
Mr. President,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Australia, Canada, France, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the USA and my own country, Germany.

We thank the Ethics Office for its indispensable contribution to promoting high standards of ethics, integrity and accountability in UNICEF.

The Ethics Office plays a vital role in delivering training to UNICEF staff in order to raise awareness regarding standards and values of UNICEF’s work. Furthermore, the Ethics Office received and worked on 321 requests for its services in 2016. The majority of these requests dealt with questions on ethics advice and guidance. We commend the Ethics Office for assisting staff and management by giving advice on how to deal with conflicts of interests or outside activities.

We welcome the successful collaboration with Ethics Offices of other United Nations entities and especially the planned collaborative launch of the online training on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in 2017.

However, with its limited resources the Ethics Office covers 12,000 UNICEF employees. Since 2015, we saw a significant increase in the number of requests for service. Therefore, we encourage UNICEF to continue its support to the Ethics Office and to regularly monitor if sufficient resources are being made available for its effective functioning.

The report flagged the absence of a standard procedure for the involvement of the Ethics Office in matters of standard-setting and policy-support. As the Ethics Office has the mandate to advise the management on rules, policies, procedures and practices of the organization, we would appreciate the elaboration of a comprehensible and transparent standard procedure for the involvement of the Ethics Office by the management for standard setting and policy support issues.

We ask UNICEF to address the issues raised in the present report and moreover to closely analyze and subsequently act on the upcoming results of the Global Staff Survey 2017. We expect UNICEF to strengthen staff training in relation to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and we expect UNICEF to be strongly engaged in UN-wide work in this field. UNICEF should furthermore pay particular attention to the evolution of staff perceptions of their ability to speak up.
A speak-up culture is critical for the health of an organization. The tone from the top needs to be clear and convincing by better communicating that retaliation for reporting misconduct is not acceptable and those found to have retaliated will be held accountable. By setting the right tone at the top, employees will feel more comfortable reporting misconduct without fear of retaliation. A speak-up culture allows the organization to address potentially harmful situations before they become systematic. A listening culture, as noted in the report, is equally important in nurturing a culture of ethics at UNICEF. We appreciate this observation by the Ethics Office and welcome information on steps taken by UNICEF to strengthen both of these components of ethics in future reports.

Thank you.