
UNITED NATIONS DISPUTE TRIBUNAL

Case No.: UNDT/NBI/2015/151

Judgment No.: UNDT/2016/158

Date: 23 September 2016

Original: English

Introduction

1. The Applicant is a former staff member of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO). He served at the GS-3 level.

2. On 11 November 2015, he filed an Application contesting the decision not to renew his fixed-term appointment and to separate him from service on the grounds of abolition of his post.

3. The Respondent filed a Reply to the Application on 14 December 2015.

4. The Tribunal, with the consent of the Parties decided, in accordance with hearing is not required

submissions.

Facts

5. The Applicant had served in Bukavu within MONUSCO as a Language Assistant (LA) until his fixed term appointment which ended on 30 June 2015 was not renewed on grounds of abolition of post.

6. Before the said abolition, the United Nations Security Council in its Resolution 2147 (2014)¹, had called on MONUSCO to enhance the flexibility, effectiveness and capacity of the operations of the military force in the implementation of the M
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15. Shortly thereafter, the Applicant was offered an Individual Contractor (IC) contract by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) for the position of LA within MONUSCO. This IC contract was for a period of one-month effective 1 July 2015 but was subsequently extended.

Applicant's case

16. The Applicant

The recommendation of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly that led to the abolition of the Applicant's post was in violation of the United Nations statutory framework.

- a. The Secretary-Assembly regarding the proposed financing arrangements for MONUSCO for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 recommended the abolition of 80 LA posts in MONUSCO for the 2015/2016 budget cycle. The said report did not make any reference to reengaging these LAs as ICs.
- b. That report was in turn considered by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) which then issued a report to the General Assembly on 1 May 2015 approving the Secretary-

the report of the Secretary-General, no reference was made to the fact that these 80 LAs would be reengaged as ICs.
- c.

paragraph

b.

Dispute Tribunal lacks jurisdiction to review the matter of the abolition of the post the Applicant encumbered and the recommendation of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly that led to the abolition of the post. These claims are not receivable and should be rejected.

c. The only reviewable administrative decision before the Dispute Tribunal is the decision not the abolition of the post.

Submissions on the Merits

The decision not to renew the Applicant's appointment was lawful as the post he encumbered was subject to a legitimate restructuring of the Mission.

d. A fixed-term appointment does not carry any expectancy of renewal, irrespective of length of service (staff regulation 4.5(c); staff rule 4.13(c)).

e. The Applicant has adduced no evidence that the decision not to renew his fixed-term appointment was unlawful. On 25 June 2015, the General Assembly abolished 80 LA posts to meet the operational and budgetary needs of the Mission. In conjunction with the MONUSCO military force, the MONUSCO Administration identified the LA posts in Bukavu and Kinshasa as the posts to be abolished. This decision was made in accordance with the change in Mission operations as mandated by the Security Council.

f. A proposal to restructure a mission that results in loss of employment for staff members falls within the Secretary-discretionary authority.

g. The exercise of the Secretary-challenged and reviewed on the grounds that the staff member had a legitimate expectancy of renewal, that the exercise was attended by procedural irregularity, or that the decision was arbitrary or motivated by

improper purposes. The Applicant bears the burden of proving that the discretion not to renew his or her appointment was not validly exercised.

A comparative review was not required and the outsourcing of the LA functions was proper in the circumstances.

h. There was no requirement for the Mission to subject the Applicant and others similarly placed to a comparative review process. The Department of Field Support Downsizing Guidelines provide that locally recruited staff must be comparatively reviewed by duty station. Since all LA posts in the Bukavu and Kinshasa duty stations were abolished, a comparative review was unnecessary.

i. Due to the need for LAs to be more mobile and to effectively interact and liaise with the local population by providing linguistic support during their engagement, it was agreed to engage LAs through individual contractor agreements to be administered by UNOPS.

j. As a result, it was no longer viable to use national General Service posts to provide for LA positions to a force that is highly mobile, that deploys at short notice, and sometimes requires a surge in its numbers for a limited duration. Additionally, there is no suitable allowance for the travel of national staff.

k. MONUSCO decided to outsource the provision of LA functions in response to the recommendation of the Civilian Staffing Review (CSR) report.

l. MONUSCO already outsources a number of services and considers that the outsourcing of language services satisfies the mi current requirements. Information Circular ST/IC/2005/30 (Outsourcing and impact on staff) issued on 15 June 2005, sets out guidance for programme managers when considering outsourcing.

m. In accordance with that guidance, MONUSCO informed staff representatives that language services would be outsourced and the staff

representatives had an opportunity to respond by engaging in discussions with the National Staff Union representatives under the UNOPS contractual modality.

The Respondent did not violate any provisions of ST/AI/2013/4.

n.

of ST/AI/2013/4 is inapposite. Section 1.1 of that Administrative Instruction sets out the scope and procedure under which the United Nations Secretariat may directly engage individual consultants and individual contractors for temporary assistance in order to respond quickly, flexibly and effectively to organizational priorities.

o. MONUSCO did not engage LAs under the framework of ST/AI/2013/4. Rather, the Mission decided to engage individual contractors under agreements administered by UNOPS which are governed by the UNOPS Financial Regulations and Rules.

p. Insofar as the Applicant claims that the award of individual contracts by UNOPS violated any rules, such a violation would not render the non-
was not entitled to be engaged under an individual contract with UNOPS.

q. If indeed the engagement of the Applicant under a UNOPS agreement contravened UNOPS contracting rules as the Applicant claims, the remedy is not monetary compensation for the Applicant, but rather the voiding of the said contract.

Considerations

18. The Tribunal will now consider whether the challenge against the non-renewal decision
other claims.

19. With regard to the issue of the receivability, the Tribunal agrees with the
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constitution, the higher norm, and the supreme organ of the Organization.

20. By the same token, a decision of the General Assembly is binding on the Secretary-General who has a duty to implement it. The Applicant lacks the capacity to challenge the non-renewal of his appointment in so far as it is properly

21. In *Ovcharenko et al*³, it was held that an administrative decision taken as a result of the decisions of the General Assembly is lawful and that the Secretary-General cannot be held accountable for executing such a decision.

22. With regard to the question whether the provisions of section 3.7(b) of ST/AI/2013/4 were contravened by the hiring of the Applicant under an IC contract by UNOPS after the abolition of his post to provide language services to the Mission, the Tribunal finds and holds that the said rules were not contravened.

23. This is because section 3.7(b) does not envisage a situation of post abolishment. The said section contemplates a situation where the post formerly encumbered by a former or retired staff member continues to exist and the separated staff member is reengaged as a consultant or IC to continue to perform the same functions.

24. The mischief that that section seeks to avoid is the continued indirect11()JTJETBT1 0 0 1

26. The Applicant in supplementary pleadings raised the issue of about five other LAs in Bukavu and Kinshasa who continued to enjoy fixed-term contracts

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(Signed)

Judge Nkemdilim Izuako

Dated this 23rd day of September 2016

Entered in the Register on this 23rd day of September 2016

(Signed)

Abena Kwakye-Berko, Registrar, Nairobi