

Enabling Environment Guidelines

FOR THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM



United Nations




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The effectiveness of the United Nations and the success of our efforts depend on reaping the gains in efficiency and productivity that come from diversity and gender parity. These *Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System* will support our efforts to create a working environment that embraces equality, eradicates bias and is inclusive of all staff.

Achieving gender parity throughout the UN System is not just about numbers—though numbers are an important indicator of progress. Sustainable change depends on transforming our organizational culture so that it fosters a safe and respectful environment in which all have equal access to opportunities. These guidelines are an important contribution to creating and maintaining such a culture and constitute one of the key recommendations of my System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity, launched in September 2017. They include practical examples of ways to attract, retain and motivate highly talented staff that reflect the diversity of humanity, ranging from flexible working arrangements and family-friendly policies to creating and supporting a work environment free from discrimination, harassment and abuse of authority.

The United Nations is the principal international standard-setting institution and bears a special responsibility to lead by example and demonstrate the core values of equality, human rights and non-discrimination. Ultimately, that responsibility devolves to each one of us, from hiring managers to human resources personnel, and from junior staff to senior leadership. We all have a part to play in creating a fair, equal and respectful working environment.

I commend all the organizations and individuals that contributed to these guidelines. And I encourage all staff, at every level, to become familiar with the guidelines, draw from them, and use them to achieve our shared goals of gender parity and a more effective and inclusive modern organization that better serves the peoples of the world.

António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations



According to Article 8 of its Charter: “The United Nations shall place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs.”¹

With the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development committing to “leave no one behind” and the ongoing reform process striving to improve efficiencies, the UN is being propelled to make a transformational change and determine ways to maximize the full potential of its personnel. Achieving a gender-balanced, diverse and inclusive workforce has been identified as a key element of this process.²

Following the recommendation entailed in the Secretary-General’s System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity,³ the present guidelines have been developed by UN Women, in coordination with the Human Resources Network of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), and the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM).*

These guidelines will focus on three thematic areas to increase inclusivity and diversity within the UN, as follows:



Flexible working arrangements are mutually beneficial arrangements between personnel and their managers in which both parties agree on when, where and how work is executed. They can greatly benefit the workplace through increased efficiency, reduced absenteeism, increased well-being, business continuity and decreased operating costs.



Family-friendly policies are those that further enable staff to effectively balance personal, family (i.e. having a child, caring for an ageing relative or self-care during life-changing events) and professional commitments as needed throughout the span of their career. Strong family-friendly policies are central to organizational competitiveness as an employer and its ability to function efficiently. Family-friendly policies are for all staff alike, not only for women. Addressing the needs and changing expectations of men in particular—e.g. through equal parental leave—is just as important. Equal participation is a key enabler of gender equality beyond the workplace and helps to encourage greater gender equality at home and in society at large.



Common **standards of conduct** are a prerequisite for a safe, discrimination-free and supportive workplace. These standards include guiding principles that encourage value-based behavior to reduce misconduct, abuse of power and harassment.

* As of 1 January 2019, The Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) has been renamed the Office of Human Resources (OHR).

The recommendations included in these guidelines should enable all UN entities to make progress on a better work environment, independent of where they currently stand.

Creating a positive workplace culture involves all levels of the organization. This effort may begin with the senior leaders, but it must come from every individual to create a truly inclusive and respectful environment.



For the organization:

An enabling environment should not rely solely on the discretion of individual managers. Formalize standards and processes and track, monitor and report on implementation. Reward and showcase good examples and practices.



For senior leaders:

Be a role model. Demonstrate and actively support desired behaviors and change.



For managers:

Support new ways of working and adapt your leadership style to accommodate this. Openly address existing concerns to find sustainable solutions.



For personnel:

Be transparent about your needs and work jointly with managers and colleagues on how to achieve job outcomes. Recognize concerns and address them proactively.

CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

The United Nations is founded on principles of equal participation and has the core values of professionalism, respect for diversity and integrity. We strive to create an inclusive culture in which differences are recognized and valued. The UN is seeking proactive ways to foster a diverse, harmonious workplace, to give each person the opportunity to contribute their skills, experiences and perspectives, which is a prerequisite to serve the diverse populations it is mandated to serve. This means in particular:

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