



## Economic and Social Council

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**For decision**

### United Nations Children's Fund

Executive Board

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Item 11 of the provisional agenda\*

### Management response to the report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2023

#### *Summary*

Pursuant to UNICEF Executive Board decision 2018/11, the present report provides a management response to the report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2023 ([E/ICEF/2024/18](#)).

The annual report covers each of the mandated areas of work for the Office: (a) standard-setting and policy support; (b) ethics training, outreach and awareness-raising; (c) confidential advice and guidance; (d) the UNICEF Conflict of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme; and (e) protection of staff against retaliation under the UNICEF Whistle-blower Protection Policy. The report additionally details the Office's participation and engagement with the Ethics Panel of the United Nations and the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations. In accordance with Executive Board decision 2014/12, the report also presents recommendations to management to continue fostering an ethical and values-based culture in UNICEF.

The report has been reviewed by members of the Ethics Panel of the United Nations, as envisaged in section 5.4 of the Secretary-General's bulletin on United Nations system-wide application of ethics: separately administered organs and programmes ([ST/SGB/2007/11](#)).

Elements of a decision for consideration by the Executive Board are provided in section VIII.

\* [E/ICEF/2024/10](#).



## I. Overview

1. Management is pleased to respond to the report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2023 (E/ICEF/2024/18), pursuant to Executive Board decision 2018/11. With the guiding principles of independence, impartiality and confidentiality, the Ethics Office helps UNICEF to prevent, mitigate and manage ethical, operational and reputational risks, thereby ensuring its status as a trusted and respected organization.
2. Management appreciates the work of the Ethics Office and continues to recognize and thank its dedicated staff for handling a large increase in the number of services provided in 2023.
3. Management takes note of the views of the Executive Board, the Joint Inspection Unit and the UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee, which have encouraged UNICEF to strengthen the ethics function. In its response to the report of the Ethics Office for 2021, management had recognized that the Ethics Office was understaffed compared with other United Nations agencies and, as such, approved one additional senior post in 2023. The Ethics Office recently completed recruitment of a senior adviser at the P-5 level, who is based in Istanbul and who joined the Office in March 2024. Management will also review additional proposals for staffing from the Ethics Office in 2024.
4. Management commends the Ethics Office for continuing to score among the top offices and divisions in UNICEF in the 2023 Pulse Check, and for being the only one to achieve 100 per cent in the overall workplace culture score.

## II. Training, education and outreach

5. Management greatly values the Ethics Office's strong focus on training, education and outreach, as the Office reached more than 8,600 personnel in 2023.
6. Notably, management values efforts by the Ethics Office to increase outreach and training, including by providing 62 new targeted trainings. Management also appreciates efforts by the Ethics and Culture Champions on the Voice and Speak Up initiative with support from the UNICEF Division of Human Resources. Other initiatives of note include a coordinated regional approach to outreach and training with the Latin America and Caribbean region and customized sessions with various groups, including the Women in Programme Group and employee resource groups.
7. Management appreciates the Ethics Office for delivering the "Introduction to Ethics at UNICEF" training to 983 participants in 19 country offices and divisions in 2023. This included 81 face-to-face trainings for 4,600 UNICEF personnel, exceeding the 3,900 personnel reached in 2022.
8. Management also applauds the Ethics Office for coordinating and leading its seventh annual Ethics Month in October 2023, engaging more than 6,000 personnel throughout the month under the core value of "trust".

## III. Advice and guidance

9. Management notes that the Ethics Office received and responded to 644 requests for advice and guidance in 2023, an increase of nearly 25 per cent from 2022. This reinforces that fact that management and UNICEF personnel see the Ethics Office as a trusted resource.
10. Management also notes and appreciates that the Ethics Office continues to strengthen collaboration and coordination related to the provision of ethics, culture

and compliance advice with key internal partners – for example, the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, the Office of the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes, the UNICEF Division of Human Resources, the UNICEF Division of Global Communication and Advocacy, and the Culture and Diversity team in the Office of the Executive Director of UNICEF.

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

11. Management appreciates the commitment made by the Ethics Office to contribute to the review of the UNICEF accountability system and policy development.

12. Management also recognizes the work of the Ethics Office in contributing to the broader United Nations policy review efforts, including Joint Inspection Unit reviews of the accountability framework of the broader United Nations system.

13. Management also notes and applauds the Ethics Office's contribution to the revision of the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service led by the International Civil Service Commission that is currently under review, in collaboration with the UNICEF Division of Human Resources and the Ethics Panel of the United Nations.

#### **V. Conflict of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme**

14. Management appreciates the Ethics Office's continued implementation of the 2018 recommendations made by the external financial services provider KPMG on the Conflict of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme. A total of 1,738 staff members were registered in the 2023 programme cycle.

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

15. Management encourages the Ethics Office to continue its collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Secretariat, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Office for Project Services, World Health Organization, World Food Programme, United Nations Relief and Works Agency, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, CGIAR (formerly the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research), World Bank and other multilateral organizations by sharing best practices, scaling up initiatives, promoting efficiencies, and promoting coherent and harmonized standards within the United Nations system and aligning them with other multilateral organizations through the Ethics Panel of the United Nations and Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations.

16. Management notes with gratitude the Ethics Office's contribution to assuming the Alternate Chair of the Ethics Panel of the United Nations in 2023.

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

17. Management recognizes the services provided by the Ethics Office in 2023 in playing a pivotal role in promoting an ethical and values-based culture at UNICEF. Management looks forward to continuing its collaboration with the Ethics Office as it embarks on its strategic priorities for 2024, which include: expanding and extending training, outreach and awareness-raising, deepening engagement for desired impact, exploring measures for early detection of ethical risks, continuing to

strengthen the network of Ethics and Culture Champions, creating and delivering new training content, and reviewing and revising key policies.

## **VIII. Draft decision**

*The Executive Board*

*Takes note* of the report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2023 ([E/ICEF/2024/18](#)) and its management response (E/ICEF/2024/19).

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