WIPO Chief Trying to 'Fix the Composition of the Staff Council' – Lawyer

July 6, 2016

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The Register

<http://www.theregister.co.uk/2016/07/06/wipo_chief_seeks_to_do_away_with_council/>

WIPO's director general Francis Gurry is seeking to strengthen his hold on the UN’s global IP group by getting rid of its staff council.

A lawyer for the council, Matthew Parish, has written to all United Nations ambassadors expressing concern over Gurry's attempts to alter the composition of the body, whose most recent elections took place just three months ago.

The staff council represents staff interests to management; it is almost like a trade union.

Gurry sacked the previous head of the council, Moncef Kateb, when he blew the whistle on the bizarre behaviour of the patent boss and his transfer of computer equipment to Iran and North Korea [in apparent breach of UN Security Council sanctions](http://www.theregister.co.uk/2014/09/22/wipo/).

According to a letter written by Parish seen by *The Reg*: “Mr Gurry, currently the Director-General of the World Intellectual Property Organisation, is trying to orchestrate new Staff Council Elections to fix the composition of the WIPO Staff Council recently determined in elections that took place fewer than three months ago.

“Mr Gurry is pushing ahead weekly with steps to orchestrate a new and, it is suspected, entirely fictitious Staff Council election in order to remove his detractors and indeed to save his neck.”

The civil servants' trade union, FICSA, has also condemned what it sees as an attempt to shut down the staff representative body and is calling on supporters to register their disquiet via [this online form](https://www.labourstartcampaigns.net/show_campaign.cgi?c=3083).

Ficsa warns that Gurry's actions risk damaging the credibility of not just WIPO but also the rest of the UN.

Meanwhile, the investigation into Gurry's behaviour by the Office of Internal Oversight Services remains under wraps.

Instead of giving the report to the member states' ambassadors, Gabriel Duque, chair of the General Assembly which is meant to oversee WIPO, is allowing ambassadors to read the 1,000 page report in WIPO offices under stringent conditions – described as “a controlled and safe environment”.

Only two representatives are allowed from each country and they are not allowed to take notes of the content of the report. Mobile phones or other devices are also verboten while they view the documents. The ambassadors' visits are limited to two hours; they may then re-apply in writing for a maximum of two further appointments. The ambassadors must also sign a non-disclosure agreement.

Despite these conditions, more than 50 countries' representatives have gone to WIPO's offices to read the investigators' conclusions. The reading period ends on July 15. It is believed that Duque is leaving his job in Geneva to take up a new post in Tokyo at the end of the month. Duque did not respond to emails requesting comment.

A redacted summary of the investigation revealed UN investigators found grounds to suspect Gurry of ["serious misconduct"](http://www.theregister.co.uk/2014/07/08/wipos_tech_head_calls_for_investigation_of_boss/) in over-ruling an IT security procurement process in favour of a company run by a friend of his.

But it found no evidence of wrongdoing in the secret taking of DNA samples from senior staff that were then analysed by Swiss police in an effort to identify the writers of anonymous letters of complaint sent to WIPO. Sources say the full report criticised Swiss authorities for refusing to cooperate with UN investigators.

Despite these findings, it seems no action will be taken against the director general.

The US Congress subcommittee on international organisations, which [described](http://www.theregister.co.uk/2016/02/25/wipo_update/) WIPO as "the FIFA of UN agencies", has also called for publication of the report.

WIPO did not respond to phone calls or emails requesting comment for this story.