

## **Executive Board Annual Session 2024**

### **Management Response to the Report on the Activities of the UN-Women Ethics Function for 1 July – 31 December 2023**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. UN-Women established its Ethics function in 2023, and through it seeks to work through the following strategic functions: (1) advice, (2) protection against retaliation, (3) financial disclosure, (4) ethics training, and (5) coherence of ethical standards. The function is both independent from UN-Women management, and seeks to execute its functions with impartiality, in order to support UN-Women to secure the highest standards of integrity of staff members.
2. The management welcomes the report on the Activities of the UN-Women Ethics Function for 1 July – 31 December 2023, and the important role the UN-Women Ethics Function plays in enabling and maintaining the work of the organisation.
3. UN-Women recognizes the critical role the ethics function plays in maintaining the integrity, credibility, and effectiveness of its operations across the globe.
4. UN-Women notes that the Ethics Advisor addressed a total of 193 service requests over the reporting period, with the majority involving ethics advice.
5. The management remains steadfast in its commitment to uphold and safeguard the independence of the ethics function.

#### **II. Activities**

##### ***A. Standard-setting and policy support***

6. The management values the focus of the Ethics Advisor's work during the period under review on strengthening our accountability framework. This included revising the Protection Against Retaliation for Reporting Misconduct and for Cooperating with Duly Authorized Audits or Investigations policy and formulating, in collaboration with the Human Resources Division, an Outside Activities Policy.
7. The organization stands ready to proactively support the implementation and the comprehensive dissemination of these policies.
8. The management further notes the Ethics Advisor's involvement in a number of efforts, including her contributions, in collaboration with the Human Resources Division, to the review of the International Civil Service Standards of Conduct, and her participation in the UN-Women Global Inclusion and Equity (GIE) Advisory Group.

***B. Training, outreach and awareness-raising***

9. UN-Women is pleased to announce that the Ethics Advisor obtained funding which will enable her to travel for outreach and training sessions at the regional level throughout 2024. Moreover, this funding will facilitate the recruitment of a temporary staff member for one year to support this function.
10. The management acknowledges the 78% compliance rate for the mandatory online ethics and integrity course and appreciates the efforts made to improve compliance, including the requirement for personnel to certify their completion of the course as part of the outside activities approval process. To further complement the online training, UN -Women also developed and conducted inter-active, scenario-based organisational culture and standards of conduct trainings.
11. UN-Women appreciates the Ethics Advisor’s support to rolling out the United Nations Leadership Dialogue on the important topic “Personal use of social media: How is my online behaviour?”.

***C. Confidential advice and guidance***

12. 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, as well as gifts, honours and awards.
13. Acknowledging that the largest number of advisory requests received pertained to engagement in outside activities in a personal capacity, the organization welcomes the promulgation of the Outside Activities policy and procedure.

***D. United Nations Financial Disclosure Programme (UNFDP)***

14. UN-Women notes that during the 2023 annual filing cycle, conducted from 1 March 2023 until 31 December 2023, 157 filers from UN-Women participated in the UNFDP, of which 2 possible conflicts of interests were identified and addressed.
15. The management is pleased that all UN-Women filers submitted their statements as required by the UNFDP.

***E. Protection Against Retaliation***

16. UN-Women appreciates the revision of the Protection Against Retaliation policy.
17. The management further takes note that in 2023 the Ethics Advisor received five requests for advice, one request for protection (without prima facie determination), and one case referred by the UN Ethics Office for investigation in 2022. The organization further acknowledges that upon receiving the investigation report from the Office of Internal Oversight Services at the end of 2023, the Ethics Advisor conducted an independent assessment, and a final determination was made that retaliation had not taken place.

### **III. The Ethics Panel of the United Nations and the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations**

18. UN-Women supports the Ethics Advisor's active engagement with the Ethics Panel of the United Nations (EPUN) and the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations (ENMO), aimed at exchanging best practices, advancing cohesive standards, and fostering collaborative efforts to enhance ethical standards and nurture a culture of integrity within the United Nations and multilateral organizations globally.

### **IV. Conclusion**

19. UN-Women values the ongoing efforts of the Ethics Advisor to reinforce our ethical culture, which forms an enduring priority that the organization remains fully dedicated to upholding. To enact and advance this priority, UN-Women undertook key actions, which include *inter alia*: the strengthening of leadership and team capacities, enhancing safeguarding and well-being, and fostering diversity and inclusion.
20. UN-Women management reiterates its commitment to offering full support to the Ethics Advisor in fulfilling her duties independently and to sustaining this fruitful collaboration.