



Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

By

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Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations

at the Sixth Committee

on the Agenda item 144:

"Administration of justice"

United Nations

New York

11 October 2023

– CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY –

Mr./Madam Chair,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries Montenegro*, Serbia*, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina*, the potential candidate country Georgia, as well as Monaco and San Marino align themselves with this statement.

Mr./Madam Chair,

We welcome the UN progress on reinforcing its current system of administration of justice. Despite these ongoing efforts, however, a gap between aspiration and reality persists, and several issues deserve further scrutiny.

First, with regard to **the formal administration of justice**, we highlight three points: (i) the challenge of case backlogs, (ii) the protection of witnesses and victims against retaliation, and (iii) possible amendments to the formal pillar of the administration of justice at the UN.

We welcome the reduction of the **backlog of cases** and encourage the UNDT, UNAT and the Office of Administration of Justice (‘the Council’) to continue on the path to overcoming this protracted challenge. In order to accelerate tackling the backlog, as underlined by the Internal Justice Council, there should be increased recourse to informal mediation services for administrative and labour disputes. To this extent, we see merits in the Council’s proposal for a pilot program to expand the use of judicial mediation within the formal system of administration of justice at the UN.

We commend the systematic reviews of the policy on **protecting parties and witnesses against retaliation**. Despite these ongoing efforts, however, the current system of victim assistance and witness protection requires further improvement, especially as regards privacy and confidentiality matters. We restate our proposal to the UNDT and UNAT to consider implementing a system whereby the Tribunals can grant anonymity to victims and witnesses if circumstances so require.

* Montenegro, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

We underline that the **Rules of Procedure and the Statutes of the UNDT and UNAT** are essential to ensure the independence and efficiency of the Tribunals. Any proposals for amending the formal pillar of the system of administration of justice at the UN must strengthen the cooperation between and functioning of both Tribunals.

As a final note on the formal system, we welcome the new Caselaw Portal and Electronic Digest for all judgments and continue to endorse all endeavors towards strengthening the transparency and accessibility of the system.

Second, in connection with **the informal administration of justice**, we point to the unequal access to mediation services of the Office of the UN Ombudsman and Mediation Services ('Office') for staff and non-staff personnel. Whilst awareness and utilization of **mediation** continue to increase progressively, it remains underutilized among non-staff personnel. We appreciate the continued efforts of the Office to promote and encourage the use of the 'informal first' approach at all levels of the UN. The informal pillar is an indispensable component of the internal system of administration of justice, which offers a cost- and time-effective alternative to protracted litigation. Furthermore, we highly value the continuation of the pilot project that extends access to informal dispute resolution services to non-staff personnel. Despite the noticeable increase of 60% of cases originating from non-staff personnel, the majority of requests for mediation still comes from staff personnel. Non-staff personnel are a critical part of the UN workforce, and, as such, they should benefit from continued access to the services of the Office on an equal basis to staff personnel. In order to successfully reduce this inequality, in line with the stance of the Secretary-General, we renew the call for regularizing the pilot project within the existing resources.

Third, with regard to **promoting dignity for all and eliminating instances of racism**, we welcome the efforts of the Office to foster conflict competence skills and prevention of conflict escalation by developing and conducting skill-building activities. The Dignity through Civility campaign and the dialogues on racism in the UN have proven effective in promoting understanding, empathy and respect among employees. We support the Office in its endeavours to maintain an ongoing and open dialogue with relevant stakeholders and to organize a series of thematic stakeholder conversations on, for example, retaliation, mental health, workplace behavior and discipline. We strongly support the efforts of the Secretary General and the Office to achieving a harmonious working environment free from discrimination and any form of racial harassment.

We also re-emphasize the value of multilingualism within the system of administration of justice. It contributes to effective, efficient and accessible dispute resolution whilst increasing outreach and awareness of the internal system of the administration of justice at the UN. We welcome the Office's continued emphasis on providing information on informal conflict resolution in the six official languages of the UN.

Finally, we emphasize that a gender perspective on the administration of justice at the UN is key to ensuring progress towards gender equality in access to justice for all.

I thank you.