

Background Note: Briefing to the Executive Board Annual Session 2026

“Management Response to the Report on the Activities of the UN-Women Ethics Function for 1 January – 31 December 2025”

I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to Executive Board decision 2022/5, UN-Women management welcomes the fourth report on the activities of the Ethics Function, covering the period 1 January – 31 December 2025.
2. Consistent with the principles set out in ST/SGB/2007/11 on the United Nations system-wide application of ethics to separately administered organs and programmes, the ethics function contributes to advancing an organizational culture grounded in integrity and accountability.
3. Management reaffirms its commitment to safeguarding the independence and impartiality of the ethics function, consistent with the standards set out in the Joint Inspection Unit Report *Review of the ethics function in the United Nations system* (JIU/REP/2021/5), recognizing its essential role in enhancing trust and credibility across the organization.

II. Activities

A. Standard-setting and Policy Support

4. UN-Women welcomes the strengthening of the policy framework, including the review of the Hospitality and Gifts Policy in collaboration with the Division of Finance and Administration, and the development of supporting guidance. Management will support the operationalization of these measures in 2026.
5. The organization also appreciates the ethics function’s inputs into key policies, including the Anti-Fraud Policy, Risk Management Policy, and Financial Regulations and Rules.

B. Training, Outreach, and Awareness-Raising

6. Management values the continued outreach and awareness-raising efforts of the ethics function, including the delivery of scenario-based workshops and targeted trainings across headquarters, regional and country offices on standards of conduct, conflicts of interest, protection against retaliation, and outside activities.
7. The organization notes with satisfaction the increased completion rate of the mandatory ethics and integrity training, reaching approximately 84% in 2025, reflecting strengthened compliance and sustained engagement across the organization.
8. UN-Women underscores the importance of reinforcing standards of conduct from the outset of service. In this regard, it notes with appreciation the collaboration with Human Resources and the introduction of a dedicated ethics segment in the monthly Global Orientation Session for New Hires, which supports early awareness of ethical values.

C. Confidential Advice and Guidance

9. Management recognizes the preventive and advisory role of the ethics function in supporting informed decision-making in line with applicable ethical standards, through the provision of impartial and actionable guidance, including on conflicts of interest.

10. UN-Women acknowledges that, of the 562 service requests received in 2025, 368 related to confidential ethics advice (65%), reflecting sustained demand for, and continued reliance on, the ethics function as a trusted source of guidance.
11. The organization further observes that the majority of requests were related to outside activities, including pre-employment advice, followed by institutional integrity and internal procedures for reporting misconduct, highlighting the importance of proactive risk management.

D. United Nations Financial Disclosure Programme

12. Management reaffirms the importance of the Financial Disclosure Programme as a cornerstone of the organization's conflict-of-interest management framework, and takes note of its successful implementation in 2025, with 100% submission rate by designated staff members and close to 99% compliance with programme requirements.

E. Protection Against Retaliation

13. The organization takes note of the information provided on requests received under the Protection against Retaliation Policy and welcomes the guidance provided to personnel, including the appropriate handling of and referrals for inquiries received during the reporting period.

III. The Ethics Panel of the United Nations and the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations

14. UN-Women welcomes the ethics function's active engagement with the Ethics Panel of the United Nations (EPUN) and the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations (ENMO), supporting coherent ethical standards and collaboration to promote a shared culture of integrity.

IV. Conclusion

15. Management acknowledges the continued efforts of the ethics function in delivering its mandate across all areas of work, including under reduced staffing capacity during part of the reporting period, and expresses its appreciation for the Ethics Specialist's substantive and strategic contributions, as reflected in the annual report.
16. UN-Women will continue to actively support the ethics function, including through ongoing review and consideration of its structure and resourcing, to ensure its effectiveness and long-term sustainability, taking into account the broader funding constraints across the United Nations System, including UN-Women, as well as ongoing organizational changes.
17. A respectful, safe, and ethical organizational culture remains a core priority for the organization. In this regard, UN-Women reaffirms its commitment to strengthening ethical standards, promoting accountability, and fostering a principled culture across all levels of the organization.