

ECA Staff Union General Assembly| MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 23 February 2023 | **Time:** 3:00 to 5:00pm | **Venue:** CR2 Conference Center

Present on the Podium:

- 1) Chair of Staff Union Council, Messkir Lemma
- 2) President of ECA Staff Union Executive Committee, Mahamadou Nassirou Ba
- 3) V/President, Executive Committee, Ms. Keiso Matashane- Marite
- 4) Treasurer of ECA Staff Union Executive Committee, Sisay Wudus
- 5) External Auditor, Haileyesus Chekol

Rapporteur: Rorisa Getachew: Secretary of the Staff Council

Quorum: 33 participants on physical-presence + 108 participants (online) : Quorum being 80

Agenda topics

1. Opening remark and presentation on SU key achievements

The Chair of the meeting, Mr. Messkir Lemma, welcomed the meeting of the General Assembly and invited the President of the Executive Committee to make his presentation.

The President of the Executive Committee, Mr. Mahamadou Nassirou Ba welcomed the meeting and recognized that this was the first face to face General Assembly that the SU has been able to organize since the long hibernation of COVID 19. Then he presented key achievements of the SU during the last two and half years.

He explained that, in his capacity of President, supported the Staff Engagement Action Plan; Co-Chaired the Joint Negotiation Committee and the HR task Force; represented ECA Staff Union and FUNSA (Federation of UN staff Associations in Ethiopia) at the international level at SMC (Staff Management Committee) and CCISUA (Coordination Committee of International Staff Unions and Associations) and supported and was founder member of the One UN COVID task Force.

Internationally, he served as member of the Working Group on Staff Selection and Mobility and Co-Chair of the Working Group on "Delegation of Authority" at SMC. At the Coordination Committee of International Staff Unions and Associations. Currently, he is Vice President for Condition of Service for CCISUA since the last General Assembly which was held in Geneva from 16-20 May 2022.

With regards to the Executive Committee's achievements, the Host Country Agreement was signed; supported ECA's Business Continuity Plan; new LSSC is formed; contributed to the Annual Review of hardship and place to place survey of the duty station. He worked with the RC office and DOA on Place-to-Place Survey; supported the RCO/DOA/FUNSA on Cost-of-Living Survey/Housing Survey; and served as Member of the UN vaccination taskforce.

Furthermore, the SU supported the 2021 and 2022 UN Clinic budget cost sharing among UN agencies. He was involved in the new negotiation for the new caterer on campus; worked with FMS to make the campus premises conformed to WHO requirements for "return to office"; worked with HR and Finance sections to provide salary advance to local staff; contributed to CRB/CRP and Rebuttal panels. Coordinated with FUNSA the fund raising for Addis Children Hospital for Children with Heart disease, which resulted in donating half a Million Birr to the hospital. Other fund raising for Covid 19, granted half

a million Birr to Addis Ababa Municipality. These 2 activities were accomplished during his predecessor time while he was Vice President. In the same token, 400 service providers staff in the compound who were laid off benefited from a small cash hand out.

As mandated by the last General Assembly for the Staff Union Executive Committee to visit all the SROs, he undertook the SROs visit.

As such 5 SROs and IDEP were visited.

Their respective staff were provided with advice and consultation. This was the chance for Staff Union to get close to these remote ECA staff category and better understand their issues. Only SRO/CA – Yaoundé could not be visited due to difficulties in coordinating the timing. But this will be done in 2023. The full report of the SROs and IDEP visited were posted on Su website and made as ECA announcement for the constituency to read.

Internationally, at SMC and CCISUA level, different Staff concerns were also tackled including downsizing, the work on new “Performance Management” proposal, parental leave, and National Officers issues; staff mobility, SG Task Force on “Racism” and discussions on “Geographic Diversity” & “Regional Representation”, Internal Justice, etc.

One of the highlight of 2022 negotiations with Management at both SMC level was the re start of the granting of continuing contract which were halted since 2016. Now OHR has called for the batch from 2016 to 2021, now closing the long gap which existed for years.

At Local level , here in Addis, either with ECA staff Union and/or FUNSA, where the executive committees gets very involved, some of the ongoing tasks include: revamping the gym; the work on UN common village; revisiting the Banking System on Campus (the ECA contract with CBE) and exploring bringing more banks on campus; , In terms of staff hardship payment, worked with the RC office and UN DSS to make sure that UN staff in Tigray are duly paid their hardship allowance and are safely relocated from the danger zone when need be. The one staying behind get adequate protection and safety for their jobs.

2. Question and Remarks from the floor:

The following issues were raised:

A point of order was raised on the proceeding of the General Assembly that:

- the agenda should have been reviewed and adopted by the General Assembly prior to the start of the meeting. Based on the fact that the agenda had not been adopted at the beginning of the meeting– there was a request to remove two agenda items **1)** the staff engagement survey (on the basis that this was a first meeting, and an opportunity should be provided for discussion of critical matters raised by staff) and **2)** the review of the Staff Union Statutes be postponed and reviewed during an extraordinary General Assembly where staff would be presented with the current and proposed changes in advance of the meeting for a thorough and transparent review.
- the quorum should have been explained to the audience as many don't know about it although the President of the meeting announce that the quorum was attained. The number of staffs in person and those online should have been clearly communicated to the meeting.

Following these interventions, the Chair of the meeting, who is the Chair of the Council apologized for the oversight on the explanation of the quorum but stated that there were 108 people online and 33 in the room at the beginning of the meeting. It was agreed that the review of the Staff Union statutes and the discussion on the staff engagement survey exercise were both postponed. The amended agenda was then presented to the General Assembly and was seconded and adopted by the assembly. The president of the Executive committee indicated that one of the amendments was to include IDEP name in the statutes since it talks only about SROs and that it was decided by council that all SROs and IDEP will have two representatives in the next council since IDEP is now fully part of ECA and that the IDEP staff are paying their dues to Staff Union.

Other salient points raised from participants include:

- One participant stated that, anybody who pertain to bid for the Staff Union Presidency should be at least as strong as the current President as it is imperative to have someone who can take staff issues firmly...The person continued that ECA staff have been impacted by so many issues and a strong leadership team will be necessary to handle the way forward.
- The Staff Union should make staff rules and regulations accessible to for staff representatives.

- The floor brought the questions regarding several announcement for polling officers and was wondering where that stands. The President of Staff Union responded that finally the bureau of polling officers was put in place by arbitration committee very recently and it will be announced in ECA announcement asap.
- There are critical issues that the next leadership should address: **(1)** address issues related to dwindling living conditions of staff as a result of depreciation of Birr and inflation; **(2)** improving the working conditions both in the SROs and at IDEP).

2. Staff Union Financial Report: 2021, 2022

A summary of the financial report for 2020 and 2021 was presented by the treasurer, Mr. Sisay wudus. It was indicated that the income of the SU increased by 23% (2020/21). The key reasons of the increase were also highlighted. The items with positive increases include Membership Fees (24.52%), interest income from staff loans (27.9%), and gain on currency fluctuation (16%).

The expenditure in 2020 was low due to COVID which explains the hike in 2021. A comparison/variance analysis was also made between the yearly expenditures of 2020 and 2021. Accordingly, the highest expenditures with negative balances have been 1) Salaries Expense-Gym Staff (increased by 48%): This was due to the adjustment made by Staff Union to the salaries of the Gym staff to adjust their salary as per as same as ECA increment, 2) Mission Costs– (increased by 413%) due to the fact that this is compared to the previous term where there was zero mission paid by the Staff Union budget except 2 CCISUA mission and Now to the two CCISUA missions were added the 5 Missions to 4 SROS and IDEP. , and 3) CCISUA Membership Fee to CCISUA (increased by 253%). This was due to the fact that two years were not paid. This was an oversight and furthermore, it was decided to increase the membership fee by 20%. (from \$4000 to \$5000/year).

Questions and interventions from the floor:

- The presentation on the financial performance was very clear, but some people wanted to see nitty gritty details of each line. As such they wanted a detailed accounting. It was stated that the finances belong to members of the General Assembly and as part of proper fiduciary responsibility and for financial legitimacy a detailed financial accounting should have been presented with its printed version given to each member of the General Assembly. But this presentation mirrors the kind of presentations which has been always done by staff Union including during the last GA. But the treasurer stated that he is ready to provide more details when asked.
- Participants also asked the reasons for the increase in travel cost: The President of Staff union explained that the missions paid by Staff Union budget were the two missions of CCISUA and the SRO and IDEP visits which were mandated by the last GA.
- The Chair also noted that the financial presentation should have been made both in Birr and USD which would have given a better picture of the expenditure increase which has resulted due to the exchange rate fluctuations rather than the expenditure alone.
- The floor recognized that the numbers in Birr should have been converted in USD and that was acknowledged by the treasurer, and he agreed that this will done next time.
- The audit reports of the SU for 2020 and 2021 were presented by the external auditor, Mr. Haileyesus Chekol. There were 3 critical audit findings which appeared in both fiscal years:
- It was noted that a long outstanding difference of **Birr 27,106.93** between staff loan receivable controlling general ledger and detail subsidiary ledgers. Moreover, some of the loans have shown credit balances.
- The inventory depicted on the balance sheet is not substantiated by year end count and evaluation sheet has not been availed for the review.
- Credit includes long outstanding balances of **Birr 287,552.37**; the liability may not be genuine. This was acknowledged by the treasurer, and he said that these lingering balances have been there for over 10 years and either the council or the GA should make decision on it.
- The floor request the Executive Committee to undertake a thorough review of the causes of the audits findings (the lingering balances) and present its responses during the next GA
- The audit reports to be posted on the SU website

The financial figures on the audit reports to be presented both in local currency and in USD for next GA

3. Local Staff Salary Survey 2022 and Upcoming survey in June 2023

It was noted that staff had complaints on the outcomes of the last salary survey. The price of household items and the ever-increasing inflation in the country is impacting staff wellbeing. Therefore, every effort should be made to ensure competitive pay.

•The President of the Executive Committee indicated that new Local Staff Salary Survey Committee (LSSC) was put in place; and a training programme was organized to enhance their understanding and skills on the rules, procedures and processes of the LSSC. And more trainings are planned with ICSC.
•He further explained that ICSC has rules which cannot be bent, and methodologies are fixed and can be changed only during Comprehensive survey. Therefore, inflation rate is not often taken in account as it is the comparators methodology. But he said he is working closely with the RC office and the LSSSC to do whatever possible so that staff salaries are protected. The Chair of the meeting also explained about the methodology as he is the Deputy chair of the LSSS.

4. Staff Engagement Survey results/Implementation plan:

This item was taken out from the agenda at the request of the floor

5. Staff wellbeing: Work/Life balance: Flexible Work Arrangement, Future of Work and New Normal

The SU has done a lot on issues related to ensuring staff Work/Life balance; also had active participation in the One UN COVID-19 task force and other committees. However, it needs to push further on the ongoing discussions about least two days/week of flexible Work arrangement for staff to telecommuting from home. This is from an ST/Ai dated 2019 before COVID

6. New and updated policy on maternity leave

There are ongoing discussions with the management in New York concerning the revision of the Parental leave; this will be followed-up and status update to be provided by the Executive Committee.

7. Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, USD account issue, UNFCU, Loans Car deal, Land and Real Estates etc.

There is a FUNSA working group on Banking which has been put in place to oversee all banking issues. That working group is currently working on issues brought up for UN staff on campus banking with CBE.

There is also a FUNSA working Group on UN Village. The proposal is to get a plot of land for the construction of common buildings as the earlier proposal (securing a plot of land for every staff member may not be feasible); the executive committee is following it with Addis Abba City Authority. A status report will be given at the next GA.

8. Review of the Staff Union Statute:

This item was removed from the agenda at the request of the floor. But it will be addressed during an extra-ordinary GA. What needs to be done is the following: The unclear sections of the Statute requiring revision/reformulation to be highlighted/identified. Then the draft Statute to be circulated to members in advance / posted on the Union website and therefore solicit their feedback and comments; and to be discussed during the upcoming extra ordinary GA.

9. Conclusion: In conclusion, the Chair of meeting apologized for the long time the meeting has taken and thank all participants online and in physical presence for their engagement and support.

He then gave the floor to the President of the Staff Union, Mr. Mahamadou Nassirou also thanked all participants for their valuable contribution and the meeting adjourned at 5:43pm.