



Fact Sheet: Conflicts of Interest

What is a conflict of interest?

In the UN, a conflict of interest occurs when our private interests, such as outside relationships or financial assets, interfere—or appear to interfere—with the interests of the UN, making it difficult for us as staff to fulfil our UN duties impartially. Our professional decisions must be based solely on the UN's needs, and we have a duty to avoid even an appearance of a conflict between our personal interests and those of the UN. We are expected to arrange our private affairs so that we serve the interest of the UN ahead of any interest, including our own.

Conflict-of-interest situations do not necessarily imply corruption, wrongdoing, or inappropriate activities. However, if they are not identified and managed appropriately, such situations can compromise (or appear to compromise) our integrity as well as the values and integrity of the Organization.

What should we be aware of?

Each one of us can face ethical dilemmas entailing a conflict of interest. These dilemmas are often complex and difficult to identify. Below are some common areas where conflicts of interest can occur:

Independence and Impartiality

A fundamental obligation of international civil servants is to protect our status requiring independence and impartiality, responsible only to the UN. This status means staff, in the performance of our duties, may not seek or receive instructions or make representations on behalf of any Government, person, entity or cause external to the United Nations; nor may staff act in a way that could lead to actual or perceived preferential treatment for or against governments, individuals, groups or interests. Staff must always regulate their conduct in accordance with the interests of the UN.

Political Activities

Our participation in any political activity must be consistent with and may not reflect adversely upon the independence and impartiality required by our status. As international civil servants, we do not have the freedom that private persons have to take sides or to publicly express our convictions on controversial matters. (For more information, please see the [Fact Sheet on Outside Activities](#).)

Use of UN Assets, Property and Information

Each staff member is responsible for the appropriate use and protection of UN's property and assets. They include human, financial, and material resources such as facilities, equipment, supplies, information and time. All UN property and assets should be used with care for purposes directly related to official objectives and duties. Additionally, we must recall that all rights -- including title, copy and patent -- for any work performed by staff members as part of their official duties is vested in the UN.

We are prohibited from using our office or the knowledge gained from our official function for private gain, financial or otherwise, or for the private gain of any third party. We are also prohibited from using our office for personal reasons to prejudice the positions of those we do not favour. The term "office" further includes the Organization's name, symbol/flag, reputation, and resources: e.g., human, financial, material as well as time and information.

Personal Financial Interests

As UN staff members, we must avoid situations where we benefit personally or allow others to benefit from the decisions we make on behalf of the Organisation. This is especially important in matters related to financial interests. We must refrain from managing or holding financial interests in any enterprise if either the individual or the enterprise has the opportunity to benefit from our position with the UN. When faced with a possible financial conflict of interest, seek assistance from the Ethics Office.

Post-Employment Restrictions

For a period of one year following separation from service, former staff members who have participated in the procurement process for the Organization before separation from service are prohibited from seeking or



accepting employment with, or otherwise accepting any form of compensation or financial benefit from, any United Nations contractor or vendor and with whom such staff members have been personally involved in the procurement process during the last three years of UN service.

For a period of two years following separation from service, former staff members who have participated in the procurement process for the Organization before separation from service are prohibited from knowingly communicating with, or appearing before, any staff member or unit of the Organization on behalf of any third party on any particular matters that were under their official responsibility relating to the procurement process during the last three years of their service with the Organization.

In-service staff members participating in the procurement process are restricted from soliciting or accepting offers of future employment from any UN contractor or vendor. In the event such a promise or offer is received, the staff member is required to report the incident and recuse himself or herself from any further dealing with that contractor or vendor. Staff are encouraged to review the policy on post-employment restrictions ([ST/SGB/2006/15](#)) for a list of activities that constitute “participating in the procurement process”.

SEE ALSO [OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES](#) AND [THE GIFT POLICY](#) FACT SHEETS FOR CONFLICTS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM THESE AREAS.

Why should I consult the Ethics Office?

By consulting the Ethics Office prior to engaging in a restricted activity, you can avoid any uninformed or misinformed conduct through the clarification of relevant standards, rules, and procedures. Such action will assist you to identify and properly navigate conflict-of-interest situations and contribute to maintaining your own and the UN's integrity and reputation.

In accordance with Staff Regulations 1.2 (m) and (n) and Staff Rules 1.2 (q) and (r), when an actual or possible conflict of interest does arise, staff members should disclose the conflict to the head of entity who should resolve the matter in favour of the interests of the Organization. In exceptional circumstances, the USG/DMSPC has the authority to deal with a matter despite a conflict of interest pursuant to the policy on Delegation of Authority found in [ST/SGB/2019/2](#) (Annex IV).

Relevant documents

ST/SGB/2018/1	Staff regulation 1.2 (m, n)
ST/SGB/2018/1	Staff rule 1.2 (q)
ST/SGB/2016/9	Status, basic rights and duties of United Nations staff members
ST/SGB/2006/6	Financial disclosure and declaration of interest statements
ST/AI/2010/1	Reporting, Retaining and Disposing of Honours, Decorations, Favours, Gifts or Remuneration from Governmental and Non-Governmental Sources
ST/AI/2000/13	Outside activities
ST/IC/2006/30	Outside activities
ST/SGB/2006/15	Post Employment Restrictions
ST/SGB/2006/5	Acceptance of pro bono goods and services
ST/AI/2002/8	Official Hospitality
ST/AI/2017/1	Unsatisfactory conduct, investigations and the disciplinary process
ST/SGB/2007/6	Information sensitivity classification and handling

Ethics Helpline: +1 (917) 367-9858

E-mail: ethicsoffice@un.org

Intranet Site: <https://iseek.un.org/nyc/ethics-office>

Street Address: United Nations Ethics Office, 323 E. 44th St., DC2-0612, New York, NY 10017, USA