

**74<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly, Fifth Committee**  
**Agenda item 146: Administration of Justice at the United Nations**

Introductory Statement by Ms. Shireen Dodson, United Nations Ombudsman,  
on the report of the Secretary-General on the Activities of the Office  
of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services (A/74/171)

Distinguished Chair and Delegates,

It is my pleasure to appear today before the Committee to introduce the Report of the Secretary-General on the Activities of the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services (UNOMS) A/74/171.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you first for your continued support of, and advocacy for, the informal resolution of workplace disputes. It is my firm belief, that addressing conflict early before it festers, is the most sensible and cost-effective way to achieve a harmonious and productive work environment.

Since the ombudsman function was established in the UN Secretariat in 2002, UNOMS has been successful in developing a best practice approach by bringing together three key areas of conflict resolution: 1) confidential and impartial assistance to resolve workplace disputes; 2) identification of the root causes of conflict and systemic feedback to the Organization for improvement; and 3) awareness and building of conflict competence skills.

I am proud to say that many UN System organizations reach out to us as a standard-bearer as they seek to establish informal resolution mechanisms as part of internal good governance and accountability. For greater coordination at the UN System level, I have therefore, initiated a Network of ombudsmen and mediators of all member organizations of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).

Since I took up Office little over a year ago, I have taken several measures to maximize our ability to deliver quality services to our constituents: 1) strengthened ombudsman services including through the creation of a regional coordination function as well as a dedicated capacity to serve New York based staff; 2) re-positioned the mediation service with more focus on structured mediation and coordination with the formal system; and 3) increased the focus on systemic issue identification and feedback, taking into account structural changes under the management reform.

Now, let me turn to the report before you which describes activities and achievements during the period 1 January to 31 December 2018.

In 2018, the UNOMS team assisted in a total number of 3,577 cases, representing an increase of 10 per cent over the previous year. Out of all cases, 2,776 originated in the Secretariat,

539 cases in the funds and programmes and 262 cases in UNHCR. This figure also includes 65 mediation cases with a resolution rate of 83 per cent. Overall, I anticipate a further increase in the number of cases for the Secretariat in the next reporting year following the restructuring of the resident coordinator system which, beginning this year, moved under the Secretariat from the funds and programmes.

We continued to invest into building conflict competence skills for staff and managers. An estimated 440 outreach activities including skill-building workshops and presentations were carried out within the Secretariat globally.

With regards to systemic observations and trends, the top areas of concern in 2018 continued to center around evaluative relationships; job and career; and compensation and benefits. In addition, we have observed that in times of significant changes, a sense of uncertainty and insecurity may translate into poor behavior resulting in an increase in incivility which can cause significant disruptions in the workplace. In light of this and in support of the Secretary-General's initiative on civility, my Office has launched a civility campaign with a special focus on increasing awareness and promoting dignity through civility in the workplace.

Following, General Assembly resolution 73/726 (para 17) regarding the establishment, within existing resources, of a pilot project to offer access to informal dispute resolution to non-staff personnel, we handled 304 cases from non-staff personnel in 2018. This is an increase of 35 per cent compared to 2017 (225 cases). To absorb the additional volume, we have been distributing the caseload among our regional offices. Should the caseload continue to increase to the extent that it cannot be absorbed further, we will report back to the General Assembly with proposals on how to address this.

Distinguished Chair and Delegates,

The dedicated staff of the Organization continue to operate in some of the most challenging areas of the world where they are exposed to hardship, security threats, and risks to physical and psychological health and we need to do our part to provide the support they need to build resilience and to effectively do their job.

Allow me to thank you on their behalf for your support and dedication to providing a harmonious workplace.

I look forward to my engagement with you during this session.

Thank you, Distinguished Chair and Delegates.