

Notes by Tytti Erästö, 22 June 2021

**1) Minutes of the last meeting and any matters arising**

RSC minute-taking might no longer be based on volunteering due to the lack of volunteers.

**2) Covid-19: Update, questions, discussion**

Dan noted that, if there is a partial return to the office in autumn, all-staff meetings are likely to remain online, but 30-35 people could be in the office simultaneously based on a combination of a fixed day and quota days. Unclear whether different groups (fully vaccinated, risk groups) would be given particular attention, depends on guidelines.

**3) Governing Board (GB) meeting 24-25 May: reports back**

Joakim reported back from GB meeting, which for the first time included the two new members from Singapore and Russia, Timo as staff observer, and Radha Kumar as vice-chair. GB members were given an overview of SIPRI work, including productivity, &Frankly survey, as well as budgetary and staff growth. Based on a previous GB request, SMT had developed a reserves policy for the institute, which the Board endorsed. The GB emphasised the importance of cybersecurity, which will get more attention in the November GB meeting. The interactive brainstorming session “Battlefields of the future” was attended by 59 staff members and was highly appreciated by the GB. There was also good GB-staff engagement at the “Challenges to Arms control” session. The GB was also briefed on the Environment of Peace 2022 initiative and dialogue activities and met with Union representatives.

Timo was impressed by the GB’s engagement, and thought that SIPRI staff was well represented at the meeting. The schedule was quite intense, with all packed in two afternoons. Discussions were substantive, with lots of ideas about topics to be added to the research agenda—all agreed on the need to focus on cyber but other ideas as well that could be discussed in the future. At the Union meeting, the GB members were also active; they appreciated the format of the meeting, were concerned about the well-being of staff and took diversity seriously. The &Frankly survey received lots of attention.

Dan responded to a question on how productivity was measured, saying there had been not a detailed count but was rather based on a general impression and evidence from the Outreach team about the rate of publications.

Vincent noted that cyber is a crowded field and requires capacity, so we need to be clear why we do it and from which angle. Dan expressed his understanding of the GB's view of cyber as something 'we cannot not work on'. However, the focus might be on connections between cyber and other topics on which we also work, rather than on cyber as a separate area. SIPRI already does work on cyber issues but some of it falls under other headings.

Dan concluded the discussion by noting that the GB really appreciates interaction with staff and they are available for questions on specific issues by us.

#### **4) Return to the office: discussion**

An informal working group (WG) has been set up to think about the return to the office when pandemic is over – the post-pandemic new normal. Based on the WG discussions, a survey was circulated among all staff; it provides guidance both for the WG and SMT, but it is just the beginning of the discussion. Joakim presented results of the survey, noting that office use is deemed to be of high importance by all, with no significant variation across different groups. From the options given by the survey, most staff opted for working in the office 3 days per week. Dan stressed that SIPRI wants to be a community of researchers, not just dispensing research funds with everybody working remotely; interaction improves the quality of work. But two days' distance work per week is ok. There are also regulations for remote work (e.g. related to taxes and insurance) that must be considered.

While staff indicated they want to be located close to team members, this might not be optimal—you might end up walking less and interacting less with other staff. So you do not necessarily want to share a room with team members. The WG will try to discuss this before the summer vacation because this is also related to refurbishment. Refurbishment is likely not to involve major changes, apart from returning the attic to office use, but rather some fine-tuning in the building (such as creating quiet rooms for Zoom meetings). The decisions we make now might need to be course-corrected later. Expert advice will be taken on ergonomics and airflow issues but perhaps not other issues like refurbishment.

It will take a major change in the official guidelines on the pandemic for there to be a full return to normalcy; first we are likely to get a looser form of work-from-home guideline. An agreement on a workable framework for dividing office and distance work will allow flexibility based on a certain process agreed with line manager—not "rules for fools".

Instead of rushing back to the pre-pandemic travel routines, we also need to consider the climate factor as well as individuals' health and well-being. Sibylle suggested a discussion on travel issue after the summer, as it also affects project planning. A big unknown is how hybrid meetings will work in the future. We may also need to renew job descriptions regarding travel requirements.

#### **5) AOB**

Recent developments in Swedish politics should be taken into account as things develop. We have had good contacts with politicians from all main parties.

## Participants

1. Frederic Daudon
2. Ian Anthony
3. Jair van der Lijn
4. Jannie Lilja
5. Jenny Mildton
6. Joey Fox
7. Johanna Eliasson
8. John Batho
9. Jose Alvarado
10. Jürg Staudenmann
11. Karoline Eklöw
12. Katongo Seyuba
13. Giovanna Malletta
14. Elena Haapaniemi
15. Joakim Vaverka
16. Abeer Ahmad
17. Alexandra Kuimova
18. Alexandra Manolache
19. Amal Bourhrous
20. Andrea Varisco
21. Annelies Hickendorf
22. Annika Salibury
23. Vincent Boulainin
24. Caronline Delgado
25. Christina Ekberg
26. Dan Smith
27. David Michel
28. Dylan O'Driscoll
29. Elin Elmgren
30. Elizabeth Smith
31. Emilie Broek
32. Emma Zetterström
33. Farah Hegazi
34. Fei Su
35. Florian Krampe
36. Frank Esparraga
37. Shannon Kile
38. Shivan Fazil
39. Shourjya Deb
40. Simone Bunse
41. Sibylle Bauer
42. Stephanie Bleckner
43. Timo Smit
44. Tytti Erästö
45. Ulla Hurtig Nielsen
46. Virginie Baudais
47. Vitaly Fedchenko
48. Vongai Murugani
49. Mark Bromley
50. Martina Selmi
51. Meray Maddah
52. Nikos Politis
53. Noel Kelly
54. Olle Persson
55. Pauline Poupart
56. Petr Topychkanov
57. Pieter Wezeman
58. Sepideh Soltaninia
59. Shannen Young
60. Kheira Tariff
61. Kolja Brockmann
62. Kristina Tschunkert
63. Laura Bruun
64. Lena Kappelin
65. Louise Edgren
66. Luc van de Goor
67. Lucile Robin
68. Luke Richards
69. Magdalena Söderqvist
70. Marie Riqueir
71. Marina Caparini