



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

UNHCR

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28 March 2008

Notre/Our code: HRM 12.02

Re: **2008 Staff Council Elections**

Dear Mr. High Commissioner,

Reference is made to the distribution of the all staff e-mail of 18 March 2008 entitled "Exclusion of nominees - 2008 Annual Election of UNHCR Staff Council", authorised by the Executive Office, containing a personal message from four staff members.

Reference is also made to the Polling Board's all staff e-mail of 20 March entitled "2008 Staff Council Elections", informing the staff that the Polling Board decided to exercise maximum flexibility in the interpretation of the timing of the deadline on 28 February regarding the submission of nominations.

The Polling Board wishes to formally convey to you its serious concern over the Executive Office's decision to lend its unconditional support to staff who requested the Management's intervention. This decision was made without seeking clarification of the facts from the Polling Board which has, by virtue of the United Nations' and UNHCR's Statutes, sole authority to conduct the UNHCR Staff Council elections.

Consultations with the Polling Board would have demonstrated the Executive Office's concern to use conventional consultative mechanisms, and to hear the voices of all parties in order to obtain a satisfactory explanation of the facts before taking the unprecedented decision to disseminate the message.

Regrettably, this has resulted in a number of serious consequences jeopardising the neutrality of the election process, as well as the mandate of the Polling Board, to conduct this exercise with respect from all parties for its independence.

Considering:

- the Polling Board's legal obligation to abide by the United Nations' and UNHCR's election process regulations, including its legitimate rights to respect absolute confidentiality;
- the misrepresentation of facts and rules by a number of staff to assert undue pressure on the Polling Board;
- the impossibility for the Polling Board to ensure that it will be able to continue discharging its mandate without further interference;
- the obstacles now faced by the Polling Board which prevent it from carrying out its duties independently, impartially and with integrity, in a safe and trustworthy environment;

.../...

the Polling Officers, who had accepted this voluntary work as a duty to serve the interest of this vital process for the Organisation, have decided to submit their resignation with immediate effect.

Respectfully yours,

2008 Polling Officers¹:

Christiane Danielou



Susan Kawczak



Johanna Lewis

Johanna Lewis

Dee Martin



Suzanne Mesli-Petalas



¹ Ferdinand Clemente (on mission) - Ejigayehu Tesfaye (on holiday)