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COUNCIL

Hundred and Fifty-ninth Session

Rome, 4-8 June 2018

Corporate Policy, Processes and Measures on the Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Authority Abuse

Executive Summary

This document provides information on the Corporate Policy, Processes and Measures on the Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Authority Abuse. It presents the measures implemented since 2011 to date on reporting, investigation and decision making, as well as outreach and support, and its alignment to recent recommendations of the UN system Chief Executive Board (CEB).

Suggested action by the Council

The Council may wish to take note of the robust policies, procedures and mechanisms in place in the Organization to prevent harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority.

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I. Background

1. The principles of integrity, professionalism, respect for human rights and the dignity of all peoples underpin FAO's commitment to preventing and addressing acts of sexual exploitation and abuse.
2. FAO has a policy of zero tolerance for any form of harassment, in particular, zero tolerance for any form of sexual harassment, sexual exploitation or authority abuse.
3. FAO has robust procedures and mechanisms in place to enable complaints to be made and to be investigated fully and promptly. These mechanisms, strengthened in January 2015, establish a clear process for complaints to be submitted, reviewed and investigated by the FAO's Office of the Inspector General. Further to the findings of such investigations, disciplinary measures, including dismissal, are to be imposed.
4. It should be noted that in 2011, FAO adopted and implemented a Whistleblower Protection Policy to protect FAO personnel against retaliation when reporting cases of unsatisfactory conduct, including sexual harassment. Requests for protection by those who believe that retaliatory action has been taken against them because they have reported unsatisfactory conduct or cooperated with a duly authorized audit or investigation.
5. In 2013, the Organization addressed the issue of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse by FAO employees, or any other personnel associated with the work of FAO, against beneficiaries of assistance and any person related to such beneficiaries by issuing the Administrative Circular on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (PSEA).
6. FAO does not tolerate harassment in any of its forms and is committed to ensuring a work environment that is free of harassment. In this respect, FAO implemented in 2015 the Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority.
7. Furthermore, FAO's Director General issued the Administrative Circular 2018/02 on 21 February 2018 to reiterate that at FAO "complaints of harassment, in particular sexual harassment (SH), and of sexual exploitation or abuse (SEA), are taken very seriously and may be made in strict confidence" and that "it is incumbent upon all employees, and in particular managers of organizational units, to create and promote a work ethos and environment that prevents sexual harassment, exploitation or abuse."

II. FAO's participation at the CEB Task Force on Sexual Harassment (TF/SH)

8. FAO has also been participating in the CEB Task Force on Sexual Harassment (TF/SH) since November 2017 upon its establishment, and closely follows the CEB TF/SH discussions.
9. In early May, at the meeting of the UN system Chief Executive Board (CEB), the Secretary-General led a special session on addressing sexual harassment within the organizations of the United Nations system.
10. The Secretary-General called on all leaders and staff across the UN system to join him in driving cultural change to ensure a workplace where sexual harassment is never tolerated, abusers are held accountable and staff feel safe to report incidents.
11. Organizations of the UN system are called for immediate action in three key areas:

Reporting: Providing mechanisms such as 24-hour helplines for staff to report harassment and access support; establishing a system-wide database to avoid rehire of individuals who have perpetrated sexual harassment

Investigation and decision-making: fast track procedures to receive, process and address complaints, recruiting specialized investigators, including women.

Outreach and support: mandatory training; providing guides for managers; harmonizing policies. Launching staff perception surveys to learn from experiences

III. Implementation at FAO

12. As mentioned above, at FAO, a robust policy has been in place since 2015 (Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority - AC 2015/03) and nearly all of the measures proposed by the CEB for implementation by the organizations of the UN system are already in place.

13. The **reporting mechanisms** have been implemented by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). OIG is the office responsible for investigating all harassment complaints and has a dedicated hotline system, monitored on a daily basis, including a secure phone line and email repository (investigations-hotline@fao.org), which FAO employees and other complainants may access to report misconduct. FAO is also working with other UN entities to build a system-wide database to avoid rehire of individuals who have perpetrated any type of harassment.

14. The **investigation and decision-making** actions are carried out by a specialized gender-balanced investigative team, including six women, which operates in OIG and are available for in-person and teleconference consultations with employees or other complainants who report sexual harassment issues.

15. In addition to the above, FAO is working to reinforce the **outreach and support** actions as applicable to the Organization, by harmonizing policies and strengthening related internal communications.

Annex. CEB Statement on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the UN System
(4 May 2018)

CEB Statement on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the UN System

Sexual harassment results from a culture of discrimination and privilege, based on unequal gender relations and power dynamics. It has no place in the United Nations system.

Leaders of UN System organizations reiterate our firm commitment to uphold a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment; to strengthen victim-centred prevention and response efforts; and to foster a safe and inclusive working environment.

The members of the CEB are driving action in three key areas:

Reporting:

- Providing mechanisms such as 24-hour helplines for staff to report harassment and access support
- Establishing a system-wide database to avoid rehire of individuals who have perpetrated sexual harassment

Investigation and decision-making

- Instituting fast track procedures to receive, process and address complaints
- Recruiting specialized investigators, including women

Outreach and support

- Mandatory training; providing guides for managers; harmonizing policies
- Launching staff perception surveys to learn from experiences

We will continue to work on changing the culture of our organizations. The United Nations must be a place where staff are valued and empowered to speak up and where sexual harassment is never tolerated.