



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa
Nations Unies
Commission économique pour l'Afrique

STAFF UNION



SYNDICAT DU PERSONNEL

MISSION REPORT

Official Visit of ECA Staff Union to Subregional Office of East Africa,
Kigali/ Rwanda

Mahamadou Nassirou Ba, President, ECA Staff Union

Omega Asheber, ECA Staff Council Bureau

17-21 October, 2022

BACKGROUND



A delegation of two-member mission from ECA Staff Union visited the Subregional Office of East Africa, Kigali from 24 to 29 October 2022 with the purpose of (i) meeting the staff physically, listening to their issues, proposals, contributions, and together designing solutions, (ii) of sensitizing the staff members in the benefit of joining the ECA Staff Union and (iii) meet with management to also get their issues and views on issues on the office.

Kigali was under strict lockdown during Covid 19. Therefore the office was working in telecommuting mode for the last 2 years.

Staff Union has always been in contact with the staff on personal and general issues. To this effect a technical team composed of the Staff Council comprising of 2 member and a support staff went to Kigali:

Mr. Mahamadou Nassirou Ba, President of the Staff Union executive Office

Ms Omega Asheber, ECA Staff Council Bureau

About the Office: The Subregional Office for Eastern Africa (SRO-EA) is located in Kigali (Rwanda). The office covers the following 14 countries: Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.

SRO-EA is headed by a Director who reports to the Deputy Executive Secretary (Programme). Its core objective is to contribute to achieving structural transformation for inclusive and sustainable development in the subregion, with a focus on deepening regional integration.

The office also serves two Regional Economic Communities (RECs): East African Community (EAC) and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); and three intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs): Indian Ocean Commission (IOC); the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL); and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR).

The core functions are as follows:

(a) Assisting member States through initiatives, advisory services, and tailored capacity-building interventions in the context of the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, including through technical studies and country profiles addressing structural transformation;

(b) Contributing to strengthening the capacity of member States in the Eastern Africa subregion, the regional economic communities, and intergovernmental bodies to develop and implement development frameworks, including on the blue economy.

The Agenda: The visit had the following pre-set agenda which was the outcome of a virtual consultation with the local Staff Union representatives

The program will consist of :

1. Meeting with the Director
2. Meeting all the staff together
3. Meeting staff on individual basis
4. Presentation of the Staff Union roles and activities
5. Presentation of the Staff Management Committee (SMC) and CCSIUA (Coordination Committee of International Staff Unions and Associations)
6. Presentation of FUNSA (Federation of the United Nations Staff Association in Ethiopia)
7. Presentation of UN Staff Rules: Focused on Article 8
8. Presentation of UN values and Behaviours

9. Presentation of UN Next Normal
10. Curtesy visit to the UN resident Coordinator in Rwanda

Proceedings

The mission was welcomed by the Director Ms. Mama Keita with whom the delegation had a long conversation on different administrative and staff issues. . We discussed staff security and well-being, and they relate to staff union functions. The Director mentioned that the SRO/EA is now back in full-time physical presence work- mode but is interested to explore flexible work arrangements for the office.

Day 1

After the welcome meeting with the Director, the delegation has an all-staff meeting at the small conference room upstairs in a hybrid format where staff who were out of the country on a mission and /or out of the office that day could also join. Several presentations were made:

1) Presentation of the Staff Union Executive committee council and its role

Ms. Omega also presented the Staff Union membership and monthly contributions and encouraged those who are still not members to join.

The staff members were briefed on the adherence status of their office in the Staff Union and the many benefits and advantages of joining the staff union.

The staff members acknowledged the importance of joining the SU. In addition, they raised many concerns and issues regarding permanent contracts, individual contracts, and Job terms of references.

2) Presentation of FUNSA

3) Presentation of SMC (the Staff management Committee) and CCISUA (Coordination Committee of International Staff Associations)

After that presentation, there was a session on Questions and Answers (Q&A)

In the afternoon, the President met with the Staff on a one-to-one basis and discuss specific issues pertaining to staff and to the office in general.

Day 2 :

1)The President continued with his one-to-one meeting with the staff

2) Also responding to clarifications raised by the staff

Day 3

Four major presentations on the program: UN Staff Rules, UN Values, and Behaviours, UN Next Normal and Integrated Chain Management (ECA 4.0). The president stressed the importance of these frameworks as they will be parts of the new ECA 4.0

1) UN Staff Rules: ST/SGB 2018/1 (Article 8)

The Staff Union President presented the Staff Rules with a focus on Article 8 which points out the privileges of the Union and clarifies the relation with management. The presentation was made by the President, and he insisted that every staff needs to familiarize him/herself with the Staff Rules as it helps understand the day staff privileges and rights. He emphasized on Article 8.1 (a) and 8.1.(b): see below

Regulation 8.1

(i) The Secretary-General shall establish and maintain continuous contact and communication with the staff in order to ensure the effective participation of the staff in **identifying, examining, and resolving** issues relating to staff welfare, including conditions of work, general conditions of life, and other human resources policies;

(ii) Staff representative bodies shall be established and shall be entitled to initiate proposals to the Secretary-General for the purpose set forth in paragraph (a) above. They shall be organized in such a way as to afford equitable representation to all staff members, by means of elections that shall take place at least biennially under electoral regulations drawn up by the respective staff representative body and agreed to by the Secretary-General.

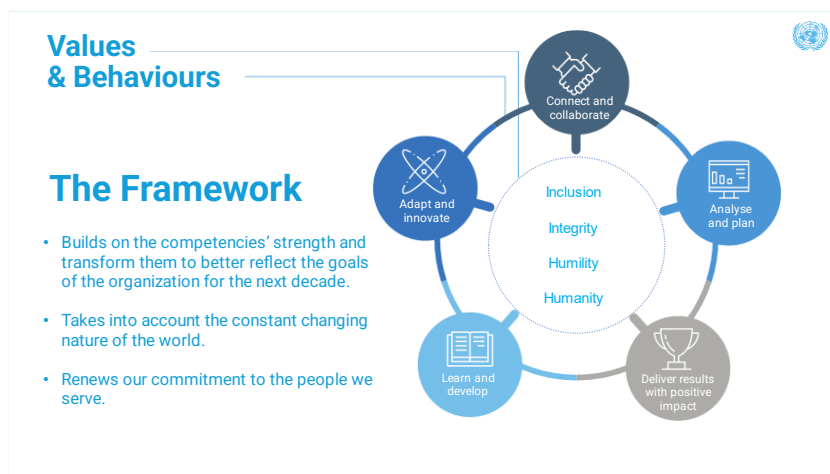
In the above two paras, the ST/SGB point out the fact that continuous communication must be maintained with staff and that in order to ensure the effective participation of the staff in identifying, examining, and resolving issues relating to staff welfare, including conditions of work, general conditions of life and other human resources policies.

At all times staff need to be consulted and be part of decisions related to staff welfare, well-being, and conditions of work.

The President insisted that all staff need to know these privileges.

2) Presentation of UN Values and Behaviours , the Next normal, the Chain management and ECA 4.0

- (a) **UN values and Behaviours:** The President made a short presentation and told the staff that these values are not new to UN, but what is new is to put them together in one framework and attach accountability to them. He emphasized the need for all staff to embark on these values and observe them on a daily basis.



forms the basis of an organizational culture that is both current and aspirational. Its nine elements, the result of a co-creation process involving nearly 4500 staff, should guide how we build relationships, how we perform our jobs, and how we experience the organization on a daily basis. As such, they will also inform human resources processes, such as workforce planning, recruitment, learning and performance management.

The framework was launched by the ES ai last month along with DOA, HR and Staff Union.

(b) NEXT NORMAL: REIMAGINING HOW WE WORK @UNHQ

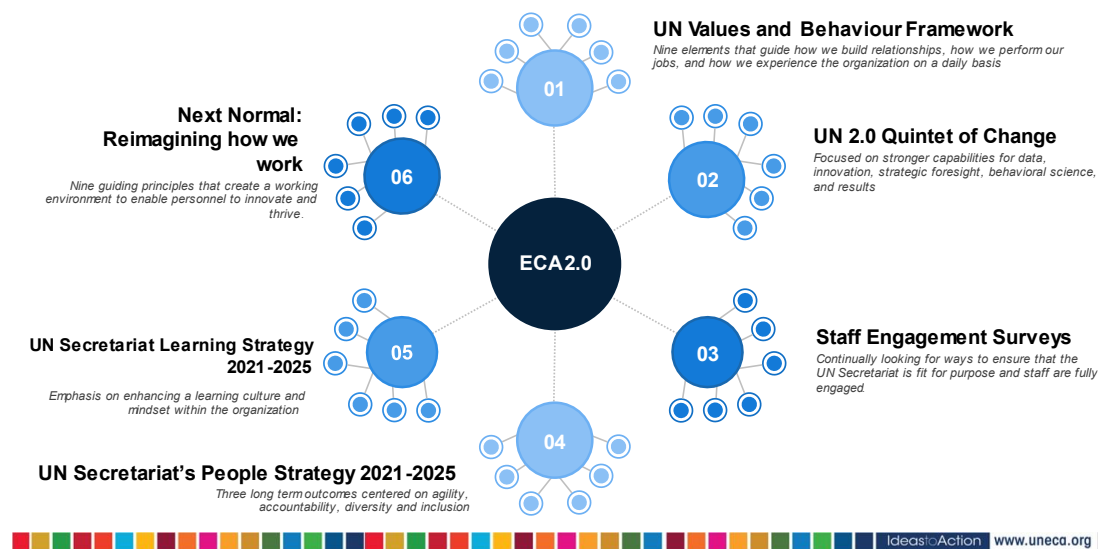
The president explained that “ The Next Normal” is a cross-functional, multi-disciplinary project team that compiled lessons learned and good practices that HQ wishes to apply as our Next Normal when we expect greater use of flexible working arrangements. The President explained how this came to play and how it was worked out. A cross-functional project team composed of over 130 focal points from across the UN Secretariat, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and including the New York Staff Union developed recommendations for the Next Normal. Staff-at-large provided suggestions through a Dialogue Series organized by the New York Staff Union and the Department of Management Strategic Programming and Compliance (DMSPC). This report describes the first iteration of the Next Normal for UNHQ and includes overarching principles that are envisaged to be shared across all duty stations to guide similar efforts. Implementation of the action points will be closely monitored through. Key actions points such as: **Flexible working arrangements** (telecommuting): Mainstreaming the operational implementation; Strengthening cybersecurity; Review our **real estate footprint** and office space configuration ; Occupational Safety and Health Management System (**OSH**) ; **Mental health and well-being**; A new culture that reflects a combination of working arrangements is cultivated

(balance between teleworking and physical presence working); Maintain our **international character and mainstream diversity/inclusion** in all that we do ; **Internal communications** will be more important than ever in a hybrid working environment, to engage and inform staff, promote well-being, and help maintain our **UN identity and sense of belonging**, with particular attention to **multilingualism** and **access to persons with disabilities**; **Keeping staff engaged and motivated** is important for productivity, creativity and overall well-being. With the increased use of teleworking, there is the potential for staff to become less engaged, and there are also opportunities to engage them in new and creative ways.

The holistic approach proposed in this strategy is meant to cultivate an agile, resilient, diverse and inclusive workforce, and foster innovation and continuous improvement. It should render better support for Member States and our colleagues in the field and make us better prepared for future emergencies. He later shared the full document where a list of key action points is found on pages 8–11 (Each workstream includes a full set of more details)

3) Integrated Chain Management

The opportunities



Day 4

Meeting with the Acting Resident Coordinator of the UN Systems in Kigali:



The Staff Union delegation paid a courtesy visit to Resident Coordinator ai. Mr. Maxwell Gomera– UNDP Resident Representative since the Resident Coordinator, Ozonnia Ojielo was on mission travel outside the country. The meeting included Ms. Josephine M. Ulimwengu (RCO Team Leader and Strategic Planning), Mr. Livingsfone Mfizi and Mr. Fidele Habimana, the LSSC C- Chair and coordinator in Rwanda who actually coordinate all the UN system meetings and all other UN system activities in country, Mr. Habimana and The

RC a.i. briefly briefed us on the different tasks the Office was engaged . The President introduced the ECA team and noted that he is not only the President of ECA Staff Union but also the president of the Federation of UN Staff Associations in Ethiopia (FUNSA). And at the international level , the Vice President of Condition of work for the CCISUA (Coordination Committee of International Staff Unions). He mentioned that the ECA delegation is interested in cross cutting issues among the UN agencies such as Local Staff Salary Survey, Place to Place Survey, and Cost of Living Survey as those have an impact on salaries, post adjustment and rental subsidies if the staff We were also informed of the existing taskforces which are dealing with cross -cutting issues among UN agencies

The RC ai noted that for the last 10 years post adjustment has not changed in Rwanda and the country is classified A Duty Station , while in reality there are question marks on a lot of areas/parameters of such classification.

We had a full discussion on how these surveys are done at Addis Level and how strong coordination between the RC office, the OMT, and the Federation of Staff Unions manage to pull it off. The President explained how Addis went from 43% post-adjustment to 54% last year. The Rwanda team promised to get in touch with Ethiopia team for both LSSS and Place to Place survey and Cost of Living Survey.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the mission was useful in the sense that it allowed us to interact directly with the staff, the Director, and the RC office. The Staff mentioned issues such:

1) Gender parity: An issue which is badly affecting male staff as it looks like there is no chance for male candidates to be selected anymore as long as there are women recommended. This seems to be unfair and discriminatory against male candidates and the President of Staff Union fully agreed with the staff on this. Gender parity needs rather to be looked at per divisions, per sections, per SROs and per functions. For example, ECA had 5 SROs and IDEP and all Directors are female. So, selecting a male Director now should not be seen as a deflator of gender parity at that level. The president reassured the staff that he agrees with that analysis and will work towards convincing the ES ai to relook at this issue closely.

2)Key Performance Indicators of the ES compact such as geographical representation and regional diversity have gained less focus compared to gender parity while they all play their role.

3) Weakness of competency-based Interview (CBI) where the whole setup is pre-fixed and disadvantages external candidates on one hand as the questions are clustered and, on another hand, the hiring Manager doesn't have the chance to ask specific questions which can be useful to the position. Technical questions are omitted; therefore, this need to be addressed at higher level in the HR system.

4) The office needs to have a second P5 although that function is now covered by a P4

5) Long services Award: It was mentioned that the long service award stop at staff who have done 35 years of service while there are staff which served 40+ years of service who have not been taken in consideration. The President promised to raise the issue with HR in Addis

6) An issue was raised related to the slowness of retirees accessing their pensions. They have ask Staff Union to get to the bottom of that issue as it seems to be a common issue with ECA

7) Certifying Officer role now required about 137 hours of training in UMOJA. That is really too much for a staff who has his regular duties to execute. Is there any way around that? The President promised to raise the issue with HR in Addis

8) G to P exam to be abolished: The President explained that the SG himself is against that barrier for G staff but this is something every year at the table at the General Assembly and the President promised to give an update on it as it is also on the SMC agenda.

09) ASAT certificate to be raised with HR Addis

10) Mobility: Staff would love to have the chance to rotate among other SROs as was done for Admirative Officers a few years back. Because most of the G staff don't see any chance of promotion or advancement in their job which can be very depressing and demoralizing.

Some of the concerns were discussed with the Director and advise was given on how to dilute some of the staff concerns.

Upon arrival in Addis the President briefed HR Chief on issues related to some personal staff issues which were discussed privately

The ES a.i. also will be briefed about the visit and Staff Union comments will be provided to him with the view of the advancement of the office work and the preservation of staff rights, well-being, and condition of work.