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## Annual report of the Ethics Office for 2017

### Executive summary

This annual report, submitted to the Executive Board at its annual session in 2018, was reviewed by the Ethics Panel of the United Nations, in accordance with Section 5.4 of the Secretary-General's Bulletin entitled "United Nations system-wide application of ethics: separately administered organs and programmes" (ST/SGB/2007/11, as amended), and was provided to the Executive Director pursuant to paragraph 6.2 of Executive Director's Circular ED2008/002 entitled "Establishment of the Ethics Office in WFP".

It provides a summary of the activities of the Ethics Office during the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017, and includes observations related to the work of the Ethics Office and ethics within WFP and within the United Nations system.

### Draft decision\*

The Board takes note of the "Annual report of the Ethics Office for 2017" (WFP/EB.A/2018/4-B).

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\* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

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#### Focal point:

Ms B. Green  
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## I. Introduction

1. This report covers the work of the Ethics Office in each area of its mandate for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017, and provides relevant analysis as compared to previous years and information anticipated into 2018. The Ethics Office conducts its activities based on principles of confidentiality, independence and integrity.
2. The Ethics Office assists the Executive Director in nurturing a culture of ethics and accountability to enable all employees (employed through all employment contract types and volunteers) to perform their functions in accordance with the highest standards of conduct and to come forward without fear of retaliation.

## II. Background

3. The Ethics Office was established in January 2008 by Executive Director Circular 2008/002 "Establishment of the Ethics Office in WFP" as a result of Secretary-General's Bulletin ST/SGB/2007/11 "United Nations system-wide application of ethics: separately administered organs and programmes." The overall objective of the Ethics Office is to assist the Executive Director in fostering an ethical environment whereby all employees observe and perform their functions with the highest standards of integrity as required by the Charter of the United Nations, the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, 2013,<sup>1</sup> the WFP Code of Conduct<sup>2</sup> and other applicable policies and practices relevant to standards of conduct for employees and those working in WFP's operations.
4. This report provides an overview of the activities undertaken by the Ethics Office in 2017 and statistical information, categorized in the following mandated areas of work:
  - A. Advice and Guidance
  - B. Annual Conflicts of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme
  - C. Protection against Retaliation – Whistleblower Protection Policy
  - D. Standard Setting and Policy Advocacy
  - E. Training, Education and Outreach
5. This report was prepared pursuant to Section 5.4 of ST/SGB/2007/11, which requires the ethics offices in the United Nations Secretariat and the separately administered organs and programmes to prepare annual reports for review by the Ethics Panel of the United Nations (EPUN or Ethics Panel).<sup>3</sup> It has been reviewed by the Ethics Panel, submitted to the Executive Director, and is hereby submitted to the Executive Board.

## III. Activities of the Ethics Office

6. Below (Figure 1) is an overview of the activities conducted by the Ethics Office by areas of the Ethics Office mandate: Advice and Guidance (374 separately recorded queries); Annual Conflicts of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme (ADP) (600 submissions flagged as possible conflicts of interest reviewed) and ad hoc exercise (66 submissions reviewed); Protection against Retaliation – Whistleblower Protection Policy (three cases); Standard Setting and Policy Advocacy (69 reviews, some with multiple documents or multiple rounds of reviews); Training, Education and Outreach (43 separate activities); Ethics Panel (11 conference calls/meetings and 63 consultations and/or deliberations). In addition,

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<sup>1</sup> International Civil Service Commission, 2013. *Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service*.

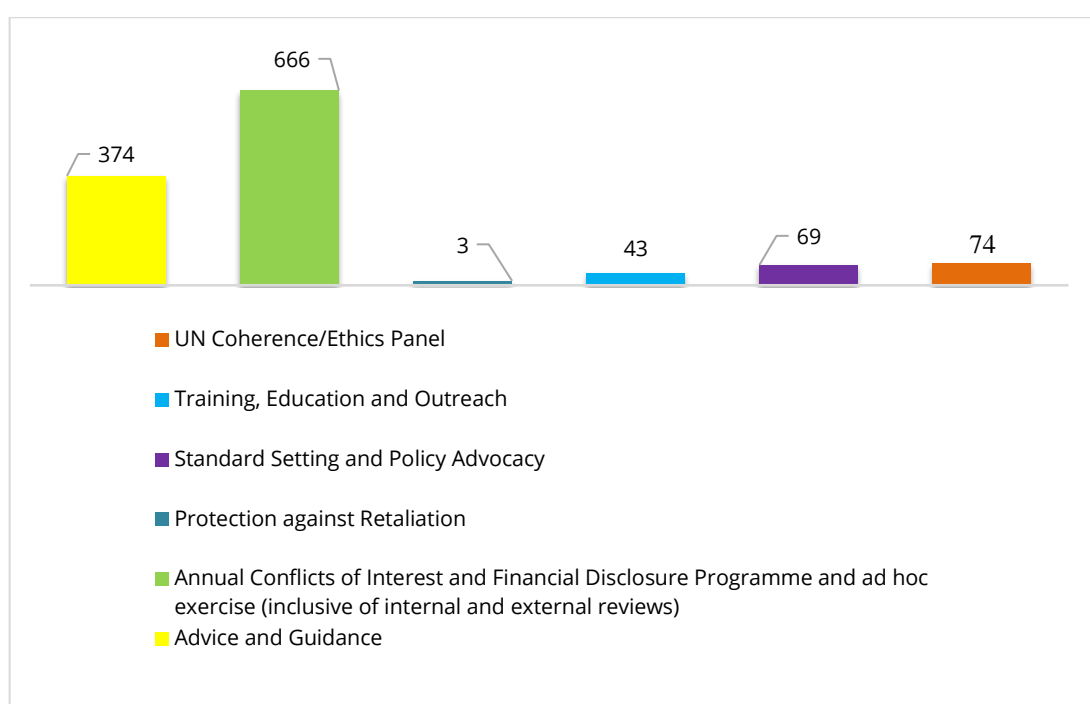
<sup>2</sup> Executive Director Circular OED2014/016. *WFP Code of Conduct*.

<sup>3</sup> Previously called the United Nations Ethics Committee.

98 gifts were disclosed and recorded into the electronic gifts register (not included in Figure 1).

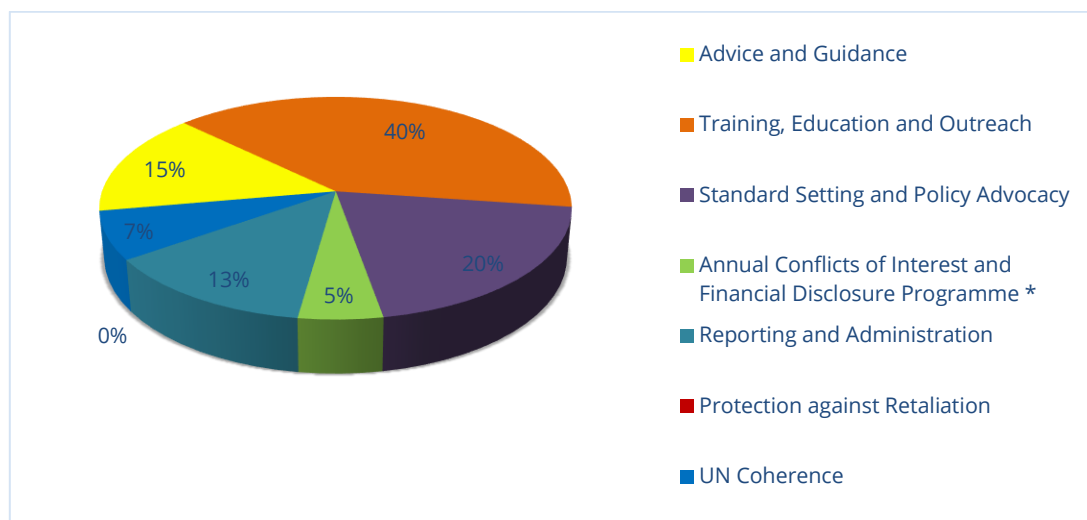
7. These are the numbers of activities recorded by mandate area and not amount of time or the number of people impacted; as well, the overview does not reflect the work by the Ethics Office on hosting the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations (ENMO) in Rome as more fully detailed in Section IV and the work by the Ethics Office staff and Director, Ethics Office, as ENMO Chair, 2017–2018, the rollout of the updated ADP application and the substantive requests related to the roll out and as related to the ADP itself; and the creation of the Ethics Office Strategy Plan as more fully detailed in paragraphs 83 and 88.

**Figure 1: Summary of the work of the Ethics Office by number of activities recorded—not time, excluding some areas.**



8. The time spent by the Ethics Office staff, other than the Director and Senior Administrative Assistant, Ethics Office, is reflected below (Figure 2), illustrating the value of additional human resources of different levels.

**Figure 2: Time spent by Ethics Office staff (excluding the Director and Senior Administrative Assistant) by areas of mandate.**



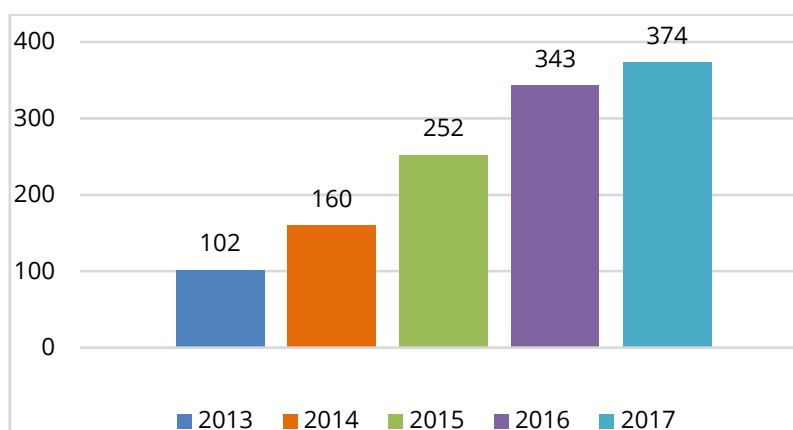
*\*(Related to the new ADP application, including revised questions based on lessons learnt.)*

9. It is worth noting that the interns' support in the area of Advice and Guidance is non-confidential, consisting largely in mini-due diligence reviews.

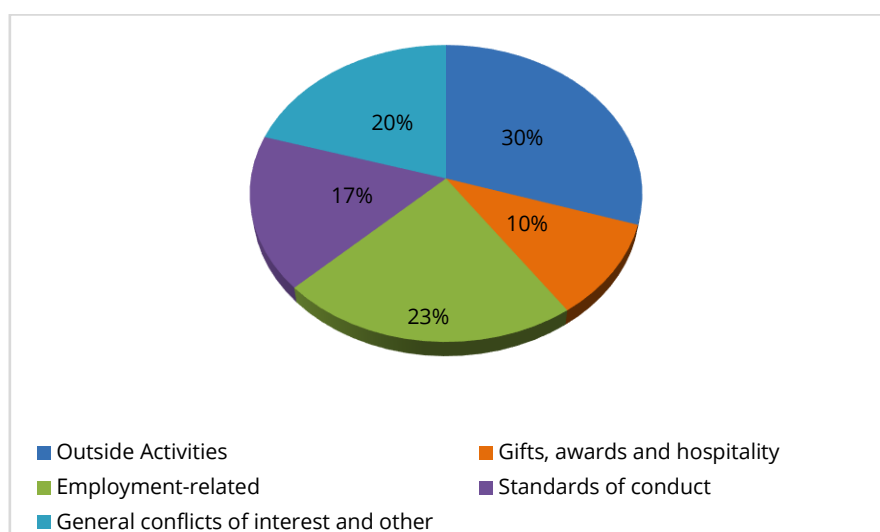
#### **A. Advice and Guidance**

10. The Ethics Office provided advice and guidance to employees, as individuals and as Management. It registered 374 requests for advice and guidance. This represented a nine percent increase in requests for advice and guidance from 2016, which were recorded at 343; and a 292 percent increase from 2013, which were recorded at 102. (Figure 3). Advice and guidance was also provided through ad hoc interactions.

**Figure 3: Requests for advice - 2013-2017.**



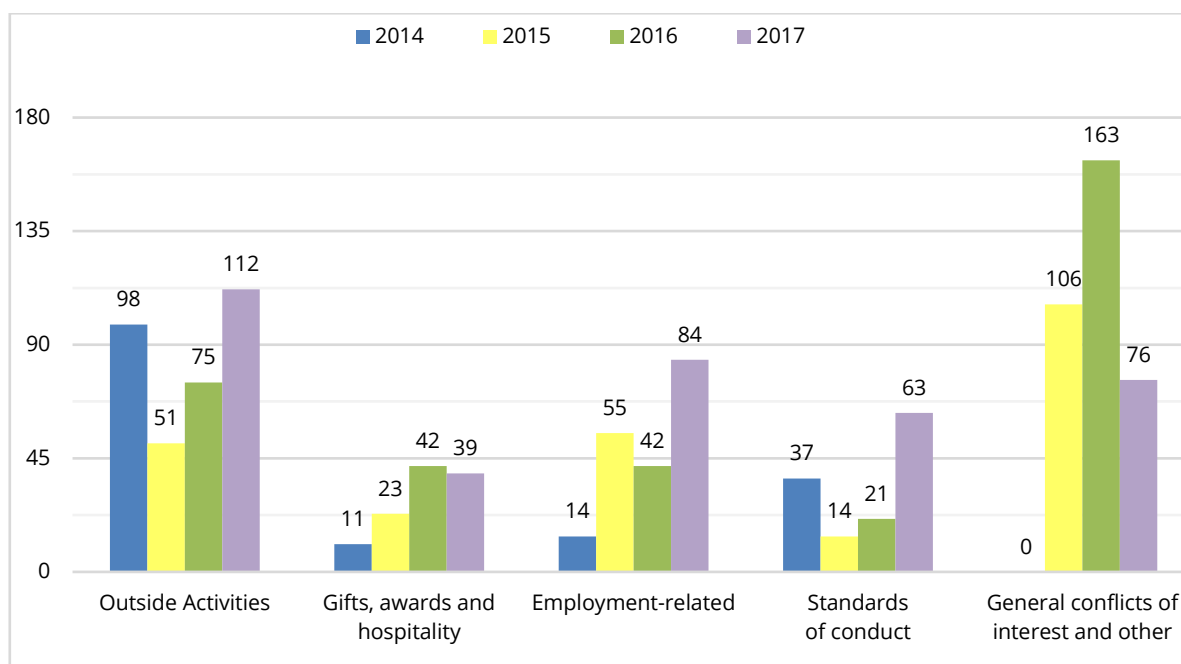
11. Advice and guidance (Figure 4) was recorded as follows: outside activities (30 percent); gifts, awards, honours, hospitality and related areas (10 percent); employment and post-employment (23 percent); standards of conduct (17 percent); and general conflicts of interest and other, including enquiries on a broad range of matters and general ethics advice (20 percent). Requests for advice and guidance continued to increase, for which there are many possibilities: professionalizing the office, participation on the Executive Management Group and otherwise in WFP, increased education and outreach, and more.

**Figure 4: Requests for advice by category.**

12. Since 2014, the Ethics Office has continued to receive an increased number of queries by managers in their capacity as Management, likely the result of the continued increased visibility of the Ethics Office, its initiatives and its education and outreach, and of the Director, Ethics Office, including participation on the Executive Management Group, and other committees and projects. As a result, the Ethics Office started to track the source of the queries for advice and guidance more closely, creating three categories – management, individual and external. In 2016, 127 requests were made by managers as Management, 155 as individuals, and 65 were external. In 2017, 189 requests were made by managers as Management, 155 as individual, and 30 were external. The Ethics Office will continue to monitor the breakdown in order to assess trends and inform other areas of the mandate.
13. The Ethics Office advised on personal, institutional/organizational and functional conflicts of interest, meaning instances in which WFP and/or its employees may be faced with a conflict of interest as a result of his/her official function. The Ethics Office initiated consideration of revisions to the Executive Director Circular 2008/004 covering conflicts of interest<sup>4</sup> in order to address all forms, as more fully described in paragraph 33.
14. In 2017,<sup>5</sup> an electronic gifts registry was instituted. There was a substantial increase of gifts disclosures in 2017 over 2016 – from 20 to 98. Despite the increase, the number of disclosures continued to seem rather low in comparison to the population of WFP. It is worthy of noting that these disclosures are separate from advice on gifts, which were tracked through advice and guidance, as reflected in paragraph 16.

<sup>4</sup> Executive Director Circular ED2008/004. *Disclosure of Financial Interests, Outside Activities and Honours, Decorations, Favours, Gifts or Remuneration.*

<sup>5</sup> Executive Director Circular OED2017/002. *Disclosure of Gifts.*

**Figure 5: Requests for advice – categories, 2014-2017.**

15. While the increase of recorded advice and guidance from 2017 to 2016 was nine percent, the comparison of the actual numbers of 2016 to 2017 (Figure 5) showed a substantial decrease of requests classified under the “General conflicts of interest and other” category. The actual numbers were 163 and 76 in 2016 and 2017, respectively. This seemed mainly to be the result of more requests classified under the “Standards of Conduct” and “Employment-related” categories.
16. There was a slight decrease in advice and guidance on “Gifts, awards and hospitality” (from 42 to 39 in 2016 and 2017, respectively), though there was a substantial increase in disclosures of gifts through the new electronic gifts register.
17. As related to the increase of matters under the “Employment-related” category (from 42 to 84 in 2016 and 2017, respectively) in addition to the reclassification, it seemed the Ethics Office was receiving more queries through the Human Resources Division.
18. Lastly, there was a substantial increase in advice and guidance on (personal) outside activities (from 75 to 112 in 2016 and 2017, respectively). This reflected three distinct occurrences—the continued increase of disclosures (34) originating from the ADP exercise as described in Section B; country office-specific initiatives; and, the roll-out of the second module of the ethics e-learning, which is described in paragraph 46.
19. Of note, the Ethics Office continued to update its categories to reflect the areas of advice and guidance and to inform other actions, like education and outreach. This work will continue in 2018.

## **B. Annual Conflicts of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme**

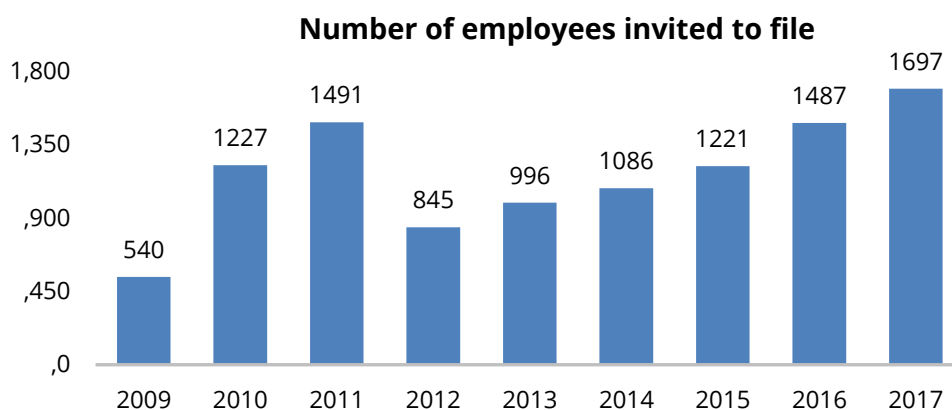
20. WFP’s Circular on the Annual Conflicts of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme (ADP)<sup>6</sup> was adopted in April 2008 and first implemented in 2009. The ADP reflects WFP’s commitment to transparency and public confidence-building; it acts as a safeguard and risk management tool for employees and the organization as a whole. The Ethics Office is

<sup>6</sup> Executive Director Circular ED2008/004. *Disclosure of Financial Interests, Outside Activities and Honours, Decorations, Favours, Gifts or Remuneration.*

mandated to administer the ADP<sup>7</sup> to assist WFP in identifying and addressing personal conflicts of interest for the purpose of mitigating or eliminating conflicts of interests in the best interests of WFP.

21. In collaboration with the Information Technology Division, the Ethics Office developed a new ADP application, taking into consideration feedback from past and current participants. While the launch was slightly delayed because of the new application, the application was generally well received and successfully implemented, resulting in a more user-friendly application with greater functionality, although it was not possible to migrate the data from past years because of concerns over data security. As in past years, data continued to be transmitted and maintained in a technologically secure and confidential manner.
22. The ninth annual ADP exercise was launched on 28 April 2017 with a requested completion date of 9 June 2017. Based on input from Management (and a more realistic timeframe based on the high number of emergencies in WFP), the initial timeline for the submission of the ADP was extended to six weeks. This will continue in 2018.
23. A total of 1,697 employees out of a total WFP population of 15,691<sup>8</sup> were identified to participate. This represented 10.8 percent of the total WFP population and an increase of 14.1 percent over the 2016 ADP population. (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Annual Conflicts of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme participation, 2009–2017**



24. Through an extensive process, starting with data feeds from the Human Resources Division, the Ethics Office compiled and distributed separate lists of eligible participants for review by Management. Input from Management was essential to identifying relevant participants; and, Management fulfilled this responsibility based on the policy criteria.
25. The policy criteria captured employees at D-1 and D-2 levels; all country directors, deputy country directors and heads of offices/sub-offices; all oversight – audit/investigations, inspections – and investment – treasury, procurement and legal officers, with the exception of the Employment and Administrative Law Branch; those whose occupational duties included procurement authority to release purchase orders of any type (those who have authority to release only MPOs are excluded) or who had regular access to confidential procurement information; and, members of vendor management committees.
26. The ADP was again comprised of three parts: conflict of interest (COI) questionnaire, eligibility questionnaire, and financial disclosure statement.

<sup>7</sup> Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2007/11. *United Nations system-wide application of ethics: separately administered organs and programmes.*

<sup>8</sup>Total Number of WFP employees as of 31 March 2017.

27. Of the 1,697 employees identified to participate, 42 were exempted mainly because of separation from WFP, including retirement, or extended leave. As a result, 1,655 employees completed the COI questionnaire. The COI questionnaire required disclosures related to relationships of employees and their dependent family members with any governments, WFP vendors and partners, and required disclosure of any outside activities, receipt of gifts or awards, family relations in the United Nations, landlord/tenant relations, etc. Of the total COI questionnaires reviewed (1,371), 397 submissions (some of which had multiple disclosures) were flagged as possible conflicts of interest and reviewed; some were found to be actual cases of conflict of interest. During this review, 30 outside activities were identified for complete reviews through the Ethics Office standard practices.
28. The eligibility questionnaire combined with the process of granting exemptions further reduced the number of participants completing the financial disclosure statements from 1,655 to 1,321. Based on experience and as validated, the Ethics Office is of the opinion that the COI Questionnaire supports the intended purpose of the ADP and, with few modifications, the financial disclosure statement can be eliminated.
29. The financial disclosure statement required disclosure of assets, profits, income, supplements, liabilities and other financial interests of employees and their dependent family members, and whether such interests were with WFP vendors/partners, etc. Of the total financial disclosure statements reviewed (1,319), 203 submissions (some of which had multiple disclosures) were flagged as possible conflicts of interest and reviewed; some were found to be actual cases of conflict of interest. During this review, four outside activities were identified for complete reviews through the Ethics Office standard practices.
30. In implementing the 2017 ADP, the Ethics Office logged more than 2,000 email messages, plus addressed queries by telephone and direct office visits. The substantive review resulted in a sizeable number of additional emails requesting more information and advice. All relevant disclosures were reviewed against the WFP vendor list.
31. For the fourth time since the initial implementation of the ADP, the compliance completion rate was 100 percent; yet, this was only achieved on 23 February 2018. This was a result of a lack of personal accountability and compliance from ADP participants. To reach the completion rate, routine and extraordinary extensions were accorded. Many reviews from 2017 continued into 2018. Seven reviews were carried over from 2016 to 2017, with one still under review into 2018.
32. Since 2014, the Ethics Office has tracked the number of submissions with no financial information reported. The percentage of participants, a rate of 15.5%, remained steady for 2017 and 2016. As in past years, the Ethics Office sought confirmation of the accuracy of these submissions directly via email.
33. The Ethics Office continued to improve the ADP application based on lessons learnt and initiated the drafting of a revised version of the Executive Director Circular 2008/004 into separate Executive Director Circulars including one on conflicts of interest and the ADP. This revised Executive Director Circular is currently pending the work on the definition of institutional/organizational conflicts of interest as more fully described in paragraph 13.

### **C. Protection against Retaliation – Whistleblower Protection Policy**

34. It is the duty of all employees to report any breach of WFP's regulations and rules to those with responsibility to take appropriate action, and to cooperate with WFP's oversight functions. The primary objective of the Whistleblower Protection Policy is to ensure that employees can report misconduct and cooperate with audits and investigations without



being subject to retaliation.<sup>9</sup> As of 2017, this would also include Proactive Integrity Reviews in practice.

35. The Ethics Office administers the Whistleblower Protection Policy, and determines whether there has been a *prima facie* case of retaliation, and if substantiated, the matter is then referred to the Office of Inspections and Investigations (OIGI) for investigation, unless there is a conflict of interest in making a referral to OIGI. In such an instance, the matter is referred directly to the Executive Director for action.
36. Three cases of protection against retaliation were considered. Two continued from 2016, and there was one new case. One *prima facie* case of retaliation was established and protection measures were implemented. In one case, no *prima facie* was established and no protection measures were implemented. One case was still under review by the Ethics Office into 2018. The cases were again complex, with one case requiring several separate reviews when the complainant submitted several separate tranches of supporting documentation. All the cases required a substantial amount of time.
37. The Ethics Office started working on an updated Whistleblower Protection Policy, which was originally promulgated in 2008, for the purpose of reflecting current relevant practices for WFP and harmonization with the revisions at the level of the United Nations system. In the meantime, the Ethics Office continued to foster understanding of the scope of the policy within WFP through trainings and outreach initiative, as the objectives of the policy remain the same – in essence to further a safe to “speak up” culture, as more fully described in Section E below.

#### **D. Standard Setting and Policy Advocacy**

38. Fostering an organizational culture of ethics, transparency and accountability requires frequent and consistent advocacy. To operationalize ethics and compliance, the Ethics Office continued to provide guidance to Management on the incorporation of ethical standards in organization-wide and various policies, practices and processes.
39. The Ethics Office recorded requests for input to 87 separate policies (23 received as part of the Director’s role on the Executive Management Group and 64 as WFP’s Chief Ethics Officer and Director, Ethics Office), in various forms – circulars, policies, guidance and other administrative issuances and documentation – and on a range of topics. Of the 87 recorded requests, the Ethics Office provided 69 reviews, some with multiple documents or multiple rounds of reviews.
40. In 2016, the Ethics Office recorded consultation on 87 policies, providing inputs on 71 of them, while, in 2015, the Ethics Office provided input on approximately 50 policies and reported a total of 19 policies reviewed in 2014. The large number of consultations is considered a positive reflection of WFP’s appreciation for the integration of ethical considerations in its governance and operations.
41. In addition, the Ethics Office collaborated with other divisions on drafting and disseminating a guidance note on preventing child labour and a guidance note on the prohibition of engaging in prostitution services, regardless of its legal status, and actively participated in a working group aimed at updating WFP’s Policy on Protection from Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Abuse of Authority.
42. The Ethics Office also functioned collaboratively with the Resource Management Division as the subject matter expert on two Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) Questionnaires on the “Review of mechanisms and policies addressing conflict of interest in the United Nations system”

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<sup>9</sup> Executive Director Circular ED2008/003, *Protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits and investigations (WFP “Whistleblower” Protection Policy)*.

and the “Review of whistleblower policies and practices in United Nations system organizations”, respectively. The JIU Inspector responsible for the latter review also conducted a session on the same topic during the Ninth Annual ENMO Conference as more fully described in paragraph 76.

43. Lastly, the Ethics Office continued its proactive engagement with Management, particularly as related to conflicts of interest in various forms and through various initiatives. The Ethics Office created guidance on general pre-employment vetting process and another specific to the recruitment of government employees. The guidance was discussed with the current Director, Human Resources Division, who was receptive, and it is anticipated that both will be finalized and operationalized in 2018.

## **E. Training, Education and Outreach**

44. To help employees to understand their responsibilities working for WFP and to promote an organization-wide ethical and “speak up/listen” culture, the Ethics Office continued to concentrate on awareness, training, education and other outreach initiatives.
45. In accordance with the recommendations received from the WFP internal justice system review in 2014, the Ethics Office developed a mandatory ethics on-line training, composed of three modules. The e-learning was designed to reinforce a common understanding of WFP’s expectations of conduct and ensure ethical considerations underpin decisions and behaviour.
46. The first module of the e-learning focused on foundational values, principles and standards and was rolled out in December 2016; the second module was rolled out in December 2017. The second module focused on practical responsibilities of employees, including conflicts of interest, confidentiality and discretion, respectful treatment of colleagues, responsible use and stewardship of WFP assets and IT resources. The Ethics Office received queries as a result of the e-learnings, including requests for advice and disclosures, like outside activities.
47. Due to technical issues, the e-learning was rolled out in English; versions in Arabic, French and Spanish of both the first and second modules were slated to be rolled out in the first quarter of 2018 with the third module to be rolled out in 2018, as well.
48. As of 31 December 2017, 8,868 employees completed the first module of the e-learning comprising 54.6 percent of the total WFP population of 16,218<sup>10</sup> and 865 employees completed the second module of the e-learning, comprising 5.3 percent of the total WFP population.
49. The Director, Ethics Office, requested and the Director, Human Resources Division, instituted, a mechanism to have completion of the mandatory ethics on-line training and all other mandatory e-learnings<sup>11</sup> to be integrated in the personal performance assessments of all employees. Employees are now held responsible to all mandatory e-learnings through the applicable individual performance system, as well as through the probation performance review.
50. Training sessions on ethics and standards of conduct were held directly by the Ethics Office, reaching more than 290 employees, separate from employees reached by the Headquarters Ethics Induction Briefing, as more fully described in paragraph 54. Briefings were conducted to the Wellness Division, Finance Officers, Panama Regional Director/Country Directors, Haiti Country Office and two brownbag sessions in the New York Office. “Train the trainer”

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<sup>10</sup> Total WFP Population as of 31 December 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Basic Security In The Field II; United Nations Course on prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority; and Prevention of Fraud, Corruption and SEA at WFP.

sessions are covered separately under paragraphs 60-61. It is anticipated that the Ethics Office will expand direct trainings in regional bureaux and country offices in 2018.

51. In addition, the Director, Ethics Office conducted two Induction sessions for new Executive Board Members, a presentation on code of conduct for boards at the Ninth Annual United Nations Governing Bodies Secretariats (UNGBS) meeting, chaired by the WFP Secretariat in Rome, and participated in a panel on "Ethics on the Ground and a Rights-Based Approach to Data Artificial Intelligence" during an event co-hosted by United Nations Global Pulse and the International Association of Privacy Professionals. Related, the Director, Ethics Office also actively participated on a United Nations Global Pulse Working Group by specific request of United Nations Global Pulse leadership and with support of WFP Management.
52. Thanks to the collaboration with UNRWA, 30 employees in Aleppo participated in a training session on ethics conducted by the Chief, Ethics Office of UNRWA. The Ethics Office sent supporting WFP-specific information separately. This is a successful example of the productive collaboration among EPUN members (as more fully described in Section IV), which will continue in 2018.
53. Education and other outreach initiatives resulted in additional advice and guidance (as more fully described in Section A), thus showing the effectiveness. The Ethics Office tailored all Education and Outreach.
54. The Headquarters Ethics Induction Briefing, created in 2016 by the Ethics Office in collaboration with the Divisions of Resource Management, Human Resources, Security, the Executive Board Secretariat, and the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services, was rolled-out in January 2017. The Ethics Induction Briefing is compulsory, aimed at employees new to WFP Headquarters (whether new to WFP or re-assigned to the Headquarters). The Ethics Office conducted 25 Ethics Induction Briefings, resulting in 260 employees trained.
55. The Ethics Office also created two induction briefings for regional bureaux and country offices, akin to the Ethics Induction Briefing at Headquarters, covering fundamental expectations of conduct at WFP and tailored to their specific needs. As a result, almost 200 employees received induction briefings in Djibouti and Rwanda through four separate sessions.
56. In addition, the Ethics Office was consulted on and participated in initiatives led by the Human Resources Division for the purpose of creating trainings and other materials for new hires in WFP and for WFP leadership in country offices. The Ethics Office will continue to contribute to these initiatives in 2018.
57. The Ethics Office continued working on the booklet formerly entitled "Addressing Work-related Grievances in WFP - Where to Go for Help" and now called "Resolving Workplace Concerns: Where to Go for Help". The booklet will be launched in 2018.
58. Respectful Workplace Advisors (RWAs) are WFP employees, nominated by their colleagues and voluntarily trained to perform some of the functions of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services at the field level. Since 2012, RWAs have been designated as "Ethics Ambassadors". In this capacity, RWAs assisted the Ethics Office and WFP in raising awareness on ethics and standards of conduct.
59. In collaboration with the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services, one basic training session was organized for 16 RWAs, representing 15 country offices. The Ethics Office trained RWAs on their role and expectations as "Ethics Ambassadors", and the RWAs learned how to present on their role as "Ethics Ambassadors" and on the WFP Code of Conduct, and facilitated informative sessions to enable the RWAs to fulfil their role as "Ethics Ambassadors" and as RWAs, generally.

60. As a result of “train the trainer” sessions conducted by the Ethics Office on foundational aspects of the WFP Code of Conduct, the RWAs reached directly 654 employees through training sessions on foundational aspects of the WFP Code of Conduct in six country offices, 22 sub-offices and in one regional bureau office, representing nine different countries and six regional bureaux. The Ethics Office prepared and provided materials in English, French, Spanish and Arabic for use by the RWAs.
61. The Ethics Office trained 31 of the total 104 RWAs through “train the trainer” sessions on anti-fraud and anti-corruption (AFAC) through five conference calls. As a result, the RWAs conducted training sessions on AFAC, reaching directly 982 employees in eight country offices and 51 sub-offices, representing 17 countries and five regional bureaux, with another 490 employees receiving AFAC materials electronically across three countries, representing two regional bureaux.
62. The Ethics Office covered AFAC through other awareness and training sessions and an organization- wide awareness campaign as more fully described in paragraphs 64-66.
63. In November, the Ethics Office participated in the United Nations “16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence” campaign organized by the Gender Office, focusing on WFP’s commitment to a world free from gender-based violence, including sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (SEA), disseminating a guidance note about the prohibition on engaging prostitution services, which is considered a form of SEA. The guidance note was created by the Ethics Office in response to questions from employees and in collaboration with other relevant divisions.
64. The Ethics Office continued to conduct awareness and communication campaigns reaching all employees globally. For example, in December, for the third consecutive year, the Ethics Office conducted an awareness campaign to mark International Anti-Corruption day, spearheaded by the Assistant Executive Director and CFO and the Director, Ethics Office. The awareness campaign was launched in connection to an end-of-the-year campaign on gifts. In addition to translations in French, Spanish and Arabic, translations into Italian for communications with local business partners of Headquarters were added.
65. While the Ethics Office received positive acknowledgments by Country Directors and Division Directors as related to the awareness and communication campaigns, voluntary ad hoc reporting does not provide sufficient empirical data on the extent to which the awareness campaigns and materials are being cascaded. Therefore, the Ethics Office intends to recommend such actions are reinforced by leadership and are incorporated into the internal control processes, specifically, the assurance statements.
66. The Ethics Office also created and conducted a “train the trainer” session on AFAC for Compliance Officers/Risk Compliance Advisors representing three regional bureaux; providing materials in English, French, Spanish and Arabic.
67. Due to other priorities and the many emails emanating from the Ethics Office, the practice, started in 2015, of the ethical leadership dialogue was not continued. The Ethics Office is assessing an alternate concept for 2018.
68. In a strong show of support for ethics and the Ethics Office, the Executive Director sent an annual ethics message to all employees, accompanied by a user-friendly abbreviated version of the 2016 Ethics Office annual report. This practice was started in 2015 and is expected to continue in 2018.
69. In December, the Ethics Office again organized an internal auction of gifts. The infrastructure established in 2014, when the auction was resurrected, enabled efficient implementation of the on - site auction at Headquarters and, for the third consecutive year, the Ethics Office conducted an online version to all employees worldwide. New in 2017, the Ethics Office added an “open house” event to the on-site auction at Headquarters to raise awareness of

the Ethics Office mandate and work. Though the auctions tend to be time-consuming for the Ethics Office staff (more than 200 hours spent in preparation and implementation), both auctions were well received and considered successful tools for raising awareness on WFP policies and practices with respect to gifts, and with a high level of engagement. Not all gifts are auctioned and not necessarily in the same year as received; some were retained or disposed of otherwise. Of note, the Ethics Office received a substantial number of gifts upon the departure from the former Executive Director, most of which were not disclosed through the electronic gifts register. Proceeds were allocated to WFP's response to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh.

70. The Ethics Office started working on a year-long awareness campaign on the WFP Code of Conduct to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ethics Office in 2018.

#### **IV. Ethics Panel of the United Nations and the Ethics Network for Multilateral Organizations; Rome-based Agencies**

71. The Ethics Panel of the United Nations (Ethics Panel or EPUN) was instituted in 2007<sup>12</sup> with the adoption of the Secretary-General's Bulletin "United Nations system-wide application of ethics: separately administered organs and programmes"<sup>13</sup> to help ensure coherent application of ethical standards within the United Nations.
72. The Ethics Panel is comprised of the heads of the ethics offices of separately administered organs and programmes of the United Nations: the Ethics Office of the United Nations Secretariat (chair), the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Office for Project Services, WFP, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.<sup>14</sup>
73. The Director, Ethics Office, continued to be actively engaged with the Ethics Panel, participating in all 11 standard conference calls/meetings, and recording consultations/deliberations on 63 issues of common interest, including political activities, financial disclosure programmes, outside activities, gifts, conflicts of interest, policies and practices for protection against retaliation, activities related to protection against sexual exploitation and abuse, and real-time interactions on other ethical considerations.
74. While the work of the Ethics Panel is reflected in the Report of the Secretary-General to General Assembly, it is worthy of noting that the Ethics Panel conducts reviews of non-*prima facie* findings of the member Ethics Offices. This requires a thorough review of extensive documentation. In 2017, there were three such reviews.
75. In support of the Secretary-General's promotion of system-wide collaboration on ethics-related issues within the United Nations extended network, an Ethics Network for Multilateral Organizations (ENMO) was established in 2010 within the framework of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination; it is now administered independently. ENMO is comprised of multilateral inter-governmental institutions.<sup>15</sup> The most senior professionals responsible for the ethics functions of the member organizations of ENMO participate in the annual ENMO Conferences, providing a forum to exchange information, relevant practices,

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<sup>12</sup> The Ethics Panel was originally known as the United Nations Ethics Committee and renamed in April 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Secretary-General's bulletin, ST/SGB/2007/11, *United Nations system-wide application of ethics: separately administered organs and programmes*.

<sup>14</sup> Executive Directors Circular 2008/002. Secretary-General's bulletin, ST/SGB/2007/11.

<sup>15</sup> Members of the ENMO include ethics officers and related professionals from the United Nations Secretariat, United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies and international financial institutions, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other multilateral entities.

and enable collaboration on issues of common interest and applicability to the ethics functions of the ENMO membership.

76. In July, the Ethics Office successfully hosted the Ninth Annual ENMO Conference at WFP's Headquarters. This was a three-day conference, gathering 36 attendees from ENMO member organizations, preceded by a one-day meeting for Ethics Panel members only. In addition, the JIU Inspector responsible for the "Review of whistleblower policies and practices in United Nations system organizations" participated, presenting a high-level review and conducting a focus group exercise with the attendees. The Director, Ethics Office is the ENMO Chair for 2017-2018.
77. The ethics officers of the three Rome-based agencies did not coordinate too frequently in 2017, in part, because of differences in roles and the absence of a permanent Ethics Office Director at IFAD. With a permanent Ethics Office Director appointed at IFAD, it is anticipated that the Ethics Offices of the Rome-based Agencies will meet more regularly in 2018.

## **V. Observations, Recommendations and Conclusions**

78. While maintaining all areas of the mandate, since 2014, the Ethics Office has focused on administration and infrastructure. This has enabled the Ethics Office to initiate the development of standard operating procedures in order to operate more efficiently and with consistency – also, to delegate projects and establish tracking mechanisms for metrics and enhanced reporting. The tracking mechanisms have verified a marked increase in workload over the last years, which has been viewed as a positive outcome of the activities and relationships cultivated by its service-oriented approach. However, the tracking mechanisms have also proven to be insufficient for the workload. In particular, the excel spreadsheet through which the Ethics Office tracks requests for Advice and Guidance was inadequate as well as inefficient, making reporting labour-intensive. As a result, the Ethics Office will explore a case management system in 2018.
79. Through the substantial increase in work volume, the Ethics Office continued to be staffed by two staff members (D-1 and G-6) and otherwise by transient consultants and interns. As a consequence, certain projects could not be delegated or did not advance as timely (or at all) as anticipated or desired. The Ethics Office recruited a staff member at the P-4 level with commensurate ethics and compliance skills and knowledge, starting in February 2018, to become responsible for the substantive and administrative oversight of the ADP, conducting protection against retaliation reviews, providing advice and guidance, and supporting all areas of the Ethics Office mandate, as assigned.
80. The Ethics Office has been proactive on outreach to Management; conversely, Management has been proactively seeking advice from the Ethics Office. Such outreach has been welcome and advice has been provided thoughtfully and practically. In addition, while advice and guidance are regularly responsive in nature, preventive advice and ethical considerations in operational and strategic decision-making enable an organization and its employees to avoid misconduct and mishaps, a value to WFP.
81. During its initial years, the Ethics Office focused largely on advice and guidance as related to individual integrity risks, with limited involvement on institutional integrity risks. This has evolved over the last number of years and, in 2017, the Ethics Office provided advice including on functional and institutional/organizational conflicts of interest and ethical considerations and decision-making of Management and staff during the course of official duties. Related, the Ethics Office has initiated a project to assess and enhance policies and practices regarding institutional/organizational conflicts of interest as related to private partnerships and other third parties. This will continue into 2018.

82. Some submissions of the 2017 ADP exercise remained outstanding until 2018. The Ethics Office considers this unacceptable and a poor reflection on accountability. The Ethics Office plans to address the lack of timeliness of completion and follow-up on the ADP in 2018.
83. The Ethics Office continued to spend a considerable amount of time working on an updated application for the ADP. Additional changes to enhance reporting and accountability are anticipated for 2018. While the new ADP application was implemented for the roll-out of the 2017 ADP exercise, the Ethics Office is continuing to work on a revised policy, including definitions of conflicts of interest – personal, functional and institutional/organizational. As well, the Ethics Office has proposed eliminating the separate financial disclosure statement in favour of a conflicts of interest questionnaire only. The Ethics Office is hopeful to revise the ADP application and policy as recommended in 2018.
84. Because of the level of confidentiality and analysis warranted in the review of requests for whistleblower protection, the Director, Ethics Office solely administered the Whistleblower Protection Policy. The complexity and voluminous supporting documentation and investigation report documents meant the *prima facie* reviews and related work were time consuming. Due to the level of sensitivity and other considerations, protection measures were also time consuming.
85. Providing input to standards and policies, as well as guidance/practices/processes – in other words, operationalizing ethics and compliance, are also activities which are preventive in nature. The Ethics Office provided input on a substantial number of policies and standards, practical guidance and practices; however, some policies and standards were not reviewed or not reviewed by the deadlines; as well, many recommendations to policies and standards were not well advanced. The Ethics Office considers this to be a missed opportunity. The Ethics Office advocated for the development of certain policies and practices, for example, exploration of the viability of implementing an external hotline, creating an internal justice system working committee, establishing a process administered by the Human Resources Division in vetting conflicts of interest as part of the hiring practices, and more. The Ethics Office, also, advocated for strengthening its policy governance framework and rigor in application. Of note, the Ethics Office policies<sup>16</sup> are dated and require revisions. These are expected to be initiated in 2018.
86. Despite a sizeable concentration of time and effort on Education and Outreach, the Ethics Office was still unable to fully meet the demand of requests in this mandated area and the Director, Ethics Office did not increase field presence, which has been supported and expected by Management for the last several years. The Ethics Office considers Education and Outreach in various forms and through all offices, including (or especially) sub-offices to be critical for WFP employees (and WFP partners) to understand the values, standards and principles of WFP and to understand how to live them— indispensable to fostering a strong ethical culture.
87. As part of fostering United Nations coherence, the Ethics Office anticipates a strengthened Rome-based Agencies collaboration, more similar to the interaction with members of the Ethics Panel of the United Nations. It is worthy of noting, however, the mandates and the extent of involvement in certain areas varies greatly among the Rome-based Agencies, which influences the impact of interaction.

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<sup>16</sup> Executive Director Circular ED2008/002, *Establishment of Ethics Office in WFP*; Executive Director Circular ED2008/004, *Disclosure of Financial Interests, Outside Activities and Honours, Decorations, Favours, Gifts or Remuneration*; Executive Director Circular ED2008/003, *Protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits and investigation (WFP "Whistleblower" Protection Policy)*.

88. In the 2015 annual report, the Ethics Office noted its commitment to developing an overall strategy plan to be implemented in alignment with and in furtherance of the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021). In 2016, the Ethics Office procured a highly respected ethics and compliance consultant to assist the Ethics Office for an Ethics Office Strategy (2017-2021), which was created in 2017 after consultations with Management. It is anticipated that the Ethics Office Strategy will be presented to the Executive Management Group and the Audit Committee in 2018. As well, it is anticipated that the Ethics Office will continue to be assisted by the ethics and compliance consultant in 2018 for the purpose of conducting additional assessments as related to: ethics in supply chain, privacy/data protection/data use, and conflicts of interest in private sector partnerships. In the meantime, the Ethics Office has continued to work collaboratively with the Supply Chain Division on various ethical issues and with various functions addressing data protection and data privacy while advocating for deliberate coordination of data governance and the ethical use of data.
89. The Ethics Office continued to advocate for a separate culture survey and dedicated resources to create a multi-year action plan to address results. This was noted in the 2016 annual report. As well, in the 2015 annual report, the Ethics Office outlined the results of the Global Staff Survey related to the perceptions of WFP employees on ethics and standards of conduct. The questions in those areas were designed to measure the levels of fear of retaliation, trust in WFP, and perceptions about the ethical commitment of WFP and ethical behaviour of Management and leadership. While there were improvements from 2012, the results as related to ethics and standards of conduct were below global norms where these exist, including with respect to fear of retaliation and trust in WFP, as well as perceptions about the ethical commitment of WFP, its leadership and Management. It is anticipated that the next Global Staff Survey will be in 2018.
90. The Ethics Office also continued to advocate the benefits of having a functional leader with dedicated resources to work on matters related to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). This was noted in the 2016 annual report. As well, the Ethics Office continued to provide PSEA-related advice and guidance.
91. As highlighted in the 2016 annual report, the Ethics Office continued to recommend WFP re-emphasize fundamental values, principles and standards. Like in 2016, while the Ethics Office observed a positive attitude to embrace a strong ethical culture based on the standards, principles and values of WFP/United Nations, particularly from live presentations and other trainings conducted by the Ethics Office, institutionally the Ethics Office observed some apparent erosion of consideration of ethical conduct by and in WFP. For example, ethics/standards of conduct were still not included in the measures of the WFP performance tool, known as PACE, and in vacancy announcements. The Ethics Office expects this to be addressed in 2018, working collaboratively with the Human Resources Division, which has willingly included the Ethics Office as an active participant in various Human Resources Division initiatives, for example, as related to on boarding and orientation, etc. The Ethics Office looks forward to continuing this enhanced collaboration with the Human Resources Division and other functional and operational areas in 2018.



## Acronyms used in the document

ADP	Annual Conflicts of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme
AFAC	anti-fraud and anti-corruption
COI	conflict of interest
ENMO	Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations
EPUN	Ethics Panel of the United Nations
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
MPO	Micro Purchase Order
OIGI	Office of Inspections and Investigations
PSEA	protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse
RWA	Respectful Workplace Advisors
SEA	sexual exploitation and sexual abuse
UNGBS	United Nations Governing Bodies Secretariats
UNRWA	The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees