



Distribution: All personnel at Headquarters
and established offices

Staff Regulations: 1.3, 3.2, 11.2
Staff Rules: 111.02, 111.03

DIRECTOR GENERAL'S BULLETIN

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

Section I – Introduction

1. The purpose of the present bulletin is to promulgate the Organization's policy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (hereinafter "the policy"). The policy establishes the legal framework within UNIDO for protection from and prevention of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (SEA). SEA are human rights violations and a form of sexual and gender-based violence based on unequal gender relations and unequal power relations.
2. In line with the United Nations Secretary-General's Bulletin [ST/SGB/2003/13](#) on 'Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse', dated 9 October 2003, and as a commitment to support the system-wide implementation of the zero-tolerance policy, the Director General has decided to adopt the standards and provisions on the protection of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (PSEA) set by the Bulletin and adjusted as necessary.
3. Any form of sexual exploitation and abuse is prohibited at UNIDO. The Organization considers such acts as serious misconduct, which constitute grounds for disciplinary measures, including summary dismissal, and/or criminal prosecution by local authorities, as well as ineligibility for future recruitment in the United Nations system.
4. The Director General is committed to an approach of no tolerance for inaction in response to SEA. To assist in providing protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and in line with the operating standards on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the Director General has nominated the Ethics Officer as UNIDO's focal point on the prevention of SEA.
5. As reflected in UNIDO's Code of Ethical Conduct, UNIDO is committed to the highest standards of integrity. All UNIDO personnel are required to act ethically and with integrity both in the context of their work for UNIDO and in their personal conduct. Personnel are also expected to respect the dignity, worth and equality of all people.

6. Moreover, in accordance with the ‘Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women’,¹ UNIDO abides by the fundamental principle of non-discrimination on the basis of sex, as established in the United Nations Charter of 1945 and the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights and as reconfirmed through, inter alia, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its accompanying Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
7. In addressing SEA, UNIDO is committed to placing the rights of victims or survivors of SEA at the center of its prevention and response strategies and actions.² UNIDO is also committed to acting in accordance with the principles guiding a human rights-based approach, such as ‘do no harm’ and ‘non-discrimination’.³
8. The Ethics and Accountability Unit (EAU) is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the present bulletin.

Section II – Definitions

9. For the purposes of the present policy, the term “sexual exploitation” means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.
10. Similarly, the term “sexual abuse” means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.
11. “Implementing partner” means an entity to which UNIDO has entrusted the implementation of a programme and/or project specified in a signed document, along with the assumption of responsibility and accountability for the effective use of resources and the delivery of outputs. Implementing partners may include government institutions, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society organizations, including NGOs. Implementing partners’ subcontractors are subsumed within this definition.

Section III – Scope of application

12. The present policy applies to all UNIDO staff members, to all other personnel, including interns, and to all contractors and implementing partners, as well as to all programmes, projects, operations and activities undertaken by UNIDO, irrespective of location.
13. All personnel who are proven to have committed SEA will be subject to disciplinary proceedings and/or other appropriate administrative action.
14. In its work with implementing partners, UNIDO, as specialized agency, will take appropriate actions in line with the [United Nations Protocol](#) on Allegations of Sexual

¹ DGB/2019/16, dated 18 September 2019, as amended.

² See the United Nations Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, dated 12 December 2019.

³ See the United Nations Policy on Integrating a Human-Rights-Based Approach to United Nations efforts to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, dated December 2021.

Exploitation and Abuse involving Implementing Partners of 2019. Also, when entering into cooperative arrangements with UNIDO, implementing partners, individuals and vendors are expected to abide by the standards set in the policy on ‘Exclusion from Funding’⁴ and by the standard general conditions of contract or agreement. Failure to do so may result in the immediate termination of any existing contract or agreement between UNIDO and the implementing partner or vendor.

Section IV – Prohibition of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

15. Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse violate universally recognized international legal norms and standards and constitute prohibited conduct under the Staff Regulations and Rules of UNIDO and the Code of Ethical Conduct.
16. In order to further protect the most vulnerable individuals and populations, especially women, children and minorities, the following specific standards which reiterate existing general obligations under the Staff Regulations and Rules, are promulgated:
 - (a) Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse constitute acts of serious misconduct and are therefore grounds for disciplinary measures, including summary dismissal;
 - (b) Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or the age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence;
 - (c) Exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour, is prohibited regardless on the legal status of sex work. This includes any exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries of assistance;
 - (d) Sexual relationships between UNIDO personnel and beneficiaries of assistance, since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics, undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of UNIDO and are prohibited;
 - (e) Whenever UNIDO personnel develop concerns or suspicions regarding sexual exploitation or sexual abuse by another member of the personnel or by an implementing partner or vendor, they must report such concerns via established reporting mechanisms stated in Section VIII;
 - (f) UNIDO personnel are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Managers at all levels have a particular responsibility to support and develop systems that maintain this environment.
17. The standards set out above are not intended to be exhaustive. Other types of sexually exploitative or sexually abusive behaviour such as sexual harassment, discrimination and abuse of authority may be grounds for administrative action and/or disciplinary measures, including summary dismissal.⁵

Section V – Specific roles and responsibilities

18. In addition to any roles and responsibilities that apply under other relevant policies, under the present policy, UNIDO personnel have an obligation to:
 - (a) Uphold the highest standards of personal and professional conduct at all times and never to engage in any form of SEA;

⁴ DGB/2021/15, dated 17 November 2021, as amended.

⁵ The prohibition of sexual harassment is governed by DGB/2019/12, dated 4 June 2019, as amended.

- (b) Report to the Office of Evaluation and Internal Oversight (EIO), in good faith, any allegations, suspicions or concerns of SEA of which they are aware, and fully cooperate in investigation processes;
- (c) Undertake mandated trainings and familiarize themselves with the provisions of the present policy.

19. The Director General is responsible for:

- (a) Ensuring that information and appropriate mechanisms are in place to prevent and address cases of SEA by UNIDO personnel and other individuals who have a contractual relationship with UNIDO;
- (b) Supporting the UN's system-wide strategy and key initiatives to combat sexual exploitation and abuse;
- (c) Reporting all allegations of SEA brought to his/her attention in line with agreed practices, to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

20. The Office of Evaluation and Internal Oversight is responsible for:

- (a) Receiving allegations of SEA and deciding whether the matter shall be investigated in accordance with the Investigation Policy and Investigation Guidelines;
- (b) Conducting investigations into allegations of SEA;
- (c) Informing the Ethics Officer, as the Focal Point on PSEA, of any report of SEA.

21. Human Resources Services (HRS) are responsible for:

- (a) Informing the Ethics Officer, as the Focal Point on SEA, and EIO of any disciplinary or administrative measure(s) taken in cases of SEA on the part of UNIDO personnel;
- (b) Screening and undertaking due diligence reference checks of candidates during recruitment processes to ensure that individuals who have a history of SEA are not hired. This includes consulting the ClearCheck database on SEA managed by the United Nations;
- (c) Reporting perpetrators to ClearCheck.

22. The Office of Legal Affairs and Compliance is responsible for:

- (a) Providing legal advice on questions relating to the interpretation or application of the present bulletin, in consultation with the Ethics Officer;
- (b) Arranging for the referral of credible allegations of possible criminal conduct to the responsible national authorities for possible prosecution;
- (c) Reporting the outcome of such cases to ODG, EIO, HRS and the Ethics Officer, as appropriate.

23. The Ethics Officer is responsible for:

- (a) Acting as UNIDO's Focal Point on PSEA;
- (b) Reporting on the implementation of the present policy to the Director General and to the Leadership Board through its annual report;
- (c) Representing UNIDO at relevant meetings and on relevant task-forces;
- (d) Providing appropriate training opportunities on PSEA for all UNIDO personnel and appropriate outreach to other individuals who have a contractual relationship with UNIDO;
- (e) Providing guidance to UNIDO personnel on the implementation of the present policy.

24. The UNIDO Field Offices are responsible for:
- (a) Representing UNIDO at meetings of inter-agency PSEA networks in the field and reporting all allegations of SEA in line with agreed practices, to the UNRC/DO;
 - (b) Creating and maintaining an environment that prevents SEA;
 - (c) Immediately reporting any allegations or suspicions of SEA to EIO and informing EAU thereof.
25. Managers and supervisors are responsible for:
- (a) Setting an example with respect to UNIDO's zero tolerance for SEA to their current and new personnel;
 - (b) Undertaking any mandatory training on preventative measures and on how to appropriately deal with personnel reporting acts of SEA;
 - (c) Ensuring that personnel under their responsibility undertake any mandatory training on PSEA;
 - (d) Immediately reporting any allegations or suspicions of SEA to EIO and informing EAU thereof.

Section VI – Referral to national authorities

26. The Organization reserves the right to refer any credible allegations of possible criminal conduct to the responsible national authorities.

Section VII – Support and assistance for victims of SEA

27. The [United Nations Protocol](#) on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of 2019 outlines the guiding principles for the assistance and support of victims of SEA, special considerations for children, and the roles and responsibilities of all relevant UN organizations.
28. UNIDO is committed to supporting victims of SEA and to providing them with appropriate assistance. As such, UNIDO makes available channels to facilitate reporting of SEA, gives priority to the prevention of SEA, and is committed to ensuring a prompt and effective response to reports of SEA and to protecting those individuals that come forward.
29. Any person reporting a case of SEA in good faith, or cooperating with an investigation into a report of SEA, will be protected under the Director General's bulletin on 'Protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct or cooperating with audits or investigations'.⁶ To request protection, individuals must contact EAU in person, by telephone, or by email (ethics@unido.org).

Section VIII – Reporting channels

30. All UNIDO personnel have a duty to report allegations of SEA to the Office of Evaluation and Internal Oversight (EIO) and to cooperate with investigations into alleged SEA.
31. UNIDO makes available immediate and confidential mechanisms to report SEA for anyone who may have been a victim of SEA or who may have witnessed or otherwise been informed of a case of SEA involving UNIDO. Anyone with information regarding allegations of SEA may report it to EIO in person, by regular mail, email

⁶ UNIDO/DGB/(M).116, dated 1 March 2010, as amended.

(oversight-hotline@unido.org), 24-hour voicemail (+43 1 26026 3666) or confidential fax (+43 1 26026 6831), or through a dedicated, web-based reporting tool. Anyone who has difficulty accessing or using these mechanisms, may request another person to make the report on their behalf.

Section IX – UN system-wide tracking mechanisms

32. As one of the entities participating in the system-wide mechanism for the reporting of allegations of SEA, UNIDO is required to report all allegations in real time to the Secretary-General using the iReport SEA Tracker. This tracker provides consolidated data on allegations and substantiated cases of SEA.
33. UNIDO also participates in the UN's ClearCheck mechanism, a centralized, system-wide database, which ensures that former personnel who have been dismissed as a result of substantiated allegations of SEA or sexual harassment, or who have resigned pending investigation of allegations of SEA against them, are not re-employed within the United Nations system.

Section X – Entry into force

34. The present bulletin shall enter into force as of its date of issuance.