



European Security and Defence Assembly Assembly of Western European Union

Fifty-ninth Plenary Session - Press Release No. 56/2010

The staff reject the social plan

Paris, 2 December 2010 – On Wednesday WEU staff asked for the withdrawal of the social plan that is to be implemented when the organisation and the European Security and Defence Assembly (ESDA) closes in June next year.

Addressing the Assembly on behalf of all the staff of WEU (65 people), **Mrs Indira BRISSET**, co-Chairman of the Assembly's Staff Association, said that the staff were "shocked" by "the manner in which the whole redundancy process has been mishandled so far", adding that it was no wonder that people felt "bitter and humiliated about the way they are being treated". The staff, who had received their letters of dismissal on Tuesday, "have the impression that they have been made a scapegoat for political reasons and we cannot accept that. We strongly urge the WEU Council to withdraw the new Social Plan and repair the damage it has done".

Contrary to the undertakings given by the WEU Council Presidency, the new social plan did not include the same guarantees given in the 2000 social plan which had been the basis for earlier redundancies and applied to some 80 staff working for WEU. Mrs BRISSET said that the 2010 Social Plan was "exactly the opposite" to the earlier plan. There had been no consultation with the staff. It was "discriminatory" and "arbitrary": "discriminatory because it penalises certain categories of staff", for example as regards the possibility to take an early pension and with regard to length of service; and "arbitrary in the way it imposes two financial ceilings limiting compensation payments". Finally, "it discriminates between those who leave with a lump sum as a full and final settlement and those who must accept having their indemnity paid in monthly instalments thus denying them a basic right".

"The whole closure process has turned into a fiasco. It has been devoid of proper planning and there has been no realistic assessment of all the practical problems involved" Mrs BRISSET said. "There is no information in our letters of dismissal about the legal entity which will have to manage remuneration and pension payments or deal with arrangements for health cover and access to an administrative tribunal. Would it be acceptable under national legislation?" she asked.

There had been no proposals from the WEU Council to redeploy the staff being made redundant.

The next speaker, Mr **Armand DE DECKER** (Belgium, Liberal Group) said that he had been asked to negotiate "to reduce the tensions between the Assembly and the WEU Council" and to address the concerns of the staff whose emotion he understood. He mentioned "three issues" to which "the Council has given a favourable response", namely "the creation of a body to guarantee the payment of pensions, medical cover, etc", a "minimum of six months' notice for all staff" and "an operating budget for the Assembly for the next six months".

H.E. Mr Walter STEVENS, permanent representative of Belgium, said that the 10 High Contracting Parties of WEU would honour their financial obligations after the WEU was wound up and would "take all necessary steps to ensure continuation of payments". This was echoed by **H.E. Mr Luca GIANANTI**, Permanent Representative of Italy, who added that the Appeals Board would be set up this week.

Mrs Doris BARNETT (Germany, Socialist Group), Chairman of the Committee of Quaestors and Rapporteur on the Assembly budget, said that thus far there had been "nothing in writing" to reassure the staff.

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