U.S. Statement on Ethics
As delivered by Ambassador Richard Erdman, Senior Advisor and Acting ECOSOC Ambassador, U.S. Mission to the UN
Agenda item 13, Reports of the Ethics Offices of UNDP, UNFPA, and UNOPS

June 1, 2015

Thank you, Mr. President. I am delivering this statement on behalf of Germany, Canada, Ireland and my own country, the United States. We appreciate the reports of the Ethics Offices of UNDP, UNFPA, and UNOPS, as well as the management responses, and will address each agency in turn.

With respect to UNDP, we thank the Ethics Office for its vital contributions to fostering a culture of ethics, integrity, and accountability in UNDP and we urge the office to continue to work with the management to take the necessary steps to ensure that culture takes root.

It is clear that despite resource constraints, the Ethics Office continues to develop innovative approaches to addressing challenges. Nonetheless, in order for the Office to continue to function effectively, particularly in response to ever-increasing demands for ethics training and counseling by the staff, it will require the allocation of sufficient resources. We urge the management to treat Ethics Office funding as a priority.

We welcome several new and continuing Ethics Office initiatives, including webinars and peer-training networks, the rollout of the new online ethics course, and the launch of the new ethics code. They aim to improve current practice to meet best practices through user-friendly and engaging designs relevant to the unique ethical context of the United Nations.

We commend the Ethics Office for its aggressive awareness campaign to promote and grow the ethical culture of UNDP. Encouraging managers to establish a speak-up culture is critical to setting the right tone at the top and making employees feel comfortable that they can report wrongdoing without fear of retaliation. The fact that 2014 saw a 28 percent increase in total requests made to the Ethics Office indicates that the awareness-raising efforts have been very successful.

We strongly encourage UNDP management to play a strong role in close partnership with the Ethics Office to foster a culture of ethics in UNDP. Implementing key Ethics Office recommendations, in particular the carryover
recommendations from 2013 and 2014, is critical. These relate to revisiting relevant legal and/or accountability frameworks and investigative guidelines in order to appropriately address allegations of such misconduct as harassment, discrimination, and abuse of authority. Addressing them would send a strong signal in this regard.

A related issue that merits urgent management attention is any perception by staff, expressed as “a recurring area of concern … that senior managers are not always held accountable for their conduct in the same way and to the same extent as other staff.”

We understand that management has taken steps to address these deficiencies. Given the serious nature of these matters, we would like to ask management to provide the Board with periodic progress updates on its actions.

**Turning to UNFPA,** we thank the Executive Director for his continued commitment to the work of the Ethics Office. We urge all UNFPA management to create work environments that promote ethical behavior and foster a culture of speaking-up without fear of retaliation.

We note that 2014 was a challenging year for the Ethics Office due to internal vacancies and transitions. Its ability to fulfill its mandated activities despite these challenges is a testament to its dedication and good work.

While we are pleased with the overall staff compliance rate with the financial disclosure policy, we encourage the Ethics Office to ensure that staff members fully understand the requirements of the program and provide all the necessary information and documentation.

We look forward to the rollout of the new online ethics course in 2015. We urge the Ethics Office to apply lessons learned and best practices to improve upon the current course and ensure that it is more user-friendly and relevant to the ethical-context unique to UNFPA.

**And last but not least, UNOPS.** We applaud the Ethics Office’s commitment to informing staff of the purpose, scope, and availability of protection against retaliation afforded to staff under the whistleblower protection policy. This is a critical step in preventing misconduct, promoting a culture of accountability, and encouraging staff to speak out against behavior that could place the organization at risk.
We are pleased to learn of the expanded scope of the 2014 survey on integrity, ethics, and anti-fraud. We expect that UNOPS and the Ethics Office will use the results to strengthen and improve ethics services.

We welcome the participation by the UNOPS Ethics Officer as the vice chair of the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations. Participation and coordination with inter-organizational ethics entities is important for ensuring consistent implementation and interpretation of best practices.

Finally, we urge the management of all three organizations to ensure that whistleblowers are protected from retaliation and that perpetrators of misconduct are held accountable for their actions.

Thank you very much.