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Management response to the report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2021

Summary

Pursuant to UNICEF Executive Board decision 2018/11, the present report provides a management response to the report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2021 ([E/ICEF/2022/15](#)).

The annual report covers each of the mandated areas of work for the Office: (a) standard-setting and policy support; (b) training, education and outreach; (c) confidential advice and guidance; (d) the Conflict of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme; (e) protection of staff against retaliation; and (f) participation in the Ethics Panel of the United Nations and the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations. In accordance with Executive Board decision 2014/12, the report also presents recommendations to management to strengthen the organizational culture of integrity and compliance. The report covers activities relating to UNICEF staff and services provided to UNICEF staff, as well as consultants and other non-staff personnel, as applicable.

Elements of a draft decision are included in section VIII.

* [E/ICEF/2022/9](#).



I. Overview

1. Management is pleased to deliver the management response to the report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2021 (E/ICEF/2022/15), pursuant to Executive Board decision 2018/11.
2. Management sincerely thanks the dedicated staff of the Ethics Office for another successful year in a challenging context. Although limited by staffing constraints, the Ethics Office operated effectively during the year with support from temporary contingent resources and in collaboration with other divisions.
3. Management also recognizes the leadership of the new Director, Ethics Office, under whom the Ethics Office fully executed its mandate and delivered record results in 2021.
4. Management takes note that the Ethics Office is functioning with a small staffing structure. As compared with the other United Nations agencies, the UNICEF Ethics Office is understaffed to provide support to an organization of 20,000 personnel in 190 locations. Management recognizes that this gap needs to be addressed as a matter of institutional priority.

II. Training, education and outreach

5. Management continues to value the mandatory and customized trainings offered to UNICEF staff, the annual Ethics Month campaign and the various outreach and communications materials produced by the Ethics Office. Management is very encouraged to learn that more than 6,400 personnel participated in outreach activities during Ethics Month. Management also values the strategic shift in training and outreach approaches from being reactive to more pre-planned and data-driven, targeting those in greatest need and at highest risk, complemented by offerings of curated, customized and tailored training for staff members with particular needs.
6. Management greatly values the strong focus of the Ethics Office on training, education and outreach, reaching more than 11,000 personnel through ethics training and awareness-raising activities supported by various teams across UNICEF and human resources focal points in country and regional offices. The collaboration with the Global Staff Association and other local staff association leadership is also appreciated.
7. The Ethics Office continued to raise its profile in terms of internal communications to UNICEF personnel around the globe. The Office maintained an internal social media presence via its intranet site and Yammer (the UNICEF internal equivalent of Twitter). In addition, the Office continued to roll out updates of the document “Addressing workplace issues in UNICEF: road map on where to go and when”, to provide personnel with information on different options to seek support or resolve issues, with due consideration to the nature of the available service or redress and the respective level of confidentiality.

III. Confidential advice and guidance

8. The Ethics Office received 1,020 requests for services in 2021, as compared with 555 in 2020, which indicates a high level of trust in the Ethics Office as a resource for advice and a “safe space” for speaking up and obtaining practical guidance and support. The Ethics Office also responded to 372 individual requests for confidential ethics advice.

9. Management appreciates the fact that the Ethics Office continued to respond to requests in a timely manner, meeting the seven-day response period set in the Office's standard operating procedure for 99 per cent of advice and guidance requests.

10. Management lauds the efforts of the Ethics Office to partner with the Organizational Culture team to significantly expand and strengthen the existing Ethics Dialogue Facilitator network. The renamed Ethics and Culture Champion role will be expanded to headquarters divisions and regional offices.

IV. Standard-setting and policy support

11. Management compliments the Ethics Office on collaborating with key stakeholders on ethics and integrity, including the cross-divisional Living Our Values working group to amplify messaging during Ethics Month and beyond. The Ethics Office also closely collaborated with the working group and the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations on the Spectrum Tool project, which is set for roll-out in 2022. The tool was designed to help personnel explore the spectrum of behaviours affecting workplace culture and serves as a useful resource to understand acceptable and unacceptable behaviours and various considerations to inform responses. The working group provides a strong platform for raising awareness and sparking staff engagement.

V. Conflict of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme

12. Management notes the continued implementation by the Ethics Office of the 2018 recommendations made by the external financial services provider KPMG on the Conflict of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme. A total of 1,677 staff members participated in the 2021 Financial Disclosure Cycle. The Ethics Office managed to complete the full cycle by 31 October 2021, with a 100 per cent compliance rate.

VI. Ethics Panel of the United Nations, Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations, Joint Inspection Unit reports and UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee

13. Management appreciates the outreach efforts of the Ethics Office, which participated in nine meetings of the Ethics Panel of the United Nations and collaborated with the ethics offices of other United Nations agencies on joint efforts and knowledge-sharing. These efforts included collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Secretariat, and with the ethics teams at the World Bank Group and CGIAR (formerly the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research).

VII. Observations, recommendations and conclusions

14. Management acknowledges that despite resource constraints, the Ethics Office had an impressive year. Augmenting the Office's limited budget and staffing would enable the Ethics Office to have an even greater potential to reach more staff members, more significantly impact the workplace, and execute strategic and new initiatives.

15. Management remains committed to continuing its strong collaboration with the Ethics Office to enhance the trust in and the credibility of UNICEF, both internally and externally.

VIII. Draft decision

The Executive Board

Takes note of the report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2021 ([E/ICEF/2022/15](#)) and its management response ([E/ICEF/2022/16](#)).
