



unesco

United Nations
Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

215 EX/15 Add.

Executive Board

Two hundred and fifteenth session

PARIS, 4 October 2022
Original: French

Item 15 of the provisional agenda

**FOLLOW-UP TO DECISIONS AND RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
AND THE GENERAL CONFERENCE AT THEIR PREVIOUS SESSIONS**

ADDENDUM

COMMENTS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION OF UNESCO (ISAU)

SUMMARY

Pursuant to item 9.2.7 of the UNESCO Human Resources Manual, the International Staff Association of UNESCO (ISAU) submits its comments on human resources issues (document 215 EX/15).

1. ISAU is closely tracking the implementation of the recommendations made by the Division of Internal Oversight Services (IOS) following its review of UNESCO's framework to address and respond to sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse. We fully support the zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.
2. The efforts made by all those involved in the implementation of these recommendations, including the Ethics Office, are commendable. We strongly encourage them to continue along the same path, so that there is full confidence, both inside and outside UNESCO, in the way the Organization deals with these issues. While it is important for the Organization to speak with one voice on these issues, it is important to ensure that the roles of all those involved (IOS, HRM and the Ethics Office) are always clearly distinguished, so that staff members know how to act and who to contact according to the circumstances.
3. It must be emphasized that the Organization's efforts with regard to these issues must reach all staff, including consultants and interns, in order to establish a true culture of prevention and punishment of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. Particular attention must also be paid to staff in offices and institutes in the field, who often feel neglected and less able to share any problems



Job: 202202665

they may have. In this regard, we welcome the dedicated sessions organized by the Ethics Office with the focal points in the field.

4. Lastly, ISAU takes note of the operation of the United Nations Global Centre for Human Resources Services (“One HR”) as of September 2022 and encourages the Organization to ensure that reference checks are conducted for recruitment at all levels and not only for the selection of senior candidates.



unesco

United Nations
Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

215 EX/15

Executive Board

Two hundred and fifteenth session

PARIS, 18 August 2022
Original: English

Item 15 of the provisional agenda

**FOLLOW-UP OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOLLOWING THE IOS REVIEW
OF UNESCO'S FRAMEWORK TO ADDRESS AND RESPOND TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT
AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE**

SUMMARY

Pursuant to 212 EX/Decision 13, the Director-General is invited to reinforce the adequate follow-up to all recommendations in document [212 EX/13](#) and to report on progress and challenges.

Decision required: paragraph 9.



Doc. 20220815

INTRODUCTION

1. At its 210th session, the Executive Board requested the Division of Internal Oversight Services (IOS) to carry out a comprehensive review of UNESCO's framework to address and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH), and to develop appropriate monitoring mechanisms (210 EX/Decision 18). During the 212th session of the Executive Board, IOS presented a summary of its findings and concluded that UNESCO has made good progress in establishing and implementing a policy framework to address SH and SEA across the Organization. UNESCO has recently put in place revised policies, procedures, and mechanisms to prevent and respond to SH and SEA. These include the Anti-Harassment Policy (updated in June 2019) and the Policy on the Protection from SEA (issued in November 2020). Both policies are aligned with established best practices and standards in the United Nations system. The review also found that pre-existing frameworks and policies, such as the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, the Human Resources Manual and the Whistle-blower Protection Policy, provide a solid basis for the effective application of anti-harassment and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA)-related policies, procedures and mechanisms. In terms of latest developments, the Whistleblower Protection Policy has since been fully revised in cooperation with the Ethics Office's key internal stakeholders, and issued in October 2021, in order to further strengthen the existing framework and incorporate key recommendations from the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations (JIU). Notwithstanding the above, the IOS' review formulated two main recommendations to the attention of the Bureau of Human Resources Management (HRM), Ethics Office and to some extent to the Division of Internal Oversight Services (IOS), as follows:

Rec 01: To continue to strengthen a culture of prevention and speaking up with regards to SH and SEA, and to raise awareness, the Ethics Office:

- (a) Jointly with HRM, collect and analyze data – using existing means or developing new ones – on trends in the confidence employees have in existing policies, procedures and mechanisms to prevent and respond to SH and SEA.
- (b) With HRM and IOS, establish a working mechanism to follow up on concerns regarding SH and SEA should the results of the data collection and analysis highlight this, and to take actions to address them.
- (c) With HRM, develop a monitoring and follow up mechanism to ensure all employees complete trainings in SH and SEA.
- (d) To develop and implement a communication campaign for awareness raising of policies, procedures, and mechanisms related to SH and SEA.

Rec 02: To strengthen its monitoring role and due diligence in the recruitment processes, DIR/HRM:

- (a) In liaison with the Ethics Office, ensure coordination between the two entities for effective monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the policy to fulfil their respective responsibilities.
- (b) Identify the section/unit within HRM, to monitor the status of the affected individual, the offender, and the work unit – post the investigation process - to ensure that no retaliation results from the investigative process.
- (c) Introduce mechanisms to screen applicants during the recruitment process to ensure that no individual with a proven history of SH or SEA is recruited by the Organization. This could include (but not limited to) a roll out of the "Clear Check" mechanism as a means to screen applicants from within the UN System during the recruitment processes.

UPDATE

2. Concerning Recommendation 1, mainly addressed to the Ethics Office, and (specifically rec. 01 a)) – an additional monitoring mechanism to collect and analyze data is being finalized through a United Nations System Chief Executives Board (CEB) task force on sexual harassment, workstream 2 on advancing a victim-centered approach, in which the Ethics Office has been actively involved. A major milestone of the workstream was the 2021 issuance of the document “Advancing a common understanding of a Victim-centered Approach to Sexual Harassment within the United Nations System Organizations”¹, setting out general principles designed to assist CEB organizations to adopt and implement a victim/survivor-centered approach in their formal and informal processes, policies and procedures. The document was subsequently approved by the High-level Committee on Management (HLCM). This aspirational document stresses the need, *inter alia*, to engage with victims/survivors in a way that prioritizes their safety, rights, needs, wishes and dignity, protects them from retaliation, retraumatization and discrimination, keeps them informed, and supported. Further, and relevantly for rec. 01 a), a survey gathering victims’/survivors’ experiences of using a CEB entity’s informal and/or formal institutional processes to address complaints of sexual harassment has been finalized by the workstream. The survey is anonymous, voluntary and based on informed consent. Its main objective is to identify gaps and best practices in order to holistically strengthen the institutional response to victims of sexual harassment, on the basis of their experiences. The workstream is currently discussing how the survey will be administered and how results and lessons learned will be shared by and used within CEB entities.

3. The Ethics Office also continues to apply anonymous real time surveys by asking participants in its interactive workshops, *inter alia*, whether they experienced or witnessed sexual harassment at work, and which of the available internal resources they used, if any. This is done to identify gaps and also to invite employees to subsequently meet with the Ethics Office in a confidential setting, to address specific situations. Further, as part of the UNESCO 2021 Global Staff Survey, a specific question was included, namely whether “bullying and harassment (including sexual harassment) is taken seriously by UNESCO and there are effective mechanisms for dealing with it”, with the survey results showing a 12% increase as compared to 2018. The Ethics Office will further coordinate with HRM to ensure that additional and more specific questions on sexual harassment are included in future staff surveys, as per past requests of the Ethics Office.

4. Concerning rec. 01 b), and in addition to existing ad hoc meetings, in the second half of 2021, the Ethics Office ensured the holding of quarterly coordination meetings between IOS, HRM and the Ethics Office on sexual misconduct and harassment, to discuss lessons learned and best practices, from internal cases and other Organizations, as well as relevant precedents. In the future, the information that will be obtained anonymously through the above-referenced CEB survey for victims/survivors may also be discussed during these meetings.

5. In terms of training monitoring mechanisms (rec. 01 c)), HRM facilitated the monitoring of completion rates by Ethics Office, both for the module on Ethics (including elements on SH) and the module on PSEA. By doing so, individual reminders may be sent to personnel, thus ensuring a higher level of compliance. Currently, however, no centralized system exists to monitor the completion of training for personnel under consultancy contracts. In addition to this necessary technical improvement, the next step for HRM is to develop a means to systematically assign all mandatory training to all newcomers, including interns. While e-learning is an effective means of providing training globally in a timely and cost-effective manner, the virtual and once-again in-person anti-harassment workshops conducted by the Ethics Office in Sectors and in field offices, which use methodologies of behavioral science, are especially useful in preventing and addressing sexual harassment.

¹ <https://unsceb.org/victim-centred-approach-sexual-harassment-united-nations#:~:text=The%20document%20%E2%80%9CAdvancing%20a%20Common,when%20they%20experience%20sexual%20harassment>

6. With respect to rec. 01 d), the Ethics Office ensured an important outreach operation regarding PSEA by holding dedicated sessions with the PSEA focal points in the field (three in 2021 and three in 2022). It also requested all PSEA focal points in the field to monitor and encourage completion of the PSEA training modules in their respective Offices/institutes. This operation was very successful as statistics show that since the issuance of the policy in November 2020, over 2,000 employees have completed the module on PSEA. In 2022, the Ethics Office will continue to focus on outreach and training on SEAH towards Headquarters employees. Further, the Ethics Office's website and intranet site have been updated with a new section on PSEAH, and new visuals and a special video created by the Ethics Office on SH have been included in the second half of 2021. This material has also widely been distributed to field offices and is systematically being distributed to all new recruits. The Ethics Office has also issued a newsletter dedicated to "sexual misconduct" during the first quarter of 2022.

7. Concerning Recommendation 02 a); this is addressed in paragraph 4 above (cf. rec. 01 b). In line with rec. 01 b), internal processes including the identification of an entity within HRM to monitor the status of the affected individual, the offender, and the work unit, have been clarified, to mitigate the potential for retaliation as a result of the investigative process.

8. With regards to 02 c), the United Nations Global Centre for Human Resources Services ("One HR") based in Bonn has recently finalized its modalities for facilitating an agreement as a service provider. UNESCO intends to use One HR for reference checks for candidates, including background checks, as a complement to current practice. While UNESCO has been consulting the United Nations database Clear Check (for recording known cases of sexual harassment) for senior candidates with United Nations system experience at the selection stage, this pay-per-use package will allow for a more systematic mandatory check for future recruitment. This service of the One HR facility will be initially piloted as from September 2022, before being rolled out globally.

Proposed draft decision:

9. In light of the above, the Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Having examined document 215 EX/15,
2. Takes note of its content;
3. Thanks the Director-General for the update provided and expresses its satisfaction at the measures taken to strengthen further the framework in place at UNESCO to address and respond to sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse.