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### United Nations Children's Fund

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### **Management response to the report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2018**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. The UNICEF Ethics Office was established in November 2007 based on the terms of reference laid out in the Secretary-General's bulletin on the United Nations system-wide application of ethics: separately administered organs and programmes ([ST/SGB/2007/11](#)). The Ethics Office cultivates and nurtures a culture of ethics, integrity and accountability, thereby enhancing the trust in and the credibility of the United Nations and UNICEF, both internally and externally.

2. Management is pleased to respond to the report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2018 ([E/ICEF/2019/18](#)), pursuant to Executive Board decision 2018/11. Management appreciates the leadership of the Ethics Office throughout the year in raising the awareness of staff regarding the values and expected standards of conduct and procedures, including training and outreach in over 50 offices to promote integrity, professionalism and the highest standards of ethics.

3. Management commends the Office on its creative approaches and initiatives, such as Ethics Leadership Month, held in October 2018, which consisted of coordinated activities throughout UNICEF. Such efforts promote the embodiment of the core values of care, respect, integrity, trust and accountability in the actions and decisions of UNICEF staff.

4. Management notes the valuable contributions of the Principal Adviser, Ethics, during the independent reviews commissioned by the UNICEF Executive Director to eradicate all forms of misconduct, exploitation, abuse and harassment, including sexual harassment, workplace harassment, abuse of authority and gender discrimination, as these are unacceptable breaches of fundamental human rights and a betrayal of the core UNICEF values of care, trust, integrity, respect for diversity and accountability. Management further notes with appreciation the increased efforts in outreach and awareness-building initiatives, including growing the ethics dialogue facilitators community to provide a safe space for dialogue and contribute towards fostering a "speak-up" culture.

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\* [E/ICEF/2019/9](#).



### **Training, education and outreach**

5. The Global Management Team appreciated the presentation made by the Principal Adviser, Ethics, in 2018. It provided insight into the challenges and opportunities encountered in promoting and modelling ethical behaviour as well as strengthening the organizational culture.

6. It is commendable that, in 2018, the Ethics Office was able to provide 53 group training sessions for ethics and awareness or training support as well as 30 individual trainings for managers and supervisors. In terms of training, the reach of the Ethics Office spanned 19 country offices, 16 headquarters divisions and six regional offices to a total of 2,786 staff members, with 1,510 participating in face-to-face sessions and 1,276 in remote sessions. It is evident that the use of technology to aid in communication has been an integral part of the communication strategy of the Office, which included four webinars accessible to staff worldwide. There was also a 117 per cent increase in customized face-to-face ethics training sessions.

## **II. Advice and guidance**

7. Management notes the 16.4 per cent increase in the number of overall requests for ethics services in 2018 (2018: 738 cases, 2017: 634 cases). Management also notes the 13.2 per cent increase in ethics advice requests from 2017 to 2018, with the majority (about 58 per cent) of requests coming from individual staff members or managers in country offices and notes the substantial increase in the number of Financial Disclosure Programme requests, from 69 in 2017 to 116 in 2018.

## **III. Standard-setting and policy support**

8. Management notes with appreciation the valuable advice provided in the reporting period to the Division of Financial and Administrative Management on the draft UNICEF anti-fraud strategy; input into the design of the 2018 Global Pulse Survey; input into the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on whistle-blower protection policies in the United Nations system; and comments on the draft UNICEF procedure for a child safeguarding framework and draft UNICEF personnel standards on child safeguarding. Management notes the Principal Adviser's engagement with the UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee by having provided a briefing on the activities of the Ethics Office.

9. Management also welcomed the consultation with the Ethics Office regarding the regulatory framework library documents, including inputs into policymaking and the process of re-engineering the library.

## **IV. Financial Disclosure Programme**

10. Management appreciates the guidance and technical support provided by the Ethics Office to different offices and divisions to facilitate the registration of staff members in accordance with the Executive Directive (CF/EXD/2012-003) that stipulates that all staff members at the D-1 level and above and any staff member whose responsibilities are identified in the policy are required to file a Financial Disclosure Statement. Management notes that a total of 2,160 staff members were reviewed as part of the 2018 Conflict of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme exercise, covering the reporting year ending 31 December 2017, resulting in a 99 per cent compliance rate. It was concluded that, of those participating, 95 per cent had no

conflict of interest. The remaining 5 percent of participating staff members were given guidance to avoid or mitigate conflicts of interest.

## **V. Protection of staff against retaliation and review of the UNICEF whistle-blower protection policy**

11. Management notes the increased number of request for ethics services in the realm of protection against retaliation, which doubled in 2018 from 6 to 12 requests. As the Ethics report highlights, the UNICEF policy on whistle-blower protection against retaliation was put into place in June 2018 and allowed, for the first time, the possibility to obtain, under certain conditions, ex ante preventive measures against retaliation. It also introduced changes in the policy abolishing the previous statutory limitation. Moreover, in April 2018, the Executive Directive on the prohibition of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority (CF/EXD/2012-007) was revised to remove time limits and allow anonymous reporting.

12. Management notes the importance of the ethics function's impartiality in reviewing complaints of retaliation and providing advice on measures for protection from retaliation. In addition, management is encouraged to learn that there has been an increased willingness to use the mechanism under the policy and that the Ethics Office has increased its outreach to further educate staff on the policy.

## **VI. Ethics Panel of the United Nations and the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations**

13. Management applauds the Principal Adviser's active participation in the Ethics Panel and the Ethics Network, which included bringing best practices to UNICEF; serving as Alternate Chair from October 2017 to October 2018; taking on the independent review of determinations by the United Nations Ethics Office; and participating in the yearly meeting of the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations, including holding the role of Vice-Chair of the Network from July 2017 to July 2018.

## **VII. Follow-up on 2017 observations and Executive Board decision 2018/11**

14. In response to the recommendation by the Ethics Office in its annual report for 2017, management is pleased to note that, in 2019, the annual 360-degree assessment is mandatory for all staff at the D-1 level and above, including all country office representatives, regardless of grade level. Recognizing the importance of ethical criteria in recruitment and promotion decisions, the Division of Human Resources is revising the competency framework and plans to include a component related to ethics in performance evaluations.

## **VIII. Observations, recommendations and conclusions**

15. Management notes with thanks the services provided by the Ethics Office and is fully committed to continuing to strengthen the values and principles set forth in its mandate.