

STATEMENT TO THE FIFTH COMMITTEE
by Ms. Joan Dubinsky, Director, Ethics Office
Sixty-sixth session
Item 139: Human resources management
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Mr/Mme. Chairperson,
Distinguished Representatives,

I have the honour to present the Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Ethics Office, as contained in document A/66/319. This is the sixth annual report on the activities of the Ethics Office since the Office's establishment on 1 January 2006.

The Report responds to General Assembly resolution 60/254, which requested annual reporting on the activities of the Office and implementation of ethics policies.

Let me take this opportunity to highlight key aspects of this year's Report.

During the reporting period the Ethics Office recorded a 78 per cent increase in requests for its services, including but not limited to conflicts of interest advice, protection against retaliation, procurement-related advice, policy review, outreach and training. This increased level of consultation is of significant benefit to the Organization, as it serves to reduce the risk of inappropriate behaviour that could negatively impact upon the Organization's reputation.

The increase in demand for the Ethics Office's services may be attributed to a renewed focus on staff outreach. Specifically, during the prior 12 months, the Office conducted numerous field mission visits, during which it directly interacted with over 900 staff members. Additionally, the Office conducted 54 presentations to various UN offices, compared with eight during the 2009-2010 reporting cycle.

This year, we saw advances in the Ethics Office's implementation of the Organization's protection against retaliation policy. Interim protection was provided for two staff members pending the completion of independent retaliation investigations. Subsequent to those investigations, the Ethics Office determined that retaliation had occurred in one of the cases, and issued recommendations pertaining to corrective and disciplinary measures. An alternate investigating panel was also established for the first time to investigate two *prima facie* retaliation case determinations where, due to an inherent conflict of interest, OIOS could not have conducted those investigations.

These developments demonstrate that the Organisation's protection against retaliation policy remains robust, effective, and adequately resourced.

The final issue of note relates to a proposal for structural improvements to the UN Secretariat's financial disclosure programme (FDP) which is administered by the Ethics Office.

The proposal is made subsequent to a request of the General Assembly as contained in resolution 62/236, paragraph 1, which endorsed a recommendation from the ACABQ that the Secretary-General conduct an in-depth analysis of the relative advantages and disadvantages, including costs, of conducting the review services required under the FDP in-house as compared to the current outsourcing arrangements.

In September 2010 the Secretary-General convened an internal High-level Advisory Group to provide guidance on alternate future arrangements for the FDP. As part of its work, the Advisory Group examined how confidential financial information is currently reviewed under the programme, and considered the performance of the IT platform that supports the FDP.

Based on this assessment, the Secretary-General recommends that the programme's current arrangement under which financial disclosure statements are reviewed by an external vendor be maintained. This arrangement is considered effective in managing conflicts of interest, while protecting the confidentiality of disclosed information.

The Secretary-General further recommends that a new IT platform be created. The FDP's IT platform must be impenetrable to attacks in order to ensure both the stability of the programme and to protect confidentiality. A new platform would allow the UN to leverage modern technologies that would ensure long-term system viability and robust data security protection.

The total required funding for a new IT platform is US\$597,400, which would provide for the new system's design, development, integration, and implementation. Of this amount, one-third, or US\$199,100, would be met from funds received in reimbursement for services provided to various funds and programmes. In order to implement the Secretary-General's recommendation for a new robust FDP IT platform, the General Assembly is accordingly requested to appropriate the remaining amount of US\$398,300 under the programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013, as additional requirements besides those requested in the proposed programme budget for the next biennium.

I thank you for your kind attention, and remain at your disposal to answer any questions that you may have.