



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# FAO CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT



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## Acronyms and abbreviations

AP-in-FAO	Association of Professionals in FAO
CEB	United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination
CER	Corporate Environmental Responsibility
the Code	Code of Ethical Conduct
CSH	Human Resource Division
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICSC	International Civil Service Commission
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPP	National Project Personnel
PEMS	Performance Evaluation and Management System
SEA	Sexual exploitation and abuse
SRB	Staff representative body
WHO	World Health Organization
UGSS	Union of General Service Staff
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	United Nations Department for Safety and Security
UNSMS	United Nations Security Management System

## Foreword

Every day, personnel of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) work tirelessly for the transformation to MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind. They do so from more than 150 offices across the globe, sometimes far away from their families and loved ones, with steadfast dedication, professionalism and expertise, and often in the face of difficult and complex challenges.

The journey becomes simpler, when one is guided. At FAO, that guidance is provided by the Basic Texts of the Organization. Our delivery is built on fully understanding the expectations set out by Management, diligently applying rules, regulations and policies. We adhere to a common vision, while appreciating the rich diversity represented across the Organization.

Ethical conduct is at the core of FAO's philosophy. It is crucial to achieving the Organization's noble objectives and to reaching the Sustainable Development Goals.

FAO's Code of Ethical Conduct will provide additional clarity on our standards of conduct, values and principles, and serve as a guiding light as we move forward.

FAO is a rule-based organization and every employee has the unconditional responsibility to act ethically and embrace the principles set out in the Code of Ethical Conduct, as we strive to ensure that work is conducted in the most professional manner and with a strong spirit of collegiality, mutual respect and solidarity.

**Dr QU Dongyu**  
**Director-General**

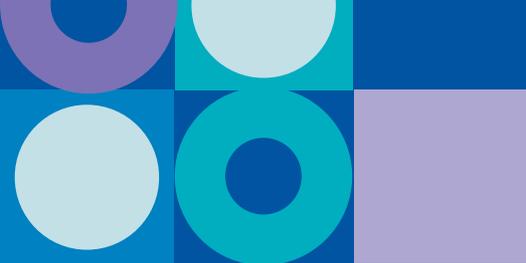


## A note from the Senior Ethics Officer

It is my great pleasure to share with you all this Code of Ethical Conduct. It is a product of broad stakeholder consultation, and it has been endorsed by the FAO Oversight Advisory Committee. It was first published in May 2021, with this, the second edition, published in 2024.

It serves as a point of entry for us all to understand the guiding principles of our Organization and it is a guide that will help us all ensure that the decisions we make on behalf of FAO are made with due consideration for ethical risks. I hope you will enjoy consulting the Code, and remember, we in the Ethics Office are here for support and guidance.

**Monde Magolo**  
Senior Ethics Officer



# 1. INTRODUCTION

As a part of the United Nations system, FAO must exemplify the highest principles of integrity, independence, and impartiality. It is critical that we all discharge our duties accordingly. The long-term success of the Organization depends on maintaining the respect and confidence of Member Nations, partners, donors, and the millions of people that we serve. We are all ambassadors for FAO in both our private and professional lives and how we behave reflects on the Organization. Therefore, we are all bound to act ethically in every way, every day.

A document that references the regulations, rules and policies that govern the conduct that we as FAO personnel must follow, is an essential tool to enable us to understand and comply with norms of an international workplace environment. For this reason, following broad internal stakeholder collaboration in 2020/21 and in 2022/23, for the first revision, the FAO Ethics Office is pleased to publish this Code of Ethical Conduct (the “Code”).

While the Code is an important guide to ethical conduct in FAO, it is not a substitute for common sense and good judgment, nor does it address every situation that we may encounter. There may be situations, conduct or actions

which are not specifically mentioned in FAO’s rules or regulations or covered in the examples in this Code, but that are deemed unethical nevertheless because they violate the spirit or underlying principles of our ethical framework.

Questions on the guidance in this Code and all the related policies, rules and regulations may be directed to the [Ethics-Office@fao.org](mailto:Ethics-Office@fao.org).

## 1.1 Purpose

This Code is intended as a practical guide to FAO rules and policies that govern the conduct of its personnel, thus in turn enabling us to do what is right, and to foster an ethical workplace culture.

The Code complements FAO’s rules and policies, but does not replace or supersede them. Should there be a discrepancy between the rules and the Code, the rules and policies prevail.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> While the Ethics Office has sought to ensure that all references to rules and policy documents are current as of the date of publication of this Code, note that rules and policies are subject to periodic revision. Note also that reference is sometimes made to information or directives of the UN Secretariat or other international entities. These references are for information purposes only.



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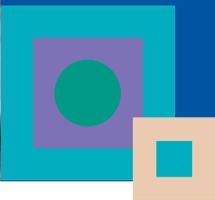
## 1.2 Who does the Code apply to?

All FAO personnel (including, but not limited to, staff members, short term personnel, consultants, national project personnel, subscribers to personal

services agreements, volunteers and interns) are expected to behave in accordance with the ethical standards in this Code.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Code will note where certain rules or policies apply to staff members only.



## 2. OUR VALUES

Our ethical framework is found in the **Charter of the UN**, the FAO Constitution, and the **Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service (ICSC Standards of Conduct)**,<sup>3</sup> our Staff Regulations and Rules, Administrative Manual and related policies.

Article I of the FAO Staff Regulations and Chapter 1 of the Staff Rules<sup>4</sup> set out the duties, obligations and privileges of staff, which are grounded in the following basic principles common to organizations across the UN system:

- ✓ independence
- ✓ loyalty
- ✓ impartiality
- ✓ integrity
- ✓ accountability
- ✓ respect for human rights.

These principles are also encompassed in the three foundational “values” in the **FAO Competency Framework**. This framework has the aim of strengthening FAO’s workforce, and guides FAO’s recruitment, performance management and staff development activities. The values are as follows:

- ✓ commitment to FAO

- ✓ respect for all
- ✓ integrity and transparency.

The Code is structured around these values because, like this Code, the Competency Framework is intended to guide us in creating and maintaining an ethical workplace that enables FAO to achieve its goal of a world without hunger.

### 2.1 Responsibilities

FAO is only able to fulfil its important mandate when the Organization enjoys the respect of the world and its Nations. All of us who work for FAO have a responsibility to act with the highest integrity, and to understand and follow the standards explained in this Code.

We must know the UN values and the FAO rules and policies, and we must act ethically in line with these values, not only while at work but also in our private lives. We must complete the mandatory training provided by FAO.

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<sup>3</sup> Established by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) and incorporated into the FAO Administrative Manual at Section 304 Appendix A.

<sup>4</sup> Contained in Chapter 3 of the Administrative Manual.



Managers have a special responsibility to uphold the ethical standards that we must all follow. They are role models who lead by example and have the primary responsibility for providing guidance to those working under their supervision about the correct way to act, especially in situations that may be challenging. They have a duty to provide timely, honest and objective feedback to personnel reporting to them, and to provide explicit reasons for their decisions, so that these are understood.

Managers have a responsibility to take appropriate action promptly where unethical conduct has been brought to their attention.

## 2.2 Duty to comply

We must all follow FAO's rules and comply with the standards described in this Code. Upon appointment or recruitment, all members of FAO personnel must commit to the required standards of ethical conduct.

There are consequences for not complying with the rules and policies, or for not upholding the ethical standards required of us. Disciplinary measures may be imposed on staff members, and administrative action may be taken with regard to other personnel, pursuant to their contractual terms.

## 2.3 Obligation to report and protection from retaliation

We have a duty to report possible unethical conduct or potential misconduct such as fraud, corruption, harassment (including sexual harassment) and gross negligence.<sup>5</sup> Depending on the type of concern, such reports may be made to our supervisor, the Human Resources Division (CSH) or to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) (see details and **Contacts** below). OIG is responsible for investigating allegations of misconduct involving FAO personnel or involving entities working with the Organization.

The Organization has an obligation to protect us from retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with any oversight activity, such as an internal investigation or audit, as set out in our Whistleblower Protection Policy. The Ethics Office is responsible for receiving complaints of retaliation (*prima facie* reviews) and will take action under the **Whistleblower Protection Policy** to protect individuals who are subject to retaliation.

For further guidance on the various offices and resources that FAO personnel may consult to raise a grievance or report misconduct, please see **From Concern to Clarity - FAO's Roadmap on where to go when in need.**

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<sup>5</sup> *Gross negligence refers to a conscious and voluntary disregard of the need to use reasonable care which is likely to cause foreseeable grave injury or harm.*

## Box 1 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraphs 16–20
- Staff Regulations Article I (Manual Section 301.1)
- Staff Rules Chapter 1 (Manual Section 302.1)
- Staff Regulation 301.10.2
- Manual Section 330 *Disciplinary Measures* at 330.1.51
- **Charter of the Office of the Inspector-General**
- **AC 2021/06 *FAO Investigation Guidelines***
- Administrative Circular 2021/10 Corr. 2 *FAO Whistleblower Protection Policy* ([En](#), [Fr](#), [Es](#), [Ar](#), [Ru](#), [Zh](#))
- Administrative Circular 2016/23 *Gross Negligence*
- Administrative Circular 2015/08 *Policy against Fraud and Other Corrupt Practices*
- Administrative Circulars 2023/05, 2022/02, 2021/03, 2020/09, 2017/13, 2015/16 and 2013/17 on *Practice of the Organization in Disciplinary Matters*
- E-learning *UN Ethics and Integrity*
- E-learning *Fraud and Corruption*



## 3. COMMITMENT TO FAO

The first of our three core values is commitment to FAO. When we accept to work for the Organization, we agree to place the interests of the Organization above all others, including our own. This means that we demonstrate dedication and professionalism in our work, that we hold ourselves accountable, and that we uphold the values of FAO when carrying out our daily activities, including in our private life.

Internal and external events and circumstances can create uncertainty regarding the achievement of organizational goals and objectives. This uncertainty is also referred to as “risk”.

We all have an obligation to follow procedures and implement controls which have been established to reduce FAO’s exposure to risks and also to be attentive in our work to identify risks, determine how to manage identified risks, and implement risk mitigating actions.

### 3.1 Loyalty to objectives and purposes of FAO

Article I of the Staff Regulations sets out our obligations as staff members. The Declaration / Oath of Office in Staff Regulation 3011.9 (see Box 2), which staff members make upon appointment, reminds us that we must always act in the interests of FAO, with honesty, integrity and respect for all.

#### Box 2

#### Declaration or Oath of Office

I solemnly swear (undertake, promise) to exercise in all loyalty, discretion and conscience the functions entrusted to me as an international civil servant of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; to discharge these functions and regulate my conduct with the interests of the Organization only in view, and not to seek or accept instructions in regard to the performance of my duties from any government or other authority external to the Organization.

## 3.2 Independence and impartiality

As a UN Specialized Agency, FAO acts for the good of the international community as a whole. FAO's independence and impartiality are the foundation for the trust placed in it by its Members. It is this trust that enables us to carry out FAO's work throughout the world.

Acting with independence means being answerable only to FAO. We must not accept instructions from any third party or external authority, including our own national government or any other government. It is important that our actions are not only independent, but that they are also *seen* to be independent. This concept is enshrined in the FAO Constitution at Article VIII and in the ICSC Standards of Conduct.

Acting impartially and objectively means that our personal views and interests in any situation must not compromise the performance of our duties or the interests of FAO. Again, it is very important that we endeavour to carry out our actions in such a manner that they are also perceived by others as impartial, free from bias, prejudice or conflict of interest.

### Box 3 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service at paragraphs 3 to 15; 27 to 29; 33 and 34
- FAO Constitution Article VIII paragraph 2
- Staff Regulation 301.1
- Manual Section 361 *Outside Activities* at 361.2.4
- Manual Section 330 *Disciplinary Measures* at 330.1.51
- Administrative Circular 2022/14 *Outside Activities*

## 3.3 Personal conduct

Our private lives are our own concern, but there may be situations outside of work where our behaviour or activities, or that of our family members, may reflect on FAO. We should bear in mind that our personal conduct, even if unrelated to our official duties, may have an adverse impact on the reputation or interests of FAO, and we must take care to act accordingly.

On social media, our personal conduct should be in line with our obligation to demonstrate independence, as well as act in accordance with the Organization's values and those of the international civil service.



We must ensure that the expression of our personal views and convictions on social media does not adversely affect our official duties, reflect poorly on our status as personnel of FAO, or call into question our duty of loyalty, impartiality and responsibility to the Organization.

We must not establish social media channels on FAO's behalf or directly upload FAO content (e.g. documents, photos, presentations, videos) to personal accounts. Instead, this material should be uploaded to official FAO repositories, and then disseminated using links from there.

#### Box 4 Sources

- ICSC Standards of conduct at paragraphs 35 to 37
- *Social Media Policy*
- See also the United Nations Secretariat Guidelines for the personal use of social media

### 3.4 Respect for national laws

We are granted certain privileges and immunities to enable us to carry out FAO's work; these are not for our personal benefit. Therefore, we must observe national and local laws and we

must meet our private legal obligations. FAO rules define non-payment of debts and a serious breach of national law as misconduct that may incur a disciplinary measure.

Observing national and local laws includes meeting legal obligations such as following traffic regulations, complying with laws when selling or purchasing motor vehicles, and ensuring that domestic employees are hired according to local legal requirements. Taking care of private legal obligations includes paying our debts and fulfilling all our personal legal responsibilities, such as support payments for children and ex-spouses. Under certain circumstances, FAO may make deductions from our salary or other payments and use these to pay our debts to a third party when the indebtedness to a third party has been legally established.

While acknowledging that local laws and customs may differ from one country to another and need to be respected, we also recognize that in some situations what is acceptable under local laws and customs may be incompatible with FAO's values, and the values of the UN with respect to human rights. In such cases, our common values as international civil servants are paramount.



If we have violated a national or local law, we should immediately report it to our supervisor at our duty station. FAO has a duty to cooperate with national authorities to facilitate the proper administration of justice and prevent the occurrence of any abuses in connection with its privileges, immunities and facilities. If local authorities bring to the attention of FAO any concerns regarding non-observance of local laws or private legal obligations by its personnel, FAO will cooperate to resolve any compliance issues, and may engage OIG in further internal investigative activities, if necessary. Immunity may be waived by the Director-General where it is determined that immunity would

impede the course of justice. In cases where FAO establishes misconduct that would amount to a serious violation of a national law (e.g. if an employee engaged in serious fraud), FAO may also decide to report such misconduct to the appropriate national authorities.

#### Box 5 Sources

- ICSC Standards of conduct at paragraphs 43 and 44
- Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies, Article VI, Section 23
- FAO Headquarters Agreement with Italy, Article XIII, Section 29(b)
- Staff Regulation 301.1.8
- Staff Rule 302.3.122 *Deductions and Contributions*
- Manual Section 330 *Disciplinary Measures* at 330.1.51-52 and 330.2.41
- Administrative Circular 2022/10 *Privileges and immunities and private obligations of staff members*





### 3.5 Sexual exploitation and abuse

Within the UN and FAO, “sexual exploitation and abuse” (SEA) refers to sexual misconduct towards those who are our beneficiaries or are part of the communities where we work.

SEA represents a catastrophic failure of protection, bringing harm to those we are mandated to protect, and it jeopardizes the reputation of the Organization. Such conduct may also violate universally recognized international legal norms and standards. We are all under an obligation to report in good faith any concerns or suspicions of SEA (see **Contacts** for details on where to report).

We must all be familiar with the Six Core Principles established by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).<sup>6</sup> These principles establish *inter alia* that prohibited conduct includes the exchange of money, goods or beneficiary assistance for sex, and sexual relations with a child, defined as a person under the age of 18 regardless of the local age of consent. We must all complete FAO’s mandatory training on Protection from SEA.

FAO has zero tolerance for SEA and considers such acts, when substantiated, to be serious misconduct that will result in summary dismissal or

#### Box 6 Definitions

“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

“Sexual abuse” means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

*\*Definitions from UN Secretary-General’s Bulletin ST/SGB/2003/13 – See also AC 2013/27-Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse*

termination of contract. In appropriate cases, FAO will also refer the matter to national authorities for criminal prosecution. FAO participates in the UN Secretary-General’s iReport SEA Tracker system, which records all allegations and substantiated cases of sexual exploitation and abuse within the UN common system. FAO also uses the Clear Check database<sup>7</sup> as a reference check tool. This confidential database contains information about individuals who have a record of sexual misconduct

<sup>6</sup> IASC Task Force on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

<sup>7</sup> Established under the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).

within the UN system, including those who left their organization before an investigation or disciplinary process regarding allegations of sexual misconduct against them was concluded and who subsequently did not cooperate with the investigation and/or disciplinary process.

### Box 7 Sources

- Administrative Circular 2013/27 *Policy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*
- Director-General's Bulletin 2012/70
- Administrative Circular 2021/4 *Procedures for use of the Clear Check screening database*
- See also United Nations Secretary-General's Bulletin ST/SGB/2003/13
- See also the IASC Six Core Principles relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, 2019
- E-learning course *Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*

Sexual harassment may involve similar behaviour to SEA, but within the UN system it is addressed as a different type of sexual misconduct (see [Section 4.4](#)).

### 3.6 Domestic abuse and intimate partner violence

Domestic abuse and intimate partner violence are forms of abuse that occur between family or household members, or between people involved in a close or intimate personal relationship. FAO considers domestic abuse and intimate partner violence to strongly conflict with our ethical standards.

### Box 8 Definition

Intimate partner violence includes any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship.

*\*Definition from the World report on violence and health, World Health Organization (2002)*





Examples of such behaviour include:

- ✓ acts of physical violence, such as slapping, hitting, kicking and beating;
- ✓ sexual violence, including forced sexual intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion;
- ✓ emotional (psychological) abuse, such as insults, belittling, constant humiliation, intimidation (e.g. destroying things), threats of harm, threats to take away children; and
- ✓ controlling behaviours, including isolating a person from family and friends, monitoring their movements, and restricting access to financial resources, employment, education or medical care.

The Health Services Counsellors may be contacted for advice on situations that may involve domestic abuse or intimate partner violence (see **Contacts** below).

If your possible involvement in such abuse is brought to the attention of FAO by national authorities, FAO will cooperate with the authorities. Administrative, including disciplinary, action may be initiated as appropriate.

#### Box 9 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct paragraphs 42, 43 and 44
- Manual Section 550.5 *Headquarters Security and Emergency Measures – Incidents*



### 3.7 Violence in the workplace

Any type of physical violence or threat of violence in any form, whether it occurs on or outside FAO premises, is contrary to the ethical values of FAO. Carrying weapons, real or fake, on FAO premises or in FAO vehicles is strictly prohibited unless there is specific authorization, such as for security personnel or government law enforcement officials.

If your possible involvement in such violence is brought to the attention of FAO by national authorities, FAO will cooperate with the authorities. Administrative, including disciplinary, actions may be initiated as appropriate.

#### Box 10 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct paragraph 44
- Manual section 330 *Disciplinary measures* at 330.1.52
- Manual Section 550.5 *Headquarters Security and Emergency Measures – Incidents*

### 3.8 Security and safety

FAO has a duty of care towards its personnel and takes their safety and wellbeing seriously. FAO takes steps to ensure that all personnel enjoy a safe and respectful working environment that is in line with FAO values. FAO supports the UN Vision on Duty of Care and its Core Principles for a healthier, safer and more respectful UN workplace.<sup>8</sup> In addition, FAO adheres to the UN Mental Health and Well-being Strategy launched in 2018, which is a comprehensive approach to protect and promote good mental health.<sup>9</sup>

In all countries where FAO operates, the primary responsibility for the security and protection of FAO personnel, eligible dependents, activities, and property rests with the host government. FAO has a duty to reinforce and, where necessary, supplement the capacities of host governments to fulfil their obligations in circumstances where FAO personnel are working in areas that require prevention and mitigation measures beyond those which the host government can reasonably be expected to provide. The Organization has an obligation to enable the activities of FAO within acceptable levels of security risk.

<sup>8</sup> UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination. *High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM). 2019. Cross-functional Task Force on Duty of Care. Final Report, October 2019.*

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/healthy-workforce-home>



We have an obligation as personnel under the United Nations Security Management System (UNSMS) to follow guidance provided, understand the security environment and comply with all UNSMS security regulations and procedures at the duty station (both while on and off duty). Security personnel, FAO managers and individual personnel are all responsible for ensuring that security measures are applied. Security personnel have the authority to issue instructions and take the appropriate actions in this respect. The UNSMS recognizes that despite appropriate security risk management efforts to reduce risks to acceptable levels by balancing security risks with criticality of programmes, its processes and procedures cannot eliminate all security risks.

We must also complete the mandatory training in security and safety, and bring any security concerns to the attention of our supervisors or the security personnel so that these can be addressed.

In line with the UNSMS *Security Policy Manual*, we have the obligation to report in a timely manner all security incidents, whether these occur while we are on or off duty, to the country Designated Official in our duty station and local UN Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS). The Designated Official is the most senior UN official who is appointed by the Secretary-General to ensure that the goals of the UNSMS in the designated security area are met.



At headquarters, the reporting mechanism is through the Safety and Security Incident Reporting Portal. In Decentralized Offices, security incidents must be reported to the FAO Head of Office and FAO security focal point.

### Box 11 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraph 41
- Manual Section 330 *Disciplinary Measures* at 330.152
- Manual Section 390 *Personnel Emergencies Outside Headquarters*
- Manual Section 550 *Security Services*
- Administrative Circular 2023/08 *Occupational Health and Safety*
- Administrative Circular 2017/15 – *Annex Code of Conduct for Security Guards at FAO Headquarters*
- Administrative Circular 2014/30 *Field Security Policy*
- Administrative Circular 2011/25 *UN Security Clearance and Security in the Field Training for FAO Personnel*
- *FAO Critical Incident Guidelines*
- *UNSMS Security Policy Manual*
- *Safety and Security Incident Reporting Portal*
- E-learning course *BSAFE*

### 3.9 Drug and alcohol abuse

FAO prohibits abuse or misuse of drugs or alcohol, whether legal or illegal. Misuse of substances does not only adversely affect the safety of personnel and the working environment, but also brings FAO into disrepute. Anyone who is struggling with addiction is encouraged to contact the FAO Health Services to obtain assistance (see **Contacts**).

### Box 12 Sources

- Manual Section 330 *Disciplinary Measures* at 330.152
- Manual Section 390 Appendix A *Arrangements for the protection of personnel and property of the family of the UN*
- Administrative Circular 2000/06 *Policy and procedures for dealing with alcohol-related and other substance abuse problems in the workplace*



## 4. RESPECT FOR ALL

Respect for all means showing consideration and sensitivity towards gender, culture, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, political conviction and other differences between people. It means welcoming and working effectively with people from all backgrounds, promoting acceptance, tolerance, and understanding, and valuing diversity.

### 4.1 Fair and respectful workplace

A harmonious working environment is of benefit to everyone. The foundation of such an environment is ethical conduct that displays fairness, tolerance and respect, where everyone is treated with dignity.

While we all contribute to making the workplace respectful, supervisors should be mindful that they set the tone in their office or team, and have a responsibility to take appropriate action to ensure a respectful workplace. Talking openly about workplace conduct and the standards of respectful behaviour makes it easier for everyone to know what is expected of them.

Supervisors must take prompt action to respond to problems as they arise. They must also foster an environment

in which personnel can express their views without fear of reprisal. Mindful of confidentiality considerations, supervisors should communicate openly and clearly about their decisions and the reasons for them, to ensure that affected personnel are informed and have an opportunity to express their views.

#### Box 13

#### Source

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraphs 3, 6 and 40

### 4.2 Respectful feedback on performance

We are required to uphold the highest standards of efficiency, competency and integrity in discharging our functions. FAO supervisors are accountable for delivering results and for supporting us in reaching our full potential. Remember, the three core values (commitment to FAO, respect for all, and integrity and transparency) around which this Code is organized must be consistently demonstrated by each and every one of us in carrying out our duties.



The purpose of performance feedback is to support FAO personnel in achieving their objectives to ensure that FAO can fulfil its mandate. That feedback must be truthful, objective, accurate, timely and in accordance with our performance management procedures. Providing feedback on an ongoing basis is essential to creating an open and respectful working environment, in which we all feel able to express our opinions. Such an environment enables problems to be addressed when they arise, which increases the likelihood of a positive resolution.

#### Box 14 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraphs 16 to 19
- Staff Rule 303.2.6 *Service evaluation reports*
- Manual section 317.10 *Evaluation of consultants*
- Manual section 319.12 *Evaluation of personal services agreement*
- Administrative Circular 2015/17 *PEMS Policy*
- Performance Evaluation Management System (PEMS) Competency framework
- Addressing and resolving underperformance – Guide for managers
- E-learning *Giving and receiving feedback & appraising effectively*

### 4.3 Harassment

Treating each other with respect and behaving with dignity entails avoiding offensive, intimidating or hostile behaviour towards others. Conduct that is disrespectful or insulting is unacceptable in our workplace.

#### Box 15 Definition

Harassment is any improper and unwelcome conduct by an individual or group of individuals that is directed at, and offensive to, another person and that the individual(s) knew, or reasonably ought to have known, would cause offence or harm to that person. Harassment does not have to be intentional or deliberate. Harassment may take the form of words, gestures or actions which tend to annoy, alarm, abuse, demean, intimidate, belittle, humiliate or embarrass another or which create an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Harassment normally implies repeated incidents.

*\*Administrative Circular 2015/03*



Harassment may come in many forms. Examples include shouting at someone, ridiculing them, making offensive comments about or to them, intentionally excluding them or undermining their work. Harassment may occur in or outside the premises of FAO, and may involve an external party to FAO. Determination of harassment is based on whether it would be reasonable to expect that the behaviour may cause offense, so it is not the intent of the person engaging in the behaviour that matters, but rather how it is reasonably perceived by the person at whom the behaviour is directed.

In accordance with FAO's Policy on the Prevention of Harassment and Abuse of Authority, such improper behaviour will always be addressed. Appropriate action will take into account the nature of the behaviour and the relationship between the individuals involved.

Negative feedback on performance alone, without other factors, is not harassment. Examples of behaviour that may constitute harassment are listed in Administrative Circular 2015/03.

If you experience or witness harassment you may consult the Ombudsperson for confidential guidance and options for informal resolution. You may also discuss it with your supervisor or CSH for advice and support. With regard to

formal resolution, you may also make a report to OIG, who will undertake the appropriate investigative actions. Administrative, including disciplinary, action may be initiated where misconduct is substantiated.

#### Box 16 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraphs 21 and 22
- Administrative Circular 2015/03 *Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Abuse of Authority*

## 4.4 Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment has no place in the UN system. Leaders of UN system organizations have reiterated their 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.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> CEB Statement on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the UN, May 2018.

## Box 17

## Definition

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offense or humiliation, when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Sexual harassment may occur in the workplace or in connection with work. While typically involving a pattern of conduct, sexual harassment may take the form of a single incident. In assessing the reasonableness of expectations or perceptions, the perspective of the person who is the target of the conduct shall be considered.

*\*Administrative Circular 2019/01*

FAO makes every effort to ensure a workplace where sexual harassment is never tolerated, abusers are held accountable and personnel feel safe to report incidents. At FAO, sexual harassment is dealt with in accordance with the Policy on Prevention of Sexual Harassment. Under the policy, sexual harassment may occur within or outside the work environment and may be towards any person, irrespective of whether the person has any contractual status with the Organization.

If you experience or witness sexual harassment you may consult the Ombudsperson for confidential guidance and options for informal resolution. You may also make a report to OIG, who will undertake the appropriate investigative actions. Administrative, including disciplinary, action may be initiated where such acts are substantiated.

Supervisors are encouraged to contact the CSH or the Ombudsperson for advice and guidance on any matters involving possible sexual harassment that are brought to their attention.

Examples of behaviour that may be sexual harassment are:

- ✓ unwelcome touching, including patting, stroking, or brushing up against someone;
- ✓ repeatedly asking someone for dates;
- ✓ making sexual remarks or comments about a person's appearance, body or sexuality;
- ✓ sharing jokes, anecdotes or images of a sexual nature;
- ✓ referring to someone with a name or term that has a sexual connotation; and
- ✓ making gestures of a sexual nature.



FAO uses the ClearCheck database as a reference check tool. This confidential database contains information about individuals who have a record of sexual misconduct within the UN system, including those who left their organization before an investigation or disciplinary process with regard to allegations of sexual harassment against them was concluded and subsequently did not cooperate with the investigation and/or disciplinary process.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Used by UN Common System entities.

### Box 18 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraphs 21 and 22
- AC 2019/01 *Policy on Prevention of Sexual Harassment*
- AC 2021/4 *Procedures for use of the ClearCheck screening database*
- Guide for Managers on Prevention of, and Response to, Sexual Harassment in the Workplace
- E-learning *Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Abuse of Authority*



## 4.5 Abuse of authority

Abuse of authority is the improper use of a position of influence, power or authority, and it is prohibited. Abuse of authority can take various forms and it is particularly serious when it is used to negatively influence career or employment conditions such as appointment, assignment, contract renewal, performance evaluation or promotion. The effects of such behaviour are damaging to morale and to a harmonious workplace.

### Box 19 Definition

Abuse of authority is the improper use of a position of influence, power or authority against another person. This is particularly serious when a person uses his or her influence, power or authority to improperly influence the career or employment conditions of another, including, but not limited to, appointment, assignment, contract renewal, performance evaluation or promotion. Abuse of authority may also include conduct that creates a hostile or offensive work environment which includes, but is not limited to, the use of intimidation, threats, blackmail or coercion.

*\*Administrative Circular 2015/03*

Examples of abuse of authority include pressuring someone to distort facts or break rules, interfering with a colleague's ability to work effectively by preventing them from obtaining access to information or resources, requesting FAO personnel to carry out your personal errands or do personal favours. Like other instances of misconduct, abuse of authority should be reported to OIG. An informal discussion with the Ombudsperson may assist in understanding whether the situation would constitute abuse of authority.

Administrative, including disciplinary, action may be initiated where abuse of authority is substantiated.

### Box 20 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraphs 17 and 22
- Manual Section 330 *Disciplinary Measures* at 330.1.52
- Administrative Circular 2015/03 *Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Abuse of Authority*



## 4.6 Discrimination

The international civil service is based on inclusion, acceptance and understanding, and we must reflect these principles when interacting with our colleagues and with the public.

### Box 21 Definition

Discrimination is any unfair treatment or arbitrary distinction based on a person's race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, age, language, social origin or other similar shared characteristic or trait. Discrimination may be an isolated event affecting one person or a group of persons similarly situated, or may manifest itself through harassment or abuse of authority.

*\*Definition from UN Secretary General's Bulletin ST/SGB/2019/8*

It is essential that we respect everyone equally and act without bias towards anyone, making special efforts to identify and avoid unconscious bias. This is particularly important when making decisions regarding the employment or career advancement of individuals within the Organization.

It is never acceptable to make statements or engage in behaviour, whether in person or online, that incite hatred or any other form of discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation or other characteristics. Administrative, including disciplinary, action may be initiated as appropriate.





## Box 22 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraphs 6, 14 and 15
- Administrative Circular 2015/03 *Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Abuse of Authority*
- Administrative Circular 2011/23 *Policy on Persons with Disabilities in the FAO Workplace*
- See also the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech

If you experience or witness discrimination, you may consult the Ombudsperson for confidential guidance and options for informal resolution. You may also make a report to OIG, who will undertake the appropriate investigative actions. Administrative, including disciplinary, action may be initiated where misconduct is substantiated.

Supervisors are encouraged to contact CSH or the Ombudsperson for advice and guidance on any matters involving possible discrimination that are brought to their attention.

## 4.7 Diversity

A diverse and inclusive organizational environment is at the heart of FAO's effectiveness as a UN Specialized Agency. Amongst us we have a

wide range of perspectives and competencies, which are put to good use in carrying out our mission worldwide. Differences are to be respected, valued and acknowledged as a source of strength and innovation, and all personnel should be enabled to fulfil their potential. We should show tolerance for different cultures and communication styles.

## Box 23 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraphs 10 and 40
- AC 2011/23 *Policy on Persons with Disabilities in the FAO Workplace (Disability Inclusion Strategy)*
- Director-General's Bulletin 2020/07 on FAO's accountability and commitment to gender equality
- See also the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP)
- AC 2009/13 corr.1 *Dress etiquette*

When at work, we should all dress with respect for the diversity that characterizes FAO, the specific working environment, and our role. While it is not necessary to dress formally at all times, we must remember that we are part of the UN family and we are expected to uphold the Organization's image.



## 5. INTEGRITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Acting with integrity and transparency means acting honestly, without consideration of personal gain or improper benefit to others and ensuring that actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest are disclosed and addressed. It means being accountable for delivering agreed outputs, and communicating proactively. It also means embracing transparency while observing the requirements of confidentiality. These are essential principles to which we at FAO must all adhere.

### 5.1 Due care

The Organization's resources are provided to us through the contributions of our Members and other engaged stakeholders. They must be managed carefully and used only for their intended purposes to ensure cost-effectiveness and to prevent waste or misuse. We should exercise diligence in the discharge of our functions, and while mistakes may sometimes occur, reckless behaviour, or gross negligence, is unacceptable and may constitute misconduct.

### 5.2 Fraud and corruption

Fraudulent and other corrupt practices are a serious threat to our work. FAO has a zero-tolerance policy with respect to such practices, and it is our duty to report any such instances to protect the interests of the Organization. We must also cooperate with investigations into allegations of fraud and corruption.

Fraudulent and corrupt practices include:

- ✓ exchanging money or favours for preferential treatment (e.g. sharing confidential information with a vendor, kickbacks, bribery);
- ✓ knowingly providing or approving false information, or concealing information, in the context of procurement activities or requests for payment, for instance in the context of letters of agreement/contracts, staff entitlements, when making medical insurance claims, or during the job application and recruitment process;
- ✓ private use of the Organization's resources that interferes with or deprives the Organization of the use of those resources; and



- ✓ an agreement between two or more people to engage in an action to obtain an undue benefit or gain some financial advantage.

Administrative, including disciplinary, action may be initiated where misconduct is substantiated and may result in dismissal or termination of contract. In certain cases, fraudulent or corrupt conduct may also be referred to national authorities for appropriate action. FAO will also make every effort to recover defrauded monies from the individual concerned.

#### Box 24 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraphs 4 and 5
- AC 2015/08 *Policy against Fraud and other Corrupt Practices*

### 5.3 Conflicts of interest

It is our duty to avoid conflicts between the interests of FAO and our own. Conflicts of interest may be existing, may be potential, or be perceived based on the way circumstances appear. Even potential or perceived conflicts of interest can undermine trust in the independence and impartiality of FAO and its personnel. A conflict of interest

#### Box 25 Definition

A conflict of interest is when our personal interests, or those of a third party, interfere – or appear to interfere – with the interests of FAO, or call into question the qualities of integrity, independence and impartiality required of an international civil servant.

*\*Adapted from paragraph 23 of the ICSC Standards of conduct*

exists, for instance, if our circumstances imply that we are not in a position to act objectively, such as where there could be a personal gain or benefit. A conflict of interest may also exist where our personal interests appear to align with the Organization's overall interests (e.g. in a policy or programme objective) in that we consider the Organization receives a benefit while we also draw a benefit, or we allow another party to benefit from the situation. Even if we do not act in a way that benefits us personally, the conflict of interest may still exist.

We must therefore always disclose any situation that may involve a conflict of interest as soon as it arises. This will allow for adequate consideration and, if necessary, action to mitigate or eliminate the conflict, so we avoid any negative impact on the reputation or assets of FAO, or on ourselves.



The situations covered in the topics below (outside activities, political activities, gifts and favours, awards and honours, personal relationships) can easily give rise to conflicts of interest, thereby exposing FAO to reputational risks. Contact the Ethics Office for confidential advice and guidance on situations that may involve a conflict of interest (see **Contacts**).

#### Box 26 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraphs 23, 24 and 26
- Manual Section 361.2 *Duties and obligations of staff* at 361.2.2

## 5.4 Outside activities

We are expected to devote our working time and energy to the work of FAO. Other work or activities, paid or unpaid, may interfere with our ability to serve FAO. Some activities are also incompatible with working for FAO or otherwise conflict with the best interests of FAO. The Organization recognizes that some outside activities may benefit us professionally and they are therefore permitted under certain conditions.

Before we engage in any outside activity, we must request approval in accordance with the applicable procedures. If this approval is granted, we may only undertake the activity during our own time. Approvals are granted for a period of 12 months or until there are material changes that may affect the situation for which the request was approved.

Outside activities requiring authorization include holding a position, even unpaid, on a board or panel of any non-UN entity (including commercial entities), and teaching and speaking, including in an educational setting. Volunteer or charitable activities generally do not require authorization, provided they are carried out during our own time and in our personal capacity, however, where such a role is of a managerial nature or where FAO collaborates with the entity, guidance should always be sought as to the appropriateness of undertaking the activity.

As a general rule, we may not accept remuneration from outside sources; however, in some cases, payment towards expenses or a small amount of remuneration may be specifically approved as part of the authorization of an outside activity.

### Box 27 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraphs 45 to 47, 50 and 51
- Staff Regulation 301.1.1, 301.1.21, 301.1.4, 301.1.10
- Staff Rule 302.1.5 *Outside Activities*
- Manual Section 361.4 *Outside Activities and Interests*
- Manual Section 361.6 *Disposition for Remuneration*
- Manual Section 317.1.4 – *Consultants*
- Administrative Circular 2022/14 *Outside activities*

## 5.5 Political activities

We are all encouraged to exercise our right to vote and we may hold political opinions. However, FAO's international status means that our conduct must reflect our independence and impartiality at all times. Therefore, there are limits to publicly expressing our views on political issues and to taking part in political activities.

We may not stand for or hold any political office at any level. Membership of a political party is possible, but not if it means we are required to take any action that could affect, or appear to affect, our independence. It is inappropriate to publicly criticize

governments, and we must exercise caution in wearing politically themed clothing or accessories, taking part in political demonstrations, or campaign activities. These considerations extend to our social media activity.

### Box 28 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraphs 10, 48 and 49
- Staff Regulation 301.1.4
- Staff Regulation 301.1.7

When in doubt, you should contact the Ethics Office for guidance (see [Contacts](#)).





## 5.6 Gifts and favours

As part of ethical conduct, we must never offer gifts or favours in connection with our official duties. To do so could give the impression that we are trying to influence the recipient's official actions or create the expectation of a favour in return. We should always refrain from asking for or accepting gifts or favours from colleagues or from third parties, which may impede or affect our neutrality.

Accepting gifts is strongly discouraged, and it is not permitted to receive a gift from a person or entity doing business with FAO or seeking to have any sort of contractual relationship with the UN (e.g. a FAO vendor, bidder, or implementing partner), regardless of the value of the gift. Small tokens of gratitude and hospitality of a reasonable nature is permitted in the context of our official duties, such as at conferences and meetings.

Gifts between colleagues for events such as retirements, birthdays, and holidays, may be given so long as they are freely given and are not offered to influence a colleague in their official

decision-making. Similarly, tokens may be received in relation to official duties, given in the context, for instance, of meetings, conferences, and similar.

FAO visibility products (i.e. products with FAO logo) may be given in the context of our official duties.

The Ethics Office is available to assist in case of any doubt (see [Contacts](#)).

### Box 29 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraphs 17, 24, 50 and 51
- Staff Regulation 301.1.6
- Staff Rule 302.1.6 *Expenses, Tokens and Courtesies*
- Manual Section 361.3 *Acceptance of Honours, Decorations, Gifts, Favours, etc.*
- Manual Section 361.6 *Disposition for Remuneration*
- AC 2006/3 *Gifts and gratuities*
- AC 2012/14 *Procedures for handling gifts*

## 5.7 Awards and honours

Awards and honours may not be accepted without first obtaining approval in accordance with the applicable procedures. This includes any awards or honours that are presented for services prior to joining FAO, or those that are unrelated to service with FAO. The purpose of this rule is to ensure our independence and impartiality.

If the award or honour is given unexpectedly without notice, and refusal would cause embarrassment to the Organization, it may be accepted expressly on behalf of FAO. The award or honour must be disclosed to the supervisor, the Ethics Office must be notified, and post-factum decision on its retention sought from the appropriate approver.

These rules do not apply to awards and honours bestowed to FAO at institutional or organizational level, and as such accepted on behalf of FAO.

### Box 30 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraph 50
- Staff Regulation 301.6
- Staff Rule 302.1.6 *Expenses, Tokens and Courtesies*
- Manual Section 361.3 *Acceptance of Honours, Decorations, Gifts, Favours, etc.*
- Manual Section 119 Appendix D *Delegation of Authority*





## 5.8 Personal relationships

To avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest or preferential treatment, FAO rules provide that an employment contract shall not be granted to a person who bears any of the following relationships to staff members or other personnel:

- ✓ father
- ✓ mother
- ✓ son
- ✓ daughter
- ✓ brother
- ✓ sister.

While a spouse may be employed by FAO, there are specific rules that apply. These rules are aimed at avoiding any conflict of interest.

Remember, to avoid conflicts of interest we must disclose the existence of *any type of family relationship*, not only those listed in the rules, included in regards to other official engagements (e.g. partnerships/programmes, LOAs, contracts). For example, if an ex-spouse, partner, ex-partner, in-law, cousin, niece or nephew is employed by FAO or by an entity that wishes to do business with FAO, this must be disclosed. Significant changes in a relationship with another member of FAO personnel must also be disclosed as soon as they are known,

as the relationship could give rise to a conflict of interest (e.g. where your unit is hiring your spouse or long-term partner).

Disclosures should be made in writing to a higher-level supervisor as soon as possible to enable the risk of improper situations to be mitigated in the best interests of the Organization.

We must not use our position with FAO to directly or indirectly promote the interests of friends, relatives or others. If asked, we should refer to the FAO website and tell interested candidates to follow the application procedures listed there.

Having an intimate personal relationship with a subordinate or a person in the same line of authority is inappropriate. Such a relationship constitutes a conflict of interest and may also constitute an abuse of authority, even if the relationship is consensual (see [Section 4.5](#)). We cannot be an objective and fair supervisor to a person with whom we have a close personal relationship. This kind of relationship could also have negative repercussions on the office environment and morale of the team, and on the Organization's image and reputation. An intimate relationship with someone in the same office must be promptly disclosed to a higher-level supervisor.



The Ethics Office is available for guidance as required (see **Contacts**).

### Box 31 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraph 23
- Staff Rule 302.4.8 *Family Relationships*
- Staff Rule 302.1.53
- Manual Section 375 *National Project Personnel* at 375.1.23
- Manual Section 502.1.5 *Ethical Standards*

## 5.9 Annual disclosure programme

The annual disclosure programme helps to maintain and enhance public trust in the integrity of FAO. The primary purpose of the programme is for the Organization to identify and address conflicts of interest, so that we do not risk being perceived as using our official position for personal gain. Participation in the programme does not release us from our general obligation to disclose to our supervisor any actual or possible conflicts of interest as they arise.

Staff members and other specific FAO personnel are annually selected to participate in the programme on the basis of their position or functions.

The administration of the disclosure programme has been entrusted to the Ethics Office, which ensures an independent review of any conflicts that are identified and advises on appropriate actions to prevent or mitigate such conflicts, in the interests of FAO. The information provided in the programme is treated confidentially and will only be used in assessing whether an actual, possible or perceived conflict of interest exists. Participants are required to cooperate with the verification of the information submitted, and to provide complete and truthful information in a timely manner.

Upon initial appointment or hire, we must all complete a separate disclosure of interest form. This will ensure that any conflicts of interest that exist at that time are eliminated or mitigated.

For any questions, contact the Ethics Office (see **Contacts**).

### Box 32 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraphs 23 and 24
- Staff Regulation 301.1.10 and 301.1.11
- Staff Rules 302.1.52, 302.1.53, 302.1.54
- Administrative Circular 2022/05 *Annual Disclosure Programme*



## 5.10 Protecting property and resources

We are all responsible for safeguarding the property and resources of FAO that we use in advancing our Organization's work and in its best interests. The Organization has procedures in place that are to be followed for maintaining and disposing of assets.

Property and resources must be used for their official intended purpose, and we must take care to prevent waste or misuse of assets such as funds, information technology equipment, supplies and vehicles, as well as intangibles such as our time. The

greatest asset of FAO is its personnel, and how well we manage our time and perform our duties greatly contributes to the effectiveness of FAO in achieving its mandate.

In the area of staff benefits and entitlements, it is also important to avoid waste. Our claims for such benefits and entitlements must be reasonable, made in good faith, and supported by appropriate documentation. False or fraudulent claims for benefits and entitlements will be dealt with by way of disciplinary measures, and staff will be dismissed for misconduct where fraud is established. See also the [Section 5.2](#) on fraud and corruption.





We should only use the Organization's vehicles for official purposes, and we should not ask FAO drivers to use FAO vehicles for activities that are unrelated to the work of the Organization, unless otherwise authorized in accordance with the applicable rules. We are also responsible for the safe operation of FAO vehicles, which is necessary to protect FAO personnel and others on the road. We should be courteous motorists and obey the traffic rules at all times.

### Box 33 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraph 25
- Staff Rule 303.2.3 *Financial responsibility*
- Manual Section 503 *Asset management*
- Manual Section 510 *Guidelines on the Use, Maintenance and Administration of Official Vehicles in the Field*
- Administrative Circular 2016/23 *Gross Negligence*
- Manual Section 330 *Disciplinary measures* at 330.1.52

## 5.11 Corporate environmental responsibility

FAO strives to comprehensively integrate environmental sustainability and efficiency considerations into facilities and operations. It is the responsibility of us all to include these considerations in our everyday work, by referring to these principles:

- ✓ Leading by example – FAO often operates in contexts with water scarcity, unstable electricity grids, and insufficient waste management mechanisms. It is our responsibility not to further exacerbate the situation of the local utilities systems.
- ✓ Managing risks – failure to identify environmental risks and to address them properly might lead to soil and water pollution or public health issues. This would also potentially entail a liability and jeopardize FAO's reputation among beneficiary communities. All operations with potential impact on the environment should be identified and reported to the Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) team for support and guidance ([corporate-environmental-responsibility@fao.org](mailto:corporate-environmental-responsibility@fao.org)).



- ✓ Achieving financial savings through resource efficiency – the resources we receive from our donors must be spent in the most efficient way possible. Therefore, it is important that consumption patterns at the office be in line with best practice. We should, for example, avoid unnecessary printing, reduce plastic goods, keep air conditioning to a reasonable temperature, turn off electric devices such as computers and screens when not in use, and limit travel.

### Box 34 Sources

- Administrative Circular 2016/15 Corporate Environmental Responsibility at FAO
- E-learning *Corporate Environmental Responsibility*

## 5.12 Procurement

To ensure that the Organization's resources are used in a responsible manner and to maintain a high degree of public trust in the Organization, it is essential that all procurement activities are competitive, transparent and fair. Such activities must be carried out impartially and avoid even the appearance of preferential treatment.

For this reason, there are specific rules governing procurement activities, including those involving Letters of Agreement and purchase orders awarded to vendors.

All personnel involved in procurement for the Organization are covered by a "No gifts and no hospitality" policy, which imposes additional responsibilities on these personnel. If any gift, favour or promise of employment is offered by a current or prospective vendor, it must be reported to the head of the procurement unit. Vendors are themselves subject to disclosure and requirements to uphold ethical conduct as part of FAO's vendor management in compliance with the UN Supplier Code of Conduct, and may be subject to sanctions if these requirements are not followed.

If you or any member of your family are in a situation that would allow you to obtain a personal benefit (even if the benefit does not actually materialize), or if you or a member of your family have more than a nominal interest in or association with a vendor, you must also promptly disclose this. Any other relationship that could appear to compromise the impartiality and transparency of the procurement process, or raise concerns about a potential conflict of interest, should be disclosed. Proper and timely disclosure permits the Organization to address

any potential conflicts of interest and mitigate related risks, including to FAO's image and reputation, before proceeding. If there is any doubt, the Ethics Office should be consulted.

### Box 35 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraphs 23, 24 and 26
- Manual Section 502 *Procurement of Goods, Works and Services*
- Manual Section 507 *Letters of Agreement*
- Administrative Circular 2014/27 *FAO Vendor Sanctions Policy*
- **UN Supplier Code of Conduct**

## 5.13 Records management

FAO is responsible to its Members and other stakeholders for the capture and maintenance of accurate and reliable records. All records created in the course of our work are the property of FAO and we must therefore, for instance, ensure that any such records are available to the Organization. All personnel are required to hand over or provide access to any FAO record in their possession when requested by a duly authorized official (such as a supervisor or an auditor).

All records must be retained according to the prescribed retention periods and disposition procedures. We must not intentionally remove, alter or destroy records, except as in line with records management and archival policies and procedures.

### Box 36 Sources

- Manual Section 601 *Records and Archives Management*
- Manual Section 340 *Confidential Personnel Files*
- **Administrative Circular 2021/06 *FAO Investigation Guidelines***
- **Administrative Circular 2022/06 *Data Protection Policy***
- **Charter of the Office of the Inspector-General**

## 5.14 Use and protection of data

As a general rule, we should exercise discretion and use good judgment in handling data. When we are communicating information outside of FAO, we must ensure that this is done in accordance with applicable rules and procedures and seek authorization as required. If in doubt about whether data should be shared, consult your supervisor.



We should assume that, unless clearly specified or evident, the data we are handling is of an internal or confidential nature. Internal data is data that has not been made public due to their preparatory or incomplete nature or need for internal approval. Thus, it may not be disclosed outside the Organization, such as correspondence or draft technical documents under preparation.

Confidential data is data that is sensitive in nature. We are all responsible for ensuring that internal and confidential data, which may include data that is provided to FAO or generated by FAO on confidential basis, is securely held and protected from unauthorized access, use and disclosure. Data that is confidential should be marked as such. To protect and secure data, we must first identify what data we handle and classify it according to its sensitivity and risk.

Personal data (e.g. performance and conduct records), is a special category that must be dealt with carefully to ensure that it is only used for the appropriate purpose. FAO has procedures in place to ensure correct handling of the personal data of its personnel.

Data that has been obtained in the course of our duties must never be

used for our private advantage or that of anyone else. Similarly, it must not be used for personal reasons to prejudice or harm any other party. In this connection, see also the sections above on **conflicts of interest** and **fraud and corruption**.

### Box 37 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraphs 9 and 10, 38 and 39
- Staff Regulation 301.1.5
- Staff Rules 302.1.55 and 302.1.61
- Manual Section 361.5  
*Communication of Information*
- **Administrative Circular 2022/06**  
*Data protection policy*





## 5.15 Intellectual property

The work that we produce while working for FAO belongs to FAO. FAO retains the right to use, publish, translate and disseminate our work in line with its mandate.

We may only use other people's information if we have their consent or if the information has been made publicly available without restriction, like with a Creative Commons license. Check with OCC ([Copyright@fao.org](mailto:Copyright@fao.org)) if you have questions about Creative Commons licenses.

When creating FAO work products, authorship should be assigned appropriately in accordance with the contribution to the development of material published, and in line with OCC guidelines for attribution and authorship. If you have any queries about authorship, these should be raised with your supervisors or the Office of Communications ([Copyright@fao.org](mailto:Copyright@fao.org)).

## 5.16 Post-employment restrictions

Working for FAO, we have access to confidential or internal data, gain special expertise, and may also develop relationships with stakeholders. It is important that we do not use our official position for our private advantage, either during our service or afterwards.

Similarly, we may not use confidential or internal data to influence the decisions of FAO or of third-party entities with a view to seeking employment with them. We must exercise care in our relationships with former and future colleagues and employers, so that it does not appear that FAO's neutrality is compromised, for instance by favouring its former personnel or its operational, technical or commercial partners in any way, especially in situations where former FAO personnel may subsequently join an entity that they directly interacted with in their official FAO capacity. Consult the Ethics Office if you are unsure of the appropriate course of action.

### Box 38 Sources

- Staff Rule 303.2.27 *Proprietary rights*
- Administrative Circular 2023/07 – *FAO Policy on Intellectual Property Rights*



### Box 39 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraphs 24 and 26
- Manual Section 507 *Letters of Agreement at 507.4 Accountability and Ethical Behaviour*
- Administrative Circular 2013/23 *Confidentiality policy*

## 5.17 Acceptable use of information technology

The use of FAO computer resources and networks is primarily for FAO official use. We are all responsible for ensuring that the information and communication technology (ICT) resources of the Organization are used in a lawful and ethical manner.

We may make personal use of the Organization's equipment and software, under certain conditions, but it is imperative that we exercise good judgement to ensure that this is kept to a minimum, does not negatively impact the Organization's resources and that it does not interfere with doing our job well and in a timely manner. Some personal use (see examples below) may constitute misconduct. It is important to highlight that FAO accepts no responsibility in connection with personal use of the Organization's ICT resources and networks.

ICT resources should be accessed only through the authorized use of personal credentials and passwords.

We must all familiarize ourselves with the Organization's rules and policies applicable to the use of ICT resources.

We also all have a duty to help maintain the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the Organization's technology, systems and information, exercising caution and due diligence to ensure that information available through the ICT resources is protected from unauthorized access.

We are not permitted to augment, change, or modify in any way the FAO equipment and software, or install non-FAO approved software. The circumvention of computing systems or network security controls is strictly prohibited.

FAO respects copyright and other intellectual property laws that apply to the FAO equipment and software. We are all required to respect these laws as well. The software used by FAO is licensed, and the licenses contain restrictions on use, which we are required to comply with. Copying, using, downloading, or transferring any images, sounds, video, objects, documents or programmes for which FAO does not have a license, is prohibited.

In relation to content creation and communication:

- ✓ Creating, accessing or sending material that is pornographic, racist, xenophobic, or in any other way violates human dignity is strictly prohibited.
- ✓ Whenever we state our affiliation to FAO (e.g. on a social media profile, in a journal article, or other), we must also clearly indicate that “the opinions expressed are my own and not necessarily those of FAO” bearing in mind that this does not absolve us from our obligations to act appropriately in accordance with this Code.
- ✓ Sending unsolicited email messages, including “junk mail” or other advertising material to individuals who did not specifically request such material (email spam) is prohibited.

- ✓ Creating or forwarding “chain letters”, “Ponzi” or other “pyramid” schemes of any type is prohibited.
- ✓ Forwarding or sending malicious emails or emails with malicious attachments is prohibited.

FAO monitors the use of ICT resources for management purposes, and to ensure that the above principles are being observed. When, as a result of monitoring activities, there is reason to believe that anyone may have engaged in misconduct through their use of ICT, OIG will be informed. Disciplinary or other administrative action may result. Use of Internet facilities for illegal purposes in the specific national context may be subject to monitoring by the competent national authorities.





## Box 40 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraphs 9 and 25
- Administrative Manual Section 505 *Information Technology*
- Administrative Manual Section 550.2.6.4 *Access to Corporate Data Collected through Electronic Turnstiles*

## 5.18 Engagement with the news media

Any engagement with the media, in any format, related to our work should be approved in accordance with internal procedures. We should only

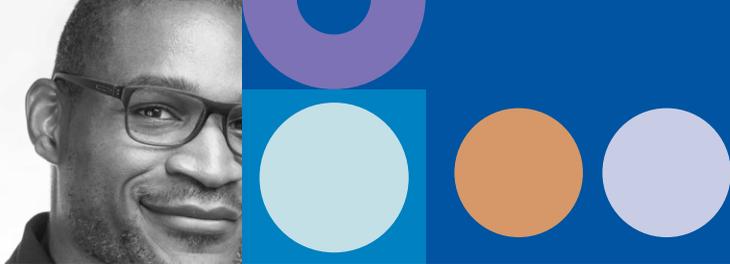
engage with news media in our official capacity where such is in line with the Organization's strategic direction and objectives.

Engagement with the media in our personal capacity on matters unrelated to our FAO work requires prior approval under Manual Section 361.5 on *Communication of Information* (see also **Section 5.4 Outside activities**).

## Box 41 Sources

- ICSC Standards of Conduct at paragraphs 35 to 37
- Manual Section 361.5 *Communication of Information*
- Administrative Circular 2022/14 *Outside activities*





## 6. REPORTING CONCERNS AND SEEKING GUIDANCE

Information about the different offices that are available to assist us with concerns relating to the topics covered in this Code, and the rules and policies that it references, is presented below. Please also refer to [From concern to clarity – FAO’s Roadmap on where to go when in need](#).

### 6.1 Office of the Inspector General

Pursuant to its [Charter](#), OIG is responsible for investigating allegations of misconduct involving FAO personnel and service providers or vendors. Such allegations include:

- ✓ fraudulent and corrupt practices
- ✓ sexual exploitation and abuse
- ✓ sexual harassment
- ✓ harassment and abuse of authority
- ✓ retaliation against whistleblowers
- ✓ abuse of privileges and immunities, and
- ✓ any other serious breaches of the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service and other FAO rules and policies.

Reports of misconduct are received on a confidential basis. While complaints may be lodged anonymously, providing our identity helps OIG with its investigative activities when additional information is required about the complaint. Investigations follow the [FAO Investigation Guidelines](#). Remember – we should never undertake any investigation ourselves as this may expose us to risks and compromise the usefulness of investigative activities.

### 6.2 Ethics Office

The Ethics Office provides guidance on situations that may involve a conflict of interest, including recommending actions to mitigate or eliminate the conflict. By consulting with the Ethics Office, we can ensure that our actions are in line with the Organization’s rules and standards of ethical conduct and this Code.

Under the [Whistleblower Protection Policy](#), the Ethics Officer reviews *prima facie* complaints of retaliation. Upon referral by the Ethics Office when a *prima facie* case of retaliation has been established, OIG investigates complaints of retaliation.



### 6.3 Ombuds Office

The Ombudsperson is a neutral and informal conflict resolution resource that offers opportunities for us to:

- ✓ discuss a problem off-the-record and in confidentiality outside formal channels;
- ✓ explore alternatives for resolving a problem and learn about the resources that are available for this purpose (e.g. if a certain concern should be reported to OIG);
- ✓ increase our ability and confidence to deal with conflict; and
- ✓ receive coaching and guidance on how to present an issue or concern through another internal mechanism.

Where the parties to a dispute agree to use mediation, the Ombudsperson can provide mediation services.

### 6.4 Human Resources Division

CSH provides guidance on our human resources policies and procedures, and the related rules, especially as regards recruitment and selection and performance management. CSH also manages learning priorities for our personnel as a whole. CSH can further advise managers and supervisors on performance and conduct issues.

### 6.5 Health Services

The Health Services is available to provide various types of support, for instance health awareness and preventive care, clinical care, emergency services, and overall guidance on health and wellbeing.

The Staff Counsellors are available for FAO personnel and their family members to address personal and work-related issues. If you need a more specialized care, you will be referred to an outside provider among a selected group of private mental health professionals.

### 6.6 Security Services

FAO Security Services contribute to a work environment that is safe and secure by providing practical security infrastructure, support, services, and advice. They also ensure a coherent, effective, and timely response to all security-related threats and other emergencies.

Security incidents, including all losses, thefts, or damage to FAO property, whether at Headquarters, in duty stations, or while traveling, must be reported to Security Services.

## 6.7 Staff Representative Bodies

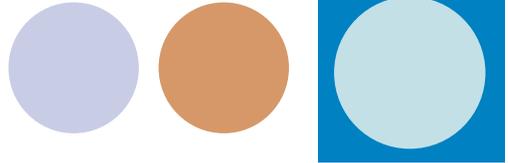
In FAO, there are two bodies representing staff; the Union of General Service Staff (UGSS) that represents all staff of FAO and WFP in the General Service category at headquarters, and the Association of Professionals (AP-in-FAO) that represents all international staff in the Professional category at

headquarters and in the field. The Staff Representative Bodies (SRBs) help resolve issues relating to staff welfare and working conditions. Staff members may bring individual cases to the attention of their SRB who can advise on and assist in addressing issues informally or formally. The SRBs may also provide their members with support and legal advice.





## 7. Contacts



### Office of the Inspector-General

FAO Hotline for reporting misconduct:

[fao.ethicspoint.com](http://fao.ethicspoint.com)

(available in over 100 languages)

Email: [Inspector-General-Office@fao.org](mailto:Inspector-General-Office@fao.org) (General office line)

Email: [investigations-hotline@fao.org](mailto:investigations-hotline@fao.org) (may also be used for confidential reporting)

### Ethics Office

Telephone: +39 06 570 53800

Email: [ethics-office@fao.org](mailto:ethics-office@fao.org)

### FAO Hotline for reporting retaliation:

[www.fao.ethicspoint.com](http://www.fao.ethicspoint.com) (available in over 100 languages)

### Ombuds Office

Telephone: +39 06 570 53900

Email: [ombuds@fao.org](mailto:ombuds@fao.org)

### Office of Human Resources

Email: [HR-Advice@fao.org](mailto:HR-Advice@fao.org)

### Health Services

Telephone: +39 06 570 53577

Email: [Health-Services@fao.org](mailto:Health-Services@fao.org) / [Wellness@fao.org](mailto:Wellness@fao.org) (Staff Counsellors)

### Security Services

Telephone: +39 06 570 53616

Email: [Security-Services@FAO.org](mailto:Security-Services@FAO.org)

In the event of an emergency at FAO Headquarters call extensions 33 or 55.

### Association of Professionals in FAO (AP-in-FAO)

Telephone: +39 06 57053986

Email: [AP-in-FAO@FAO.ORG](mailto:AP-in-FAO@FAO.ORG)

### Union of General Service Staff of FAO and WFP (UGSS)

Telephone: +39 06 570 53530

Email: [UGSS@fao.org](mailto:UGSS@fao.org)



CONTACT  
US

Ethics Office  
Ethics-Office@fao.org  
<http://www.fao.org/ethics/en/>

**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**  
Rome, Italy