

STAFF UNION BULLETIN
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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
FIRST SESSION

14 February 2008

Record of decisions

The President of the Staff Union opened the first session of the Annual General Meeting and welcomed the members who were present.

1. Election of the Chairperson of the AGM

The President of the Staff Union Committee turned to agenda item 1, *Election of the Chairperson of the AGM*. On the proposal of a member of the Staff Union, seconded by several others, Martine Humblet was elected Chairperson of the Meeting by acclamation..

2. Adoption of the agenda (doc. SU/AGM/2008/1/D.1)

The Chairperson thanked the Meeting for the honour of her election and welcomed the titular regional members present. She then moved on to agenda item 2, *Adoption of the agenda*.

The agenda was adopted by consensus, without change.

3. Discussion of the draft Programme and Strategy of the Staff Union for the year 2008 (doc. SU/AGM/2008/1/D.2).

The President of the Staff Union Committee introduced item 3 of the agenda: *Discussion of the Draft Programme and Strategy of the Staff Union for the year 2008*. After outlining the objectives under each heading, the expected results and completed or ongoing activities, he focused on the following points:

(a) *Strengthening the Staff Union's means of action*: launching an election campaign for Union stewards; improving communication so as to make the Staff Union Committee more visible, including the direct distribution of a « Newsletter » among the staff; pursuing a strategy to increase Staff Union membership.

(b) *Improving dialogue at the ILO:* maintaining transparency in negotiations with the administration and reviewing existing collective agreements, with the focus on recruitment and selection.

(c) *Transparency in recruitment and selection procedures:* more transparency at every level. For this the role of the Union representatives in the procedures would have to be enhanced. The Resourcing, Assignment and Placement System (RAPS), a new management tool introduced by the administration, was causing a great deal of concern and the Staff Union was seeking solutions to the problems it raised. Mobility must be used as a means of providing career development opportunities and not as a sanction.

(d) *Equality of opportunity and treatment:* especially equality between male and female staff, recognition of domestic partnerships and the elimination of discrimination based on sexual orientation.

(e) *Elimination of precarious employment:* Genuine progress had been made in this area, notably by putting an end to Special Service Agreements (SSA) at the ILO. The ILO Administrative Tribunal had recently taken a very important decision on the matter, for which thanks were due to the help the Staff Union received from the Legal Adviser. Negotiations with the Human Resources Department (HRD) had been proposed to define the new policy on contracts. Much remained to be done, however, and the Staff Union had set up a working group on precarious employment to handle the issue.

(f) *Family and work.* The Staff Union was awaiting the results of the questionnaire on family/work-life balance, which was the product of negotiations between the Union and HRD; it would shortly be available online. The questionnaire would help the Union to assess the staff's priorities and the present system's shortcomings and to find appropriate solutions. The Committee urged all the staff to fill in the questionnaire.

(g) *Career development.* The Staff Union was calling for short-term officials employed under rule 3.5 to be entitled to titularization. The personnel promotion exercise was behind schedule and the administration had been asked to complete it as soon as possible. On the subject of training, the Staff Union was seeking clarification as to the status of the collective agreement on personal development plans (PDP). Meanwhile, HRD was carrying out an assessment of the new training policy. The Staff Union was looking forward to discussing HRD's experience in this area during the past biennium. The Staff Union also wanted to review the classification system introduced by HRD.

(h) *Occupational safety and health.* This was a particularly important issue, and the President of the Staff Union Committee referred to the dramatic attack in Algiers that had cost the life of an ILO colleague. An agreement had been reached in 2007 between the administration and the Staff Union on a new occupational safety and health policy. The Union intended to be even more active in this area in 2008. The staff needed to be trained in safety rules. The findings of the questionnaire on smoking would be published very shortly and would be followed up by the Union.

(i) *Conflict resolution.* A leaflet entitled “Resolving problems at work”, based on collaboration between the Staff Union and HRD, had recently been published. French and Spanish versions would follow. The Committee had set up a Legal Support Unit, and it was essential that the issue of the Union’s legal adviser be resolved quickly, as the administration was undermining the principle of freedom of association. The Staff Union had tried to reach an agreement informally, but it would now have to use more official channels. If the matter was to be settled, the Union needed the backing of all its members.

(j) *Relations with other trade union organizations.* The Staff Union was following the United Nations reform very closely and was accordingly taking part in the international meetings on the subject, especially those of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC). There would soon be an online interactive forum on the Union’s website to facilitate exchanges of information between agencies. An effort must be made to strengthen solidarity between the various staff unions and associations of the international organizations. The Union also wanted to improve its links with international staff representatives, such as the Public Services International (PSI).

Following the President’s presentation, the Chairperson invited participants to comment on the draft Programme and Strategy for 2008

A participant asked the Staff Union to keep a watchful eye on the implementation of the RAPS and its relevance to current negotiations on recruitment and selection. Another participant asked whether it was possible for an official to request a staff assessment. In answer, it was explained that the possibility did exist, but not through the assessment centre. Other questions were raised concerning precarious employment and the possibility that previously existed of technical cooperation officials taking part in competitions as internal candidates.

Two amendments referring to priority safety and health issues were submitted to the Programme and Strategy.

The first sought to add emphasis to the point dealing with smoking, by replacing the words “Follow up to the questionnaire on smoking policy” by “Negotiations in the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) aimed at banning smoking completely in all ILO offices, at headquarters and in the field.” The President of the Staff Union Committee pointed out that the Union’s questionnaire on smoking, whose findings would shortly be made public, already proposed a number of measures along those lines. Since the JNC was not competent to deal with smoking issues, he suggested a subamendment reading: “*A negotiated policy banning smoking in all ILO offices at headquarters and in the field.*”

The amendment, as subamended, was adopted by consensus.

The second proposed amendment sought to add a new point dealing with harassment, as follows: “Take action against harassment at work and investigate cases of mobbing”.

The amendment was adopted by consensus.

A member of the Staff Union Committee proposed that a discussion on the subject be scheduled for a First Monday of the Month.

A participant asked the Staff Union also to be more vigilant about the presence of asbestos inside the building.

Another participant stressed that the Staff Union had to maintain a very firm stance on the United Nations reform, in liaison with the Workers' group in the Governing Body, particularly on the occasion of the statement by the President of the Staff Union Committee to the Programme, Finance and Administrative Committee (PFAC).

The Programme and Strategy of the Staff Union for the year 200 was adopted, as amended, by consensus.

The Meeting observed a minute of silence in memory of ILO colleague Abderrahim Hanniche, who died in the Algiers attack on 11 December 2007.

4. Adoption of the budget for the financial exercise 2008 (doc. SU/AGM/2008/1/D.3)

The President of the Staff Union Committee presented the budget for the financial exercise 2008 and observed that there was no real change from the previous year, other than a slight increase in the budget for the purchase of computer equipment.

A participant requested that in future the budget for the previous year be published alongside the draft budget for the new exercise, so as to make it easier to compare the two.

In answer to a question raised by a participant, the President of the Staff Union Committee confirmed that there was no change in the contribution rate for 2008.

The budget for the financial exercise 2008 was adopted by consensus.

5. Other business

A retired official asked why former officials had not received ballot papers for the current session of the Annual General Meeting. The President of the Staff Union Committee recalled that, under the Union Rules, members of the Former Officials' Section had the right to vote at General Meetings on matters affecting them, and there was no item of that nature that was liable to be voted upon at the present session. The Legal Adviser would, however, be consulted on that point so that the matter could be clarified in time for the next session of the Annual General Meeting.

The titular regional member for Africa said that his colleagues from the region had been very touched by the solidarity shown by the Staff Union following the attack in Algiers. He described the principal concerns of the staff of the region, namely, security in the field, the United Nations reform process, the RAPS, the introduction of IRIS, and the amendments to the Regulations and Administrative Rules of the Staff Health Insurance Fund (SHIF). He also stressed the need to resolve the question of the status of the Union's legal adviser. He concluded by expressing his gratitude at the holding of a regional meeting in Africa during the year.

The titular member for the Americas emphasized the question of security, which was a constant problem. He too was concerned about local salaries, the SHIF amendments, the implementation of the RAPS, the One UN policy and, with regard to conflict resolution, the inefficiency of the facilitation procedure in the regions.

The titular member for Asia said that he shared the concerns voiced by the two other regional representatives.

Following the customary expressions of thanks, the Chairperson closed the first session of the Annual General Meeting 2008.

The session ended at 4.30 p.m.
