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| **Council 2018 Geneva, 17-27 April 2018** |  |
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| **Agenda item: ADM 20** | **Document C18/52-E** |
| **8 February 2018** |
| **Original: English** |
| Report by the Secretary-General | |
| REPORT FROM THE ETHICS OFFICE | |

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| Summary  At the 2017 Session, Council requested that that the Ethics Office provide a report on its activities.[[1]](#footnote-1)  Action required  The Council is requested to **take note** of the Ethics Office 2017 Report.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  References  [C17/120(Rev. 1)](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-C-0120/en); [C17/50](https://www.itu.int/md/S17-CL-C-0050/en) |

1. **Report on Activities**
2. There were two key objectives for Ethics Office initiatives during this reporting period: (a) promoting an environment of ethical awareness across the organization; (b) enhancing the legal/administrative framework.[[2]](#footnote-2)
3. Specific activities aimed at each of these objectives are described below.
   1. ***Promoting an Environment of Ethical Awareness***
4. Ethics Survey: The Ethics Office conducted an organization-wide survey to gather information on staff awareness levels. The survey was promoted via a video message, whereby the Secretary-General along and other stakeholders explained why they consider ethics important. Enhancing familiarity with existing ethics-related policies was one of the areas for opportunity identified by the survey, particularly awareness on how to report potential misconduct.[[3]](#footnote-3) These results – along with inputs arising from **26 information-gathering meetings** with leaders, managers, and other key stakeholders across the organization – helped shape the priorities for the Ethics Office.
5. Team Awareness-raising Sessions: As the Ethics Officer position had been vacant,[[4]](#footnote-4) and in light of the survey results, the Ethics Office arranged a series of awareness-raising sessions with individual organizational units. The purpose was to: (a) explain the role of the Ethics Office; (b) underscore the importance of ethical obligations; and (c) draw particular attention to certain topics. Managers were encouraged to use the opportunity to emphasize their own commitment to upholding the highest standards of conduct.
6. As of 31 December 2017, the Ethics Office had conducted **28 sessions**, including two video conference sessions with regional offices.
7. Oath-Taking Ceremony for Newly-Recruited Staff: An oath-taking/declaration ceremony is an opportunity to express commitment and loyalty. The ITU Elected Officials deliver such an oath/declaration upon their election at the Plenipotentiary Conference. ITU appointed staff members have provided their oath/declaration by signing certain recruitment documents.
8. The Ethics Office arranged the first-ever oath-taking ceremony for a group of newly-recruited staff. During the ceremony, the four most senior appointed staff also re-affirmed their own oaths/declarations. A video of the ceremony was published on the Ethics Office intranet page.
9. One-on-One Induction Meetings with Newly-Recruited Staff: Given the importance of early awareness, the Ethics Office held **20 one-on-one induction sessions** for new fixed term staff.
10. Ethics Office Intranet Page: Establishing a channel to collect ethics-related materials and publish information for staff was a priority for the Ethics Office. The Ethics intranet page was launched shortly after arrival of the new Ethics Officer.The site – collecting ethics-related information, training materials and other resources – has been regularly updated.
11. Tailored-Training: Giving Voice to Values: A group of ITU staff participated in a half-day training focused on empowering individuals with strategies for values-based decision-making. Participants included individuals with certain key functional roles – i.e., Procurement, Human Resources, Internal Audit, and the ITU Mediators. In light of the very positive participant feedback, “Giving Voice to Values” training has been added to the 2018 ITU Learning Plan.
    1. ***Enhancing the enhancing the legal/administrative framework***
12. Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service (the “Standards”): The Standards provide a common foundation for ethics across the UN system.[[5]](#footnote-5) Based on the recommendation and documentation prepared by the Ethics Office, the Secretary-General promulgated the most recent version of the Standards. This also provided an opportunity for the Secretary-General to stress the organization’s commitment to a culture of ethics.
13. Ethics Office Guidance Notes: The Ethics Office issued two Guidance Notes, offering interpretative guidance on application of existing obligations to a particular set of circumstances. The topics covered were: (a) Ethical Aspects of Certain Campaign Activities Prior to the 2018 Plenipotentiary Conference;[[6]](#footnote-6) and (b) Gifts at Telecom World 2017.
14. New Provisions on Ethical Business Conduct in Contractual Templates for ITU Telecom World 2017: The Ethics Office worked with the Legal Affairs Unit to incorporate new provisions on ethical business conduct in the contractual templates for the ITU Telecom World 2017 event.
15. Ongoing Activities to Enhance Legal/Administrative Framework:
    * + *Draft Policy Against Fraud, Corruption and Other Proscribed Practices*: Working with other stakeholders, the Ethics Office had a primary role in drafting an anti-fraud policy, incorporating, definitions, explanations, fraud tolerance levels and reporting guidelines. The draft policy should be finalized during the course of 2018. Issuance of this policy will respond to several oversight recommendations. It will also address a key result from the staff survey on levels of awareness of how to report potential misconduct.
      + *Draft Service Order on Mandatory Ethics Training*: A draft Service Order on mandatory ethics training has been prepared. Once the relevant e-learning platform is in place, it is expected that during the course of 2018, the mandatory ethics training will be launched.
    1. ***Other Ethics Office Activities***
16. Advice and Guidance to Staff: When staff have the confidence to seek ethics advice, the organization is better placed to prevent problems from arising. To support staff in this regard, the Ethics Office has been established as an independent function and has committed itself to upholding the utmost standards of confidentiality.
17. Ethics Office records reflected **50 matters** on which staff sought individual advice and guidance from the Ethics Office. (Not included in this figure are the frequent exchanges or discussions whereby ethics advice is sought on a minor issue or in the context of broader group discussions.) The distribution by topic of these matters is reflected in Chart 2 below.

Chart 2. Advisory Support

1. Financial Disclosure Process:[[7]](#footnote-7) The Financial Disclosure Process enhances personal and institutional integrity by helping identify and address personal conflicts of interest.
2. The Ethics Office administered the Financial Disclosure process for 107 staff members. With some follow-up efforts by the Ethics Office, all eligible staff submitted their forms. The Ethics Office reviewed each submission, with **36 resulting in further consultation/guidance** and, where appropriate, specific advice from the Ethics Office on potential conflict of interest risks.
3. Policy on Protection Against Retaliation for Reporting Misconduct: The Ethics Office is assigned certain key responsibilities under the ITU Policy on Protection Against Retaliation for Reporting Misconduct (Service Order No. 11/04). The staff awareness survey suggested a need for increased familiarity with this policy. To help address this issue, during the team awareness-raising sessions (see above at paras. 4-5) the Ethics Office dedicated particular attention to explaining this policy and the importance of enabling an environment of reporting without fear of retaliation.
4. During this reporting period, there were no complaints of retaliation submitted under this policy. Once ITU issues an anti-fraud policy – which, among other things, will clarify reporting mechanisms – the Ethics Office expects that there will be improved awareness of the policy on protection against retaliation, and more broadly greater confidence in reporting concerns.
5. JIU System-Wide Reviews: The Ethics Office was ITU focal point for two system-wide reviews by the Joint Inspection Unit – namely: (a) the Review of whistle-blower policies and practices in the United Nations system organizations; and (b) the Review of mechanisms and policies addressing conflict of interest in the United Nations system. The results of these reviews will offer valuable inputs as ITU considers further enhancements to the existing framework.
6. UN system Coherence/Harmonization: The ITU Ethics Office is a member of the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations (ENMO). ENMO is a forum to exchange information and collaborate on issues of common interest and general applicability. The Ethics Office attended the ENMO Annual Meeting, and participated in monthly, in-person meetings of Geneva-based ENMO members.
7. Working with other internal stakeholders, the Ethics Office is contributing to efforts aimed at ensuring that ITU provides an enabling workplace environment that is free of harassment or any form of abuse. These efforts are taking place both at the inter-agency level – through the Chief Executives’ Board Taskforce on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the organizations of the UN system – and, within ITU, among a group of stakeholders. It is expected that, along with any measures adopted at a system-wide level, these discussions will result in changes to ITU policies as well as measures to further raise awareness.
8. **Observations**
9. The key observations arising from activities during this reporting period are:
   1. The ITU organizational culture has welcomed the re-establishment of the ethics function. This is demonstrated by the volume of requests for individual advice and ethics input on policies and other initiatives.[[8]](#footnote-8) As the role of the Ethics Office is further defined, it would be appropriate to reflect the mandate of the Ethics Office in a charter.
   2. The process for financial disclosure is an important tool for identifying potential conflicts of interest and helping staff resolve such issues. This process has not been significantly revised since it was originally established in 2011. In this regard, the Ethics Office expects that ITU will benefit from appropriate implementation of the system-wide recommendations issued in 2018 by the Joint Inspection Unit on this specific topic.

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1. C17/120(Rev. 1) at 28.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. These objectives were outlined during a presentation by the Ethics Office at the 2017 session of the Council Working Group on Financial and Human Resources. *See* Report by the Chairman of the Council Working Group on Financial and Human Resources at 15.1-3 (C17/50). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The Ethics Office presented key survey results during an ethics session at the Senior Management Retreat. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Ethics Officer position had been vacant since July 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The 2013 version of the Standards were approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 2013   
   (Resolution 67/257) but had not yet been promulgated as part of the ITU legal framework. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The content of these guidelines has been submitted to the Council for its consideration as [C18/5](https://www.itu.int/md/S18-CL-C-0005/en). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Under the Service Order No. 11/03, the Ethics Office administers the financial disclosure process and provides confidential guidance and advice to staff members on potential conflicts of interest, or a perception thereof. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. For example, the Ethics Office has contributed to: development of Sponsorship Guidelines; the Gender Taskforce; the internal working group on sexual harassment; the Secretariat Working Group on elaboration of the draft ITU Strategic Plan; development of the ITU Leadership Development Programme. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)