



5 February 2019

Dear colleagues,

Two recent staff surveys have revealed rampant harassment and abuse across the UN system, and highlighted the urgent need for concrete changes in how the UN handles cases of misconduct.

The system-wide survey commissioned by the Secretary-General focused on sexual harassment. The results, which were widely reported in international media this month, indicate that a third of all staff have experienced sexual harassment in the UN context, and that only a minority of victims choose to take action as a result.

The survey of CCISUA members, in contrast, covered a broader range of prohibited conduct: discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority. Today, we are pleased to share with you a more detailed overview of the survey results (attached), following the initial findings that were announced in December. Your responses, including some 10,000 individual comments from over 6,000 participants, helped establish some clear and striking patterns:

- Prohibited conduct is widespread in the UN, and affects women disproportionately. According to our survey, women are nearly five times more likely than men to be the victim of sexual harassment. Younger staff and personnel on 'weaker' contracts also tend to be in a more vulnerable position.
- UN personnel are reluctant to report misconduct because they do not trust the system and because they fear reprisal. Sadly, almost half of those who reported harassment believe they were subjected to retaliation.
- Staff's experiences with formal mechanisms are particularly damning: instead of receiving protection, victims tend to be left in the dark, often continuing to work under the alleged offender for an indefinite period and without any update on their case. Investigations can drag on for several years, and a significant number of respondents reported conflicts of interest or breaches in confidentiality during the course of the investigation.

Together, these two important surveys demonstrate that the UN's current culture and redress mechanisms are in urgent need of repair. It is clear that, despite some welcome steps, the administration's measures do not yet go far enough to protect staff from misconduct. In short: the mechanisms currently in place simply aren't working.

We believe the UN must better tackle misconduct in all its forms – including harassment, discrimination and abuse of authority – and that its policies and procedures must be genuinely grounded in the real-life experiences of staff. This remains a priority for all of us at CCISUA, and we will not relent until concrete improvements take hold across the UN System. We will continue to draw on your insights to guide our actions and advocacy, and to identify solutions that will make a real difference.

Thank you for your participation and support,

CCISUA Bureau