

13 November 2012

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

I refer to the letter of Ms. Susana Malcorra, Chief de Cabinet, dated 22 October 2012, in wherein she responded on your behalf to my letter to you, dated 4 October 2012, regarding matters affecting the staff of the Publishing Section, DGACM.

Ms. Malcorra's response does not address all issues raised in my letter of 4 October 2012, particularly our concern about measures aimed at strangling off publishing at the United Nations, and abetted by the precarious and transient state of leadership in DGACM. Instead, her letter has raised some important issues and created some impressions which I would like to address.

Ms. Malcorra states, incorrectly, that the "reduction of print production in the Headquarters Publishing Section is not an unsanctioned policy initiative but, rather, an implementation by DGACM managers of the Secretary-General's roadmap as he has described to the Member States." It should be recalled that the initiative to substantially reduce the number of publications, the length of reports and the distribution of hard copies was included, as Recommendation 38 within the Change Management Initiative submitted, to the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. The General Assembly, by its resolution 66/257 of 29 March 2012 on "Progress towards an accountability system in the United Nations Secretariat", did not agree to this recommendation, and twenty-eight other recommendations included in Change Management Initiative (Section II, paragraph 8):

8. Notes the Secretary-General's change management initiative and the recommendations contained in the report of the Change Management Team to the Secretary-General, and requests him, in accordance with the provisions of paragraphs 1 to 7 above, to submit for its consideration and prior approval any proposals or measures related to the implementation of the recommendations contained in paragraphs 8, 11, 15, 16 to 18, 27, 28, 30, 34, 37 through 41, 43, and 49 through 61 of that report. (Emphasis added.)

As the General Assembly has requested, the reduction of print production in the Headquarters Publishing Section should be accordingly referred to the General Assembly for consideration and prior approval.

We have taken note of Ms. Malcorra's statement that the Secretary-General's budget proposal for the biennium 2014-2015 will build on the budget approved by Member States for the current biennium. We suggest that the Secretary-General's budget proposal for the biennium 2014-2015 should build on the good practice of the hybrid production environment instituted in the Publishing Section by former Under-Secretary-General Mr. Shaaban's decision of 3 January 2012 on the organization of the Publishing Section. As previously stated, the hybrid model is

envisaged to employ both digital and offset printing technologies, with resulting chargebacks, to hedge against operational risks and possible failure to meet DGACM's commitment for delivering documents on time to meetings, make the most out of the investment made in existing printing equipment, and provide in-house color printing of publications at substantially lower cost compared to outside sources.

The hybrid model has been validated, in the aftermath of hurricane Sandy which ruined large amount of supplies and printed documents, and the printing equipment in the Section, including the two digital printers. Unlike the digital printers, the offset printers survived and can be ready to do the jobs Members States require, and for which DGACM is mandated, as soon as the electronic components that were damaged are repaired.

We have also taken note that, in her letter, Ms. Malcorra has encouraged the staff representatives, "in the interest of the staff of the [Publishing] Section" as she has put it, to engage constructively in the consultation being undertaken by the management of DGACM. I can assure you, Mr. Secretary-General, that the staff representatives are, and have always been, keen on consultation with management. Regrettably, however, the view of the management of DGACM regarding consultation has not always been constructive or undertaken in good faith.

In the latest incidence, the management of DGACM has resorted to fabrication of the staff representatives' position on matters related to the Publishing Section and falsification of the published record of a DGACM Staff-Management Committee (SMC) meeting, held on 14 September 2012, without concern about the standards of integrity and professionalism expected from United Nation staff, including senior officials. The falsified record was circulated initially to a wide audience under the misleading title of "summary of the meeting held with staff representatives of the Publishing Section on Friday, 14 September 2012."

We have since repeatedly but unsuccessfully requested the Acting Head for General Assembly and Conference Management to correct the falsified record. On behalf of the staff of the Publishing Section, I have submitted to Ms. Catherine Pollard, Assistant Secretary General for Human Resources Management, a request for investigation of the falsified record including the involvement in the falsification by Mr. Jean-Jeaques Graisse, Under-Secretary-General and Acting Head, Mr. Franz Baumann, Assistant Secretary-General, and Ms. Laila Shamji, Communication Officer, all of DGACM, in accordance with ST/SGB/2008/5.

We have further taken note of Ms. Malcorra's advice to use the available time until the end of 2013 to manage smoothly what she has referred to as a likely drawdown process in order to minimize the impact on staff in the Section, and that reluctance to utilize this time to facilitate the reassignment of staff who wish to do so may increase the difficulties of a smooth transition for affected staff at a later point, and is not, in her view, in their best interest. It appears that Ms.

Malcorra has not been informed that DGACM will no longer be able to accommodate all Trade and Crafts staff whose posts have been abolished, as previously reported to you by Mr. Shaaban, and hailed during your last Town Hall meeting with the staff at Headquarters. In an act of bad faith that belies Ms. Malcorra's advice, following the departure of Mr. Shaaban, the management of DGACM has redeployed ten General Staff posts out of the Publishing Section which were earmarked to accommodate those staff.

As I conclude it is only appropriate to reiterate here what I have written to Mr. Graise on 21 September 2012, which is that if there are opportunities being offered that are in the best interest of the staff in the Publishing Section, I am confident that the affected staff will accept such offers, and we fully support any such initiative. However, if by cooperation, we are being asked to accept the demise of our jobs in the Publishing Section without the prerequisite consultations and negotiations, in violation of the rights of the staff and denial of due process, then that cooperation will not be forthcoming.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alex O'Keith Smith Sr.", written in a cursive style.

We, the Staff of the Publishing Section, MPD, DGACM
Signed by Staff Representative Alex O'Keith Smith Sr.