

STAFF UNION BULLETIN
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27 February 2003

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
FIRST SESSION

30 January 2003

Minutes

At 1.45 p.m. the Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee (J.V. Gruat) declared the first session of the Annual General Meeting open and welcomed all members present.

Election to the Chair of the General Meeting

1. Jean-Jacques Chevron, a member of the Former Officials Section, was nominated to chair the meeting. Following a discussion, it was moved that, Mr. Chevron being a member of the Former Officials Section, his nomination as chair of a General Meeting of the Staff Union was irreceivable. Result of the vote on irreceivabiliy: 13 for, 31 against and four abstentions. In the absence of any other nominations, J.J. Chevron was elected unopposed.

Adoption of the agenda

2. The Chairperson thanked the meeting for its confidence.

3. The Chairperson of the Committee asked the meeting to allow Ben Lapk Low of the Abidjan Staff Union Committee to make a statement on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire. Our colleague gave the following account of working conditions, recent decisions and how local officials and those who stayed on are reacting to the crisis. Ninety per cent of the local staff now have walky-talkies so that they can make sure that all colleagues have returned home before the curfew. A crisis committee has been set up and has met several times. It has also brought in a stock of food at the Office. Owing to the situation elsewhere in the country, many

colleagues' family members have taken refuge in Abidjan, which has created numerous logistics problems. The administration has decided on the payment of salary advances, reimbursable or otherwise, to cope with the problem. A solidarity fund has been started into which the Director's office has already paid CHF 1,200. Our colleague went on to stress the importance of union solidarity at a time when growing insecurity is causing stress and suffering. He regretted the absence of any reaction on the part of the Director's office at headquarters and concluded: "colleagues still come to work gripped by fear". The Chair thanked the representative from Abidjan for the information. He expressed the hope that, as it had in similar circumstances in the past, the ILO administration would find the requisite solutions to all the problems facing staff at the Côte d'Ivoire Office. He proposed adopting a motion of solidarity at the end of the meeting.

4. At the request of a member, it was decided that item 7, "Report of the Treasurer of the Board of the Staff Union Assistance Fund (doc. SU/AGM/2003/1D6)", would be taken up as item 3.

5. A member asked why the resolution to require a referendum on amendment of the Staff Union Rules was referred to as an appendix to the General Meeting documents and not considered on its own, as foreseen at the previous General Meeting. The Chairperson of the Staff Union explained that the proposed resolution was incorporated in the documents prepared by the Committee with the agreement of the authors of the resolution.

Report of the Treasurer of the Board of the Staff Union Assistance Fund (doc. SU/AGM/2003/1/D.6)

6. A member of the Board of the Fund introduced the Treasurer's report (doc. SU/AGM/2003/1/D.6), which was thereafter approved by the meeting.

Discussion of the draft programme and strategy of the Staff Union for 2003 (doc. SU/AGM/2003/1/D.2)

7. The Chairperson of the Committee having introduced document SU/AGM/2003/1/D.2, several members spoke on the order of priority of the various items of the programme and on giving top priority to expressing solidarity with colleagues in the field in the throes of a crisis, such as the current one in Côte d'Ivoire.

8. Other questions were raised, such as what the role of the Staff Union should be in improving communication between staff and management, what could be done to increase the purchasing power of staff without going through the ICSC (by means of productivity bonuses, for instance), how to strengthen safety and health at the Office, how to promote work/family balance, enable our colleagues in the field to have access to loan mechanisms, promote training needs, create a committee to manage the Staff Union's finances, improve the efficiency and rules of the pension fund, achieve greater fairness with regard to retired officials' contracts.

9. A member drew the meeting's attention to the serious difficulties, in terms of

working conditions, affecting PUBL colleagues. One year after the fire that seriously damaged its premises on the first floor, PUBL is still housed in the *Salon du Personnel* on R.1 in precarious, uncomfortable and unsuitable conditions. Although work has been done and more is under way on the first floor, there has been no actual commitment to re-house PUBL in premises suited to the needs of the service. The staff has expressed its dissatisfaction in a petition addressed to INTER and seeks the Staff Union's help in moving things forward.

10. Several members took the floor to ask that the Staff Union's continued action for the reform of the ILO Administrative Tribunal be incorporated among the specific objectives of the Union's programme for 2003.

11. In answer to the question concerning priorities, the Chairperson of the Committee explained that all the items mentioned in the programme were priority matters and that working conditions in the outside offices were a central issue among the priorities. As to the other items mentioned by members, they would be expressly taken into account in the Staff Union's activities for 2003 as set out in the "Task schedule", now accessible on the Staff Union's web page.

Amendments to the Staff Union Rules (doc. SU/AGM/2003/1/D.3)

12. As regards the proposed amendments, points (A)(i) to (iv) were adopted with the corrections as set out in the record of decisions (see Staff Union web page under "Information – General Meeting documents"), provided there are no inconsistencies with other provisions of the Rules. Under point (iii), responding to a statement the Secretary of the Former Officials Section undertook to encourage staff who are not members of the Staff Union and who wish to join the section as supporting members to join the Staff Union as well.

13. It was noted that the procedure for putting future amendments to a referendum will also apply to the Former Officials Section for any amendment of the Rules which may concern them (right to submit proposals, right to vote) and that the text of the relevant annex is to be revised accordingly.

Budget revision – Exercise 2003 (doc. SU/AGM/2003/1/D.4)

14. Document SU/AGM/2003/1/D.4 having been introduced by the Chairperson of the Committee, the proposals were adopted (see Staff Union web page under "Information – General Assembly documents").

Arrangements for the elections to the Staff Union Committee (doc. SU/AGM/2003/1/D.5)

15. The Chair explained that the amendment had been proposed at the request of the Annual General Meeting of 31 October 2002. The proposed amendment and calendar were adopted (see Staff Union web page under "Information – General Assembly documents").

Other business

16. The Chair proposed the following message to convey the meeting's solidarity with our colleagues in Abidjan.

“The Annual General Meeting of the ILO Staff Union, held in Geneva on 30 January 2003, wishes to transmit its full solidarity to all officials of the ILO's Regional Office in Abidjan and to all ILO staff in Côte d'Ivoire, as well as those in other organizations and projects of the United Nations system, in the hardships endured by them and their families.”

The above text was adopted.

17. The Chair closed the discussions and thanked members for a most productive meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 6 p.m.