



UN-HABITAT

AGENDA ITEM 12:

Summary of the Annual Report of the Activities of the UN Ethics Office, (Report of the Secretary-General A/79/76, published 30 April 2024), and Summary of Ethics Activities Related to UN-Habitat in 2023 – 2024

Executive Board of UN-Habitat: Second session for year 2024

4-6 December 2024

Agenda Item 12: Annual Report of the UN Ethics Office, A/78/91

INTRODUCTION

- As part of the United Nations Secretariat, UN-Habitat implements its **ethics related functions** and activities with the support of the UN Ethics Office, which is mandated specifically for that function. The **Legal Unit** currently serves as the **focal point** for **all ethics related activities** at UN-Habitat and carries out these functions with the support of the Office of the Executive Director (OED), Human Resources Liaison Office and the Conduct and Discipline Focal Point who serves as UN-Habitat focal point for all conduct and discipline related matters.
- **The 2023 Annual Report, A/79/**, published on 30 April 2024, was submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly pursuant to General Assembly resolution **77/278**, “**Human Resources Management**,” in which the General Assembly took note of the recommendation for strengthening the Ethics Office independence and included it in its agenda of the 78th session as an item entitled: “**report on the activities of the Ethics Office**”.

Agenda Item 12: Annual Report of the UN Ethics Office, A/78/91

- ❑ This presentation summarizes below the **Annual Report** and highlights the **activities undertaken by UN-Habitat** as a UN Secretariat agency in implementing the policies and supporting the activities of the UN Ethics Office within UN-Habitat. **A copy of the report and its summary has already been shared.**
- ❑ For reference purposes, **section I** of the report sets out an *introduction*; **section II**, sets out the *background and functions of the Ethics Office*; **section III** provides *general information* on the Ethics Office; **section IV** details the *activities of the Ethics Office*; **section V** outlines the background and function of the *Ethics Panel of the United Nations and the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organisations*; and **section VI** sets out the *observations and conclusions* of the General Assembly to take note of the report.

Ethics/Conduct Related Cases/Complaints received by UN-Habitat from 2023/24

(i) **Ethics Related Requests Received by UN-Habitat:** For all requests received, the necessary advice was given and appropriate action taken in accordance with the relevant UN Regulations, Rules, Administrative Instructions applicable to the request. The table below shows a slight increase in the number of cases in 2023.

Date Reported	Type of Request	Action Taken	Status
13 August 2024	Abuse of authority, discrimination and harassment	Referred by OIOS to UN-Habitat for review. UN-Habitat conducted a preliminary assessment and prohibited conduct established. Investigation initiated by a panel of investigators from UNON and UN-Habitat.	Ongoing
8 August 2024	Unsatisfactory conduct involving corruption at UN organisations	Referred by OIOS to UN-Habitat for review. UN-Habitat is conducting a preliminary assessment.	Open
22 July 2024	Unsatisfactory Conduct	Referred by OIOS to UN-Habitat for review. UN-Habitat is conducting a preliminary assessment.	Open
7 July 2024	Abuse of authority and corruption	Referred by OIOS to UN-Habitat for review. UN-Habitat is conducting a preliminary assessment.	Ongoing
13 June 2024	Unsatisfactory Conduct	Referred by OIOS to UN-Habitat for review. UN-Habitat is conducting a preliminary assessment.	Open
22 July 2024	Unsatisfactory Conduct	Referred by OIOS to UN-Habitat for review. UN-Habitat conducted a preliminary assessment and prohibited conduct established. Investigation initiated.	Open

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Date Reported	Type of Request	Action Taken	Status
13 June 2024	Unsatisfactory conduct involving corruption at UN organisations	Referred by OIOS to UN-Habitat for review. UN-Habitat conducted a preliminary assessment. Investigation has been initiated.	Ongoing
17 May 2024	Unsatisfactory Conduct	Referred by OIOS to UN-Habitat for review. UN-Habitat conducted a preliminary assessment and is finalising its report.	Ongoing
6 May 2024	Abuse of authority, discrimination and harassment	Referred by OIOS to UN-Habitat for review . UN-Habitat conducted a preliminary assessment and is finalising its report.	Ongoing
19 March 2024	Unsatisfactory Conduct	Referred by OIOS to UN-Habitat for review. UN-Habitat conducted a preliminary assessment and awaiting feedback	Ongoing
9 May 2023	Damage to UN Property	Reviewed by the Special Service Unit and referred to UN-Habitat. The Conduct and Discipline Focal point referred matter to the Local Property Board (LPB) for final determination	Closed
4 September 2023	Loss of UN Property	Reviewed by the Special Service Unit and referred to UN-Habitat. The Conduct and Discipline Focal point referred matter to the Local Property Board (LPB) for final determination	Closed

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Date Reported	Type of Request	Action Taken	Status
17 August 2023	Unsatisfactory Conduct	Referred by OIOS to UN-Habitat for review. Panel consisting of UNON and UN-Habitat staff members with OIOS investigative training constituted to further review this case. Prohibited conduct established. Administrative measure issued. OIOS notified.	Closed
27 June 2023	Sexual exploitation and abuse	Report of SEA received by the Conduct and Discipline Focal point and referred to OIOS for further action.	Closed
23 May 2023	Unsatisfactory Conduct	Referred by OIOS to UN-Habitat for review. UN-Habitat conducted a preliminary assessment and staff member was cautioned. OIOS and UNON HR notified.	Closed
27 August 2023	Prohibited Conduct	Referred by OIOS to UN-Habitat for review. . UN-Habitat conducted a preliminary assessment and conducted an investigation. Prohibited conduct established. Subject of the complaint issued an administrative measure. OIOS and OHRM notified	Closed
23 May 2023	Unsatisfactory Conduct	Referred by OIOS to UN-Habitat for review. UN-Habitat conducted a preliminary assessment and staff member was cautioned.	Closed
25 April 2023	Unsatisfactory Conduct	Referred by OIOS to UN-Habitat for review. UN-Habitat conducted a preliminary assessment. Unsatisfactory conduct found.	Re-opened

Ethics Related Activities Undertaken by UN-Habitat (1 November 2023 –31 October 2024)

(i) The Ethics Related Activities by UN-Habitat

- Providing **timely advice and guidance** to management and staff on ethics issues (**30 – 35 requests**).
- Collaborating with the Conduct and Discipline and Sexual Exploitation Abuse **focal points** to ensure the proper handling of cases. The focal points have received **18 cases**.
- Promoting an **internal change process** through the **UN-Habitat Change process** aimed at transforming the organisation into an ethic compliant organisation ensuring the promotion of good conduct, dignity and civility (**workshops undertaken in November 2024** for management with the Ombudsman's Office).
- Establishing an enhanced **ethics framework** capable of dealing expeditiously with all ethics matters, (in consultation with UN Ethics Office).
- Ensuring compliance with all **mandatory ethics training** and **ethics leadership dialogues** training sessions.
 - Supporting the Executive Director in the exercise of her functions in achieving her Compact with the Secretary-General on Ethics.

(ii) Milestones of Ethics Related Activities in UN-Habitat

- Complainants informed of the process, protected and accorded due process in line with the United Nations system-wide reforms on handling of **retaliation complaints** in accordance with **ST/SGB/2017/1**.
- Assisted the Ethics Office in the coordination of **Financial Disclosure Programme**. For **2023, 35 staff members participated** and successfully submitted their disclosure statements to the Ethics Office to ensure compliance with their financial disclosure obligations.
- Enhancement of the **Executive Director's delegation of authority** to deal with unsatisfactory conduct. The ED can now issue **disciplinary sanctions such as ALWP** and other administrative measures without referral to OHRM. (**Implemented in one case in 2024**)
- Enhancement of **UN-Habitat's investigations capacity** to deal with complaints on unethical conduct. UN-Habitat has **5 investigators. 10 more investigators** are to be trained by OIOS in **February 2025**.
- Recruitment **screening**: HRSD guidelines, the Hiring Offices **MUST** ensure compliance with the disciplinary clearance from the Administrative Law Division must be performed prior hiring.

Ethics Related Key highlights for UN-Habitat 2023/24

(iv) Outreach, training and Education

- Virtual **one-on-one** meetings/consultations with the UN Ethics Office, on ethics and related policies, with UN-Habitat management and staff.
- Workshops **have been** undertaken by the Legal Office with the support of the Office of the Ombudsman and OIOS: **Civility**. Recently held for senior management on **28 November 2024** and others planned for **ALL personnel** in **2025**.
- Missions undertaken for its outposted offices in ROAf, ROAS and ROLAC to undertake **ethics/PSEA-SH related** training and outreach activities (Countries are: West African Hub in Dakar, Senegal, Kenya, Mozambique, Afghanistan, India, and others planned in the **first and second quarter of 2025**).

(v) Leadership Dialogues/Ethics

- **With the** support of the UN Ethics Office, UN-Habitat is conducted **leadership dialogue sessions**, on ethics related issues with a completion rate of **90%**. The topic for the 2023 dialogue session was: ***“Personal use of Social Media: How is my online behavior”*** UN-Habitat will undertake **additional outreach training** and awareness activities to ensure that personnel use social media responsibly in an era of misinformation and disinformation as well as information literacy .
- **PSEA Focal Point training** undertaken in the **first** and **second quarter of 2024** to **Brindisi, Nairobi, Geneva**.

CONCLUDING MESSAGES: RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED OUTCOMES

- ❑ With the support of the Office of the Executive Director, the Legal Unit and the Conduct and Discipline Focal Point, who also serves as the PSEA Focal Point, **continues** to handle all ethics related requests and queries. This is putting a strain on the Legal Unit in delivering its normal functions. Therefore, it is recommended, subject to availability of funds, for UN-Habitat to have an **independent ethics focal point** who will serve as a liaison with the UN Secretariat Ethics Office and the focal point for handling all ethics related requests within UN-Habitat. A similar recommendation was made in 2022 and 2023.
- ❑ In the recent published **MOPAN Assessment Report**, (**Performance at a Glance, UN-Habitat, December 2024**), its “**Areas for Improvement**” provides that **despite significant improvements, there are still shortcomings in oversight and accountability although internal control mechanisms and risk management procedures have been strengthened to some extent, important gaps remain in oversight and accountability, including formal internal systems, a dedicated budget for the handling of PSEA**. Based on this, it is recommended that UN-Habitat works closely its Executive Board to devise a **sustainable funding strategy** or **model** to bridge these gaps.

CONCLUDING MESSAGES: RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED OUTCOMES

- ❑ The Legal Unit plans to undertake further **outreach activities** with the UN Ethics Office and the Office of The Ombudsman to **raise awareness** of staff and other personnel on the **UN ethics framework, standards of conduct, policies** and **procedures** for **reporting fraud, sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse**, particularly for those in the field. These will be in the form of **workshops** and **one-to-one consultations**.
- ❑ Ensure a more **coherent system** of addressing **ethics related issues** and **complaints** and the need to align with the procedures in other UN agencies.
- ❑ Working with our partners, Member States, local governments, NGOs etc., to **raise awareness** and **promote the implementation of standards** and other ethics related measures, particularly during events such as **UN-Habitat's Assembly and Executive Board, World Urban Forum (WUF), World Habitat Day (WHD)**, etc. Plans underway to have banners and workshops during such events.

CONCLUDING MESSAGES: RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED OUTCOMES

- ❑ The roles of the **Conduct and Discipline** and **Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse focal points** need to be **enhanced** and **more resources allocated for it to adequately undertake its work.**
- ❑ We have undertaken several ethics training and leadership dialogues across the organization. These have been quite impressive with **90 to 95%** of staff participating. These include the following:
- ❑ 2024-Leadership Dialogue- Navigating Outside Activities which is currently ongoing with the ED having held her maiden session on 17 October 2024.

2023 Leadership Dialogue- “Personal use of Social Media: How is my online behaviour?”

2022 Leadership Dialogue — “*Living the UN Values: What this means in practice for each of us*”

2021 Leadership Dialogue — “*Accountability System in the United Nations Secretariat: how do we understand and make it work?*”;

2020 Leadership Dialogue — “*Acknowledging dignity through civility: How can I communicate for a more harmonious workplace?*”

2019 Leadership Dialogue — “*Conflicts of Interest: Why do they matter?*”;

2018 Leadership Dialogue — “*Speaking up: When does it become whistleblowing?*”

2017 Leadership Dialogue — “*Standards of conduct: What’s expected of me?*”;

2016 Leadership Dialogue — “*Fraud awareness and prevention: How do I fit in?*”

2015 Leadership Dialogue — “*Fulfilling our mission: Taking individual responsibility*”;

2014 Leadership Dialogue — “*Treating each other with respect and tolerance*”;

2013-12 Leadership Dialogue — “*What does it mean to be an international civil servant?*”

CONCLUDING MESSAGES: RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED OUTCOMES

- ❑ **Adequate funding** to be provided to establish an independent ethics focal point who will serve as a liaison with the UN Ethics Office and handle all ethics related requests within UN-Habitat.
- ❑ **Additional funding** to facilitate additional outreach on civility and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in other offices of UN-Habitat.
- ❑ The need to encourage partners to **comply** with the **UN Ethical framework** and **standards of conduct**. Our agreements particularly our Contribution Agreements and other legal instruments should make it clear that we will ensure that cases of unsatisfactory are fully investigated and addressed in a timely manner
- ❑ UN-Habitat needs to undertake additional **training** and **awareness raising** to sensitise **ALL** UN-Habitat personnel on **standards of behaviour** and particularly in furtherance of the Organisations **zero-tolerance policy** on **sexual exploitation and abuse** and **sexual harassment**.

Thank you!

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