From Concern to Clarity

FAO’s Roadmap on where to go when in need
The development of this Roadmap was led by the Ethics Office in collaboration with several internal stakeholders. It is a living document that will be updated in accordance with any changes to rules, regulations, policies, contacts, etc. For questions on the contents of the Roadmap, please contact Ethics-Office@fao.org.
INTRODUCTION

Where do you go and who do you contact when you have something to report, feel unfairly treated or need guidance to interpret the rules? Do you have a concern that the Ombudsman, the Inspector General or the Ethics Officer can assist with? Should you discuss your situation with your manager, the Human Resources Division, the Staff Representative Bodies, or should you speak to the Staff Counsellor?

This Roadmap will empower you in navigating the various offices, functions and mechanisms available to you, whether you are based in the field or at headquarters, to help you address your concerns related to workplace conduct or employment conditions.

The Roadmap introduces the various offices, functions and mechanisms in FAO and explains the areas of responsibility of each. It also offers some practical examples to provide context to the explanations, and to help you when you have doubts about how to deal with your concern. Be mindful, however, that each situation presents unique circumstances and that the guidance offered will differ accordingly, and may therefore need to be adjusted in light of your specific situation. In some cases, you may also wish to consult with more than one office or function.

This Roadmap is for all FAO personnel (staff members on all types of contracts, consultants, personal service agreement holders, interns and volunteers, FAO retirees, etc.). For some areas of concern, the Roadmap may also provide guidance to third parties external to FAO.

You may refer also to the FAO Code of Ethical Conduct, which details appropriate ethical conduct and identifies the underlying policies. All FAO personnel are expected to be familiar with the Code and related policies.

The following headings identify the possible sources of information you may wish to refer to.

1 At the time of publication, the Code of Ethical Conduct has not yet been published. Refer to https://intranet.fao.org/ethics_office/documents_references and http://www.fao.org/ethics four updates on this.
By leading by example, managers have a responsibility in ensuring their own as well as their team or office’s adherence to FAO’s regulations and rules, and to the highest standards of integrity and conduct. Managers are in a unique position to help consider and address problems as they emerge, and to take early action before issues escalate. They should take action and provide guidance to the personnel under their leadership, on how to address issues such as:

- ✓ office management or inter-personal disputes;
- ✓ misuse of FAO assets, including human, financial, material;
- ✓ minor violations of regulations, rules or administrative issuances (serious infractions should be investigated);
- ✓ acts of discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority;
- ✓ signs of possible misconduct\(^2\), favouritism, nepotism, corruption, or other violation of the Code on Ethical Conduct;

Many of the above-mentioned types of issues, if considered of a serious nature, should be referred to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). Managers may contact the offices listed in this Roadmap for guidance on addressing concerns brought to them, as well as refer their personnel to these offices as necessary.

You can contact your manager for advice, assistance or information if you have a concern about office dynamics, inappropriate behaviour or interpersonal relations, or have doubts whether actions are carried out ethically. If you are not comfortable doing so, or where you have doubts about the advice provided, you may, of course, contact one of the independent offices listed in this Roadmap for help.

\(^2\) Misconduct includes unsatisfactory conduct by FAO personnel, as per the non-exhaustive list of examples in FAO Administrative Manual paragraph 330.1.52 and sanctionable action by a third party, as defined in the FAO Vendor Sanctions Procedures.
The Human Resources Division (CSH), the Regional Human Resource (HR) Officers, and the Shared Services Centre are partners in support of FAO’s most valuable asset; its personnel. Their roles and responsibilities summarized as follows:

**CSH** in headquarters focuses on developing HR strategy, policy, learning and capacity building programmes, and manages complex workplace issues, senior level staffing matters and rotation programmes as well as medical insurance plans, pension fund, compensation plan and service-incurred related matters.

- **Specifically,** CSH provides guidance and addresses issues related to:
  - recruitment processes, mobility, lateral transfer, organizational design and position management: employment@fao.org
  - advice on workplace issues and conflicts: HR-advice@fao.org
  - non-staff human resources (NSHR): CSH-Consultants-Queries@fao.org
  - learning and staff development, performance management (including disagreement with appraisals): you-at-fao@fao.org

**The Regional HR Officers** are responsible for providing HR advice and compliance support to the offices in their region. Contact details are available in COIN.

The **Shared Services Centre** (CSLC, but usually referred to as SSC) conducts the day-to-day HR transactional/administrative processes and provides advice to personnel in headquarters and Decentralized Offices on their personal and individual contracts or entitlements and routine administrative transactional processes including individual human resources servicing, consultant and non-staff recruitment, payroll and travel operations. The SSC also advises staff members and managers on the interpretation of applicable procedures, and answers queries on entitlements and obligations. The **SSC** is the first point of contact for all your HR contract and entitlements queries and can be contacted at:

- HR-Services@fao.org
  - or
- NSHR-Services@fao.org

- medical insurance plans, UNJSPF pension fund, compensation plan and service-incurred related matters:
  - For issues on social security:
    - Service-Incurred: Service-Incurred@fao.org
    - Pensions: Pensions@fao.org
    - Medical-Insurance: Medical-Insurance@fao.org
OMBUDSMAN

The Ombudsman provides a safe and confidential space in which to raise any work-related concern informally. The Ombudsman can help you find the right way to resolve disputes. The Ombudsman is neutral, impartial, and independent. You can visit the Ombudsman in complete confidence, knowing that, without your express consent, the Ombudsman will never tell anyone about your concern. The Office of the Ombudsman helps foster a harmonious and productive workplace for all at FAO.

The Ombudsman provides informal advice and guidance to all FAO personnel, regardless of function, grade, or geographical location, on concerns such as:

- conflicts with a co-worker, peer, or supervisor.
- administrative decisions affecting your employment.
- available mechanisms to address harassment, sexual harassment, or other misconduct such as abuse of power or authority.

The Ombudsman actively helps FAO employees and non-staff personnel to address workplace concerns and resolve conflicts through informal means, such as:

- identification and review of options;
- conflict coaching (increasing an individual’s ability and confidence to deal with conflict);
- shuttle diplomacy (where the Ombudsman serves as intermediary between the parties in a dispute, without direct contact between the parties);
- mediation (bringing the parties together to help them find a mutually agreeable solution).

For better understanding of the role and functions of the Ombudsman, please refer to the following International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Code of Ethics and the IOA Standards of Practice.

CONTACTS:
+39 06 570 53900 | ombudsman@fao.org

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ETHICS OFFICE

The Ethics Office helps foster a culture of integrity, transparency and accountability within the Organization. The office is independent and reports directly to the Director-General. The work of the Ethics Office is based on the principles of confidentiality and independence.

The Ethics Office provides formal advice and guidance on professional ethics standards and dilemmas, and conflicts of interest, such as:

- maintaining independence and impartiality;
- employment related conflicts of interest;
- use of FAO resources;
- acceptance of gifts, honours or awards;
- outside activities;
- political activities;
- post-employment restrictions;
- personal financial investments and assets where there might be a conflict of interest;
- perceived or actual unethical management of resources (procurement contracts, letters of agreement, etc.).

You should use the services of the Ethics Office to obtain clarification and information on ethical issues related to your work.

The Ethics Office does not undertake investigations or take decisions on the final disposition of matters brought to its attention, and does not, generally, get actively involved in informal resolution of issues between parties. When you bring a concern to the Ethics Office, you will receive confidential advice and guidance on the options available to you, including for formal reporting of possible wrongdoing.

The Ethics Office also:

- acts as the Senior Focal Point under the Policy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA);
- administers the Organization’s Financial Disclosure Programme;
- provides advice and guidance to help prevent ethical issues related to interpersonal misconduct such as harassment, sexual harassment and discrimination;
- serves various roles in the context of protection of personnel (Whistleblower Protection Policy) who have reported misconduct or cooperated with duly authorized oversight activities (such as audits or investigations), and who subsequently experience retaliation or threats thereof. Here, the Ethics Office’s role is to:
  - receive and conduct prima facie review (i.e. initial assessment) of retaliation complaints under the Whistleblower Protection Policy.
  - refer prima facie cases of retaliation to OIG for investigation.
  - refer the staff member to the Ombudsman or other informal mechanisms of conflict resolution as appropriate.
  - issue interim protection measure recommendations for matters referred to OIG for investigation.
  - issue final protection measure recommendations for cases where retaliation has been established post-investigation.

At the country level, the Ethics Office is supported by a network of Ethics focal points who act as a first point of contact for personnel in the country office and who can provide guidance on matters relating to the rules and regulations of the Organization. The Ethics focal points do not resolve individual cases but will refer you to the correct resource.

In addition, the PSEA focal points in the country offices have a pivotal role in liaising with the other UN organizations to ensure system-wide actions are in place and reporting back to the Senior PSEA Focal Point.

CONTACTS:
+39 06 57053800 (confidential hotline)
Ethics-office@fao.org
The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) investigates acts of misconduct by FAO personnel and sanctionable actions by third parties (such as FAO implementing partners and vendors) affecting FAO’s activities and operations. The types of matters investigated include:

- fraudulent, corrupt, collusive or coercive practices:
  - to obtain undue financial benefits in the context of staff entitlements (e.g. fraudulent claims for rental subsidy, education grant, travel, medical insurance, etc.)
  - in the context of project implementation, financial transactions, procurement (e.g. misrepresentation, false certification, forgery, embezzlement or misappropriation, disclosure of confidential bidding information, solicitation/acceptance of bribes or kickbacks, extortion, etc.);
- gross negligence;
- favoritism (e.g. in the context of recruitment or procurement activities);
- harassment, abuse of authority, and discrimination;
- sexual harassment pursuant to the Policy on Prevention of Sexual Harassment;
- allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Sexual pursuant to the Policy on PSEA;
- retaliation as defined under the Whistleblower Protection Policy;
- violations of the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service;
- other types of misconduct.

Individuals or entities external to FAO may report misconduct to OIG but are not covered by the Whistleblower Protection Policy. OIG accepts anonymous complaints, although such complaints may be more difficult for OIG to investigate, and complainants are therefore encouraged to identify themselves in full confidentiality. OIG’s investigative activities are confidential fact-finding exercises that follow established professional standards (see FAO Investigation Guidelines for further details on the investigative process), and investigative conclusions and recommendations are submitted to the Director-General (or delegated authority) for decision and action, if any.

OIG can be consulted for advice or guidance about whether your concerns would fall within OIG’s investigative mandate or may, instead, be better addressed by another office. OIG also provides information about procedural issues relating to the investigative process.

CONTACTS:
+ 39 06 570 52333 (confidential hotline)
inspector-general-office@fao.org
Investigations-hotline@fao.org
Hotline Intranet form
In FAO, there are two bodies representing staff, namely the Union of General Service Staff (UGSS) that represents all GS staff at headquarters, and the Association of Professionals (AP-in-FAO) that represents all international professional staff at headquarters and in the field. Each of these is recognized as representative of staff through a Recognition Agreement concluded with FAO. Membership (SRBs) is voluntary.

Staff representative bodies (SRBs) participate in identifying, examining and resolving issues relating to staff welfare, including conditions of work and human resources policies. The SRBs defend rights on a collective and individual basis, providing support in disputes, grievance resolution and advice on legal issues. Staff members may bring individual cases to the attention of their SRB who can advise on, and assist in, addressing issues. This also applies to cases involving performance management, discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority. Traditionally, SRBs have assisted staff in resolving workplace grievances in numerous cases, in collaboration with concerned units.

SRBs also participate in consultative fora, e.g. the Joint Staff-Management Consultative Committee (SMCC), the Joint Advisory Committee on Medical Coverage (JAC/MC), the Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (ACOSH), and in processes (e.g. Employee Satisfaction Surveys that cover staff welfare and working conditions of staff).
COUNSELLING AND HEALTH SERVICES

The Staff Counsellor provides psycho-social assistance to FAO personnel and their families with situations encountered in everyday life that may have an impact on their well-being and productivity, including:

- fears and anxiety;
- psychological trauma;
- depression;
- alcohol/substance abuse;
- loss and grief;
- personal/family issues and concerns;
- harassment and sexual harassment.

The Counselor does not provide for mediation services between personnel, or between personnel and managers, but instead helps you to obtain the necessary tools and contacts for mental health specialists to handle your situation better, or to help you regain good health.

FAO recognizes and supports the UN system Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy, see https://www.un.org/en/healthy-workforce/

The Health Services also provide assistance with:

- HIV/AIDS counselling;
- mission-readiness;
- psycho-education and training on a variety of topics related to stress management and resilience.

CONTACTS:
Medical Unit: +39 06570 53577 | Health-Services@fao.org
If you are a staff member or a consultant employed under Manual Section 317, have a grievance resulting from an administrative decision, and you are not able to resolve it by other means, such as through the Ombudsman, then you have the option of submitting an appeal to the Director-General for an administrative review of the matter. Any decision of the Organization that directly affects you can be the subject of an appeal, for example, decisions involving non-renewal or termination, benefits and entitlements, and disciplinary decisions. An appeal must be submitted within 90 days of the date you were notified of the decision you wish to challenge.

If your appeal is rejected by the Director-General, then you may proceed to appeal to the Appeals Committee, as provided for in the rules set out in Administrative Manual Section 331, which also sets out the deadlines for taking action. The role of the Appeals Committee is to review the matter and advise the Director-General, who then takes a final decision. The composition of the Appeals Committee is in Annex A to Manual Section 331.

The Organization recognizes the jurisdiction of the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization (ILOAT), which is the final forum for review of any decision by the Organization. A complaint to the ILOAT may be submitted after a final decision of the Director-General, as provided for in Administrative Manual Sections 331 and 332.

Note that, apart from consultants employed under Manual Section 317, the specific grievance and dispute resolution procedures for non-staff personnel are set out in their contract of employment with the Organization.

Consider contacting the Ombudsman as a first point of call – ombudsman@fao.org