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Management response to the report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2022

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 2022 ([E/ICEF/2023/16](#)).

The annual report covers each of the mandated areas of work for the Office: (a) standard-setting and policy support; (b) ethics training, outreach and awareness-raising; (c) confidential advice and guidance; (d) the UNICEF Conflict of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme; and (e) protection of staff against retaliation under the UNICEF Whistle-blower Protection Policy. The report additionally details the Office's participation and engagement with 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 continue fostering an ethical and values-based culture in UNICEF.

The report has been reviewed by members of the Ethics Panel of the United Nations, as envisaged in section 5.4 of the Secretary-General's bulletin on United Nations system-wide application of ethics: separately administered organs and programmes ([ST/SGB/2007/11](#)).

Elements of a draft decision are included in section VIII.

* [E/ICEF/2023/9](#).



I. Overview

1. Management is pleased to respond to the report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2022 (E/ICEF/2023/16), pursuant to Executive Board decision 2018/11. With the guiding principles of independence, impartiality and confidentiality, the Ethics Office helps UNICEF to prevent, mitigate and manage ethical, operational and reputational risks, thereby ensuring its status as a trusted and respected organization.
2. Management appreciates the work of the Ethics Office and continues to recognize and thank its dedicated staff for handling a large increase in the number of services provided in 2022 despite no increase to its staffing structure.
3. Management takes note of the views of the Executive Board, the Joint Inspection Unit and the Audit Advisory Committee, which encouraged UNICEF to strengthen the ethics function. In its response to the report of the Ethics Office for 2021, management had recognized that the Ethics Office was understaffed compared with other United Nations agencies and, as such, approved one additional senior post. Management will also review additional proposals for staffing from the Ethics Office in 2023.
4. Management commends the Ethics Office for achieving the biggest improvement in the overall workplace culture score in UNICEF in the 2022 Pulse Check.

II. Training, education and outreach

5. Management greatly values the Ethics Office's strong focus on training, education and outreach, as the Office reached more than 8,900 personnel in 2022.
6. Management appreciates the Ethics Office for launching the Introduction to Ethics at UNICEF training for 1,347 participants in 21 country offices and divisions. This included 87 face-to-face trainings for 3,900 UNICEF personnel, more than doubling its efforts from 41 face-to-face trainings in 2021.
7. Management also applauds the Ethics Office for coordinating and leading its sixth annual Ethics Month in October 2022, engaging more than 5,300 personnel throughout the month under the theme of Accountability in Action.

III. Advice and guidance

8. Management notes that the Ethics Office received and responded to 516 requests for advice and guidance in 2022, an increase of nearly 40 per cent from 2021. This reinforces the fact that management and UNICEF personnel see the Ethics Office as a trusted resource.
9. Management also notes and appreciates that the Ethics Office continues to strengthen collaboration and coordination related to the provision of ethics, culture and compliance advice with key internal partners – e.g., the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, Office of the Ombudsman, Division of Human Resources, Division of Global Communication and Advocacy, and the Office of the Executive Director's Culture and Diversity Team.

IV. Standard-setting and policy support

10. Management appreciates the commitment made by the Ethics Office to contribute to the review of the UNICEF accountability system.

11. Management also recognizes the work of the Ethics Office in contributing to the broader United Nations policy review efforts, including Joint Inspection Unit reviews of the accountability framework of the broader United Nations system, and measures and mechanisms for preventing and addressing racism and racial discrimination in the United Nations system.

12. Management also notes and appreciates the Ethics Office's contribution to the revision of the Standards of Conduct led by the International Civil Service Commission that is currently under review, in collaboration with the Division of Human Resources and the Ethics Panel of the United Nations.

V. Conflict of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme

13. Management appreciates the Ethics Office's continued implementation of the 2018 recommendations made by the external financial services provider KPMG on the Conflict of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme. A total of 1,630 staff members were registered in the 2022 programme cycle.

VI. Ethics Panel of the United Nations and the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations

14. Management encourages the Ethics Office to continue its collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, CGIAR (formerly the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research), the World Bank and other multilateral organizations by sharing best practices, scaling up initiatives, promoting efficiencies, and promoting coherent and harmonized standards within the United Nations system and aligning them with other multilateral organizations through the Ethics Panel of the United Nations and Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations.

VII. Observations, recommendations and conclusions

15. Management recognizes with gratitude the services provided by the Ethics Office in 2022 in playing a pivotal role in promoting an ethical and values-based culture at UNICEF. Management looks forward to continuing its collaboration with the Ethics Office as it embarks on its strategic priorities for 2023, which include: expanding and extending training, outreach and awareness-raising, strengthening the network of Ethics and Culture Champions, creating and delivering new training content, and reviewing and revising key policies.

VIII. Draft decision

The Executive Board

Takes note of the report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2022 (E/ICEF/2023/16) and its management response (E/ICEF/2023/17).