



Fact Sheet: Outside Activities

Outside activities

Outside activities are, by definition, not part of your official duties or functions. Consequently, a staff member engaged in an outside activity is not acting as a UN representative. These activities are undertaken in your personal capacity, on your own time and at your own expense. Since outside activities have the potential to call into question your independence and impartiality and/or create a conflict-of-interest situation and/or reflect adversely on the Organization, they may require prior approval or clarification. Some can be engaged in at your discretion.

Prior approval required for the following three types of outside activities:

Failure to obtain prior approval could result in disciplinary action.

1. **Outside employment or occupation**

Employment (whether paid or unpaid) is a contractual relationship pursuant to which one party is providing work and skill at the control and direction of another. The notion of occupation includes the practice of a profession (whether as an employee or an independent contractor). Self-employment or freelance work, ownership of an entity that involves a leadership or management role or undertaking such roles for a non-United Nations entity are also covered by the notion of “occupation” and “employment”. **Renting** out immovable or movable properties may constitute an occupation, depending on factors such as the number of properties and the income derived. When approval is granted, it shall be for not more than 12 months at a time.

RESTRICTIONS

2. **Activities related to the United Nations**

Activities that relate to the purpose, activities or interests of the United Nations and undertaken in a personal capacity fall within this category. They include, among other activities, publishing, public speaking or participating in public events on issues relating to the United Nations.

3. **Sitting on any board, panel, committee, expert group or similar body**

Participation requires prior approval whether the entity is for-profit, non-profit or affiliated with national authorities and whether the entity is related or unrelated to the work of the UN.

Clarification may be needed for the following outside activities:

Political activities

Any political activity must be consistent with, and not reflect adversely upon, the independence and impartiality required by your status as an international civil servant.

Permitted: Voting; belonging to a political party (provided its prevailing views and obligations on members are consistent with the UN oath of office); making normal financial contributions to a political party; discussing political views privately; and participating in local community activities or peaceful civic engagements. Permissible individual political activities should only occur during off-duty hours, strictly in a personal capacity and without the use of the Organization’s name, resources, facilities or equipment. At the same time, staff members must



observe all local laws and orders and comply with UN issued public health and security directives for the duty station concerned.

Not permitted: Standing as a candidate (including announcing candidacy) or holding any public office; accepting or soliciting funds for a political campaign or party; engaging in any illegal activity, direct or indirect, to undermine or overthrow a government; representing a government; publicly criticizing or trying to discredit a government; writing articles or making public speeches or statements to the press concerning a political campaign or party without having obtained permission in accordance with the Staff Regulations and Rules.

Requiring good judgment as well as tact and discretion: While we may have political views, our status as impartial international civil servants never ceases while in service; therefore, the expression of a particular political opinion or an opinion about a particularly sensitive political matter in public may not be compatible with our status. We must always exercise discretion and good judgment, including when expressing our opinions on social media and when “liking” or re-tweeting other posts. When exercising such judgment, the question should be whether engaging in such political activity is consistent with, and does not reflect adversely upon, the independence and impartiality required by our status as international civil servants.

Local community or civic activities

Participating in local community activities or peaceful civic engagements can be permissible provided that such participation is consistent with your independence and impartiality required by your status as an international civil servant. You are encouraged to seek clarification and/or guidance when in doubt.

Your own discretion may be exercised to engage in the following outside activities:

External studies

External studies that take place outside working hours or while you are on leave may be engaged in at your own discretion. However, any ensuing academic research or publication that is related to the work of the UN may not use internal UN resources (e.g. inside information, UN officials, etc.) but publicly available information.

Social or charitable activities

Private, non-remunerated activities for social or charitable purposes which have no relation to your official functions or to the Organization and take place outside working hours or while you are on leave, may be engaged in at your discretion. You must, however, ensure that the activity is and remains compatible with your status as an international civil servant and does not call into question your independence and impartiality.



Approval

The decision to approve or not approve engagement in an outside activity is an **administrative action** taken by the head of entity, pursuant to the delegation of authority set out in ST/SGB/2019/2 (Annex IV) and any further sub-delegation by the head of entity. You should contact your local human resources partners for clarification on local approval procedures.



Any head of entity reporting to the Secretary-General wishing to engage in outside activities is required to write to the Chef de Cabinet, Executive Office of the Secretary-General, to obtain the Secretary-General's prior approval. Any ASG reporting to a USG head of entity should seek approval from the USG.

Approval granted for outside activities should be accompanied with conditions to be followed by the requesting staff members to avoid conflicts of interests and safeguard their independence and impartiality. Approving officials may consult with the Ethics Office to ensure appropriate restrictions are in place.

Clarification

Pursuant to Staff Rule 1.2 (v) staff **may** seek clarification from the Ethics Office on whether proposed outside activities would conflict with their status as international civil servants. The advice provided by the Ethics Office is confidential and from an ethics perspective. It cannot be part of the approval process nor is it an administrative decision. The Ethics Office does not have the authority to approve outside activities.

Advice and guidance given by the Ethics Office is confidential. We will review your activity and alert you to any associated ethical risks.

Helpful documents

ST/SGB/2018/1	Staff regulation 1.2
ST/SGB/2018/1	Staff rule 1.2
ST/SGB/2016/9	Status, basic rights and duties of United Nations staff members
ST/AI/2000/13	Outside activities
ST/IC/2006/30	Outside activities
ST/SGB/2006/15	Post Employment Restrictions

While the above regulations, rules and policies are applicable to United Nations interns pursuant to Section 6 of ST/AI/2020/1 on the United Nations internship programme, the same provisions do not necessarily apply to Officials other than Secretariat Officials and Experts on Mission as well as consultants; their activities are guided by ST/SGB/2002/9 and ST/AI/2013/4 respectively.

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