and putting in place proper industrial relations procedures. A fundamental principle of freedom of association was that in order to carry out meaningful negotiations, both parties needed to have access to full information. However, this fundamental principle was still not part of the practice within the house. Two recent examples

illustrated this point well: first, the decision to re-open the Regional Office for Africa in Abidjan and second, the launching of an Administrative Management Process Review (i.e. a tender for external consultants to review internal procedures) which were communicated to the Staff Union in a fortuitous or unofficial manner despite their serious consequences for staff. The Staff Union was determined to follow closely both issues.

With regard to Objective No. 3: raising the profile of security of staff, the Chairperson of the Staff Union placed emphasis on the question of security in the field. No information had been communicated to the Staff Union on the field structure review, despite initial commitments to consult early in the process. The Titular members from the field would meet the Deputy Director-General for Field Operations (DDG/FOP) the following day and would have the opportunity to seek the information themselves.

In relation to the same Objective No. 3, the Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee noted the need to fully implement the newly adopted Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Policy through the recently established OSH Committee (COSH). The Staff Union would help to set up a network of OSH representatives entrusted with overseeing the implementation of the OSH policy throughout all ILO Offices at HQ and in the field.

The Titular member representing Africa asked a question concerning the reclassification of staff positions in the field which had not moved forward despite years of delay. Field staff would like to know more about the strategy and what could be done at grassroots level.

The Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee replied that despite some steps taken (selection of classification experts and selection of offices to be reviewed) the delay was important and one could not expect field staff to have more patience. A simple way to get things in motion would be to use alternative strategies such as legal action in order to obtain concrete outcomes and the Staff Union was ready to help in this regard. But it would be prudent to wait for any progress at the meeting with DDG/FOP the following day and during the GB session currently underway before launching this strategy.

Moving on to Section 2 of the Report, the Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee emphasized the following elements:

- Addressing the concerns of ILO field staff: staff should be consulted on the Field Structure Review. Staff *had* to be consulted. Regional Directors to whom the DG had delegated authority in the framework of the review should hold full and frank consultations with staff. Moreover, it was important to share information in order to carry out meaningful consultations. The Staff Union Committee, including the titular members from the regions, would demand no less from the DDG/FOP the next day.

Furthermore, the titular members from the regions would meet the newly appointed Executive Secretary of the SHIF in order to discuss the continuing concerns of staff in this area, notably the delays in reimbursement. Last December, an increase in the contribution rate had been averted at the last moment at the SHIF Management Committee, thanks to the elected representatives of the

insured on the SHIF Management Committee, as no corresponding improvement in the services rendered by the SHIF had been ensured. The Staff Union would continue to follow up on this question of improvement in services offered by the SHIF in the framework of the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC).

- Equality, Diversity and Work-life Balance: A question which was particularly worrying for the Staff Union was the discriminatory treatment suffered by LGBT colleagues in relation to their personal status. An important administrative decision taken by the UN Secretary General last year to redress this inequality was questioned at the 5th Committee of the General Assembly (the Committee where the conditions of work of international civil servants were decided upon) by a number of UN Member States. There was good reason to hope that the Administrative Decision would not be overturned and that it would be put into practice not only at the UN but also the ILO in particular. The Staff Union followed up on this portfolio in close cooperation with UN Globe and intended to exert pressure on the Administration so that equal treatment could be ensured for the LGBT community in the ILO and within the UN System as a whole.

- Career Development and IRIS: the Joint Training Council remained in suspension thereby preventing the Staff Union from the legitimate means of addressing the Administration in relation to gaps in training. In particular, it was necessary to offer IRIS training to G staff at Headquarters as this was essential for the career development of G staff. Colleagues were unable to move from G4 to G5 level due to IRIS related requirements and moreover, the constant practice of re-hiring retired staff was based on the argument that they had knowledge of IRIS. The Chairperson proposed to add a section on training under the means of action relevant to IRIS: "The Staff Union will demand that ongoing IRIS training be put in place at Headquarters as soon as possible in order to provide adequate career development opportunities to General Services staff and stop the re-employment of retired officials."

The General Meeting approved the Programme and Strategy of the ILO Staff Union Committee for the year 2015 by consensus.

4. Adoption of the budget for the financial exercise 2015 (doc. SU/AGM/2015/1/D.3)

The Assistant Treasurer (in the absence of the Treasurer) introduced the budget, describing the various lines of income and expenditure. A Global Meeting of the Staff Union was foreseen in October of this year in the place of two regional meetings. The cost related to this meeting would lead to a deficit which would be balanced in the subsequent financial exercises, notably through the reorganization of the cycle of regional meetings which would result in savings every year.

The Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee added a proposal to insert in the entry relative to "external collaboration" the words "and campaigning" to clarify the fact that the Staff Union could eventually call upon external consultants for assistance in the framework of the forthcoming negotiations on contracts for research and the organisation of campaigns.

The Chairperson added that external collaborators often intervened in the framework of campaigning and therefore the addition helped to clarify this point and allow for expenditures in this framework in the course of negotiations.

The General meeting approved the Budget for the Financial Exercise 2015 by consensus.

5. Other Business

The Chairperson recalled that one item had been placed on the agenda, on the Swiss citizenship law and impact for international civil servants living in Geneva.

The Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee introduced the item by explaining that the Swiss people had recently voted a new law which had some unintended consequences upon international civil servants posted in Geneva. The Staff Unions, Associations and Federations representing international civil servants organized an information session within the UN family in order to inform staff on the implications of this important development. The ILO Staff Union in collaboration with the unions, associations and federations representing international civil servants, was in the process of asking the ILO Director-General and other heads of agencies their assistance in order to bring this issue to the attention of the Geneva cantonal authorities, in full respect of the Swiss sovereignty. A small window of opportunity was open as long as the Decree of implementation of the new law was being drafted at cantonal level and the staff representatives were hoping for improvements at cantonal level to protect to a certain extent the interests of international staff. However, it should be up to the Administrations, not the unions and associations to undertake these discussions with the Swiss authorities. The Staff Union had addressed a letter to the Director-General on this question noting among other things, that the change in status of the international civil servants would have an undeniable impact on the negotiations on contracts policy. The Chairperson added that the Staff Union was committed to following up on this matter closely to ensure that the interests of staff were formally represented to the Administration and adequately protected. There would probably be a follow-up meeting on this subject.

The Chairperson added that of course it was not the responsibility of the SU to negotiate these matters but to ensure that the interests of staff were represented to the Administration and especially that the contractual implications could be taken into account. The issue was complex enough to require close attention. A follow-up meeting would provide further information in the near future.

After the customary thanks, the Chairperson closed the first session of the Annual General Meeting 2015.

The session ended at 2.30 p.m.