OSC STAFF LETTER TO THE EDITOR

When an International Organization Collapses, Who Takes Responsibility for Its Staff?

The Organisation of Southern Cooperation (OSC)'s closure exposes a troubling failure of leadership, financial accountability and protection of staff rights.

By the Staff Representative Committee (SRC) and Staff Rights and Justice Initiative (SRJI), Organisation of Southern Cooperation (OSC) (12 October 2026)

An international organization may close its doors, but its obligations to the people who served it do not disappear. Yet this is precisely the prolonged injustice facing the staff of the Organisation of Southern Cooperation (OSC), whose employees have endured prolonged salary arrears while the Organisation's closure proceeds without a satisfactory resolution of their outstanding salaries, benefits and entitlements.

Since March 2025, OSC staff have gone without salaries. For many, this is not simply an employment dispute or an administrative inconvenience. It is a prolonged human crisis and violation of livelihood rights affecting families, dependents and personal dignity. People recruited from the Host Country Ethiopia and other countries to serve an ambitious multilateral project have been left struggling to meet basic obligations, despite having continued to discharge their responsibilities under increasingly difficult circumstances.

How can an organization established in the name of solidarity and cooperation among the countries of the Global South allow its own staff to be abandoned in this way?

Established in January 2020, the OSC began its operations at its headquarters in Addis Ababa as of Januay 2023. Bringing together 28 founding and full Member States from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East, and Latin America and the Caribbean, it sought to advance a renewed vision of cooperation and collaboration among countries of the Global South. Under its first Secretary-General, Mr. Mansour bin Mussallam (Saudi Arabia and Switzerland), the Organisation established a Secretariat employing nearly 100 people of different nationalities.

Its first biennial programme, covering 2023–2024, was implemented, and the General Assembly approved a second programme and a framework for assessed contributions at its second ordinary session held in Addis Ababa in November 2024. Yet Member States and the Secretary-General, despite a contributions framework and undertaken commitments, have failed to mobilise the financial resources required to sustain the Organization. The resulting institutional crisis culminated in a closure process initiated in December 2025 by the announcement of his resignation by the Secretary-General.

The failure of Member States and the Secretary-General to honour their financial commitments must be confronted directly. An intergovernmental organization cannot operate on declarations of solidarity alone.

The Secretary-General, as chief executive and legal representative of the Organization, had a central leadership role in managing its affairs, addressing the financial crisis and safeguarding the interests of its staff. According to staff representatives, assurances were repeatedly given during town hall and management meetings that funding was being pursued and that outstanding arrears would be addressed. During the closure process, the Secretary-General reportedly indicated that concrete progress had been made towards securing funds to settle amounts owed to staff and other creditors, yet he chose to withdraw from the closure process in August 2026 and abruptly left the OSC and its staff without resolving any of the pending issues in this painful closure process.

Where are those efforts now? What resources were secured or received? What prevented the promised payments from being made? And who will take responsibility for ensuring that the outstanding obligations are resolved?

These are not unreasonable questions. They are questions of accountability to which staff deserve to have answers.

The handling of the closure process has further aggravated these concerns. An initial six-month period, running from January through June 2026, was established for the closure. The Secretary-General subsequently sought an extension until 30 September 2026. Yet, before that deadline, he convened an Extraordinary General Assembly and as noted above, withdrew from the process, leaving serious questions about institutional continuity and arrangements for resolving outstanding staff claims.

A responsible closure respecting the dignity of the OSC staff requires more than the cessation of operations. It demands an orderly settlement of liabilities, transparent accounting, the preservation of institutional records and a clear mechanism for addressing the rights of employees. Leadership cannot be considered complete if an institution is left with unresolved obligations and those who served it are left without an effective avenue for redress.

There are also outstanding questions concerning financial transparency with regard to liquidation of the OSC assets. Member States and Staff Representatives have called for the submission of the closure report and audited financial statements, together with a full accounting of expenditure, assets and liabilities. Questions have also been raised about the disposal of assets originally imported duty-free and the accounting for the proceeds. These matters require documented explanations and independent scrutiny.

The Secretary-General's withdrawal must not become an excuse for leaving these matters unresolved. Nor should the absence of an effective transitional mechanism allow responsibility to become dispersed among institutions and individuals until no one is answerable.

Ultimately, the OSC General Assembly and Member States must ensure that the closure process is completed transparently, and legitimate staff claims receive urgent attention. The former Secretary-General should provide a full account of the actions taken during his tenure to address the financial and humanitarian crisis, by also answering for his personal unfulfilled

pledges, and protect staff rights and entitlements. The relevant oversight bodies should establish the facts surrounding the Organization's financial position, the management of its assets and the outstanding liabilities.

OS staff need and demand action, not further hollow words and assurances.

The international community should pay attention to this case because it raises a question extending far beyond one organization: what protection do international civil servants have, when the institutions they serve collapse financially?

Multilateral institutions depend on the commitment, professionalism and trust of their employees. Staff are expected to uphold institutional mandates, work across national and cultural boundaries, and serve under difficult conditions. They should not be expected to bear the financial consequences of failures beyond their control. Nor should their rights become an afterthought in negotiations over institutional closure.

The people affected are not merely entries in a liquidation report. They are professionals and parents, husbands and wives, sons and daughters, with families who depend on their income. Every month of unpaid salary compounds their hardship. Every delay in resolving their claims deepens the sense that the principles these institutions proclaim are not being applied to those who serve them.

The closure of the OSC may mark the end of an institution. It must not mark the end of accountability, justice and respect for human rights. **An organization created to promote solidarity among nations must not leave its own people to continue facing this deep and prolonged this crisis alone. The international community should not look away.**

The SRC therefore calls on OSC Member States, the General Assembly, relevant oversight bodies and concerned international partners to establish an urgent and credible mechanism to settle outstanding staff salaries and entitlements which now amounts approximately USD 5 million; ensure the publication of audited financial statements and comprehensive closure documentation; account transparently for all assets, expenditure and liabilities; and form an authorized transitional mechanism to complete the liquidation process in an orderly, transparent and dignified manner.

Respectfully,

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