



47th Staff Council

UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/UN WOMEN
Staff Council

2023 Annual Report

Date: 9 February 2023

Message from the Chairs

Dear Colleagues,

Twenty twenty-three was a year of unprecedented challenges and losses for the United Nations and our personnel. The conflict in the Middle East has been particularly devastating, resulting in the highest number of personnel fatalities in a single conflict to date, most of them from UNRWA. Within our organisations, we grieve the loss of two UNDP employees, five UNDP and UN Women dependents, and the injuries sustained by colleagues and their dependents, including those from UNFPA. We pay tribute to their sacrifices in their commitment to humanity and stand in solidarity with colleagues in the region who continue to deliver in the most difficult circumstances. Your bravery and resolve are an inspiration to us all.

In 2023, we also mourned the passing of our dear colleague, Tenagne Getahun, who joined the Staff Council Secretariat in 2017. Tenagne exemplified devotion and commitment to supporting and helping personnel.

The year also saw our farewell to a long-standing representative, Rohan Jones from UNOPS, whose contract was terminated due to restructuring. This incident has raised significant concerns about the protection of staff representatives, prompting us to voice our strong objections.

On a positive note, we are pleased to present this report on behalf of the 47th Staff Council, showcasing our accomplishments as we progress with our 2023–2024 work programme. The first round of regional consultations towards the establishment and operationalization of the Global Forum of Staff Representatives was especially insightful, underscoring the importance of this undertaking, which we are dedicated to complete before the end of our term. The Staff Council has had regular meetings with heads of agencies and senior management to discuss and strategize on issues related to policies and procedures impacting personnel. We have engaged in difficult organizational change processes, advocated for fair and equal working conditions and representation of all personnel, supported and advocated for individual colleagues facing challenges, promoted mechanism giving voice to personnel and engaged in dialogues on operationalizing a hybrid working environment,

When it comes to advancing the interests of personnel with the broader UN Common System, the Staff Council has represented our staff federation UNISERV and engaged in various dialogues including through the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), as well as in the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) and the Staff Management Committee, addressing issues related to standards of conduct, gender parity, staff welfare, conditions of service and benefits, security, and occupational health and safety, to name a few.

Overall, the Staff Council has advocated for the organizations to adopt a positive leadership model that emphasizes transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. Through these efforts, we aim to foster a more

engaging and supportive working environment that not only meets the current needs of our personnel but also anticipates future challenges and opportunities.

To ensure full staff representation and enhance our team's effectiveness, we successfully held by-elections in 2023 to fill four vacant UNDP seats and one UNOPS seat. We extend a warm welcome to our new members and applaud their dedication to collaboratively promoting, protecting, and safeguarding the rights, interests, welfare, and well-being of personnel from UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS and UN Women.

Our responsibilities extend beyond serving the headquarters personnel and encompass the oversight of and support to the Global Staff Association. Collaborating with local staff representatives has been a particularly rewarding experience. We express our heartfelt thanks to the dedicated staff representatives from the 90 Local Staff Committees who ceaselessly advocate for the rights and well-being of all national personnel.

We wish to express our appreciation to our colleagues across the globe and the Heads of Agencies: UNDP Administrator, Achim Steiner; UNFPA Executive Director, Dr. Natalia Kanem; UNOPS Executive Directors, Jens Wandel and Jorge Moreira da Silva; and UN Women Executive Director, Sima Sami Bahous, as well as their human resource management teams for their continued support in our mission to represent our colleagues across UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS and UN Women.

We also express our deepest thanks to our Staff Secretariat colleagues for keeping us on track and helping us move forward.

Michael, Henia and Patricia

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Introduction

This report is prepared in accordance with Article 11 of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/UN Women Staff Association constitution. It covers the work of the Council as the principal body of the global Staff Association from 1 January to 31 December 2023.

All the actions outlined in this report have been undertaken by the Staff Council in its effort to:

- (a) Promote, protect, and safeguard the rights, interests, welfare and well-being of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/UN Women staff.
- (b) Defend staff seeking resolutions arising out of disputes, work to improve the terms and conditions of employment, and maintain morale of staff.
- (c) Develop and improve effective staff participation in the decision-making process by maintaining active and open channels of communication with the Administration.
- (d) Promote better understanding between Management and the Staff of UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS and UN Women.
- (e) Promote cooperation and unity among Staff Associations and Unions in the United Nations and UN Specialized Agencies within one Common System on matters governing conditions of service.

(Chapter I, Article 2 of the Constitution)

Staff Council Structure

The members of the 47th Staff Council are:

- **Michael H. Lund**, Chairperson (UNDP representative)
- **Henia Dakkak**, First Vice-Chairperson (UNFPA representative)
- **Patricia Cortes**, Second Vice-Chairperson (UN Women representative)
- **Danielle Okoro**, Treasurer - (UNFPA representative)
- **Athena Rebutiaco Cortez**, Member (UN Women representative)
- **Rohan Jones**, Member (UNOPS representative)
- **Michaela Bock Pedersen**, Member (UNOPS representative)
- **Rekha Das**, Member (UNDP representative)
- **Ali Tahsin Jumah**, Member (UNDP representative)
- **Tiffany Moore**, Member (UNDP representative)
- **Pradip Tripathy**, Member (UNDP representative)

The term of the current and 47th Staff Council ends on 31 October 2024.

Committees

As per the Constitution, the following standing committees to support the Staff Council should be in place: Legal, Audit and Electoral. It was not possible to form these committees in 2023. Renewed efforts will be made in 2024 to have all committees formed.

The elected Polling Officers for Headquarters are:

- **Donaldo Lopez** (UNDP)
- **Claudia Josephs** (UNDP)
- **M. Firas Akkad** (UNFPA)
- **Alicia Long** (UN Women)

Annual General Meeting

The previous annual general meeting was held virtually on 14 February 2023. The Staff Council presented the 2022 annual report along with its financial statement. The Staff Council also presented its 2023- 2024 Programme of Work and 2023 budget, which were approved.

Implementation of the Programme of Work 2023

Establishing the Global Forum of Staff Representatives

In the 2022, revision of the Staff Council Constitution, a critical mandate was set forth for the establishment of the Global Forum of Staff Representatives, aiming to foster enhanced collaboration and effectiveness among staff representatives from diverse levels across our four organizations. The Staff Council, serving in the 2023-2024 period, has taken this mandate to heart. By engaging in a comprehensive process of co-creation and extensive consultations with local representatives, the Staff Council is actively working to ensure that the Global Forum transitions from concept to reality and becomes fully operational.

The Global Forum seeks to bring together staff representatives from UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, and UN Women, aiming to unify efforts, share challenges and strategies, and bolster the efficacy of staff representation across these organizations and from local to global. The work was initiated with virtual regional consultations, the Global Forum is shaping its structure and objectives, emphasizing the sharing of experiences, enhancing communication, advocacy, capacity building, and institutional support. These efforts are directed towards addressing common personnel issues, enhancing working conditions, and promoting the rights and well-being of personnel, marking a foundational step towards a more collaborative and supportive environment within the United Nations system.

First Round of Consultations and Findings

A first round of regional consultations marked a significant step forward, bringing together representatives from various regions to discuss key challenges and opportunities in personnel representation. These discussions, undertaken between March and July 2023, highlighted several issues, including the lack of visibility of staff/personnel representatives, communication barriers, and the need for more effective engagement with management. Participants voiced concerns about contract insecurities, disparities in working conditions, and a perceived lack of support from higher management levels. The consultations underscored the necessity for a more connected and supportive global network of staff representatives, laying the groundwork for the Global Forum's strategic direction.

In terms of representation, a challenge encountered was that of the over 60 representatives who participated in the consultations, there was an unequal representation from the organizations with 72 percent colleagues representing UNDP, 20 percent from UNFPA, six percent from UN Women, and two percent from UNOPS. To achieve a more balanced representation, the Staff Council has decided to conduct entity-specific consultations within UNFPA, UNOPS, and UN Women in February 2024. The efforts to establish a Global Forum will continue and conclude in 2024.

Strengthening and harmonizing the representation of staff and personnel

Secure organizational engagement

The Staff Council is mandated to develop and improve effective staff participation in the decision-making process by maintaining active and open channels for communication with the administration and to promote better understanding between management and the staff of the four agencies.

To fulfil this mandate, a critical part of the Staff Council's work is to regularly engage with key offices in the four organizations.

The Staff Council, either collectively or through our representatives within our respective agencies, has engaged in regular meetings with the executive heads and senior management. These discussions have focused on overarching policy issues, organizational matters, and on specific organizational change processes within UNFPA and UN Women.

Two meetings were held with the UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner and one meeting of the Staff-Management Coordination Group in UNDP also took place. Following the by-election resulting in full UNDP staff representation in the Staff Council, meetings were held with Bureau Directors. The Staff Council had ten regular meetings with the management of OHR/BMS in UNDP regarding organizational wide personnel matters and very regular meetings with human resource officers on specific individual cases. The Chair of the Staff Council also addressed all the global town hall meetings held in 2023.

Monthly regular meetings were held between the Staff Council and UNFPA Director of the Division of Human Resources. In addition to the monthly meetings with human resources, quarterly meetings were held with the Deputy Executive Directors of Management and Programmes and the Chief of Staff. During 2023 two meetings took place with the Executive Director of UNFPA, Dr. Natalia Kanem. Staff Council participated in all UNFPA Staff Meetings Town halls and had a speaking slot during such meetings to bring to attention concerns of staff and personnel working within UNFPA.

At UN Women, Staff Council representatives have monthly meetings with the office of human resources and occasional meetings with Executive Leadership regarding various organization-wide personnel matters. Additionally, meetings are held with OHR colleagues on individual cases. Representatives have addressed global and directorates town hall meetings held in 2023. The Second Vice Chair of Staff Council participated in UN Women's Leadership 2023, securing a speaking slot in a panel discussion with the Director of human resources on issues related to working conditions and fostering an enabling environment within UN Women.

The Staff Council had eleven regular meetings with the People and Change Group in UNOPS.

Meetings were also held with the Office of the Ombudsman, the Ethics Office, Audit and Investigation and the Office of Staff Legal Assistance (OSLA). The Staff Council also organized a webinar for all personnel with the Office of the Ombudsman and OSLA.

These very regular interactions with the administration in our four organizations enabled the Staff Council to push policy concerns, advocate for the interests of individual staff members and build trust between the administration and the Staff Council.

Policy dialogue

The key objective of the regular meetings with management and the administration is to engage in a policy dialogue to ensure that staff interests are well represented in policies affecting staff.

In 2023, the Staff Council reviewed and commented on the following UN Women policy and procedure guidelines: Inter-organization staff mobility policy, flexible work policy and part-time work and employment procedure (the procedure has been incorporated in the flexible work policy which is expected to be promulgated shortly), conditions of service policy, including parental leave and the supplementing parental leave with SLWFP procedure (the procedure was revised for the transition period to new parental leave policy, and has been archived since 31 December 2023) and recruitment and selection policy and procedure.

In 2023, the Staff Council reviewed and commented on the following UNFPA policy and procedure guidelines: Policy for parental leave, policy and procedures for time-off for breastfeeding, policy and procedures for safe driving bonus, policy for inter-organization mobility, policy for special leave, policy for retention in service beyond mandatory age of separation, policy for flexible working arrangements, policy for developmental assignments, policy for special post allowance and UNFPA Administrative Guidelines in response to the 2023 Gaza Emergency.

The key policy dialogue with UNOPS in 2023 focused on the conversion of non-staff to staff contracts culminating in the conversion of 130 contracts from non-staff to staff contracts in 2023.

A significant portion of human resource related policies and guidance in UNDP under the People for 2030 Strategy was prepared and approved prior to 2023. The Staff Council did engage actively with UNDP regarding revisions and implementation of policies and guidance related to: Parental leave, flexible working arrangements, contractual modalities, mobility policy, rank-in-post plus pilot, performance management and administrative guidelines for various duty stations including in the Arab States region.

Organizational change processes

UN Women launched the "Pivot to the Field" initiative, a significant shift toward decentralizing operations and reallocating resources to enhance its presence at the country level. The Executive Office has established a task force at the director-level charged with analysing and developing a strategy for decentralizing the operational model. The design phase is ongoing, with the goal of completing the transition by the end of 2025.

UN Women's commitment is to bolster support for personnel as the organization transitions to a more decentralized model. Staff Council representatives have participated in this journey by holding dialogues with the Executive Office and Human Resources; consulting with the advocacy personnel groups and interested colleagues about their concerns, questions and recommendations to inform the process; and promoting a town hall meeting with the Executive Office to discuss the initiative's vision and progress. Issues regarding the impact on personnel's family lives and personal circumstances have been voiced, including questions about relocation criteria, changes in roles and responsibilities, and how these align with organizational goals. The Staff Council has advocated for early, transparent, and participatory decision-making, adopting a personnel-centric and feminist approach to build trust, address concerns, and increase the effectiveness of the initiative.

In UNFPA, the Staff Council continued being engaged with the organizational change management processes regarding the headquarters optimization process that impacts 25 percent of headquarter staff. The restructuring process includes merging of two divisions into one and relocating the newly established division in September 2025

to Nairobi with the evaluation office. In addition to the headquarters optimization process for UNFPA, the Staff Council is involved with the local staff committee colleagues in Copenhagen to support them in the restructuring of the Supply Chain Management Unit located in Copenhagen. The Staff Council is also engaged in the restructuring of the Office of Security Coordination in New York and at the regional levels.

The Peace and Security Cluster in UNOPS, New York underwent a significant change process in 2023 culminating in the reduction of staff contracts.

A significant change process in UNDP and UN Women was the introduction of the new enterprise risk management system Quantum. From a staff perspective this involved significant challenges across the two entities not least in the UNDP Office in Copenhagen. The UNDP representatives advocated successfully for additional resources to support the teams in Copenhagen through this change process.

In UNDP headquarters, a restructuring of the Crisis and Fragility, Policy and Engagement Team into a new Policy, Knowledge and Partnerships Team in the Crisis Bureau was initiated in 2022 and concluded in 2023. The 47th Staff Council engaged in the process. A review of the Crisis Bureau and the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support was initiated in December 2023 and the Staff Council is involved in this process as well.

The Staff Council was also involved in a few UNDP country office restructuring processes in support of the Local Staff Committee and impacted personnel.

Support to personnel in addressing their concerns and grievances

The staff Council has continued working with both staff and the administration of the relevant agencies to address staff and personnel concerns and grievances such as post abolishment, non-renewal of contracts, abuse of authority, work related disputes, toxic work environment, salary scales in countries that have experienced high inflation rates and the devaluation of national currencies, contract modalities as well as staff representations and elections at the national levels.

In 2023, the Staff Council representatives at UN Women provided support to nearly 20 individuals at headquarters and a few colleagues from country offices helping with specific grievances, career development, conflict management, and overcoming communication challenges within teams and between team and management, proactively fostering open communication and contributing to improved job satisfaction and team cohesion. The Staff Council stood in solidarity with the General Service staff in their efforts to establish an advocacy group aimed at promoting the recognition and value of their roles, supporting their dialogue with senior management and HR, advocating for the acknowledgment of their contributions to the organization and their teams, as well as for fair and transparent career development opportunities, prioritizing those colleagues undertaking responsibilities beyond those outlined in their job descriptions.

The UNDP representatives were directly involved in 47 individual cases in UNDP in 2023. A significant number of the cases related to termination of contracts including as a result of restructuring and realignment processes. A number of cases related to performance management and broader matters of well-being including considerations of mental health issues. A common theme across the individual situations was the absence of a feeling of trust and an adverse work environment.

The Staff Council also helped Local Staff Associations in several countries as they provided support to individual personnel. Since October 2023, the Staff Council followed-up with human resources and security about the situation of personnel in the Middle East. The Staff Council engaged with UNISERV and sister unions to raise concerns about

our personnel in conflict affected areas. The Staff Council also worked closely with colleagues of the Local Staff Association in Palestine and held meetings with them and affected staff in Gaza to support them during the horrific experiences and to address their hardship living conditions, health and mental health needs and to respond to their security concerns and continue advocating on their behalf at the global level. The Staff Council is advocating and working on setting up a trust fund with UNFCU to support colleagues in rebuilding their lives and helping them through the on-going war on Gaza and to continue addressing their mental health needs and that of their families.

Contractual modalities and representing personnel

The appropriate use of different contract modalities continues to be a challenge in our organizations and was a key priority for the Staff Council in 2023 and will continue to be a critical priority in 2024.

The Staff Council introduced a modality for associate membership of the Staff Association for non-staff personnel at both headquarters and country level enabling the Staff Association to better represent colleagues on non-staff contracts. The issue of formal representation and full participation in the Staff Association of these colleagues continues, however, to be a significant concern to be addressed.

The Staff Council recognizes that the nature of some of the work in the organizations is best performed on a non-staff contract. However, the main reason for the use of non-staff personnel is largely due to the relative flexibility and lower cost implications compared to staff contracts and not, as it should be, due to the actual nature of the functions and work to be performed. This is a structural concern in the management of contract modalities and an issue that the Staff Council will continue to pursue.

The Staff Council advocated with UNDP human resources on behalf of a group of colleagues employed on personnel service agreements (PSA) concerning a range of administrative and financial challenges faced in various duty stations.

The Staff Council representatives at UN Women have consistently advocated for non-staff and general service colleagues to receive training on career development, emphasizing the importance of equipping all team members with the skills and knowledge needed for professional growth and advancement.

In regard to the review conducted by the Joint Inspection Unit on the use of non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities in the United Nations system, the Staff Council shared perspectives and experiences as well as contributed with proposals for improvement. This review will support the Staff Council in its advocacy efforts within the respective organizations to ensure the utilization of appropriate contractual modalities and address the gaps in representations within the Staff Council as well as address the concerns and grievances experienced by personnel on service contract modalities and consultant's contract holders.

Career planning

Progress on the issue of career planning in terms of policy and guidance development did not advance significantly in 2023. The Staff Council did engage in the mobility exercise and the rank-in-post plus in UNDP. The two initiatives are meant to facilitate career development.

The Staff Council also was involved in induction training for new staff at UNFPA, ensuring that newly recruited staff understand available non-formal support available for them in cases they need additional support in case of disputes.

Protecting staff in the current economic and funding environment

Economic turmoil and rapidly rising inflation in many parts of the world had a significant negative impact on compensation of personnel locally recruited and non-staff personnel. Rapidly changing local economic conditions challenged the UN to maintain conditions of service for locally recruited staff that reflect the best prevailing conditions found locally for similar work. The Staff Council advocated with the system-wide Human Resource Network and the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) for timely and suitable local salary surveys and adjustments. The Staff Council also advocated with the ICSC for appropriate compensation for UN staff working in hardship duty stations.

Harmonizing and improving the representation of staff members and personnel

Secure successful Annual General Meetings with Staff Council at Headquarters

The Annual General Meeting is a critical engagement forum for the Staff Council at headquarters level. The 2023 Annual General Meeting was held on 14 February 2023. The Staff Council 2023-2024 Programme of Work was approved with an associated budget for 2023. The 2024 Annual General Meeting will be held on 12 February 2024. The agenda will include the presentation of the 2023 Annual report, the interim 2023 financial report, and audited reports of the previous year. In addition, the focus in the existing programme of work for 2024 and its associated budget will also be presented for discussion and approval.

Strengthening staff engagement in the Staff Association

The roles and responsibilities of the 47th Staff Council was announced on 17 November 2022. The Council has a total of eleven seats but only six seats were filled at that time. The remaining five seats (four for UNDP and one for UNOPS) were filled through a by-election running from 22 September to 29 September 2023. The full Staff Council with all eleven representatives was announced on 27 October 2023.

Regrettably, in January 2024, the Staff Council lost one of its members amid a downsizing exercise at UNOPS. The contract termination of the incumbent staff was implemented despite concerted efforts by the Staff Council and UNISERV colleagues advocating for his retention. This situation underscores the critical need to ensure that staff representatives are adequately supported throughout their tenure, protecting their roles and enabling them to perform their duties. Such measures are vital for maintaining a robust and effective representation system that can truly advocate for the interests and rights of all personnel across our organizations.

The Staff Council – through the Polling Officers – conducted a referendum from 27 April to 9 May 2023. The referendum concerned a proposed revision of article 28-3b of the constitution reducing the existing requirement of duration of contract for a candidate to the Staff Council from one year to six months. This revision aligned the contract duration requirement for the Staff Council with the same requirement for Local Staff Committees. No other

changes to the constitution were proposed in the referendum. The proposal was passed with 73.5 percent supporting the change.

The Legal, Audit and Electoral Committees as called for in the constitution have not yet been established. Doing so will be a priority in 2024.

Representing personnel

The combined workforce of UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS and UN Women is over 40,000 personnel. Of the total workforce, staff only constitutes 48 percent in UNFPA, 36 percent in UN Women, 33 percent in UNDP, and around 8-10 percent in UNOPS. The rest of our personnel, which combined amounts to over 70 percent of the total workforce, are on non-staff contracts. The legal interpretation by our organizations of the system-wide staff rules is that the Staff Council and wider association can only formally represent staff, and only staff can be formal members of the Staff Association. The Staff Association constitution reflects this situation. The Staff Council has, however, in 2023, introduced a modality for associate membership at both headquarters and at the country level for all non-staff. A key priority for the Staff Council in 2024 is to advocate for the full implementation of the recommendations and findings of the Joint Inspection Unit's review of the use of non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities in the United Nations systems organizations. This will include negotiations on a solution for full representation of all personnel.

Enhancing engagement with the UN Common System

The Staff Council is a member of the United Nations International Civil Servants Federation (UNISERV), which is an international Federation of UN system staff unions and associations committed to constructive cooperation to provide equitable and effective representation of staff and personnel at all levels.

The Chair of the Staff Council was elected General-Secretary of UNISERV in September 2023 at the UNISERV annual general meeting. The First Vice Chair of the Staff Council serves as one of the Vice Presidents of UNISERV. The Chair and the Vice Chair of the Staff Council are members of the UNISERV Executive Committee.

International Civil Service Commission

Engagement with the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) is a key part of UNISERV'S work. The ICSC is an independent expert body making decisions on matters, such as the establishment of daily subsistence allowance (DSA) and post adjustment (i.e., cost-of-living element, hardship entitlements). The Staff Council joined the UNISERV delegations at the ICSC-95 on 20-31 March 2023 in New York and the ICSC-96 on 10-21 July in Montreal.

At the ICSC-95 and ICSC-96 reports on progress from the ICSC working groups (mentioned below) were provided and a discussion of the scope of the comprehensive compensation package was held. Various issues related to conditions of service and benefits were reviewed and discussed.

As part of UNISERV the Staff Council is also a member of the ICSC working groups on human resource framework and the working group on the standards of conduct for the international civil service. The working group on ICSC human resource framework was tasked with reviewing and revising the framework and met on 13-17 February in London. The working group on the standards of conduct is reviewing and revising the standards of conduct for the international civil service. The working group met on 23-26 May in Brussels. The focus of the discussions at this meeting was the provisions in the standards of conduct related to: Politicization of the international civil service

including the relations with member states; external activities and employment; public expression and political engagement of staff; conflicts of interest; and post-employment provisions. The second meeting of 2023 was held on 30 October – 3 November in New York focusing on internal issues in the Standard of Conduct such as abuse of authority, harassment and violence; strengthening of accountability provisions; duty of care and staff-management relations.

The Staff Council also represented UNISERV at the duty station and hardship review in November 2023 in New York.

High-Level Committee on Management

UNISERV participates in the meetings of the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM), which is responsible for ensuring coordination in administrative and management areas across the UN system. The HLCM is also responsible for maintaining dialogue with staff representatives on concerns of a system-wide nature. It is composed of the most senior administrative managers of the organizations of the system and the three Staff Federations of the UN system. HLCM meets bi-annually, and the Staff Council represented UNISERV at the HLCM-45 on 3-4 April in Amman, Jordan. This meeting had a special theme on a UN disability inclusion strategy. Occupational health and safety, actions towards a more diverse and inclusive UN system and addressing sexual harassment in the UN system was also discussed.

The Staff Council leads on behalf of UNISERV on occupational safety and health and is a member of the OSH Forum under the HLCM. During 2023 OSH held several online meetings to address COVID-19 residual issues and measures. Recognizing that personnel are the UN's greatest asset, and the UN has a duty to undertake all reasonably practicable actions to prevent occupational accidents, illnesses and exposures, and to enhance personnel health and wellbeing. Therefore, the UN's ability to deliver its mandate is inextricably linked to the safety and health of its workforce, and managing workplace safety and health is part of the UN's duty of care to its personnel and to those affected by its work. The UN's Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) policies and the achievement of its OSH objectives in New York (NY) are implemented through a consultative process between personnel and management within the NY OSH Committee. The New York OSH Committee's mandate is to advise the Senior Emergency Policy Team on all aspects of occupational safety and health in New York. The Staff Council is a member of this committee.

As part of the UNISERV delegation the Staff Council also joined one of the bi-annual meetings of the Human Resource Network on 11-13 October in Turin, Italy. Staff federations are not part of this network, which brings together Directors of human resources departments from over thirty UN and related organizations but was invited to this meeting to specifically discuss the ongoing comprehensive compensation package review.

Staff Management Committee

The Staff Management Committee (SMC) has been established by the Secretary-General pursuant to staff regulation 8.2 and staff rule 8.2(a) (ii). The SMC is the joint staff-management machinery at the Secretariat-wide level for the purpose of advising the Secretary-General regarding human resources policies and general questions of staff welfare. The Staff-Management Committee ensures the effective participation of the staff in identifying, examining and resolving Secretariat-wide issues relating to staff welfare, including conditions of work, general conditions of life and other human resources policies, as provided for in staff regulation.

The SMC holds regular virtual meetings and the Staff Council joined nine such meetings in 2023. The topics covered included: Next normal, the liquidity crisis, roster management, AI, human resource strategy and mobility among others.

SMC XI in-person meeting took place on 23-29 April 2023 in Brindisi, Italy with Staff Council participation. The issues discussed included: staff selection, gender focal points, psychological safety and mental health, liens, education grant, hybrid working modality and DEI.

The SMC also has working groups, and the Staff Council is represented in the working group on the Administration of Justice.

Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN)

The Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN) brings together representatives of all partners in the UN security management network including UN agencies, funds and programs to coordinate security practices and policies across the UN system. The IASMN reviews all existing and proposed policies, procedures and practices of the United Nations security management system and makes recommendations on these to the High-Level Committee on Management.

UNISERV is invited to the bi-annual meetings of the IASMN and the Staff Council joined IASMN-37 on 7-9 February in New York.

UN System Mental Health and Well-being Strategy Implementation Board

United Nations personnel at all locations can find themselves working in challenging situations. The challenges can stem from pressure and deadlines, being at a high-risk duty station, isolation from family and being away from one's country of origin. Successive surveys have shown that United Nations personnel report high levels of symptoms consistent with poor mental health. The working environment can play a direct role in this. Good working conditions protect mental health. Work can also be good for people, and healthy working conditions can protect mental health. United Nations personnel at all locations may be living with mental health conditions irrespective of work as a contributory factor.

The Staff Council recognizing the importance of mental health and well-being for our staff actively participated and engaged as part of UNISERV in the meeting of the UN Mental Health Strategy Board in Segovia, Spain. The focus of the working meeting is to review the implementation of UN Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for 2018-2023 and the development of score cards as indicators on the implementation by the different organization of the UN System Wide Strategy on Mental Health and Wellbeing and to develop and design the 2024 and Beyond Strategy and get it approved.

Making our workplace a better place to work

Staff Surveys

The Staff Council has taken a heightened interest in ensuring that all personnel have a chance to voice their views and concerns about our working conditions. The Staff Council took an active role in analysing various surveys conducted in our organizations. In 2023, UNDP launched the Listening Architecture dedicated to quarterly surveys to stay closely connected with personnel on different topics. The first survey was on engagement and the Staff Council promoted participation. The Staff Council has proactively reviewed and analysed surveys before meeting with each bureau and country office and had discussions as necessary. The experience so far is that implementation of meaningful action based on the survey results is very uneven and unfortunately, the offices that scored the lowest are also the ones with the least follow-up. The success of the listening architecture – including action on views expressed – is a corporate priority for UNDP and the Staff Council will continue to support this initiative actively.

UNOPS has conducted three pulse surveys since the crisis and the Staff Council has monitored the results closely. While there is some improvement it is slow and engagement among UNOPS personnel is still below average compared to other organizations.

At UN Women, the Staff Council was consulted on the findings of the 2022 Survey titled "UN Women 2.0 - Nurturing an Empowered Workforce." The recommendation was that the management's response should be formulated through a participatory approach, involving the different teams, thereby ensuring a more in-depth look and analysis per region and division vis-à-vis the organizational results. Following the debrief sessions, dedicated workshops with leadership and management of the regions and headquarters divisions with the goal of developing action plans aimed at enhancing staff engagement and morale.

In 2023 the Staff Council participated in the UNFPA Global Leadership Meeting under the theme of "The Art of Leadership" held in Almaty, Kazakhstan 16-18 of May which have culminated by Almaty Pledge.

In December 2022, Staff Council participated in the launch of UNFPA 2030 People's Strategy that centres on three key goals: 1. Building the workplace of the future for UNFPA by striving to become a workplace where the skills and capabilities of all members of the organization are valued and nurtured; where everyone can take the lead and find growth opportunities; and where all feel safe, included and respected. 2. Empowering the people – UNFPA's talented, dedicated staff. 3. Improving efficiency and effectiveness were the Division for Human Resources taking the lead by simplifying and streamlining HR policies, services, and programmes to strengthen a more decentralized workforce and ensure that all of HR speaks with one voice.

Future of Work

The consolidation of a hybrid working modality and implementation of flexible working arrangements were key issues in 2023 and will continue to be so in 2024. A hybrid working modality offers clear benefits to the organization and personnel.

A survey conducted at UNDP headquarters while operating under a mandatory two-days in office flexible working arrangement, showed that almost 80 percent of the personnel were satisfied with this arrangement. However, on 1 January UNDP changed the arrangement to three-days mandatory in the office.

UNOPS and UN Women have also transitioned to a mandatory three-day office model. UNFPA on the other hand have maintained the mandatory two-days in the office. The Staff Council was very engaged in discussions with human resources and managers at various levels as well as with Local Staff Committees and will continue to be very engaged on this issue.

The Staff Council representatives have urged human resources to encourage managers to hold open discussions with their teams about individual circumstances, highlighting the importance of compassionate and exemplary leadership. Flexible working arrangements must be augmented by guidelines on all aspects of a hybrid work environment including on how to lead and supervise and optimize the advantages of in-office and remote work.

Psychological Safety

The Staff Council promoted a working environment based on psychological safety where all personnel feel a sense of permission for candour and act and speak without fear of retribution. The Staff Council engaged with human resource in UNDP on the Speak Up initiative which encourages personnel to speak up in all cases of illegal dealings and misconduct – for instance in situations of bribery, sexual harassment, conflict of interest and more. Psychological safety and a speak up culture is an integral part of the implementation of a DEI strategy with a focus on strengthening inclusion.

Embracing a positive leadership model

The Staff Council champions positive leadership, advocating for personnel meaningful and equitable engagement in decision-making processes. We promote an inclusive, participatory, and empathetic approach to management and strive for equitable growth opportunities and gender parity at all levels, focusing on transparent and inclusive recruitment, and ensuring fair career growth for all personnel, while also ensuring that in recruitment processes gender balance is duly considered. By promoting leadership that embodies values of equality, inclusion, and justice, the Staff Council aspires to foster a more dynamic and equitable organizational culture.

Harmonizing the Mental Health and Well-Being Strategies

The UN System Workplace Mental Health and Well-being Strategy for 2024 and beyond was officially launched by the Deputy Secretary General on 15 November 2023. The Strategy was unanimously endorsed by the High-Level Committee of Management held in Copenhagen in October 2023 and represents a significant step forward in the UN's commitment to promoting mental health and well-being for its workforce. The Staff Council was part of the launch and contributed to the ongoing discussions in the HLCM.

The comprehensive data and consultation process ensured that the Strategy is grounded in the needs of personnel and reflects best practices in workplace mental health and well-being, and it confirms the commitment to creating an inclusive and sustainable working environment where mental health and well-being is embedded in the organizational culture and systems, where each and every one belongs, is valued, nurtured and thrives, ensuring an efficient workforce delivering on our promise of a better world.

Embracing and supporting the full implementation of the UN DEI Strategy

The Staff Council is a member of the UNDP DEI committee and attended its first meeting in January 2024. DEI Committee is mandated to advise on and support implementation of the UNDP DEI Strategy 2023-2025. Members of the committee play a pivotal role in ensuring DEI efforts (action plans, initiatives, campaigns, projects) reach personnel across the whole organization to help create a more inclusive environment for all employees.

At UN Women, the concerted efforts of advocacy groups such as the Black Caucus, Youth Council, LGBTIQ+ Advocacy Group, and the General Service Advocacy Group play a pivotal role in supporting management in fostering an organizational culture that values diversity, equity, and inclusion. Staff Council representatives leverage the expertise and leadership of these groups to enhance policy consultations, facilitating open dialogue and gathering feedback on critical initiatives like the gender architecture review and the Pivot to the Field initiative. This collaboration not only provides Staff Council representatives with firsthand insights into the diverse aspects affecting personnel from a diverse perspective but also strengthens personnel constituency building within the organization. Such endeavours are essential in uniting the workforce, highlighting the importance of inclusivity and community in shaping the organization's future, and underscoring the ongoing need to deepen these engagement efforts as part of UN Women's commitment to empowerment and equality.

At UNFPA, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is embedded in the 2030 UNFPA People Strategy, which aims to build a workplace for the future; empower the people to be more agile and adaptable and improve operational efficiency and effectiveness. The policy focuses on justice, humanity and inclusion, aligning the internal community with those UNFPA wishes to reach.

Cross-cutting priorities

An ACE Strategy (Advocacy, Communications and Engagement)

Progress in enhancing the 47th Staff Council's communication and advocacy strategy is being advanced through a multi-faceted approach aimed at strengthening the relationship between personnel and management across all levels of the organization. This includes enhancing open channels of communication between personnel and senior management, promoting robust internal and external communication channels, and exploring options to strengthen the inter-linkages between Staff Council at headquarters and Local Staff Associations and committees to amplify voices from the country and regional levels.

2023 Financial Statement

In 2023, UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS and UN Women provided financial support to the Council. In addition to providing general operating expenses, UNDP funded the position of the Chair and of two members of the Staff Council secretariat. UNDP also provided office space for the Staff Council. Significant additional support was provided to the Staff Council's work through one full-time and one part-time release of the two UNFPA representatives and the part-time release of the UNOPS representatives. The number of individual dues-paying members remains low at 145 for all four organizations and requires further action in 2024.

| UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/UN WOMEN Financial Report 1 January - 31 December 2023 | | |
|---|--|----------------------|
| Opening balance on 1 January 2023 | | \$865,556.74 |
| Income | | |
| UNDP | General operating expenses (GOE) | \$40,000.00 |
| UNFPA | Annual contribution | \$20,000.00 |
| UNOPS | Annual contribution | \$60,000.00 |
| UN Women | Annual contribution | \$20,000.00 |
| UNFCU interest | | \$9,984.27 |
| Membership dues | | \$17,119.68 |
| Subtotal | | \$167,103.95 |
| Expenditures | | |
| | UNISERV membership fee 2022 | (\$2,000.00) |
| | UNISERV mission | (\$55,954.47) |
| | Retreat 2024 venue | (\$13,221.00) |
| | Audit 2022 | (\$3,000.00) |
| | Equipment -phone | (\$903.06) |
| | SC Referendum; election -simply voting | (\$3,489.15) |
| Subtotal | | (\$78,567.68) |
| Closing balance as of 31 December 2023 | | \$954,093.01 |

Paul Hoffman Assistance Fund

New members of the Committee for the Paul Hoffman Assistance Fund must be appointed. The Staff Council has identified interested staff members and will seek the endorsement of management.