

PUTTING ETHICS TO WORK

A Guide for UN Staff



United Nations

UN ETHICS OFFICE

This publication is a joint effort of the United Nations Ethics Office and the United Nations Office of Human Resources Management.

United Nations Ethics Office

Tel: +1 (917) 367-9858

Fax: +1 (917) 367-9861

E-mail: ethicsoffice@un.org

Website: <http://www.un.org/en/ethics>

Learning, Leadership and Organizational Development Section

United Nations Office of Human Resources Management

Website: <http://www.un.org/staffdevelopment>

Issued September 2012

UNITED NATIONS OATH OF OFFICE

I solemnly declare and promise to exercise in all loyalty, discretion and conscience the functions entrusted to me as an international civil servant of the United Nations, to discharge these functions and regulate my conduct with the interests of the United Nations only in view, and not to seek or accept instructions in regard to the performance of my duties from any Government or other source external to the Organization. I also solemnly declare and promise to respect the obligations incumbent upon me as set out in the Staff Regulations and Rules.

As United Nations staff members, we are called upon by the United Nations Charter to uphold the highest levels of efficiency, competence and integrity. This commitment is reflected in our Oath of Office, which we take when we begin our UN careers.

Adherence by United Nations staff to the highest ethical standards is central to the work of the Organization and the maintenance of its good name. As we collectively endeavour to build a more peaceful and prosperous world, the ethical conduct of all staff members is paramount. *Putting Ethics to Work - A Guide for UN Staff* seeks to provide you with a better understanding of our ethical standards, so that they may be exercised each and every day as we conduct our work.

CONTENTS

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction	2
Using this Guide	2
Applicability	2
The Ethical Framework of the UN	3
Making Difficult Decisions	5

PART TWO: APPLYING OUR ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Carrying out the UN Mission.....	8
Maintaining Impartiality and Independence	8
Respect for National Laws	10
Zero Tolerance for Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse	11
B. Avoiding Conflicts of Interest	13
Personal Relationships	14
Gifts and Hospitality, Awards and Honours	15
Outside Employment and External Activities	18
Working with External Partners and Donors	20
Political Activity	21
Financial Disclosure	23
Post-Employment Activities	24

C. Protecting UN Resources	27
Managing Assets and Resources.....	27
Office Technology.....	29
Use of UN Vehicles	30
D. Creating a Harmonious Workplace.....	32
Mutual Rights, Duties and Obligations.....	32
Non-Discrimination	34
Avoiding Harassment and Abuse of Authority.....	36
E. Protecting Information.....	38
Information Management and Intellectual Property.....	38
Confidentiality.....	40
Public Speaking and Social Media	41

PART THREE: MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS

Thinking Things Through.....	46
Role of the Ethics Office	46
Confidential Advice	47
Speaking Up	47
Duty to Report and the Right to Protection against Retaliation	48



PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

USING THIS GUIDE

This booklet is a practical guide to the ethical expectations that the United Nations has set for its staff members. This Ethics Guide explains our regulations and rules within the context of the UN workplace. This Guide can be used in training and in workplace discussions about how we can put the UN's ethical principles into action everyday.

This Guide offers many practical examples and action points to help you uphold our values and follow UN policies. The Guide includes references to supporting documents and to offices that can provide further guidance. The Guide aims to (1) help you make informed decisions; (2) promote an ethical culture throughout the UN; and (3) prevent misconduct.

By using this Guide and other resources, you can proactively resolve many of the ethics questions that arise in the workplace. When you are unsure about the right course of action, speak up and ask for advice. The UN Ethics Office will listen to your concerns and provide assistance.

This Guide does not replace or supersede UN regulations, rules, policies, and directives. Please note that policy and mandate changes may occur more frequently than revisions to this Guide. You should check for recent decisions of the General Assembly through the Official Document System (ODS) and those of the Secretary-General through iSeek.

APPLICABILITY

The UN expects each staff member to observe the ethical standards discussed in this Guide. Consultants, volunteers, interns, and suppliers are also expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the values of the UN. This Guide serves as a resource for all.

THE ETHICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE UN

Charter of the United Nations

The Charter sets out the purposes and principles of the Organization. Under our Charter, UN staff are appointed on the basis of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity. The concept of integrity embraces all aspects of behaviour of an international civil servant, including qualities such as honesty, truthfulness, impartiality, and incorruptibility. As UN staff, we are expected to exhibit and adhere to the highest standards of ethical conduct.

Staff Regulations and Staff Rules of the United Nations

The Staff Regulations are provided by the General Assembly and describe the fundamental conditions of service and the basic rights, duties and obligations at the United Nations Secretariat. The Staff Regulations establish what the UN expects of its staff and what staff may expect from the UN. They represent the broad principles of human resources policy for the staffing and administration of the Secretariat. The Secretary-General provides and enforces our Staff Rules, consistent with these principles, as he or she considers necessary. This Guide helps to explain our Regulations and Rules, but is not itself a term or condition of UN service.

Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service

The International Civil Service Commission promotes the Standards of Conduct that apply to staff of all United Nations system organizations. The Standards of Conduct describe some of the obligations which distinguish employment with the UN. International civil servants have a special calling to serve our universal ideals of peace, respect for fundamental rights, and international cooperation.

Our Fundamental Ethical Values

Each of us swears an oath of loyalty and obedience when we start our UN careers. Our fundamental ethical values are based on the UN Charter and this Oath of Office, and inform our ethical culture. These values are:

Independence

United Nations personnel shall maintain their independence and shall not seek or receive instructions from any Government or from any other person or entity external to the United Nations and shall refrain from any action which might reflect negatively on their position as United Nations personnel responsible only to the United Nations.

Loyalty

Loyalty to the purposes, values and principles of the United Nations is a fundamental obligation of all United Nations personnel. They shall be loyal to the United Nations and shall, at all times, discharge their functions and regulate their conduct with the interests of the United Nations only in view.

Impartiality

United Nations personnel, in the performance of their official duties, shall always act with impartiality, objectivity and professionalism. They shall ensure that expression of personal views and convictions does not compromise or appear to compromise the performance of their official duties or the interests of the United Nations. They shall not act in a way that unjustifiably could lead to actual or perceived preferential treatment for or against particular individuals, groups or interests.

Integrity

United Nations personnel shall maintain the highest standards of integrity, including honesty, truthfulness, fairness and incorruptibility, in all matters affecting their official duties and the interests of the United Nations.

Accountability

United Nations personnel shall be accountable for the proper discharge of their functions and for their decisions and actions. In fulfilling their official duties and responsibilities, United Nations personnel shall make decisions in the interests of the United Nations. They shall submit themselves to scrutiny as required by their position.

Respect for human rights

United Nations personnel shall fully respect the human rights, dignity and worth of all persons and shall act with understanding, tolerance, sensitivity and respect for diversity and without discrimination of any kind.

MAKING DIFFICULT DECISIONS

The information in this Guide will help you work through most difficult workplace issues and dilemmas. As the answer to some problems may not be obvious, take the extra time to think through these questions:

- Have I reviewed the facts carefully?
- Besides myself, who else may be affected by this decision?
- What are the issues?
- What does the UN require me to do in this situation?
- Have I used the resources available to me to understand my duties and rights?
- Have I thought carefully about my options and the potential consequences?
- Will my decision stand the test of time?

If you are still not sure what to do, speak up and get the advice you need. Keep asking questions until you are certain you are doing the right thing.

In addition to this Guide, you may find the following resource helpful:

The Roadmap: A Staff Member's Guide to Finding the Right Place, available from the Ethics Office or at <http://www.un.org/en/ethics>.



PART TWO

**APPLYING
OUR ETHICAL
FRAMEWORK**



A. CARRYING OUT THE UN MISSION

MAINTAINING IMPARTIALITY AND INDEPENDENCE



MAIN IDEAS

The UN Oath of Office requires us to act with impartiality and independence. As international civil servants, we should consider the impact of our comments and actions, and manage our conduct so that we represent the international community, rather than individual governments or other political interests. This is especially important when working in peacekeeping operations and field based missions, where daily work often involves significant interactions with governmental representatives, non-governmental organizations, and other third parties.



TAKING ACTION

- If your work puts you in contact with representatives of Member States, political parties, or civil society groups, remember that the UN's mission and goals come first.

- Act only in your officially authorized capacity, and do not overreach your delegated authority.
- Do not misrepresent your functions or title to Member States, or to anyone external to the UN.
- Respectfully advocate for and uphold the values and principles of the UN.
- You may not ask for assistance or follow instructions from any government official or from any other authority external to the UN, in relation to your status as a UN staff member.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q.** I am conducting research on Member State economic policies. I think that my home government has excellent data and possibly the best approach. Could I just conclude my research by suggesting that the UN follow what my government has been doing for years?
- A.** As an international civil servant, you must remain impartial and independent. It is far better that you complete your benchmarking research in an evenhanded and thorough manner, rather than favour any one Member State's approach.
- Q.** If a representative of a Member State sends me the résumé of a person and asks me to forward the résumé to a hiring manager for a vacancy, may I send it on?
- A.** No, you should return the résumé and politely advise the representative that anyone who wants to work for the UN must follow our application procedures via the Careers Portal. As a UN staff member, you must respect the integrity of our hiring and recruitment processes.



LEARNING MORE

From the Standards of Conduct

The Standards of Conduct tell us that we must remain independent of any authority outside the UN, and that our conduct must reflect that independence. Similarly, we must not interfere in the policies or affairs of Governments, or seek to discredit any Government.

Secretariat resources and references

- See staff regulation 1.2 (b) & (f), ST/SGB/2012/1, *Staff Regulations*

RESPECT FOR NATIONAL LAWS



MAIN IDEAS

The UN operates in countries across the globe. Just as we respect diversity, we must respect the laws of the nations that host our activities. The privileges and immunities that you hold as a staff member are conferred upon you solely for the interests of the Organization. They do not exempt you from observing local laws, or provide an excuse for ignoring your private legal or financial obligations.



TAKING ACTION

- Remember that as a UN staff member, you are a guest in your host country.
- You are expected to cooperate with local law enforcement authorities, and to pay traffic and other fines promptly.
- If you are involved in a violation of local laws, you should immediately report it in accordance with the procedures of your duty station.
- If local authorities bring concerns about your adherence with local laws or private legal obligations to the UN's attention, the UN will cooperate with the authorities to resolve any compliance issues.
- You must settle all in-country financial debts promptly, prior to leaving the duty station or separating from the UN.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q.** If I disagree with a court order regarding alimony payments to my ex-spouse, can I ignore it under UN staff member privileges and immunities?
- A.** No, you must comply. UN staff members are required to comply with all local and national laws, including laws involving domestic matters. The UN will cooperate with local and national authorities in resolving compliance issues.



LEARNING MORE

From the Standards of Conduct

Our privileges and immunities as international civil servants do not exempt us from observing local laws or provide an excuse for ignoring our private legal or financial obligations.

Secretariat resources and references

- See staff regulation 1.1 (f), ST/SGB/2012/1, *Staff Regulations*

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND SEXUAL ABUSE



MAIN IDEAS

You should demonstrate respect for peoples, languages, cultures and customs. With that respect comes an obligation to protect human rights and to speak out against acts that are contrary to human dignity. You are prohibited from engaging in discrimination, or abusing the authority of your position.

Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse by UN personnel represents a catastrophic failure to adhere to our ethical obligations. It brings harm to those whom the UN is mandated to protect, and violates universally recognized human rights, norms, and standards.

“Sexual exploitation” means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including but not limited to profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Similarly, the term “sexual abuse” means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Very often, there is a great disparity in economic and social power between a UN staff member and our beneficiaries. You must be alert to the potential for exploitation and abuse, regardless of intention, and take every measure to avoid even the appearance of inappropriate behaviour.



TAKING ACTION

- Each of us must support and develop systems that prevent sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.
- It is not just your intentions, but also the impact of your behaviour that is important.
- While certain conduct may be acceptable in one country, it may be illegal or otherwise inappropriate in another. Pay attention to guidance at your duty station concerning what is and what is not considered appropriate conduct.
- UN forces conducting operations under UN command and control have a particular duty of care towards women and children, and are also prohibited from committing acts of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.
- Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of consent locally.
- The exchange of money, employment, goods or beneficiary assistance by UN staff for sexual services is prohibited.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q.** I think that one of my colleagues is seeing a local girl who can't be more than 15 years old. He showers her with small gifts, like T-shirts and cigarettes. He does not think that there's anything wrong with what he's doing. I am concerned, but do not see that I have any right to interfere.
- A.** Under our zero tolerance policy, you are expected to speak up and report your concerns to your head of office, your Human Resources representative, your Conduct and Discipline Team, or to OIOS.



LEARNING MORE

From the Standards of Conduct

We are to be guided in our actions by fundamental human rights and the dignity and worth of the human person.

Secretariat resources and references

- See staff regulation 1.2(a), *ST/SGB/2012/1, Staff Regulations*
- *ST/SGB/2003/13, Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse*



B. AVOIDING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

A conflict of interest occurs when your private interests interfere—or appear to interfere—with the interests of the UN. You should base your decisions on the UN's needs, rather than your own interests, the interests of family or friends, or a Member State's interests. Each of us should deal with third parties in ways that avoid even the appearance of a conflict between our personal interests and those of the UN. You are expected to arrange your private affairs so that you can provide your loyalty first to the UN.

To avoid possible conflicts of interest, try to anticipate and avoid situations where you could be faced with competing interests that may impact your impartiality. Conflicts of interest represent high-risk situations, with potential for significant, detrimental effects on the reputation of the Organization. If you think that you have a possible conflict of interest, seek assistance from the Ethics Office.

The following situations can easily give rise to conflicts of interest:

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS



MAIN IDEAS

A staff member's personal relationships with family and friends should not affect the impartial performance of their official functions. To prevent preferential treatment or favouritism of family members, UN appointments are not to be granted to anyone who is an immediate family member of a staff member. While the spouse of a staff member may be hired, the staff member cannot participate in their spouse's recruitment process, and there can be no subsequent supervisory relationship between them.



TAKING ACTION

- Share with your family and close friends the UN's policy on employing family members.
- If friends and acquaintances ask you about UN employment, refer them to the Careers Portal and tell them to follow our application procedures.
- If you are asked to recommend a consultant or subject area expert with whom you have worked previously, be certain to provide full disclosure about how you know this individual.
- Always disclose any prior relationship with any person or entity that wishes to do business with your office. A conflict of interest in relation to procurement may compromise the process.
- Do not request a hiring manager to look out for the application of a colleague or friend.
- If you have any question or doubt about whether you have a conflict of interest, please seek guidance from the Ethics Office. By addressing conflicts and concerns early, we prevent them from escalating into major issues later.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q.** I have recently become involved in an intimate relationship with a staff member who reports to me directly. Do I have to disclose this?

- A.** Yes. You should immediately report the relationship to your manager and the Office of Human Resources Management. Your reporting lines must be changed as your relationship creates a conflict of interest. You cannot be an objective, neutral and fair supervisor to someone with whom you have a close personal relationship.
- Q.** I am part of a selection panel and learned that my nephew has applied for this vacant position. I know that he is an excellent candidate. What should I do?
- A.** You should immediately disclose to the panel that you have a conflict of interest, and ask to be replaced without sharing your views on your nephew's candidacy. In addition, you need to inform your nephew to disclose on his application that you work for the UN.



LEARNING MORE

From the Standards of Conduct

We should avoid assisting outside parties in their dealings with the UN where this might lead to actual or perceived preferential treatment.

Secretariat resources and references

- See staff rule 4.7, ST/SGB/2011/1, *Staff Rules and Staff Regulations of the United Nations* (to be revised)
- ST/AI/273, *Employment of Spouses* (to be revised)

GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY, AWARDS AND HONOURS



MAIN IDEAS

Accepting gifts, honours or other tokens of appreciation can impact your independence and impartiality. Such situations may compromise both your integrity and the UN's reputation. The acceptance of a gift can create a conflict of loyalties or raise expectations from the giver of the gift. You may not receive any gifts or other incentives that could induce you—or be perceived as inducing you—to take any action that is other than independent or impartial.

Staff members carrying out functions in sensitive areas such as procurement and investment management are to be particularly attentive to this issue, and are held to an even higher standard, in relation to the discharge of their duties and responsibilities.

From Governments

As a rule, we cannot accept any honours, decorations, favours, remuneration or gifts from Government sources. However, if refusal of an unanticipated gift would cause embarrassment to the Organization, you may accept it on behalf of the Organization and then report and entrust it to the Secretary-General.

From non-governmental sources

While the receipt of honours, favours, gifts or remuneration from non-governmental sources may be permitted with the prior approval of the Secretary-General, approval will only be granted in exceptional cases.

From any source having or seeking a contractual relationship

Accepting gifts from a person or entity doing business with the UN, or seeking to have any sort of contractual relationship with the UN, constitutes a conflict of interest. You may not accept anything from such sources. There is no exception to this rule.

Offering or promising gifts

When people exchange gifts in a work setting, it can look as if favours were granted in order to influence the exercise of professional judgment. You may not offer anything of value, such as gifts, favours, or other personal benefits, to other staff members or to third parties if by doing so you are trying to influence the recipient's official actions. Offering gifts such as a birthday present is acceptable if there is no expectation of any official action in return.



TAKING ACTION

- Ensure that all vendors and contractors with whom you work are aware of the UN's strict policy regarding gift giving.
- Accepting meals, tickets, travel expenses, or other hospitality from UN vendors or contractors is prohibited.
- Gifts that arrive unexpectedly and cannot be returned are to be registered and disposed of in accordance with ST/AI/2010/1.

- Do not distribute business cards, brochures, or any other type of business solicitation on behalf of an external entity.
- Never take a gift accepted on behalf of the Organization for your personal use.
- Never accept cash given to you as a gift in your official capacity from any person or entity, for any reason.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q.** May I accept a gift worth \$25 from a Government in recognition of my UN service?
- A.** No. You may not receive any gift—no matter how large or small—from any Government. To do otherwise could give the appearance that you are favouring one Member State or are taking instructions from a Member State. Unlike some employers, the UN does not have a “de minimus” rule when it comes to our prohibition against accepting anything of value from a Member State.
- Q.** Our office was offered a substantial award from the private foundation of a current vendor. We are honoured to receive recognition for our efforts to protect the rights of displaced children. May we accept the award? It would boost morale and demonstrate the value of our work.
- A.** You should decline the award. Though the benefits of this award are tempting, accepting the award could interfere with your ability to maintain an arms-length relationship with this vendor. It could be very difficult for you to be objective in evaluating this vendor’s performance—especially when it comes time to renew the relationship.



LEARNING MORE

From the Standards of Conduct

We must not accept any honour, decoration, gift, remuneration or favour from any source outside the UN without prior authorization from the Secretary-General.

Secretariat resources and references

- See staff regulation 1.2 (j-l), ST/SGB/2012/1, *Staff Regulations*

- See ST/AI/2010/1, *Reporting, Retaining & Disposing of Honours, Decorations, Favours, Gifts or Remuneration from Governmental & Non-governmental Sources*, for relevant procedures.
- Offices concerned with being offered pro bono goods or services from external entities should review ST/SGB/2006/5, *Acceptance of Pro Bono Goods & Services*

OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT AND EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES



MAIN IDEAS

The image and reputation of the UN depend on our actions and efforts. As staff members, we are expected to devote our time and energy to the work of the Organization. Outside employment and external activities, paid or unpaid, may interfere with our ability to serve the UN. More importantly, some external activities are incompatible with our status as international civil servants, or conflict with the best interests of the Organization. For these reasons, outside employment and external activities may only be allowed when prior approval has been granted by the Secretary-General through the staff member's proper chain of command.

We must avoid activities that can adversely impact the Organization, or contravene our status as international civil servants. You can generally participate in local community, civic or charitable activities without the Secretary-General's permission, provided you are certain that they do not conflict with your status as an international civil servant. Likewise, outside activities which are beneficial to both the Organization and you, such as the development of professional and technical skills, are encouraged.



TAKING ACTION

- Private, unpaid social or charitable activities which have no relation to your official functions or to the Organization, and take place outside working hours or while you are on leave, do not require approval.
- Opportunities to teach or speak in educational settings that rely upon your work with the UN must be approved.

- If you receive approval for a speaking engagement in your personal capacity, make clear to the organizers and attendees that you are participating as a private individual and not as a representative of the UN.
- Do not represent, even informally, anyone who seeks to do business with the UN, or who seeks to provide services or sell products to UN staff members.
- You should consult the Ethics Office if you wish to serve on any external panels, boards, or committees.
- To seek approval for an outside activity, carefully review ST/AI/2000/13 for the relevant steps. The process starts by completing a written description of your proposed activity, for initial review by your supervisor and the Executive Officer or local chief of personnel.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q.** May I serve on the board of directors of a local organization that promotes corporate social responsibility? I would not be paid but could get some valuable experience.
- A.** It depends. While the UN encourages staff to become involved in their local communities, you must be sure that board membership will not interfere in any way with your status as an international civil servant. You may want to discuss this opportunity with the Ethics Office to ensure that it presents no conflict with your regular duties and obligations to the UN.

LEARNING MORE

From the Standards of Conduct

We cannot engage, without prior authorization, in any outside activity, whether paid or not, that interferes with or conflicts with the interests of the Organization. Any questions about this should be referred to the head of office or department. However, outside activities can be beneficial both to us and the UN. The UN will allow, encourage, and facilitate participation in professional activities that serve to maintain and enhance professional and technical competencies.

Secretariat resources and references

- See staff regulation 1.2 (o-p), ST/SGB/2012/1, *Staff Regulations*
- ST/AI/2000/13, *Outside Activities* (to be revised)
- ST/IC/2006/30, *Outside Activities*

WORKING WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERS AND DONORS



MAIN IDEAS

The complex work of the UN often requires that we form partnerships or alliances with donors or other private sector organizations. These relationships can result in real or perceived conflicts of interest, particularly where the role of the UN and its staff is unclear. The UN's reputation rests not only on your actions and decisions but also on the actions of partners with whom we accomplish our mission.

When discussing a potential partnership with an external entity, it is prudent to establish the terms of the relationship in a written document so that the parties concerned are fully aware of their respective roles, responsibilities and obligations. The Office of the Controller and the Office of Legal Affairs should be consulted on the development of any such document.



TAKING ACTION

- Be clear about roles, responsibilities, and reporting relationships whenever you create a partnership or alliance.
- Act in your official capacity when dealing with Member States and external partners.
- Ensure that external organizations are familiar with the UN rules, by explaining how you will conduct business.
- Maintain a respectful, professional and business-like relationship with external partners and donors.
- Senior managers must take care in deciding whether a pro bono contribution would create a conflict of interest or expose the UN to reputational harm. Consult with the Ethics Office early in your analysis.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q.** My office has just concluded a first-ever agreement with a major for-profit corporation. With this agreement, we can expand our peace building and rule of law initiatives and make a significant difference. Is there anything we should consider from an ethics perspective?
- A.** By engaging with the private sector, you may be able to extend the capacity of the UN to serve. However, there could be a number of ethical risks when we engage too closely with the private sector, including financial and other personal conflicts of interest, organizational conflicts of interest, procurement questions, and situations that could undermine the UN's status as an international organization and your status as an international civil servant. You and your office should discuss the situation with the Ethics Office to ensure that you are alerted to the areas where ethical risks could arise.

LEARNING MORE

From the Standards of Conduct

The Standards of Conduct stress the importance of our impartiality and independence as international civil servants. We must not seek or accept instructions from any Government, person, or entity external to the United Nations. For their part, neither Governments nor organizations should place international civil servants in a position where our international and national loyalties may conflict.

Secretariat resources and references

- Offices considering offers of pro bono goods or services from external entities should review *ST/SGB/2006/5, Acceptance of Pro Bono Goods & Services*

POLITICAL ACTIVITY

MAIN IDEAS

As a private citizen, you may vote and belong to political parties. You are not expected to give up your political or religious convictions. However,

your primary duty of loyalty is to the objectives and purposes of the UN. As a result, you must avoid political activities that could reflect adversely on the UN, or diminish your independence and impartiality. As an international civil servant, you do not have the freedom that private persons have to take sides or to express your convictions publicly on controversial matters.



TAKING ACTION

- Remember to use tact and discretion when expressing your personal views.
- Avoid promoting national political positions or displaying endorsements of political candidates while at work.
- Do not represent yourself as a UN staff member when you sign petitions or engage in any political activity.
- Do not align yourself with external groups where your position as a UN staff member may be used to promote the external group.
- In your private capacity, you may make financial contributions to political parties or causes that you support.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q.** I have been asked to run in the next local election in my hometown. May I continue working for the UN and be a candidate running for office?
- A.** No. A UN staff member may not be a candidate for public office at any level. If you decide to run for office, you must resign from the Organization.



LEARNING MORE

From the Standards of Conduct

International civil servants do not have the freedom enjoyed by private persons to take sides or to express their convictions publicly on controversial matters. This does not mean that we have to give up our personal political views or national perspectives. We retain the right to vote but should not participate in certain political activities, such as standing for or holding local or national political office.

Secretariat resources and references

- See staff regulation 1.2 (f) and (h), ST/SGB/2012/1, *Staff Regulations*
- See staff rule 1.2(s), ST/SGB/2011/1, *Staff Rules of the United Nations*
- See Section 5.3 – 5.5, ST/AI/2000/13, *Outside Activities* (to be revised)

FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE



MAIN IDEAS

The UN Financial Disclosure Programme (FDP) helps to maintain and enhance public trust in the integrity of the UN. Under the FDP, selected staff members are required to disclose annually their assets and liabilities, outside activities, and affiliations. Covered staff members are placed on an honour system, and are expected to provide truthful and complete information.

The primary purpose of the programme is to manage risks for personal conflicts of interest. The FDP aims to identify, resolve and mitigate conflict of interest situations arising from staff members' financial assets, liabilities, investments, and outside activities. This may include advising staff members to divest themselves of holdings, or to recuse themselves from a particular activity or aspect of their official functions.

Every March, covered filers submit information about themselves, their spouses, and dependent children through a secure website.



TAKING ACTION

- If you are required to participate in the FDP, you will be contacted by the Ethics Office.
- If you are required to participate, ensure that you fully comply with your filing obligations within the specified timeframe. A failure to fully comply with programme requirements is considered a breach of applicable regulations and rules.
- You should seek the advice of the Ethics Office if you have any questions concerning this programme.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q.** Who determines whether I have to file a financial disclosure statement?
- A.** Your head of department identifies which staff members must file, following ST/SGB/2006/6.



LEARNING MORE

From the Standards of Conduct

Conflicts of interest include circumstances in which international civil servants, directly or indirectly, may benefit improperly, or allow a third party to benefit improperly, from their association with their organization. Conflicts of interest can arise from an international civil servant's personal or familial dealings with third parties, individuals, beneficiaries, or other institutions. Thus we may be required to disclose certain personal assets if this is necessary to enable the UN to make sure that there is no conflict.

Secretariat resources and references

- See staff regulation 1.2 (m) & (n), ST/SGB/2012/1, *Staff Regulations*
- ST/SGB/2006/6, *Financial Disclosure and Declaration of Interest Statements*

POST-EMPLOYMENT ACTIVITIES



MAIN IDEAS

According to the staff regulations and staff rules, staff members shall exercise the utmost discretion with regard to all matters of official business. Confidentiality obligations related to your official UN duties do not cease upon separation from service.

While working for the UN, you may not solicit or accept offers of future employment from any UN contractor or vendor. Should you receive such an offer of employment you must report the incident to your manager and recuse yourself from any further dealings with that contractor or vendor. Additionally, if you participate in the procurement process, you are restricted in certain types of activities when you leave UN

employment. These restrictions apply whether you resign, are terminated, or retire.

Upon leaving the UN, if you participated in the procurement process, you may not seek or accept employment with, or any form of compensation or financial benefit from, any UN contractor or vendor for a period of one year following your separation from service. Also, for two years following your separation from service, you may not knowingly communicate with or appear before any staff member or unit of the UN on behalf of any third party on any particular matters that were under your official responsibility related to the procurement process.



TAKING ACTION

- Ensure that the contractors and vendors with whom you work are aware they cannot make offers of future employment to UN staff members.
- Avoid conversations with contractors or vendors about jobs in their companies or industries.
- After you leave UN employment, continue to maintain the confidentiality of non-public information.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q.** I don't have any procurement duties. When I leave the UN, I plan on using the information that I have gained to help me get my next job. Is this OK?
- A.** Even if you are not a procurement official, when you leave the UN you have continuing ethical obligations. UN data that is not publicly available must remain confidential. You cannot use confidential data that the UN collected or developed to help you get or perform your next job. Furthermore, you should not use your UN connections to "lobby" or influence your former colleagues to take a position that will benefit your new employer. Finally, you should act with caution if you accept a job with a Member State immediately after leaving the UN.



LEARNING MORE

From the Standards of Conduct

After leaving service with the UN, you should not take improper advantage of your former official functions and positions, including through unauthorized use of confidential information. International civil servants, including those involved in procurement, should not attempt to influence the decisions of the UN in the interest or at the request of third parties, with the intention of seeking employment opportunities with such third parties. It is also improper for international civil servants to accept supplementary payments or other subsidies from a Government or any other source prior to, during or after their employment with the UN, if the payment is related to that employment.

Secretariat resources and references

- ST/SGB/2006/15, *Post-employment restrictions*
- See Chapter 4.9 of the UN Procurement Manual



C. PROTECTING UN RESOURCES

We are all responsible for the appropriate use and stewardship of UN property and assets. We are expected to make the best possible use of UN resources when conducting official business. Any personal use of UN resources should be kept to a minimum, and may not conflict with the interests of the UN.

MANAGING ASSETS AND RESOURCES



MAIN IDEAS

The greatest asset of the UN is its staff. How you manage your time, apply yourself to your duties, and work with others will greatly contribute to the achievements and effectiveness of the UN. You are expected to use UN resources wisely, and to prevent waste or misuse. This responsibility also extends to the use of benefits and entitlements, for which you may be eligible, such as sick leave.



TAKING ACTION

- Heads of offices are responsible for the inventory and management of assets under their care. Each staff member is also responsible for the care of the items assigned to him/her at work.
- Use UN time for official business only.
- Avoid requesting other staff to use official time to perform activities other than those required in the performance of their official duties. This includes asking staff to run personal errands.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q.** At the back of the mission compound, there is some discarded electronic waste. Some of those items could be valuable on the resale market. Can I volunteer to clean this area up, recycle the valuable parts, and keep the proceeds for my trouble?
- A.** No. Though your desire to recycle is admirable, those items are UN assets. Talk to Mission Support and suggest that they explore how to responsibly dispose of these materials.
- Q.** I have to fly to a conference overseas but the Travel Unit refuses to book my ticket following my preferred route. May I demand that I conduct the booking myself?
- A.** No. You must abide by the decision of the Travel Unit, which is responsible for administering the UN's travel policy and ensuring responsible use of the Organization's funds.



LEARNING MORE

From the Standards of Conduct

The concept of integrity, as enshrined in the UN Charter, includes such qualities as honesty, truthfulness, impartiality and incorruptibility, as well as competence and efficiency.

Secretariat resources and references

- See staff regulation 1.2 (q), ST/SGB/2012/1, *Staff Regulations*
- See staff rule 1.7, ST/SGB/2011/1
- ST/AI/2003/5, *Property management and inventory control at United Nations Headquarters, addresses procedures for the inventory of UN assets*

OFFICE TECHNOLOGY



MAIN IDEAS

UN telephones, computers, e-mail, Internet, and other technologies should be used only for official business purposes. The UN has the right to monitor and review all information contained in these systems, and will verify how its systems are used. You are responsible for using these assets wisely and in the best interests of the UN. All information conveyed through the UN's IT systems remain the property of the Organization.

Though we may regard e-mail as a less formal means of communicating, all UN e-mail messages are official records, and may be retrieved and examined by the Organization when required.

You are prohibited from using the UN's information technology resources to access, send, or forward any material that is harassing, offensive, sexually oriented, or defamatory. There are no exceptions to this rule.



TAKING ACTION

- Remember that your UN e-mail account is not a private channel for conducting personal communications.
- The UN's IT systems are provided to help you meet official responsibilities. The UN will allow reasonable and occasional personal use of its telephones or other resources such as e-mail, Internet, and computers.
- If you use the UN's telephone system to make a personal long-distance telephone call, correctly record the call as private and ensure that the Organization is reimbursed for the cost of your call.
- Think about what you write in an e-mail, and re-read it before sending. Ensure that e-mails are accurate, and that the language and tone you use are appropriate. Ask yourself if you would be comfortable if your e-mail reached the Secretary-General's office.
- Do not download pirated audio or video files onto your UN computer. This is against the principles of the UN, and the laws of various Member States.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q.** My daughter attends school in a country far removed from my duty station. I occasionally communicate with her via Skype and e-mail her from my UN computer. Is this OK?
- A.** Yes. The UN permits reasonable personal use of its IT communications resources, but make sure that you are not using official work time for staying in touch with your daughter. It would be wise to cross check with your manager.

Secretariat resources and references

- *ST/SGB/2004/15, Use of Information and Communication Technology Resources and Data*

USE OF UN VEHICLES



MAIN IDEAS

The Organization's vehicles are to be used for official business purposes. Drivers of UN vehicles should not be asked or told to use UN vehicles for chores unrelated to the work of the Organization.

The safe operation of UN vehicles is necessary to protect staff members and others on the road. If you are authorized to drive a UN vehicle, you must obey the rules of the road. You should also perform an inspection of your vehicle prior to use, and report any observed damage.



TAKING ACTION

- All persons travelling in UN vehicles must wear seat belts at all times.
- Local speed limits and traffic regulations must be followed.
- As UN vehicles represent a significant expenditure to the Organization, treat all vehicles with care.
- Do not allow another UN staff member to drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs. All such incidents must be reported.
- Only authorized staff members and authorized officials may drive UN vehicles.

- Do not operate any mobile device while driving. In the case of emergencies, stop the vehicle prior to using any mobile device.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q.** I work for a UN field mission and wish to pick up a visiting family member from the airport using my UN vehicle. May I do this in my free time?
- A.** You must obtain prior authorization for the transportation of any non-UN personnel, and ensure waivers are signed for insurance purposes.



LEARNING MORE

From the Standards of Conduct

The privileges and immunities that we enjoy are conferred upon us solely in the interests of the Organization. They do not exempt us from observing local laws, nor do they provide an excuse for ignoring private legal or financial obligations.

Secretariat resources and references

- ST/AI/2010/6, *Road and driving safety*



D. CREATING A HARMONIOUS WORKPLACE

The UN has a global workforce that numbers over 43,000 men and women in over 160 duty stations. We are committed to creating and maintaining a harmonious workplace environment, where we work together and are treated with dignity. You can contribute by treating colleagues, clients and others with fairness, tolerance, respect and courtesy.

MUTUAL RIGHTS, DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS



MAIN IDEAS

Managers and supervisors are expected to provide timely advice and guidance to staff on ethical conduct. The more we talk openly about workplace conduct and our standards, the clearer we will be about what is expected.



TAKING ACTION

Staff members also have ethical duties and obligations. We are expected to learn the rules that apply to us, follow those rules, and seek guidance as needed.

Managers and supervisors should:

- Lead by example
- Affirm the need to follow the UN regulations, rules and policies that govern our work
- Encourage staff to ask questions and get advice before they act
- Listen attentively when staff members raise ethics-related questions and concerns
- Take prompt action to respond to questions and correct problems
- Foster an environment of trust, in which staff members can speak up without fear of retaliation
- Seek advice when unsure how to proceed

Staff members are expected to:

- Learn the details of the policies that specifically affect work assignments
- Take required training
- Be personally accountable, and hold our colleagues accountable, for ethical work behaviour and practices
- Share concerns about possible ethical misconduct with supervisors, heads of office, Human Resources officers, or OIOS
- Cooperate with internal investigations about reported unethical behaviour or other misconduct



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q.** My supervisor knows we may not accept gifts from vendors, but does so anyway. Why should I bother to follow the rules if my supervisor does not?
- A.** You should always follow the rules and do what is right, even if you witness wrongdoing yourself. Your oath was a personal one; adherence to the oath and the rules is not contingent upon others' behaviour. You should report the misconduct, or seek advice from the Ethics Office.



LEARNING MORE

From the Standards of Conduct

Managers and supervisors are in positions of leadership and it is their responsibility to ensure a harmonious workplace based on mutual respect. Continuing dialogue between staff and management is indispensable.

Secretariat resources and references

- Staff representative bodies participate in identifying, examining and resolving issues relating to staff welfare. See staff rule 8.1 (f), *ST/SGB/2011/1, Staff Rules and Staff Regulations of the United Nations*
- *ST/SGB/2011/5, Performance Management and Development Learning Programme for Managers and Supervisors*, requires that all first and second level reporting officers take part in the UN Secretariat's Performance Management and Development Learning Programme
- *ST/IC/2004/4, Conflict resolution in the United Nations Secretariat*
- The UN's Ombudsman and Mediation Services assists staff in resolving workplace disputes through informal means (www.un.org/en/ombudsman)

NON-DISCRIMINATION



MAIN IDEAS

At the UN, discrimination is any unfair treatment or arbitrary distinction based on a person's race, sex, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, language, social origin or other status. Discrimination may be an isolated event affecting one person or a group of persons similarly situated, or may manifest itself through harassment or abuse of authority. All forms of discrimination are prohibited.



TAKING ACTION

- Be aware of your own behaviour, and consider how others could interpret your words or actions.
- When evaluating job applicants, thinking about who will fit best into your team in terms of job-related criteria—experience, skills, and work style—is appropriate.

- Show respect for and understanding of diverse points of view.
- Managers and supervisors have an obligation to take action if they become aware of any alleged, unfair treatment relating to their staff.
- Do not isolate a colleague you disagree with, or deliberately leave someone out of communications, meetings or projects without just cause.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q.** Does the UN discipline staff members who have discriminated against others?
- A.** Yes. For summaries of disciplinary actions taken for all categories of violations, see the annual information circular, *Practice of the Secretary-General in disciplinary matters and possible criminal behaviour*.



LEARNING MORE

From the Standards of Conduct

Tolerance and understanding are basic human values and we must respect all persons equally. This implies respect for the right of others to hold different points of view and follow different cultural patterns. It requires a willingness to work without bias with persons of all nationalities, religions and cultures. Freedom from discrimination is a basic human right. International civil servants are expected to respect the dignity, worth and equality of all persons.

Secretariat resources and references

- See staff rule 1.2 (e), ST/SGB/2011/1, *Staff Rules and Staff Regulations of the United Nations* (to be revised)
- ST/SGB/2008/5, *Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, including Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority*
- ST/SGB/2008/12, *Departmental Focal Points for Women in the Secretariat*
- ST/SGB/2008/14, *Joint Harassment Prevention Boards*
- ST/IC/2004/4, *Conflict resolution in the United Nations Secretariat*

- The UN's Ombudsman and Mediation Services assist staff in resolving workplace disputes through informal means (www.un.org/en/ombudsman)

AVOIDING HARASSMENT AND ABUSE OF AUTHORITY



MAIN IDEAS

Behaviour that is offensive and unwelcome or unreasonably disrupts another person in his or her work is harassment. We will not tolerate harassment or abuse of authority.

Workplace harassment

Workplace harassment is any inappropriate conduct, including words or actions, that can reasonably be expected to cause offense or humiliation to another person. Disagreement about work performance is normally not considered harassment, and is to be dealt with in the context of performance management.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour, or any other behaviour of a sexual nature that can reasonably be expected to cause offense or humiliation to another person.

Abuse of authority

Abuse of authority is the improper use of a position of influence, power or authority against another person. This is considered particularly serious when a person uses their influence, power or authority to improperly influence another person's career or employment conditions.

You have the right to be free from improper or offensive conduct at work. You don't have to keep silent if you believe you are being harassed or if you observe harassing behaviour.



TAKING ACTION

- Treat all employees, contract workers, customers, vendors, and visitors with respect, courtesy, and dignity.
- Do not make unwelcome, insulting or offensive remarks or take unwelcome, insulting or offensive actions. If one of your comments or jokes offends someone else, it may be seen as harassing.

- Speak up and tell a person if you are upset by his/her choice of words. Explain why your colleague's comments offend you. Ask him/her to stop.
- To maintain a work atmosphere free from harassment, exercise good judgment in your relationships with co-workers and others in the workplace.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q.** A staff member in our division has posted a calendar with sexually suggestive photos in his cubicle. We are uncomfortable seeing it but are reluctant to say anything to him. Should he be required to remove the calendar?
- A.** Yes. Each of us must avoid actions or displays that create a hostile work environment or make others uncomfortable or feel disrespected. Managers are required to take action if such conduct occurs. Clear communication and management role-modeling are essential to creating a harassment-free work environment for all.



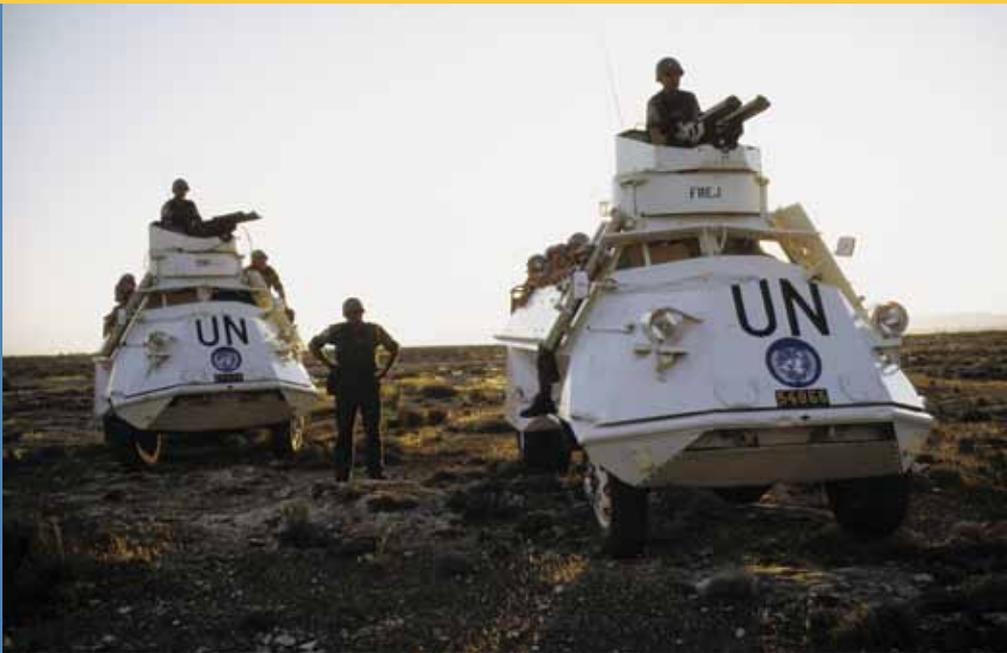
LEARNING MORE

From the Standards of Conduct

Harassment in any shape or form is an affront to human dignity, and international civil servants must not engage in it. International civil servants must not abuse their authority or use their power or position in a manner that is offensive, embarrassing or intimidating to another person.

Secretariat resources and references

- See staff rule 1.2 (e), ST/SGB/2011/1, *Staff Rules and Regulations of the United Nations* (to be revised)
- ST/SGB/2008/5, *Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, including Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority*
- ST/SGB/2008/12, *Departmental Focal Points for Women in the Secretariat*
- ST/SGB/2008/14, *Joint Harassment Prevention Boards*



E. PROTECTING INFORMATION

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY



MAIN IDEAS

The work that you produce as a UN staff member is the property of the Organization. The UN has the right to use all such work in any manner that it deems appropriate. As your UN intellectual property becomes part of the official UN record, you should ensure the quality and integrity of all work that you produce.

Other organizations also protect their intellectual property. We respect their rights. We do not tolerate the unauthorized copying or disclosure of another's intellectual property. You may use other people's information only if you have received their consent or if it is publicly available without restriction.

Our rules and guidance about information management and intellectual property also extend to the use of electronic media, social networks, and other forms of non-print based communications.



TAKING ACTION

- Follow the retention policy guidelines for your office for the safekeeping and/or disposition of all records and documents.
- If you create official documents or other records on your personal computer, make sure they are transferred to your office archive at the first opportunity.
- If you wish to write or speak on topics you have researched within your official capacity, you must first obtain permission to do so.
- Departments/offices are responsible for maintaining the accuracy of information on their websites.
- The intentional or unauthorized destruction, alteration or misplacement of official records is prohibited.
- Do not place excerpts from UN documents on your personal websites, blogs or other social media.
- UN letterhead should only be used to conduct official correspondence.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q.** I have been asked to write an article for an economic journal on an international trade issue. As I have not recently worked on this issue for the UN, do I still require prior approval?
- A.** Yes. Prior authorization is required for any materials intended for publication that relate to the purposes, activities or interests of the UN.



LEARNING MORE

From the Standards of Conduct

The disclosure of confidential information may seriously jeopardize the efficiency and credibility of the Organization. We are therefore

responsible for exercising discretion in all official business and must never divulge confidential information without authorization. These are obligations that do not cease upon separation from service.

Secretariat resources and references

- See staff rules 1.2 (h) & 1.9, *ST/SGB/2011/1, Staff Rules and Staff Regulations of the United Nations* (to be revised)
- *ST/SGB/2007/5, Record-keeping and the management of the United Nations archives*
- *ST/SGB/2007/6, Information sensitivity, classification and handling*
- *ST/AI/2001/5, Internet publishing*, provides guidelines for creating and publishing materials on official United Nations websites.

CONFIDENTIALITY



MAIN IDEAS

The UN promotes transparency, and makes a great amount of its information available to our stakeholders and the public at large. Greater awareness and understanding of our work increases public support. As a UN staff member, you also have access to protected information that is not intended for public disclosure. Each of us must be able to balance both expectations, by protecting confidential UN information and making available public information. Always protect the Organization's confidential information—including intellectual property—from disclosure.



TAKING ACTION

- Protected UN documents are classified as confidential or strictly confidential, and remain under the supervision of the relevant head of department or office concerned.
- Do not post commentary about confidential UN projects on blogs or social media websites such as Facebook.
- Act with care when describing your work projects to people you are not working with in order to protect details that, if revealed, could impact upon negotiations, decisions, or working relationships.
- Avoid forwarding e-mails or replying to e-mails that have 'trails' of previous messages attached—you may overlook something that should not be passed on or copied to others.

- Do not let others know you have access to information about decisions or expenditures the UN is making, as it could lead them to pressure you to disclose confidential information.
- Do not give any UN document that is not publicly available to an outside party.
- Your obligation to protect confidential information remains after you separate from the Organization.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q.** I took a video from my mobile phone of a UN Secretariat staff meeting. I would like to share the video on my blog and YouTube site. May I do this?
- A.** No. UN Secretariat meetings are internal and are not intended for public audiences.



LEARNING MORE

From the Standards of Conduct

It is necessary for the UN to maintain guidelines for the use and protection of confidential information, and it is equally necessary for such guidelines to keep pace with developments in communications technology.

Secretariat resources and references

- ST/SGB/2007/5, *Record-keeping and the management of the United Nations archives*
- ST/SGB/2007/6, *Information sensitivity, classification and handling*
- ST/AI/2001/5, *Internet publishing*, provides guidelines for creating and publishing materials on official United Nations websites.

PUBLIC SPEAKING AND SOCIAL MEDIA



MAIN IDEAS

The United Nations is committed to being an open and transparent organization. Media, whether traditional, new or social, are critical tools for the UN to inform and engage the public about our work. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Flickr are now an intrinsic

part of our daily lives, both professional and personal. When speaking to the media or using social media platforms, it is important to keep in mind some basic facts to protect your own interests and those of the UN.



TAKING ACTION

Public speaking and the use of social media in your official UN capacity

- When speaking to the media on subjects within your area of responsibility, remember that you speak for the United Nations, and not as a private individual, academic, or independent expert in your field.
- If you speak to a journalist or participate in an interview, keep your supervisor apprised of such activities ahead of time.

Public speaking and the use of social media in your personal capacity

- Use care, discretion and good judgment when posting on personal web pages, blogs, and discussion forums, and when leaving comments on online articles and social networking sites. You must ensure that your personal views expressed on such sites do not reflect adversely on your independence and impartiality as required by your status as an international civil servant.
- Do not use the UN emblem on your personal web pages or social networking sites.
- Do not identify or use the names or positions of other UN colleagues on your blogs or sites without their permission.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q.** I have been contacted by a journalist to give an interview on a subject in my area of my expertise. May I participate?
- A.** You may participate as long as you are speaking only within your area of competency and responsibility, and you have consulted beforehand with your Executive Office or Administrative Officer regarding the protocol in your department or office for clearance. If approved, be careful to provide facts, not opinions or comments, and to leave sensitive issues to officials specifically

authorized to speak on them. Do not feel you need to answer every question, in particular hypothetical ones. Moreover, you should feel free to seek the guidance of a professional media expert in your department.



LEARNING MORE

From the Standards of Conduct

Openness and transparency in relations with the media are effective means of communicating organizational messages. However in no circumstance should we use the media to further our own interests or views.

Secretariat resources and references

- Media Guidelines for United Nations officials (DPI/2189)
- United Nations Department of Public Information Social Media Guidelines (DPI/2573)
- ST/AI/2000/13, *Outside Activities* (to be revised)



PART THREE

**MAKING ETHICAL
DECISIONS**

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Each of us may face situations where applying the rules may be difficult or unpopular. Each of us has faced a time where the right course of action was hard to determine. Perhaps the facts were complex. Maybe many individuals could be affected by our decisions. Perhaps a “good” choice was just not obvious, or our personal interests conflicted with the best interests of the Organisation. Maybe we did not have the information we needed to make an informed choice.

The following six-step model can help you think through such tough situations:

- **FACTS:** What are the facts?
- **STAKEHOLDERS:** Who has an interest or stake in the situation?
- **ISSUES:** Identify the ethical issue(s) and questions.
- **COMPLIANCE:** Consider what the UN requires of you.
- **OPTIONS and CONSEQUENCES:** Consider possible options and their consequences.
- **DECISION:** Make your best possible decision and take action, finding the resolution that is just and fair to all.

ROLE OF THE ETHICS OFFICE

The UN Ethics Office is an independent, confidential, neutral, impartial, and professional resource for all UN Secretariat staff—everywhere. We promote an organizational culture that places the highest value on integrity, accountability, transparency, and mutual respect.

How we interact and treat each other at the workplace reflects our commitment to doing the right thing. A few simple concepts are at the center of what we do:

- We listen openly to your concerns and questions.
- We carefully follow the regulations, rules and policies that govern our work.
- We will not compromise our values or take short cuts.

- You don't have to make tough decisions by yourself. You have many resources to help you.
- When in doubt, speak up and ask for advice.
- The Ethics Office offers five lines of service:
 - Confidential ethics advice
 - Ethics awareness and education
 - Protection against retaliation
 - Financial disclosure program
 - Promoting coherence and common ethics standards and policies across the UN family

CONFIDENTIAL ADVICE

The Ethics Office provides confidential advice to UN staff wherever they are based. The Ethics Office will not disclose the name of anyone who seeks our advice, nor will we share information brought to our attention unless the staff member gives us permission to do so.

By consulting with the Ethics Office, you can ensure that your conduct adheres to UN rules and standards. We will communicate with you in confidence to review your situation and will make recommendations on how best to resolve your concern or situation. We make referrals to other offices within the UN whose services may also be of help to you.

SPEAKING UP

The UN workplace is complex and fast-paced. The more dispersed our global workforce becomes, the more the UN must encourage staff to speak up, and support staff when they do so. Speaking up can clarify misunderstandings, and prevent ethical lapses. It is always best to prevent or correct problems in their early stages. Raising the issue is the first step, and can often be as simple as asking a manager for more information.

If you feel unsure about whom to approach, or if you have spoken up and still feel uneasy about a situation, seek help from the Ethics Office.

DUTY TO REPORT AND THE RIGHT TO PROTECTION AGAINST RETALIATION

UN staff members have a duty to report any violations of the Organization's regulations and rules to a responsible official or entity such as the Office of Internal Oversight Services. Staff are expected to cooperate with official UN audits and investigations. Under the Organization's protection against retaliation policy, as contained in ST/SGB/2005/21, the Ethics Office protects staff from being punished for reporting misconduct or for cooperating with audits or investigations. This is commonly known as "whistleblower protection."

By providing protection to staff who may otherwise be reluctant to come forward, the UN learns about and can respond to misconduct. This strengthens accountability and maintains the integrity of our operations and programmes.

Protection against retaliation applies to all staff members, interns and UN volunteers. If you feel that you have been subjected to retaliation because you reported misconduct or cooperated with an investigation, you should contact the Ethics Office.

Contacting the Ethics Office

If you are not sure what to do, speak up and get the advice you need. Keep asking questions until you are certain you are doing the right thing.

Here is how you can contact the UN Ethics Office:

Ethics Helpline: +1 (917) 367-9858

Fax: +1 (917) 367-9861

E-mail: ethicsoffice@un.org

Website: <http://www.un.org/en/ethics>

Street Address: Consult the Ethics Office website for our updated address

For other useful staff resources, consult *The Roadmap* which is available online at <http://www.un.org/en/ethics>

Published September 2012

Photographs courtesy of UN Photo



United Nations

UN ETHICS OFFICE