UNOV/UNODC STAFF COUNCIL

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

To: António Guterres
United Nations Secretary-General

Date: 13 March 2026

From: Samar Haidar
President, UNOV/UNODC Staff Council

Subject: Physical Office Presence

1. The UNOV/UNODC Staff Council has been informed about the memorandum of 4 March 2026 on *Physical Office Presence* from the Chef de Cabinet conveying your request to Heads of Entities to implement arrangements requiring office presence of at least four days per week. Our Staff Council, which has active membership on the Staff-Management Committee (SMC), expresses its disappointment that a decision with such significant implications for staff was taken without prior consultation with staff representatives.

2. Our request is that due regard be paid to *staff regulations 8.1 and 8.2*, which require that the Secretary-General "shall establish and maintain continuous contact and communication with the staff in order to ensure the effective participation of the staff in identifying, examining and resolving issues relating to staff welfare, including conditions of work, general conditions of life and other human resources policies."

3. Pursuant to the staff regulations and ST/SGB/2011/6/Rev.1, the SMC was established for the purpose of advising you regarding human resources policies and general questions of staff welfare. Within the framework of the SMC, staff and management have regularly discussed the governance of flexible working arrangements and good practices for implementing ST/SGB/2019/3, and we could have effectively responded and jointly and strategically agreed on proposals to respond to any needs to adjust the physical presence of staff in the office.

4. The UNOV/UNODC Staff Council notes with great concern that the issuance of such a request at a time when staff are already demoralized and working under immense pressure reinforces the growing sense of arbitrariness and disenfranchisement from managerial decision-making. Your decision will have a disproportionate and negative effect primarily on women, single parents and colleagues with disabilities. We are concerned that the new approach to restrict flexibility makes the Secretariat a less competitive employer, contradicts the Organization's broader commitments on these matters, and fuels perceptions of institutional weakness and hypocrisy over adherence to stated norms and values.

5. On 11 February 2026, staff unions and associations of the SMC sent a letter to you to raise persistent concerns about staff-management relations. We have not yet received a reply to the letter, including our invitation for you to directly chair an SMC meeting. The next annual SMC meeting will be held from 15 to 22 April 2026 in Valencia, Spain, and we reiterate the call for your presence in Valencia, or at a minimum to hold a meeting with the SMC by video conference.

6. The UNOV/UNODC Staff Council concludes this memo by emphasizing that the SMC framework exists to ensure that matters such as flexible working arrangements are discussed in a structured and meaningful manner. We, therefore, kindly request that you suspend your memo on *Physical Office Presence* to the Heads of Entities, pending meaningful consultation with the staff unions and associations to ensure that collectively we will respond in the most strategic, fit-for-purpose, manner to the expectations from some Member States.