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# FINANCE COMMITTEE

## Hundred and Eightieth Session

Rome, 18 - 22 May 2020

**Update on the status of recommendations presented in the JIU Report,  
Review of Whistle-Blower Policies and Practices in United Nations System  
Organizations (JIU/REP/2018/4)**

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The JIU *Review of Whistle-blower Policies and Practices in United Nations System Organizations (JIU/REP/2018/4)* was submitted to the 178th session of the Finance Committee (November 2019),<sup>1</sup> following guidance by the Joint Meeting of the 126th session of the Programme Committee and 175th session of the Finance Committee (March 2019).
- The Committee may wish to recall that FAO endorses JIU/REP/2018/4, as well as the related CEB comments (A/73/665/Add.1).
- This document responds to the request of the 178th session of the Finance Committee<sup>2</sup> for an update on the status of implementation of the recommendations presented in the JIU Report, and on the recruitment process for the two positions of ethics and ombudsman functions.
- At the time of writing this report, the newly appointed Ethics Officer has joined FAO in March 2020 and recruitment of the new Ombudsman is nearing the final stage.

### GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

- The Finance Committee is invited to take note of the information provided in the attached JIU report, and submit any comments it may wish to make to the Council.

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<sup>1</sup> FC 178/10

<sup>2</sup> CL 163/5 paragraph 24

1. This document provides information in relation to the recruitment process for the two positions of ethics and ombudsman functions, and the status of implementation of the recommendations presented in the JIU Report.
2. The newly appointed Ethics Officer has joined FAO in March 2020 and, at the time of writing this report, recruitment of the new Ombudsman is nearing the final stage.
3. FAO confirms that it has fully implemented Recommendations 3, 4, 8, 9 of the JIU report, and provides below a status report on the remaining recommendations.

***Recommendation 1:*** *Legislative bodies should adopt measures by 2020 to ensure that all policies related to misconduct/wrongdoing and retaliation specify appropriate channels and modalities, such as independent oversight committees, for reporting and investigating allegations against the executive head of the organization, as well as against any other functions that may entail a potential conflict of interest in the handling of such issues.*

4. FAO confirms its position that it is advisable to have a UN system-wide approach that applies to all heads of UN Organizations and Agencies. In this regard, FAO will continue to follow discussion on this topic within the framework of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board (CEB) for Coordination.

***Recommendation 2:*** *In United Nations system organizations that do not have an external and independent mechanism for appeals when a prima facie case of retaliation is not determined, the executive head should instruct the relevant office(s) to develop, by 2020, appropriate options to address this deficiency for his or her timely consideration, and to outline any agreed-upon mechanisms and processes in updates to protection against retaliation policies.*

5. FAO published Administrative Circular 2019/07, which provided transitional arrangements regarding the prima facie review of complaints of retaliation. The Ethics Officer, following her arrival at FAO, has been liaising with the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) on undertaking the function of prima facie review of complaints of retaliation. It is foreseen that a full transition of the function can be implemented in the latter part of 2020.

***Recommendation 5:*** *By the end of 2019, executive heads of United Nations system organizations should develop comprehensive communication tools for all personnel on what, how, where and to whom to report misconduct/wrongdoing, including harassment and retaliation, in all the working languages of the organization.*

6. Notwithstanding the concerns expressed by the CEB, which FAO shares, the development of comprehensive communication tools by 2019 is undergoing and progress has been made since the arrival of the Ethics Officer. The mandatory training for all staff on the prevention of harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority provides detailed indications on how and to whom to report misconduct/wrongdoing.

***Recommendation 6:*** *Executive heads of United Nations system organizations should develop, by 2020, standard operating procedures for proactively protecting those who report misconduct/wrongdoing from retaliation, which should include undertaking relevant risk assessments and clearly identifying available support mechanisms and resources.*

***Recommendation 7:*** *Executive heads of United Nations system organizations should develop standard operating procedures by 2020 for handling retaliation cases, with specific checklists and protocols for investigation, support services and communication.*

7. The Office of the Inspector General has started developing and issuing standard operating procedures (SOPs) covering different aspects of the investigative process. With regard to a SOP on retaliation investigations, since the arrival of the Ethics Officer, OIG has been closely collaborating with her on the review of a number of processes which would in the future be placed under the responsibility of the Ethics Office. OIG aims at issuing relevant SOPs before the end of 2020.

**Recommendation 10:** *By the end of 2019, executive heads of United Nations system organizations should ensure that all supervisors and managers are required to complete specific training on whistleblowing policies and on how to appropriately respond to and handle misconduct/wrongdoing and retaliation reports.*

8. FAO has been engaging senior level managers in training on harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority. A new e-learning course on Whistleblower Protection Policy has just been launched and is available to all staff, in addition to the section on whistleblowing in the mandatory training course on UN Ethics and Integrity.

**Recommendation 11:** *By 2020, executive heads of United Nations system organizations should conduct global staff surveys on a biennial basis, in order to gauge staff views on “tone at the top” issues, accountability and ethics-related topics and to develop a comprehensive action plan to address the issues identified. Rec 11 - global staff surveys on a biennial basis (tone at the top, accountability and ethics)*

9. FAO notes that it has carried out an employee satisfaction survey in December 2019, and it is foreseen that the next survey would be carried out in 2022.