

# Leadership Dialogue 2020

**Acknowledging Dignity  
through Civility:  
How can I communicate  
for a more harmonious  
workplace?**

LEADER'S GUIDE AND MATERIALS

## Welcome to the United Nations Leadership Dialogue

Thank you for participating in the 2020 United Nations Leadership Dialogue. This annual event is an important opportunity for you and your colleagues to discuss topics with great meaning for our work, particularly as we mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations.

Each year, every senior leader conducts a guided Dialogue with their staff, who in turn lead their own direct reports in a similar discussion, until every United Nations staff member has participated in the Dialogue. The first such Dialogue in 2013 addressed what it means to be an international civil servant, while last year's exercise focused on the importance of maintaining public trust by mitigating risks that could arise from personal interests and circumstances.

This year, the Leadership Dialogue will be held under the theme, *Acknowledging Dignity through Civility: How can I communicate for a more harmonious workplace?* The principles of dignity and civility are essential to promoting a healthy, rewarding, vibrant and productive work environment. A key dimension of practicing civility is to create a respectful environment for providing constructive feedback and for challenging ideas, not people. This year's Dialogue is an opportunity to shift mindsets and to explore a new possible dynamic of workplace interactions.

Respectful and civil communications are all the more important during challenging times, such as those resulting from the current COVID-19 pandemic. I invite all United Nations personnel to actively participate in what I hope will be a rewarding undertaking.

**António Guterres**

Secretary-General

# Table of Contents

---

<b>I. GETTING STARTED</b> .....	<b>4</b>
HOW THE LEADERSHIP DIALOGUES WILL WORK THROUGHOUT THE UNITED NATIONS.....	6
PLANNING YOUR LEADERSHIP DIALOGUE SESSION .....	7
YOUR ROLE AS THE SESSION FACILITATOR .....	8
PRE-SESSION CHECKLIST .....	9
SESSION PLAN.....	10
POST-SESSION CHECKLIST .....	11
<b>II. INTRODUCTIONS</b> .....	<b>13</b>
OPENING ACTIVITY .....	14
<b>III. SCENARIO DISCUSSIONS</b> .....	<b>15</b>
INSTRUCTIONS .....	16
INTRODUCTION TO SCENARIOS .....	18
SCENARIO 1: DIFFERING TREATMENT .....	19
SCENARIO 2: TEAM TENSIONS .....	23
SCENARIO 3: UNWANTED FEEDBACK FROM A WELL-INTENTIONED COLLEAGUE? .....	26
<b>IV. CLOSING ACTIVITY</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>V. LEADERSHIP DIALOGUE APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>31</b>
APPENDIX A: LEADERSHIP DIALOGUE SIGN-IN SHEET .....	32
APPENDIX B: SESSION LEADER'S FEEDBACK FORM .....	33
APPENDIX C: RECORD OF FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANT DISCUSSIONS.....	35
APPENDIX D: HAND-OUTS.....	36
APPENDIX E: ROLL UP OF SESSION FEEDBACK FORMS .....	37
LEADERSHIP DIALOGUE CONTACT INFORMATION .....	39

# Getting Started

---

Welcome to the 2020 Leadership Dialogue.

We chose this year's topic, "Acknowledging Dignity through Civility: How can I communicate for a more harmonious workplace?" based on the Secretary-General's emphasis on our responsibility to create a more effective and harmonious work environment. This year's Leadership Dialogue is part of the Secretary-General's initiative on fostering civility at all levels within the UN. It continues the work done by the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services (UNOMS) on the same topic. As UNOMS assisted in creating the scenarios for this year's Leadership Dialogue, those of you who have participated in a "C3" workshop or attended a Civility Café may recognize some of the same themes.

We are fortunate to work for an Organization that has the concept of dignity enshrined in its foundational documents, such as the Preamble to the UN Charter, which reaffirms faith in the dignity and worth of the human person. [Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) declares, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." As we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations this year, we can also acknowledge the dignity and worth of our colleagues by consistently engaging in civil communication and behaviour.

The word "civility" comes from the Latin word "*civilis*," meaning "citizen." As international civil servants, we are "citizens" of the United Nations, part of a community of shared values. We each have a responsibility to communicate with our colleagues in a way that is civil and respectful of the dignity of our community and all its members. It is more challenging, and yet all the more essential, that we demonstrate respect and understanding in the workplace as we face additional stresses brought on by the various phases of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through its scenarios, this Dialogue will cover the following points:

1. Providing performance feedback in an appropriate tone and setting;
2. Preventing conflict in the workplace through civil communication;
3. Demonstrating that civility fosters dialogue that challenges ideas but not people, allowing staff to work more effectively in a harmonious environment; and
4. Avoiding negative impacts upon a colleague's dignity and the team's ability to work effectively because there is a lack of civil communication, with more scope for misunderstanding when communication moves online or is conducted remotely.

In consideration of your time and schedule, this Leader's Guide provides step-by-step instructions and specific materials for you to use. Managers should feel free to supplement and include personal examples and relevant situations from their own experience.

If you require additional support for this session, or wish to supplement these materials, please contact the Ethics Office at [ethicsoffice@un.org](mailto:ethicsoffice@un.org) for guidance.

A session leader's feedback form is included as Appendix B. Once your session has concluded, please fill it out and send it to your Executive or Administrative Office so that it can be forwarded to the Ethics Office. Your feedback will help us improve future Leadership Dialogue materials and select new topics.

In addition, substantive feedback from participants regarding the Leadership Dialogue is very important. Please record participant suggestions and feedback in the form (see Appendix C) and forward these to the Ethics Office.

Thank you,

**Elia Yi Armstrong**

Director,

United Nations Ethics Office

## How the Leadership Dialogues Will Work Throughout the United Nations

The discussion you are about to lead with your group is one of hundreds that will take place throughout the United Nations Secretariat. Here is the order in which it will work:

1. The Secretary-General will launch this year's dialogue.
2. Under-Secretaries-General will host dialogue sessions with their own direct reports.
3. Assistant-Secretaries-General will host dialogue sessions with their direct reports.
4. Directors and Chiefs will host dialogue sessions with their direct reports.
5. P-5s and P-4s who manage teams will host dialogue sessions with their direct reports, if their direct reports were not already included in the Director/Chief led discussions. And so on.
6. Our goal is for all international and national UN personnel globally, regardless of type and length of contract, to participate in a Leadership Dialogue session each year.

By the time you lead your own session, you should have already completed the session with your own manager. This way, you will have a sense of how the dialogue works, and you will have had an opportunity to think through the activities, topics of discussion and questions that may arise. **Please note that all managers are expected to complete their sessions by 30 November 2020.** Thus, if you have managers who report to you, schedule your session as soon as possible after your supervisor has completed his or her session with you, to ensure all managers in your department or mission complete their sessions on time.

All heads of department or office will be asked to certify by **31 December 2020** to the Secretary-General that all managers in their departments or office have completed their dialogue sessions.

**Special note on COVID-19:** At the time of preparing this Dialogue, the world was experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic. If you are holding this Dialogue at a time and place where COVID-19 measures, such as social distancing, are in place, we expect you to observe these measures and carry out the Dialogue through creative means such as video/audio teleconferencing through Microsoft Teams or through telephone call in areas with low bandwidth. To ensure accurate reporting, appoint a colleague to note down names of participants if the sessions are done remotely and sign-in sheets cannot be utilized.

## Planning your Leadership Dialogue session

We chose this year's topic, *"Acknowledging dignity through civility: How can I communicate for a more harmonious workplace?"* based on the emphasis that the Secretary-General has placed on creating a more harmonious and effective work environment. We are fortunate to work for an organization that has the concept of dignity enshrined in its foundational documents. Often, we use dignity as an external framework in guiding the work of the organization. In this year's Leadership Dialogue, we would like to propose that dignity be used as an internal framework that helps us organize our relationship with colleagues. If dignity refers to the inherent value and worth that all human beings possess, then the acknowledgment of dignity establishes a baseline beneath which none of us should fall. Civility, on the other hand, is a set of behaviours that allow us to consistently acknowledge the dignity of others.

With the goal of increasing understanding of why we should acknowledge dignity through the practice of civility, the Dialogue will cover the following topics

1. Recognizing dignity and implementing civility allow staff to engage in a robust battle of ideas without bruising the discussion participants.
2. "Dignity" as enshrined in the foundational documents of the UN also has a role to play in the way that the organization is managed and run.
3. Civility is the consistent acknowledgment of dignity in the workplace, even when we work under stressful and socially isolating conditions brought on by pandemics, armed conflicts, etc.
4. Acknowledging dignity through civility provides a framework for providing one another with more effective feedback to help us better understand the consequences of our actions, even when we engage in more e-communications, with greater scope for misunderstanding, during times of crises

The materials in this Guide are designed to be used in a single session with a group of 10 to 25 participants. If you have more than 25 participants, we recommend conducting two or more separate sessions. Be sure to appoint a colleague to note down names of participants if the sessions are done remotely and sign-in sheets cannot be utilized. The actual programme (without the introduction) is designed to take about one and a half hours, but you are free to use more time, as you deem necessary.

We are providing you with a PowerPoint presentation to view and follow along with participants in the Dialogue. As some of the topics can be difficult to discuss, we encourage you as the facilitator to create a setting where the participants feel at ease.

## **Your Role as the Session Facilitator**

This leadership dialogue is designed to encourage participants to share their ideas on the topic of “acknowledging dignity through civility” and how we can communicate for a more harmonious workplace.

You are the facilitator of the discussion. You will guide discussions, ask questions, encourage and engage participants. Participants often leave a dialogue session remembering points that they and their co-workers made much more vividly than those made by the facilitator. Remember that your role is not to lecture, but to guide the learning experience in a way that allows your team to arrive at important understandings on their own and raise questions with each other.

Discussions like these prompt further conversations afterwards and increase trust and understanding. Be prepared for one or more of your group to approach you to ask questions or report concerns. The scenarios you will work through with participants sometimes relate to difficult and sensitive topics; what is important is that we have open discussions, not that you have all the answers.

The overarching message we would like to emphasize to all participants in this year’s Leadership Dialogue is that acknowledging one another’s dignity through the practice of civility enhances the effectiveness of our work. It provides us with a framework for providing one another with more robust and effective feedback as well as a more harmonious workplace.

**Each of the discussion topics will give you an opportunity to encourage participants to speak up and to exchange ideas.**



## Pre-session checklist

To ensure that all participants complete the dialogue sessions by 30 November 2020, plan to lead the session no more than a few weeks after your supervisor has completed their session with you.

DATE	TASK
<p><b>1-2 weeks ahead</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read this guide and review the discussion topics.</li> <li>• Prepare an example from your own experience to discuss in the opening session.</li> <li>• Review the following:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; <a href="#">Preamble to the UN Charter</a></li> <li>&gt; <a href="#">Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service</a></li> <li>&gt; <a href="#">United Nations Competencies for the Future</a></li> <li>&gt; <a href="#">Staff Regulations 1.2(a)(b)</a></li> <li>&gt; <a href="#">Addressing discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority</a></li> <li>&gt; <a href="#">2019 Senior Managers Compacts, Section 2 (B)</a></li> <li>&gt; <a href="#">Promoting Dignity and Respect in the Workplace, HR Toolkit</a></li> <li>&gt; <a href="#">UNOMS iSeek Article: Just Words</a></li> <li>&gt; <a href="#">UNOMS iSeek Article: Productive Email Exchanges</a></li> <li>&gt; <a href="#">UNOMS Take 5 Cards</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Invite participants to the session.</li> <li>• Reserve the location and any equipment needed. Alternatively, in case of COVID-19 measures in place, prepare a suitable secure software link for a virtual meeting, consulting with your IT section if needed.</li> <li>• Consult your supervisor or the Ethics Office, if you have questions about the materials or the session.</li> </ul>
<p><b>1-3 days ahead</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send a reminder to participants about the date and time for the session.</li> <li>• Distribute <i>the Participant's Guide</i> to participants.</li> <li>• Confirm availability of the room and test any equipment needed for displaying the PowerPoint. In case of COVID-19 measures in place, test the link for the virtual meeting including the feasibility of using a PowerPoint presentation.</li> <li>• Print out the "Notes View" of the accompanying PowerPoint presentation, which contains the Leader's script.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Dialogue Day</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct the dialogue session with participants.</li> <li>• Appoint a colleague to note down names of participants if the sessions are done remotely and sign in sheets cannot be utilized.</li> <li>• Report the completion of your session to your Executive Office.</li> <li>• Forward a list of any questions you were not able to answer during the session to the Ethics Office for follow-up.</li> <li>• Send feedback to your Executive Office or Administrative Office, which will forward it to the Ethics Office.</li> </ul>

## Session plan

Follow the session plan as described in the table below:

SECTION	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS	TIME
<b>1) Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants sign in</li> <li>• Explain why the United Nations is conducting this dialogue</li> <li>• Review the session agenda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant sign-in sheet (OR a colleague may note names of virtual participants)</li> <li>• Opening Remarks</li> </ul>	5 minutes
<b>2) Opening Activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share a brief story about a situation you encountered, related to upholding dignity through civility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlights of personal story</li> </ul>	5 minutes
<b>3) Scenario Discussions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss any two of the three scenarios. You may use the PowerPoint provided</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two scenario discussions</li> </ul>	1 hour 10 minutes
<b>4) Conclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make closing comments and ask for last questions</li> <li>• Thank participants for attending</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closing remarks</li> <li>• Collect sign-in sheet (see Appendix A) OR list of names of virtual participants</li> </ul>	10 minutes

## **Post-session checklist**

### **ONCE THE SESSION IS COMPLETE, PLEASE DO THE FOLLOWING:**

#### **> Managers**

1. Collect and send the completed sign-in sheet (Appendix A, OR a compiled list of virtual participants) and leader's feedback form (Appendix B) to your Executive Office or other designated recipient.
2. Complete the record of feedback from participant discussions (Appendix C) and send it to the Ethics Office.
3. Send an email to the Ethics Office following up on any questions asked during the session you were unable to answer.

#### **> Executive Officers and Administrative Officers**

1. Once you have collected all sign-in sheets OR a compiled list and evaluation forms for your department or office, send a copy of the evaluation forms and the roll up form provided in Appendix E, respectively, to the Ethics Office.
2. You do not have to submit the sign-in sheets (Appendix A OR a compiled list) to the Ethics Office; they are for your own records. Instead, a total participant count at the conclusion of all of your department's or office's sessions (Appendix E) should be sent to the Ethics Office.
3. Send an email to the Ethics Office following up on any questions asked during the session you were unable to answer.

# **Leadership Dialogue Materials**

---

## Introduction

### TIME REQUIRED: 5 MINUTES

- As participants arrive, ask them to sign in using the form provided (see Appendix A) OR designate a colleague to compile a list of virtual participants.
  - Begin displaying the accompanying PowerPoint presentation, if possible.
  - At the scheduled time for the session to begin, welcome the participants, and thank them for attending.
- > **CLICK SLIDE 2 IN THE POWERPOINT PRESENTATION.**
- Explain the purpose of the session by reading or summarizing this opening script, which accompanies slide 2:

Welcome to the 2020 Leadership Dialogue. Acknowledging dignity through civility:  
How can I communicate for a more harmonious workplace?

> **ADVANCE TO SLIDE 3.**

Continue reading or summarizing the following script:

Civility is the consistent acknowledgment of dignity in the workplace. It provides a framework for providing one another with more effective feedback to help us better understand the consequences of our actions and communicate in a manner conducive to a more harmonious workplace.

> **ADVANCE TO SLIDE 4.**

Continue reading or summarizing the following script:

The Secretary-General has asked us to engage in a discussion about important ethical issues like this, once a year. So, please participate and ask questions.

One of the purposes of promoting dignity and civility is to promote frank dialogue. However, if you don't feel comfortable talking in front of others, please speak to me after this session.

➤ ADVANCE TO SLIDE 5.

Continue reading or summarizing the following script:

If you do not feel comfortable speaking to me, there are many others you can turn to such as the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services, the Staff Counsellor and the UN Ethics Office.

Another resource, published by the Ethics Office, is [The Roadmap](#). It is a guide for those seeking assistance and is available on the [Ethics Office](#) website.

You may wish to review:

- [Preamble to the UN Charter](#)
- [Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service](#)
- [United Nations Competencies for the Future](#) – Professionalism, Respect for Diversity, Leadership, Empowering Others, Building Trust
- [Staff Regulations 1.2\(a\)](#)
- [2019 Senior Managers Compacts, Section 2 \(B\)](#)
- [Promoting Dignity and Respect in the Workplace, HR Toolkit](#)
- [UNOMS iSeek Article: Just Words](#)
- [UNOMS iSeek Article : Productive Email Exchanges](#)
- [UNOMS Take 5 Cards](#)

➤ ADVANCE TO SLIDE 6.

Continue reading or summarizing the following script:

Our colleagues have developed materials to guide our discussion. My supervisor has conducted a similar session with me, so I am familiar with the materials. I think you will find them interesting.

Here is an overview of our session today:

1. We will have an initial discussion about civility using a personal example as a starting point.
2. Then we will discuss two out of the three scenarios provided. If there is time left, we can tackle the third one.
3. Finally, we will conclude with a summary of today's discussions.

Let's get started.

## Opening Activity

➤ ADVANCE TO SLIDE 7. **TIME REQUIREMENT: 5 MINUTES**

This part of the dialogue discussion consists of 5 steps:

1. **Recount a situation from your professional experience about a time you were faced with a situation where you were quite frustrated with someone but refrained from acting on that frustration. What happened?**

➤ Address the following questions:

- What were the details of the situation?
- How did you handle it?
- How did you refrain from acting on your frustration? Did you demonstrate other behaviours instead of acting on your frustration?
- Did you address your concern immediately or have you let some time pass before addressing this concern?
- What factors did you consider?
- What were the consequences of your actions? Were you able to convey why you were frustrated to the other person without acting on your frustration?
- Would you have done anything differently in hindsight?

2. **Ask participants to suggest what they would do if they found themselves facing a similar dilemma.**

What key factors are involved in acknowledging someone else's dignity? What factors often get in the way?

What guidance does the Organization provide to help in such situations?

➤ AFTER THE GROUP HAS DISCUSSED THESE QUESTIONS AND POINTS, ADVANCE TO SLIDE 8.

Read or paraphrase the following script:

**If dignity refers to the inherent value and worth that all human beings possess, then the acknowledgment of dignity establishes a baseline beneath which none of us should fall. Civility, on the other hand, is a set of behaviours that allow us to consistently acknowledge the dignity of others.**

Now, we will discuss today's specific scenarios, carefully considering how each of us has a role to play in acknowledging dignity through the practice of civility and communicating for a more harmonious workplace.

## Scenario Discussions

There are three scenarios to be discussed. Each scenario is designed so that it can be completed within 20 - 35 minutes. Choose two scenarios to discuss. If there is time left over, discuss the remaining one. For each scenario, guiding questions have been designed to address the dignity and civility issues present.

The purpose of this exercise is to have a meaningful dialogue with colleagues regarding acknowledging dignity through civility, not to cover all of the material in detail or to find the right answers. Indeed, while talking points are provided, there are no “perfect” answers to these topics. These are not easy issues for most people to discuss in a group setting.

We suggest the following approach when leading each discussion:

- Encourage peer learning or sharing by soliciting the opinions of participants.
- Be aware that some participants will be more comfortable than others when speaking in front of the group.
- Encourage the quieter members to participate by asking them to offer their views on the case being discussed.
- Emphasize the importance of each staff member’s role in acknowledging dignity through the practice of civility and seeking assistance when one is unsure.
- Should you find yourself unable to answer a particular question, admit to the group that you do not have the answer, note the question, and after the workshop is completed, promptly forward any unanswered questions to the Ethics Office.

Below is a list of questions to draw on to encourage open dialogue:

- What do you think about the situation?
- Has anyone faced a similar situation they would like to share with the group?
- How would you resolve the situation?
- Who would you turn to for assistance if unsure?
- If you were unclear on handling this situation, where could you go for help?
- What are things that you have done that have proven to be effective?

The table below provides a brief synopsis of each of the discussion topics.

Discussion Topic	Key Issue	Suggested Allotted Time
<b>Scenario 1</b>	Differing Treatment	20 - 35 minutes
<b>Scenario 2</b>	Team Tensions	20 - 35 minutes
<b>Scenario 3</b>	Unwanted Feedback	20 - 35 minutes



## Instructions

You may project or share virtually the PowerPoint presentation as you lead the Dialogue. It serves to guide you and help your group follow along in the discussions. The Participant's Guide contains the discussion scenarios and resources and references related to each scenario. Follow the steps below:

- 3. Introduce the scenario:** Each scenario includes a small introduction you can read or paraphrase to the group.
- 4. Read:** Display the discussion topic on PowerPoint and read aloud to participants or have someone read it aloud. You can also pass/send out a print version to participants.
- 5. Ask questions:** The scenarios have several questions. Ask a question and allow participants to discuss it fully before moving on to the next one.
- 6. Wait:** Give participants time to consider each question and potential answers. It can take several seconds for a person to hear a question and formulate an answer. Ask for volunteers to offer their thoughts. Encourage group members to share what they would do if faced with a similar situation of potentially violating a colleague's dignity.
- 7. Conclude:** Once you have discussed each of the questions, conclude by reviewing the key discussion points provided. If participants are still actively discussing, say, "Let's hear one more comment before we move forward." After discussing the individual topics, close with concluding remarks and thank everyone for their participation.

## Introduction to Scenarios

**TIME REQUIREMENT: 25 MINUTES**

For this activity, you will read and discuss a scenario with the group.

➤ **DISPLAY SLIDE 9 OF THE POWERPOINT.**

Read or paraphrase the following introduction to the scenario:

The two scenarios we will read today relate to the practice of civility in situations that can sometimes be difficult, sensitive or fraught with the risk of violating a colleague's dignity. If there is time left, we will discuss the third. Each scenario highlights different civility issues for us to identify and discuss.

Before we begin, let's review a working definition of civility. Civility, for the purposes of this Dialogue, is the consistent acknowledgment of dignity in the workplace. It provides a framework for providing one another with more effective feedback to help us better understand the consequences of our actions and contribute to a more harmonious workplace. Some factors that often arise when thinking about dignity, include but are not limited to: acceptance of identity, recognition, acknowledgement, inclusion, psychological safety, fairness and understanding (Hicks, D. (2011). *Dignity Its Essential Role in Resolving Conflict*. Yale University Press). If dignity refers to the inherent value and worth that all human beings possess, then the acknowledgment of dignity establishes a baseline beneath which none of should us fall. Civility, on the other hand, is a set of behaviours that allow us to consistently acknowledge the dignity of others. In this way, dignity and civility gives us the framework for providing one another with more robust and effective feedback.

It is worth pointing out that, as face-to-face communication plays a very important role in acknowledging the dignity of colleagues, modified communication methods such as those necessitated by telecommuting (e.g. video conferencing, emailing), including during periods of social isolation, require special attention so that they are executed in a manner that does not lead to a lack of civility in the workplace.

## Scenario 1: Differing Treatment

➤ ADVANCE TO SLIDE 10 OF THE POWERPOINT.

Read the following scenario or invite a participant to read it to the group. The Scenarios can also be found in the Participant's Guide.

Chikondi is a Director managing an office of 20 people. Within her office, there are two teams each headed by P5 unit leads Seung-hye and Ahmed. Each unit has eight members and the remaining four colleagues provide administrative support.

Every week, Chikondi posts an article on the office's Teams page, which is only accessible to the office's staff. She often uses this opportunity to highlight things that the teams have done well and on those that the team needs to improve. In last week's article, she praised Ahmed's team for its timely delivery of outputs while pointing out that Seung-hye's team was lagging in its delivery, without specifying on which outputs.

Earlier this week, at a general staff meeting, during the tour-de-table, when unit leads provide updates on their team's work, Chikondi interrupted Seung-hye's presentation on a programme she works on, to point out that the Executive Office had expressed concern that the programme was very expensive to run. She did not follow this comment up with any suggestions or requests, but asked Seung-hye to proceed with her presentation. Ahmed, making his presentation, reported that, despite an unprecedented upsurge in requests for his team's services, his team had managed to take the challenge head on and reduce request response rates. Chikondi asked everyone to clap their hands at this news.

Later that morning, four officers from a non-UN entity joined the meeting to give a briefing on the work that they do which was similar to the work carried out by Chikondi's office. After they shared their work and impressive data on a programme which resembled the one for which Seung-hye was responsible, Chikondi stepped in and went on a prolonged critique of Seung-hye's performance, personally blaming her for failing to deliver comparable outputs. The critique was backed by facts and evidence.

Chikondi, Syeng-hye and Ahmed also hold weekly leadership meetings which are aimed at sorting out administrative and managerial issues. Chikondi also meets the unit leads one-on-one from time to time to discuss any sensitive or performance issues. While Chikondi has never privately confronted Seung-hye about her performance before, at the last leadership meeting (the day after the general staff meeting), she criticized Seung-hye about what she perceived to be her lack of leadership skills, citing complaints she had just received from Seung-hye's team members that morning. She also praised Ahmed for his innovative spirit, making reference to certain initiatives that he and his team had introduced.

Later that day, Chikondi privately apologized to Seung-hye for her criticism, explaining that she got emotionally worked up with the complaints and failed to exercise patience to have a sit-down with Seung-hye. Chikondi calmly explained the complaints that she had received from the team and pointed out several specific areas where she felt that Seung-hye needed to improve, providing concrete suggestions for the same. Seung-hye however was defensive, accusing Chikondi of being unfair.

Seung-hye feels embarrassed by what she considers to be Chikondi's "constant attempts to publicly humiliate her". She has begun to suffer from anxiety and has resorted to taking sick days to avoid facing Chikondi and her colleagues. It has also been observed that staff members have been gossiping about the apparent difference in treatment that Chikondi has been showing between Seung-hye and Ahmed. Together, these factors appear to be negatively affecting Seung-hye's team's morale and delivery of outputs.

## Discussion Questions

Use the following questions to guide your discussion. Ask the group or draw on volunteers.

Discussion Question	Follow Up Questions	Important Points
<p><b>What is happening in this scenario?</b></p> <p><b>What are the relevant facts?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do we know the reasons why Chikondi acted as she did?</li> <li>What was the impact of Chikondi's feedback on at least some members of the team?</li> <li>How did the scenario potentially impact on the dignity of: Ahmed, Seung-hye, Chikondi?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We can only guess at people's intentions by observing their behaviour and the impact that their behaviour has on others.</li> <li>We should bear in mind that the way someone communicates may be interpreted differently from one person to another, from a manager's perspective and a staff member's perspective.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Civility as consistency</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has Chikondi behaved consistently? Why or Why not?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Consistent" in our civility definitions can refer to repeated examples over time (the feedback given during the different meetings and on Teams) or can also refer to applying the same behaviour to different individuals (the different feedback that Ahmed and Seung-hye received).</li> <li>Consistency does not imply providing equal but inaccurate feedback where there's a difference in performance. It will depend on the situation.</li> </ul>

Discussion Question	Follow Up Questions	Important Points
<b>Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was the type of feedback given to Seung-hye inappropriate? Why do you think people commented on the difference in feedback given to the two team leaders?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Context matters: feedback that might be easier to accept in bilateral settings may be more difficult to accept in group settings.</li> <li>Fairness. Because people are social beings, fairness often impacts on people's perception of dignity.</li> </ul>
<b>Addressing the situation: Who?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who has responsibility for addressing the situation?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chikondi created the situation that people have commented on and should take steps to address it once she is aware of the situation.</li> <li>We are all responsible for giving one another feedback to help us modify our behaviour in the future.</li> </ul>
<b>Addressing the situation: What?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the advantages and disadvantages of not addressing the situation?</li> <li>How should Chikondi address the situation?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One important take-away is that we will never be able to always avoid the perception of a dignity violation, but we do have control over how we react to those perceptions.</li> <li>Scenarios like this one could be excellent opportunities for staff to provide one another with feedback necessary to improve.</li> </ul>
<b>Receiving feedback</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was Seung-hye right to rebuff Chikondi's one-on-one feedback?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How feedback is received might impact how effective it will be in improving a staff member's performance. Feedback which is not perceived as an affront to a colleague's dignity is more likely to produce positive results.</li> <li>This notwithstanding, where accurate feedback is received, we have a duty to accept it.</li> <li>Complaining about a dignity violation and accepting legitimate feedback are not mutually exclusive concepts.</li> </ul>

## Key Messages

- **ONCE THE DISCUSSION IS COMPLETE, ADVANCE TO [SLIDE 11](#).**

Wrap up by reading or paraphrasing the key messages below.

- **Context matters: feedback that might be easier to accept in bilateral settings may be more difficult to accept in group settings. Regular one-on-one feedback matters.**
- **Fairness. Because people are social beings, fairness often impacts on people's perception of dignity especially in a multicultural context such as the United Nations.**
- **We are responsible for giving each other feedback, encouraging one another and recognizing the work of one another so that each of us delivers further and better.**
- **We will never be able to always avoid the perception of a dignity violation, but we do have control over how we react to those perceptions.**
- **Complaining about a dignity violation and accepting legitimate feedback from those who may have violated our dignity are not mutually exclusive concepts.**

## Reference materials

- [Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, Sections 16, 17, 18](#)
- [United Nations Competencies for the Future](#) – Professionalism, Respect for Diversity, Leadership, Empowering Others, Building Trust, Managing Performance
- [Staff Regulations 1.2\(a\)](#)
- [Addressing discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority](#)
- [2019 Senior Managers Compacts, Section 2 \(B\)](#)
- [ST/AI/2010/5, Performance Management and Development System](#), Sections 2.1(d), 5.4, 11.2

## Scenario 2: Team Tensions

➤ ADVANCE TO SLIDE 12 OF THE POWERPOINT.

Read the following scenario or invite a participant to read it to the group. The Scenarios can also be found in the Participant's Guide.

Juan, Bibek, Nema and Lupita all work in a team. Juan and Bibek are G-level national staff and have been working in the office for several years. Nema and Lupita are P-level international staff and transferred to the office from other UN assignments within the last three years. They all report to Janella.

The following behaviours have started to become commonplace:

- Lupita talks about Juan behind his back and openly speaks to others in the team about her dislike of Janella, saying that Janella works too slowly in the office and should retire soon.
- Juan does not welcome Nema and Lupita's constructive feedback on his work and often argues with Janella regarding the tasks assigned to him and the instructions given to him by her.
- Bibek often tells Nema that because she is relatively new to the office, she doesn't know how things work and she does not understand the mandate of the office. Bibek often uses Nema's age as a reason for discrediting her and her prior experience. He makes comments such as "when I drafted this SOP, Nema was probably still in school!"
- Bibek and Juan regularly have lunch and coffee together. In the cafeteria, they can often be heard speaking negatively of Janella and gossiping about Nema and Lupita. Other colleagues outside of the team often hear these comments but have not reported back to Janella or to anyone else.
- Face-to-face meetings are uncommon. Team members do not greet one another, and team discussions are also uncommon. Most interaction occurs through e-mail, even though the colleagues sit within steps of one another.
- Janella does not confront members of the team when she overhears them make negative comments about other team members or when they challenge her instructions or feedback.

The direct supervisor of Janella has sent her an email stating that her team has fallen behind on their deliverables for this work cycle and asking her if the team dynamics are contributing to delay in deliverables. In an e-mail reply, Janella notes that she does not believe staff need to like one another in order to achieve results; therefore, these behaviours are not the cause of the delay in producing the deliverables. She promises to "crack the whip" (the words she used in her email) in order to make up for the delay.

## Discussion Questions

Use the following questions to guide your discussion. Ask the group or draw on volunteers.

Discussion Question	Follow Up Questions	Important Points
<p><b>What is happening in this scenario?</b> <b>What are the relevant facts?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any concerns related to dignity that this scenario raises?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The absence of consistent greetings could be symptomatic of larger issues within the team. This could also fall within our definition of civility (the consistent acknowledgement of dignity).</li> <li>• Speaking negatively about someone behind their back can also be symptomatic of larger issues.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Addressing the situation: What?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is psychological safety an issue in this scenario?</li> <li>• What happens if Janella is wrong in her assessment that the team dynamics are not the cause of the delay?</li> <li>• What can Janella do to address the situation?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This scenario has indications that psychological safety might be an issue on the team.</li> <li>• Psychological safety can be defined as a state of mind where one feels free of concern about being shamed or humiliated and that they feel free to speak without fear of retribution.</li> <li>• Experiencing psychological safety at work means that you feel comfortable making yourself vulnerable in front of the people you see every day.</li> <li>• If Janella is wrong in her assessment, “cracking the whip” might have the opposite impact than she intended (especially if psychological safety is an issue).</li> </ul>



## Key Messages

- ONCE THE DISCUSSION IS COMPLETE, ADVANCE TO [SLIDE 13](#).

Wrap up by reading or paraphrasing the key messages below.

- **Absence of consistent greetings and speaking negatively about someone behind their back are affronts to civility that can also be symptomatic of larger issues.**
- **Psychological safety at work is important, so that colleagues feel comfortable making themselves vulnerable in front of the people they see every day.**
- **Where psychological safety is lacking, “cracking the whip” might lead to negative consequences.**
- **Supervisors should interact with their teams in a transparent and fair manner. It might help to organize a team retreat and/or have a box for anonymous suggestions to encourage colleagues to speak up and express their grievances, if any.**

## Reference materials

- [Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, Sections 16, 17, 18](#)
- [United Nations Competencies for the Future](#) – Integrity, Professionalism, Communication, Teamwork, Leadership, Building Trust, Judgment
- [Staff Regulations 1.2\(a\)\(b\)](#)
- [Addressing discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority](#)
- [2019 Senior Managers Compacts, Section 2 \(B\)](#)
- [Promoting Dignity and Respect in the Workplace, HR Toolkit, p.5 & 11](#)

### Scenario 3: Unwanted feedback from a well-intentioned colleague?

> ADVANCE TO SLIDE 14 OF THE POWERPOINT.

Read the following scenario or invite a participant to read it to the group. The Scenarios can also be found in the Participant's Guide.

\*

Elena is working for the UN at a duty station which has been the epicentre for a pandemic, resulting in telecommuting measures following a local “stay at home” order meant to curtail disease spread. She works hard and appears committed to improving herself and the work of the team on which she works. Her colleagues and supervisors have often commented that they can rely on her to meet deadlines with consistently good quality outputs. In video teleconferences, which have become her office’s main method of holding team meetings, she often provides her impressions to the rest of the team about how they can collectively improve their work processes while staying mentally healthy during the stressful pandemic.

In a recent staff team meeting, she provided feedback to her FRO, Ragip, about ways that he can improve his own work after he casually indicated to the team that he was not adapting well to remote work and the telecommuting way of life. Ragip, in his response to her, called her a “backseat driver” and then gave out a perceived “fake laugh” to dissipate the resulting tension. However, colleagues noticed that he had appeared edgy and offended when the teleconferencing camera was on him as he spoke these words. Unbeknownst to Elena, Ragip was having family problems and had been experiencing additional stress brought upon by the stay at home order, hence his issues with telecommuting.

Elena felt a bit taken aback by these comments, considering that her supervisor was normally cheerful before the telecommuting arrangements. She felt that she could not respond to such a public rebuke in a staff meeting, so she did not say anything further. However, she had felt somewhat offended and thought that it was an unnecessary rebuke at her attempts to help a colleague.

\*\*

During the following two weeks, Elena's performance began to decline compared to her usual efficient and collaborative manner. She often logged in late for work, missed deadlines and failed to respond to emails from the team in a timely manner. During video teleconferences, her video was usually switched off and she rarely responded to Team chats, which were introduced in an effort to enhance team communications.

During a performance review conducted remotely on video chat, Ragip, assuming that Elena's poor performance was due to an elevated sense of self-importance resulting in a lack of team spirit, tells her: "Your work is really starting to suffer. I am trying to be understanding, but we have a big deadline coming up and the team needs a staff member who is fully dedicated. If things don't improve immediately, I am going to have to put you on a Performance Improvement Plan." He hoped that his feedback would serve to motivate Elena to get back on track to her usual work standard. Ragip had tried his best not to appear hostile as he delivered this message to Elena so that she would know that he was simply executing his duties impartially as her supervisor but was remaining confident in her abilities. However, owing to poor network connection which affected the video and audio quality of the communication, all of the positive emotions intended, was lost in translation.

Consequently, Elena becomes unsure of what Ragip meant by "I am trying to be understanding" but she fails to ask him to elaborate or explain. Unbeknownst to Ragip, Elena had also been undergoing a difficult personal situation under the current circumstances. Her elderly mother who lives with her, had fallen ill approximately two weeks ago, and Elena is terrified that she might have become a victim of the pandemic which can be fatal for her mother's age group. Her time, energy and attention had been diverted searching for medical personnel to test her mother so she could obtain appropriate medical care, but tests for the illness, which is new, had not been available.

Offended by Ragip's feedback which she considers heartless under her current situation, she assumes that Ragip is "retaliating" for their interaction at the meeting two weeks ago. She complains against him to HR, accusing him of abuse of authority.

## Discussion Questions

Use the following questions to guide your discussion. Ask the group or draw on volunteers.

Discussion Question	Follow Up Questions	Important Points
<p><b>What is happening in this scenario?</b></p> <p><b>What are the relevant facts?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there any concerns related to dignity that this scenario raises?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both the feedback and the responses thereto suggest that there is a deeper issue related to communication.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Direct and indirect communication styles</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was Ragip's reply at the meeting effective? Why do you think that Elena saw it as a rebuke?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Often when we try to be indirect, that leaves open the possibility of misinterpretation.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is Elena's reply to Ragip's performance feedback appropriate?</li> <li>Was she right to make assumptions about Ragip's feedback? Was Ragip right to make assumptions about her performance?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making assumptions without seeking clarification equally exposes us to misinterpretation of colleagues' intentions.</li> <li>Failure to communicate pertinent information can mislead colleagues into providing us inaccurate feedback.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Making the implicit, explicit</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On both sides, is there something implicit in this interaction that needs to be made more explicit?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There seem to be some unresolved issues in this communication that need to be aired out.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Moving forward</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What would be the best way to have a conversation that brings out the more implicit topics in a way that feels safe to both parties?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use clear language in communication albeit courteously.</li> <li>Make your intentions and pertinent circumstances known to colleagues.</li> <li>When in doubt about a colleague's intention, ask to clarify.</li> <li>When using technology to communicate, extra care should be taken to make sure that our intentions are clearly communicated.</li> </ul>

## Key Messages

- **ONCE THE DISCUSSION IS COMPLETE, ADVANCE TO [SLIDE 15](#).**

Wrap up by reading or paraphrasing the key messages below.

- **Use clear language to communicate. When using technology to communicate, extra care should be taken to make sure that our intentions are clearly communicated.**
- **Indirect communication leaves open the possibility of misinterpretation.**
- **Making assumptions without seeking clarification exposes us to misinterpretation of colleagues' intentions – when in doubt, ask to clarify.**
- **Failure to communicate pertinent information can mislead colleagues into providing us inaccurate feedback.**

## Reference materials

- [Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, Sections 16, 17, 18](#)
- [United Nations Competencies for the Future](#) – Communication, Teamwork, Accountability, Managing Performance, Leadership, Building Trust, Judgment
- [Addressing discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority](#)
- [2019 Senior Managers Compacts, Section 2 \(B\)](#)
- [Promoting Dignity and Respect in the Workplace, HR Toolkit, p.5 & 11](#)

## Closing Activity

➤ AFTER CONCLUDING THE SCENARIOS, ADVANCE TO [SLIDE 16](#).

Read or paraphrase the following:

That was an excellent discussion. You made very interesting points.

Each of us plays a role in ensuring a harmonious and effective work environment by upholding each other's dignity through our practice of civility.

As we discussed today, one of the purposes of promoting dignity and civility is to promote frank dialogue but, if there is an issue you did not feel comfortable talking about in front of others, please speak to me after this session. If you are not comfortable speaking to me, there are a variety of other resources including the following:

- Ombudsman and Mediation Service
- Staff Counsellor
- Ethics Office
- Your supervisor

The Roadmap, published by the Ethics Office, is a guide for those seeking assistance. Feel free to consult the Ethics Office website for a copy.

Take suggestions and offer encouragement to share more ideas going forward.

## Concluding the Dialogue

➤ Thank participants for their willingness to engage in an important discussion.

Read or paraphrase the following final remarks:

Thank you for your participation today. I hope you found it useful. I appreciated your enthusiasm for the discussion and your ideas and comments.

Before we close the session, are there any final questions or comments?

Take any final questions. Do not be concerned if there are questions you cannot answer. Contact the United Nations Ethics Office for a definitive response and get back to the questioner.

Close the session.

# **Leadership Dialogue Appendices**

---

## Appendix A: Leadership Dialogue Sign-In Sheet

<b>Date of Session:</b>	
<b>Discussion Leader:</b>	
<b>Department:</b>	
<b>Office/Mission:</b>	

- |     |     |
|-----|-----|
| 1.  | 14. |
| 2.  | 15. |
| 3.  | 16. |
| 4.  | 17. |
| 5.  | 18. |
| 6.  | 19. |
| 7.  | 20. |
| 8.  | 21. |
| 9.  | 22. |
| 10. | 23. |
| 11. | 24. |
| 12. | 25. |
| 13. |     |



## Appendix B: Session Leader's Feedback Form

We value your feedback!

Please complete this evaluation form and return it to your Executive Office or Administrative Office. You can send the form from your printed guide or cut and paste the form from the online version of this guide and email it as an electronic document. Feel free to provide additional comments and questions in addition to this form.

<b>Date of Session:</b>	
<b>Discussion Leader:</b>	
<b>Department:</b>	
<b>Office/Mission:</b>	
<b>Number of Participants in Session:</b>	

Please evaluate the Leadership Dialogue materials and your session. Indicate your responses by circling the number representing a low, medium, or high rating.

<b>Leader's Guide Overall</b>	<b>Low</b>					<b>High</b>
<b>Quality of Content</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	
<b>Ease of Use</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	

**Which discussion topics did you use?    1    2    3**

<b>Discussion Topics Used</b>	<b>Low</b>					<b>High</b>
<b>Quality of Content</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	
<b>Ease of Use</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	

**Please provide feedback in your own words to the following questions:**

1. What went well during your session?
2. What did not go well during your session?
3. Were there any questions or issues that you could not answer during the session?
4. What changes would you recommend for future Leadership Dialogues?
5. What topics would you recommend for future Leadership Dialogues?

## **Appendix C: Record of feedback from participant discussions**

Further actions that could be implemented to minimise the specific risks related to the discussion topics.

## **Appendix D: Hand-outs**

- [Preamble to the UN Charter](#)
- [Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service](#)
- [United Nations Competencies for the Future](#)
- [Staff Regulations 1.2\(a\)\(b\)](#)
- [2019 Senior Managers Compacts, Section 2 \(B\)](#)
- [Promoting Dignity and Respect in the Workplace, HR Toolkit](#)
- [UNOMS iSeek Article: Just Words](#)
- [UNOMS iSeek Article : Productive Email Exchanges](#)
- [UNOMS Take 5 Cards](#)

## Appendix E: Roll up of Session Feedback Forms

**THIS IS TO BE COMPLETED BY THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE OR ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE.**

Please complete this summary form and send it to your Executive Office. This form has been designed to assist the Executive Office or Administrative Office in compiling and summarizing all of the feedback forms from the various Leadership Dialogue sessions conducted in your organization.

You can send this form from your printed guide or cut and paste the form from the online version of this guide and email it as an electronic document. Feel free to provide additional comments and questions in addition to this form.

All Entities: Please compile overall statistics for your entity and send it to the Ethics Office.

<b>Leadership Dialogue 2020 – (Name of Department)</b>				
<b>No.</b>	<b>Name of Unit</b>	<b>Total Personnel in Unit/Section</b>	<b>Total Number Completed</b>	<b>Percent of personnel completed</b>
<b>1</b>				
<b>2</b>				
<b>3</b>				
<b>4</b>				
<b>5</b>				
<b>6</b>				
<b>7</b>				
<b>8</b>				
<b>9</b>				
<b>10</b>				

<b>11</b>				
<b>12</b>				
<b>13</b>				
<b>14</b>				
<b>15</b>				
<b>16</b>				
<b>17</b>				
<b>18</b>				
<b>19</b>				
<b>20</b>				
	<b>TOTAL</b>			

## **Leadership Dialogue Contact Information**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, OR TO COMMENT, CONTACT:**

**United Nations Ethics Office**

[www.un.org/en/ethics](http://www.un.org/en/ethics)

(Available via iSeek or the public United Nations site)

Email: [ethicsoffice@un.org](mailto:ethicsoffice@un.org)

Phone +1-917-367-9858

Fax +1-917-367-9861

---

Also, please consult these resources, available on our website:

[\*Putting Ethics to Work: A Guide for UN Staff\*](#)

[\*The Roadmap: A Staff Member's Guide to Finding the Right Place\*](#)