

UN Ethics Office
Statement by Ms Elia Yi Armstrong, Director,
before the Fifth Committee
4 March 2016

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Members of the Committee,

I have the honour to present the Report of the Secretary-General on the *Activities of the Ethics Office* from 1 August 2014 to 31 July 2015. I wish to highlight the key achievements during this time. They include responding to 980 requests for services, of which 533 were confidential ethics advice requests; managing the Financial Disclosure Programme, requiring review of 5,043 confidential disclosure statements; facilitating the Secretariat's second Leadership Dialogue on *Treating Each Other with Respect and Tolerance*; and conducting 15 preliminary reviews related to the UN's protection against retaliation policy as well as providing advice on related requests.

As an independent office, the UN Ethics Office continues to assist the Secretary-General to enhance the Organization's culture of ethics, transparency and accountability. The main initiatives include:

- the promotion of ethical "tone at the top" through induction briefings for and the Voluntary Public Financial Disclosure of senior officials;
- the administration of the annual Financial Disclosure exercise;
- the review of complaints of retaliation for protected activities such as reporting wrongdoing and cooperating with authorized audits and investigations;
- the offering of confidential ethics advice and guidance; and
- the provision of outreach, training and briefings with OHRM and other departments, including the launch of a new online mandatory ethics awareness training programme.

As mandated, the Ethics Office plays a key role in administering the annual Financial Disclosure Programme which aims to enhance public trust and protect the integrity and reputation of the Organization by preventing, detecting and managing personal conflicts of interest. Through doing so, the Office has contributed to ensuring that the discharge of UN staff duties is not influenced by personal interest or external affiliation. The Programme achieved a compliance rate of 100 per cent for the 2014 cycle. As reported previously, the Office completed an internal review of its regulatory framework in 2014 with recommendations to strengthen its governing policy and procedures. The Secretariat's inter-departmental working group, established in 2015, deliberates on areas for improvement. Recommendations will be submitted to the Secretary-General. For the Voluntary Public Financial Disclosure of senior officials, the Ethics Office continues to actively encourage senior officials who have not yet publicly disclosed a summary of their assets to do so in future cycles.

The Ethics Office continues its outreach, both face-to-face and by remote conferencing, to as many staff in as many locations and field missions as possible. Based on an analysis of our records, the Office sees a correlation between our outreach and increased use by staff of the confidential advisory services. Confidential ethics advice contributes significantly to preventing, mitigating, and managing ethical and reputational risks concerning staff and Organizational units. The annual Leadership Dialogues, where managers lead a discussion about a selected topic concerning ethics, demonstrates organizational commitment, cascading from the top. In collaboration with other concerned offices, the Ethics Office is developing the 2016 Leadership Dialogue discussion guide on fraud awareness and prevention. It should facilitate discussion on the different mechanisms to report allegations of misconduct to ensure that the reporting and advisory mechanisms relating to cases of alleged wrongdoing are clear to all United Nations staff.

The Ethics Office -- in collaboration with the Department of Management, the Office of Legal Affairs, and the Office of Internal Oversight Services -- has drafted a revised protection against retaliation policy proposal. Based on an external expert review, and reflecting developing best practice, the proposal seeks to refocus the policy on the reporting of misconduct harmful to the operations, governance, and interests of the United Nations, as well as provide for retaliation prevention.

In addition, ongoing collaboration among members of the Ethics Panel continues the coherent and consistent application of ethical standards among the Secretariat and the Funds and Programmes.

This Annual Report concludes with the role of the Office as an advocate for the values and principles enshrined in the Charter. By engaging directly with staff, management and other stakeholders on those values and promoting adherence to the highest standards of efficiency, competency and integrity, the Office plays a supportive role to the Secretary-General and Member States.

Finally, I wish to thank the Committee for its continuous support for the Ethics Office.

I look forward to answering any questions that you might have.

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