

UN-Women Executive Board

Second Regular Session 2023

Management Response to the report on the UN-Women Ethics Function for 1 April - 30 June 2023

I. Introduction

1. The management of UN-Women welcomes the first report on the UN-Women Ethics Function for 1 April – 30 June 2023, presented by UN-Women’s Ethics Advisor, as the first incumbent in the role since 1 April 2023.
2. UN-Women commends the Ethics Advisor for her work to promote, strengthen, and sustain a culture that embraces the highest standards of ethical conduct across the organization from 1 April – 30 June 2023
3. UN-Women further wishes to express its appreciation to the UN Ethics Office for their ethics services provided to the organization over the years.
4. The management would also like to thank UN-Women Human Resources Division who has been serving as the primary focal point of liaison between the UN Ethics Office and the organization, relaying ethics guidance and promoting ethics culture within UN-Women.

II. Establishment of the ethics function

5. The establishment of a dedicated independent ethics function within UN-Women was a priority for UN-Women Executive Director and the organization in order to strengthen the ethical organizational culture based on its values of integrity, respect for diversity, and professionalism.
6. UN-Women welcomes the Ethics Advisor and notes with appreciation the focus of the Ethics Advisor’s efforts during the first months in office on establishing the ethics function within UN-Women, thus ensuring its confidentiality and independence.
7. UN-Women also appreciates the Ethics Advisor’s cooperation with managers and the ethics functions of other UN system entities to set up the function, in line with the principles set for in ST/SGB/2007/11 to secure the highest standards of ethics and integrity of United Nations staff members and ensure the consistent application of such standards within the United Nations.
8. UN-Women supports the Ethics Advisor’s usage of the JIU Review of the ethics function in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2021/5) findings as guiding principles, which have informed the organization’s efforts in the past.

III. Activities

9. UN-Women acknowledges receipt of 102 requests for services during the period, 49% of which were for ethics advice and 25% of which were for outreach and training.

A. Standards-setting and policy support

10. UN-Women notes with appreciation the Ethics Advisor's provision of advice and support in developing and updating policies and standards relating to ethics and integrity within UN-Women and for system-wide efforts.
11. UN-Women acknowledges the Ethics Advisor's contributions to the review of the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service led by the International Civil Service Commission, in collaboration with UN-Women Human Resources and the Ethics Panel of the United Nations (EPUN).
12. UN-Women welcomes the Ethics Advisor's initiation of the review of the Protection Against Retaliation Policy.

B. Training, outreach and awareness-raising

13. UN-Women agrees with the Ethics Advisor that training, outreach, and awareness-raising activities are essential to ensure that all personnel observe the highest standards of ethical conduct in performing their functions.
14. UN-Women commends the Ethic Advisor's hosting of a global meeting on ethics and integrity, introducing the ethics function to UN-Women personnel, in which 480 personnel attended, as well as her participation in the induction course for UN-Women Junior Professional Officers (JPOs) and the UN-Women Global Leaders Retreat.

C. Confidential advice and guidance

15. UN-Women takes note that the Ethics Advisor received requests for advice on a range of topics including outside activities, internal procedures for reporting misconduct, conflicts of interest, ethics-related employment concerns, and procurement ethics.
16. Recognizing that the largest number of advisory requests received was related to engagement in outside activities, UN-Women is pleased that a revision of the outside activities' clearance procedure has been initiated, in collaboration between the Ethics Advisor and Human Resources to maximize its efficiency.

D. United Nations Financial Disclosure Programme (UNFDP)

17. UN-Women acknowledges that during the 2022 annual filing cycle, conducted from 1 March 2022 until 31 December 2022, 169 filers from UN-Women participated in the UNFDP, of which 4 possible conflicts of interests were identified.
18. UN-Women is pleased that all mitigation measures recommended by UN Ethics Office were accepted and implemented.
19. UN-Women appreciates the recognition of the Ethics Advisor that the Executive Director and the two then Deputy Executive Directors of UN-Women participated in the annual voluntary public disclosure initiative of the Secretary-General, which is designed to

provide assurance to Members States that senior officials are not influenced by their private interests in the performance of their official duties.

E. Protection Against Retaliation

20. UN-Women welcomes the Ethics Advisor's assumption of the responsibilities for UN-Women's Protection against retaliation policy.
21. UN-Women agrees with the Ethics Advisor that the ability of personnel to report misconduct and wrongdoing and cooperate with audits and investigations without fear of retaliation is an essential element in building a culture of integrity, transparency, and accountability and remains firmly committed to the ensurance thereof.
22. UN-Women acknowledges that in 2022, the United Nations Ethics Office referred one UN-Women retaliation matter to OIOS for investigation and confirms that UN-Women promptly implemented all recommended protective measured; the organization further notes that during the period of this report, the Ethics Advisor received 3 inquiries for advice under the policy.
23. UN Women remains committed to continue to work with the Ethics Advisor to raise awareness and encourage the use of these services.

IV. The Ethics Panel of the United Nations and the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations

24. UN-Women shares the Ethics Advisor's view that collaboration with other ethics functions, including sharing best practices and promoting coherent standards, is crucial to enhancing ethical conduct, transparency, and accountability at UN-Women.
25. UN-Women is pleased that the Ethics Advisor was accepted as member of the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations (ENMO) and encourages her active participation in ENMO as well as the continuation thereof in the EPUN.

V. Conclusion

26. UN-Women appreciates the advice and guidance provided by the Ethics Advisor in the 3 months since her arrival and is looking forward to her key contributions to the fostering and nurturing of a culture of ethics, integrity, and accountability.
27. UN-Women recognizes the importance of the Ethics Advisor's work to continue strengthening the ethical culture, to which UN-Women remains fully committed as a fundamental organizational priority. This is exemplified by the inclusion of the principles of "Principled Performance" and "Empowered People" in UN-Women's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, so that the promotion of an ethical workplace with shared principles forms a key pillar of the organization's high impact business model for achieving gender equality. To operationalize and champion this priority, UN-Women undertook key actions, which include *inter alia*: the development of an inclusive workplace strategy, the promotion of diversity and inclusion, capacity building workshops on the promotion of a respectful organizational culture. as well as the provision of mental health and well-being support for all personnel.

28. Moreover, UN-Women understands that senior leadership has a special responsibility to promote a robust culture of integrity and accountability. For this reason, UN-Women is proud to have launched leadership journeys to strengthen the capacity of our senior managers to foster and practice feminist leadership and is looking forward to rolling out the Leadership Dialogue on the topic “Personal use of social media: How is my online behaviour?” in partnership with the Ethics Advisor.
29. UN-Women remains fully committed to provide support to the Ethics Advisor in carrying out her functions independently and to maintain this fruitful collaboration.