I am honored to deliver the Management Response to the 2019 Annual Report of the Ethics Office. The independent Ethics Office is a key pillar of our Conflict Resolution System and an invaluable partner in UNICEF’s quest to transform our organizational culture to create a workplace environment where our personnel can thrive as they pursue our mission in support of children and young people everywhere.

Management congratulates the dedicated staff of the Ethics Office on yet another successful year. As evidenced by 788 requests for services in 2019 – a further increase compared to previous years – our staff very much appreciate the services of the Ethics Office.

Management greatly values the Ethics Office’s strong focus on training, education and outreach which yielded a total of 71 customized ethics training events, covering 19 country offices, 17 headquarters offices/divisions and six regional offices with a total of 2'823 staff participating in person or remotely. The third organization wide “Ethics Month” - dedicated to the value of integrity - was once again a resounding success, with more than 2'300 colleagues, representing 15% of personnel, participating in some form of ethics training or outreach activity during “Ethics Month”. The Ethics Office further extended its reach through continued roll-out of the Ethics Dialogue Facilitator train-the-trainer model.

Management appreciates the Ethics Office’s further strengthening of the Financial Disclosure Program by implementing the recommendations made in 2018 by KPMG and reviewing a total of 1’613 staff members, achieving 100% compliance.

Management notes that the Ethics Office received a total of 10 formal requests for protection under the whistleblower protection policy, 3 of which resulted in a prima facie finding of retaliation and referral to OIAI for full investigation. We are grateful to the Ethics Office for its critical role in ensuring that all staff can report misconduct without fear of retaliation through the whistleblower protection mechanism.

Management wishes to highlight the significant contribution of the Ethics Office to the response to the ITF report by placing particular focus on ethical awareness and behavior change, working in close collaboration with the newly created roles in the Office is the Executive Director. The Ethics Office also closely collaborated with the Human Resources function in the development of the new competency framework, which for the first time includes the competency of ‘ethical awareness’ as well as in the enhanced due diligence process for senior leadership recruitments.

Management is pleased to report that based on the findings of the ITF and subsequent recommendations by the Ethics Office, UNICEF has further strengthened the institutional independence of the Ethics Office in a number of important ways (1) establishment of a 5-year term, renewable once, (2) change of title to Director of Ethics, (3) establishment of the Ethics Office as a separate business unit with its own budget.

Management takes good note of the points raised by the Ethics Office regarding the issue of potential overlap and even competition between the newly created roles and units in the Office of the Executive Director on the one hand (ie Child Safeguarding, Protection from SEA, Organizational Culture) and the
independent offices on the other hand (ie OIAI, Ombuds, Ethics Office) and concerns expressed regarding different standards of confidentiality between the two. We look forward to working closely with the Ethics Office to clarify and resolve these matters.

Management looks forward to continued productive collaboration with the Ethics Office, particularly when it comes to the follow-up to the recently concluded Global Staff Survey. One of the topical areas of the Global Staff Survey is ‘Standard of Conduct’ and follow-up on these results will provide a further opportunity to deepen our close collaboration with the Ethics Office.