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Report of the Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Officer for the year ended 31 December 2025

Summary: This report is submitted to the Governing Body for information purposes, with a view to providing an overview of the PSEA function, its mandate and progress achieved during the reporting period.

Author unit: Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Officer.

Related documents: [GB.353/PFA/12](#); [GB.353/PFA/PV](#); [GB.350/PFA/6](#).

► About this report

1. This report provides a progress update on the Office's efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in 2025 and recalls the Office's commitment to maintaining high standards of integrity and safeguarding in all aspects of its work. It fulfils the Office's undertaking to provide a comprehensive account of progress in the implementation of prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) measures to the Governing Body,¹ copied to the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee.

► About the PSEA Officer's function and role

2. The PSEA Officer's function was established in July 2023 as a temporary assignment under the Ethics Officer to enhance the Office's capacity to prevent and respond to SEA.
3. The role of the PSEA Officer spans a broad portfolio, encompassing prevention, capacity-building, strategic advisory functions, and the strengthening of procedural and institutional systems across the Office. It further entails the provision of specialized technical expertise and guidance to headquarters, regional and country teams, and contributes to the development, refinement and consistent application of organizational policies, frameworks and due diligence mechanisms to ensure a coherent and effective approach to preventing and responding to SEA. The PSEA Officer works in close collaboration with key institutional functions, as well as with United Nations (UN) entities and global inter-agency networks, to ensure alignment with system-wide standards and strengthen the Office's mechanisms to address the risk of SEA.
4. In 2024, in response to a recommendation of the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee² and informed by a benchmarking analysis of PSEA resourcing and placement within the UN system, the Director-General decided to designate PSEA as a stand-alone function, reporting directly to him, and to propose the creation of a full-time position at P4 level funded from the regular budget.
5. Accordingly, as of November 2024, the PSEA Officer reports directly to the Director-General, reflecting the strategic importance and enhanced visibility of the function. In line with the adopted Programme and Budget for 2026–27, the establishment of a full-time core position is under way and is expected to be completed in 2026.

¹ Progress for previous years was reported through the Ethics Officer's annual reports to the Governing Body, in which the Office detailed key developments and achievements related to PSEA. See [Annual report of the Ethics Officer](#) – 1 January–31 December 2024 and [Reports of the Ethics Officer](#) – 1 January–31 December 2023.

² See [GB.350/PFA/6](#), recommendation 6.

► **Overview of the PSEA Officer's role and responsibilities** ³

1. Oversees the development of the PSEA annual organizational action plan and is responsible for its coordination, monitoring and reporting.
2. Leads and coordinates the work of the PSEA working group at headquarters level.
3. Provides technical guidance and support to officials across the Office, irrespective of their duty station.
4. Designs, delivers and facilitates capacity-building initiatives related to PSEA, including training, awareness-raising and other relevant activities.
5. Leads the Office's participation in institutional initiatives and activities related to PSEA.
6. Advises on measures required to ensure alignment with international standards and best practices, as well as a coherent and harmonized approach across the Office and within the wider UN system.
7. Prepares official submissions to the ILO Governing Body and briefs donors and constituents on the Office's efforts to prevent and respond to SEA.
8. Represents the Office in UN working groups and other international forums dedicated to combating SEA.
9. Reports directly to the Director-General on progress achieved and challenges encountered in the implementation of the PSEA policy and annual organizational action.

► **2025 highlights**

6. During the reporting year, progress was made in consolidating the ILO's approach to preventing and responding to SEA, with notable advancements across prevention and awareness-raising, system strengthening, transparency, headquarters and field-level action, and participation in UN system-wide initiatives.

Prevention and awareness-raising

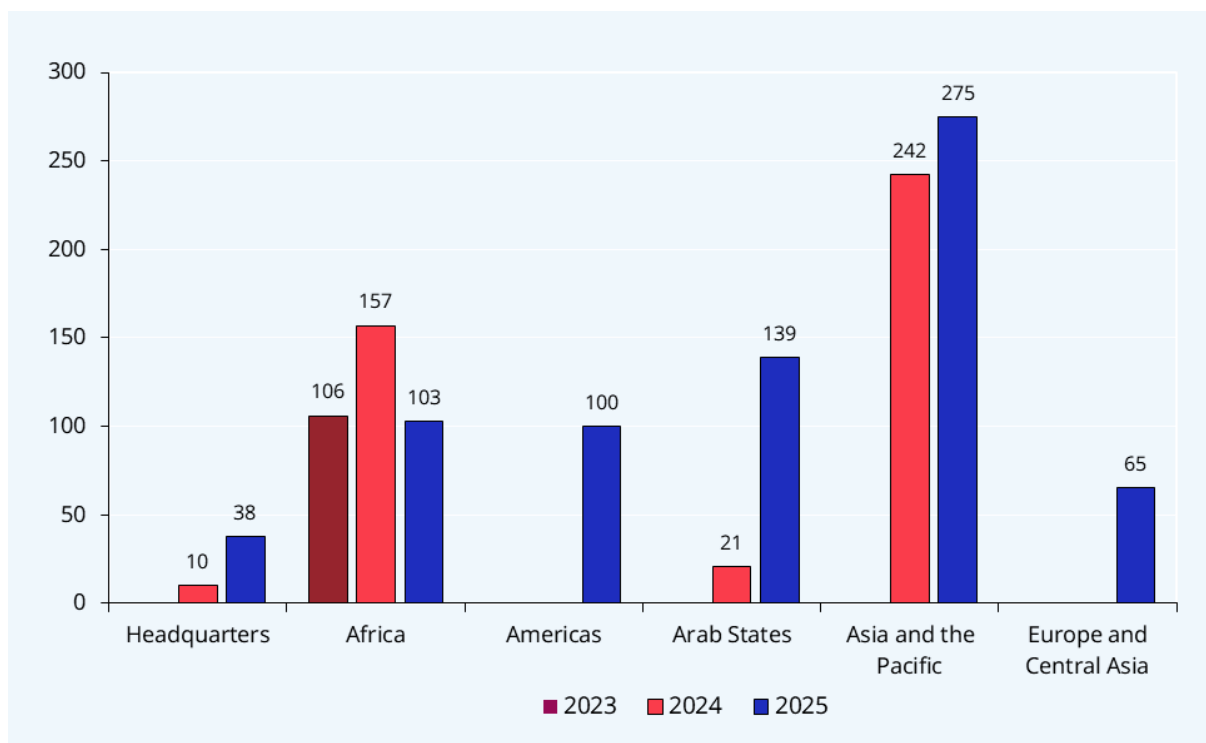
7. A core area of focus in 2025 was the continued strengthening of prevention and awareness-raising efforts across the Office. A total of 18 ad hoc PSEA training sessions were delivered by the PSEA Officer, reaching approximately 720 officials across headquarters, regional and country offices. This represents a substantial increase compared to previous years: 7 sessions were delivered in 2024 for 425 staff, while 1 session was delivered in 2023 for 106 staff.⁴ Overall, the number of training sessions increased substantially compared to 2023, while the number of staff reached expanded more than six-fold over two years.
8. To further strengthen accessibility and ensure inclusive learning opportunities, two training sessions were delivered at the regional level by the PSEA Officer, in Spanish for the Latin America and Caribbean region and in French for French-speaking offices in the Africa region. Pre- and post- training assessments conducted throughout the year indicated measurable

³ The responsibilities of the PSEA Officer do not include the receipt, assessment or investigation of SEA allegations, which fall exclusively under the mandate of the Office of Internal Audit and Oversight.

⁴ Of the 18 training sessions delivered in 2025, 7 were jointly delivered by the PSEA Officer, officials from the Office of Internal Audit and Oversight and the Human Resources Development Department for staff and non-staff in Afghanistan and Bangladesh offices.

improvements in participants' understanding of PSEA requirements and reporting obligations, and feedback received from both staff and managers reflected strong appreciation for the practical guidance provided during these sessions.

► **Figure 1. Number of officials trained by region, 2023 to 2025**



9. Complementing the momentum generated by the 2024 [No excuse: PSEA staff campaign](#) and reinforcing the Office's communication efforts, tailored resources were developed in the ILO's official languages to ensure inclusive learning for all staff, interns and third parties engaged by the ILO (such as implementing partners, contractors and external collaborators). Country offices were further encouraged to translate these materials into local languages, wherever relevant, in order to maximize accessibility and support context-appropriate learning.
10. Awareness efforts were further mainstreamed through the first ever inclusion of PSEA messaging in the global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, which included targeted social media outputs and engagement with staff of the International Training Centre of the ILO.
11. In the area of capacity development, the Office advanced work to offer to all staff a scenario-based and interactive refresher course aligned with the ILO context and to create a PSEA learning track for development cooperation learning pathways. However, these and a few other initiatives had to be put on hold due to financial constraints and operational challenges faced by the Office during the year.
12. Another noteworthy initiative was the inclusion of PSEA, for the first time, in the global meeting of representatives of the ILO Staff Union. This provided staff representatives with the opportunity to learn about key ILO functions, gain a clearer understanding of how existing accountability, safeguarding mechanisms and support services operate, and explore how they can serve as valuable resources in addressing staff needs and concerns.

System strengthening

13. The Office advanced the revision of the PSEA policy, ensuring that the process integrates clear definitions and standards of conduct, as well as system-wide and sectoral best practices. PSEA provisions will also be included in the Principles of Conduct for Staff of the International Labour Office that are being updated by the Ethics Officer. Both documents are still to be finalized, but important groundwork has been laid.
14. Under the leadership of the Office of Internal Audit and Oversight, the Office also strengthened its reporting architecture through the launch of the [ILO Integrity Hotline](#), a safe and independent channel for reporting allegations of misconduct, including SEA. The hotline allows staff, third parties engaged by the ILO and beneficiaries of ILO assistance to submit reports 24/7, by telephone, online form or email. The Integrity Hotline complements existing internal reporting pathways and contributes to a more coherent and survivor-sensitive response system. Its integration into PSEA-related communication and learning efforts aligns with the broader action plan to strengthen accountability and reporting culture across the Office.
15. To further reinforce the Office's internal controls, completion of the online PSEA training has been established as a prerequisite and formal registration requirement for external collaborators. This measure ensures that all individuals engaging with the Office meet minimum PSEA training standards prior to undertaking any contractual activities.

Transparency

16. The ILO continues to use the iReport tracker ⁵ to report credible SEA allegations upon receipt. In support of enhanced transparency and accountability, and in direct response to comments from Governing Body members calling for greater openness, ⁶ the Office made its organizational [PSEA action plan](#) and information on [disciplinary actions](#) publicly accessible through the ILO website.

Headquarters and field-level action

17. At headquarters, the PSEA Officer continued to coordinate closely with relevant departments to advance the mainstreaming of PSEA across key areas of the Office's work, ensuring that policies, operational practices and organizational processes consistently integrate PSEA standards. Collaboration with the PSEA working group remained central to these efforts: the group met on a quarterly basis and throughout the year, and its members were regularly informed of relevant developments and emerging concerns.
18. At field level, country office directors, staff and focal points continued to receive technical guidance and support, reinforcing consistent application of PSEA standards in operational contexts.

Participation in UN system-wide initiatives

19. During the reporting period, the PSEA Officer continued to lead the internal coordination of the ILO's submissions to the UN Joint Inspection Unit review of policies and practices to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse in the United Nations system organizations. Completed in August 2025, this review offers the ILO valuable insights to strengthen its own

⁵ See [Data on Allegations: UN System-wide](#).

⁶ GB.353/PFA/PV.

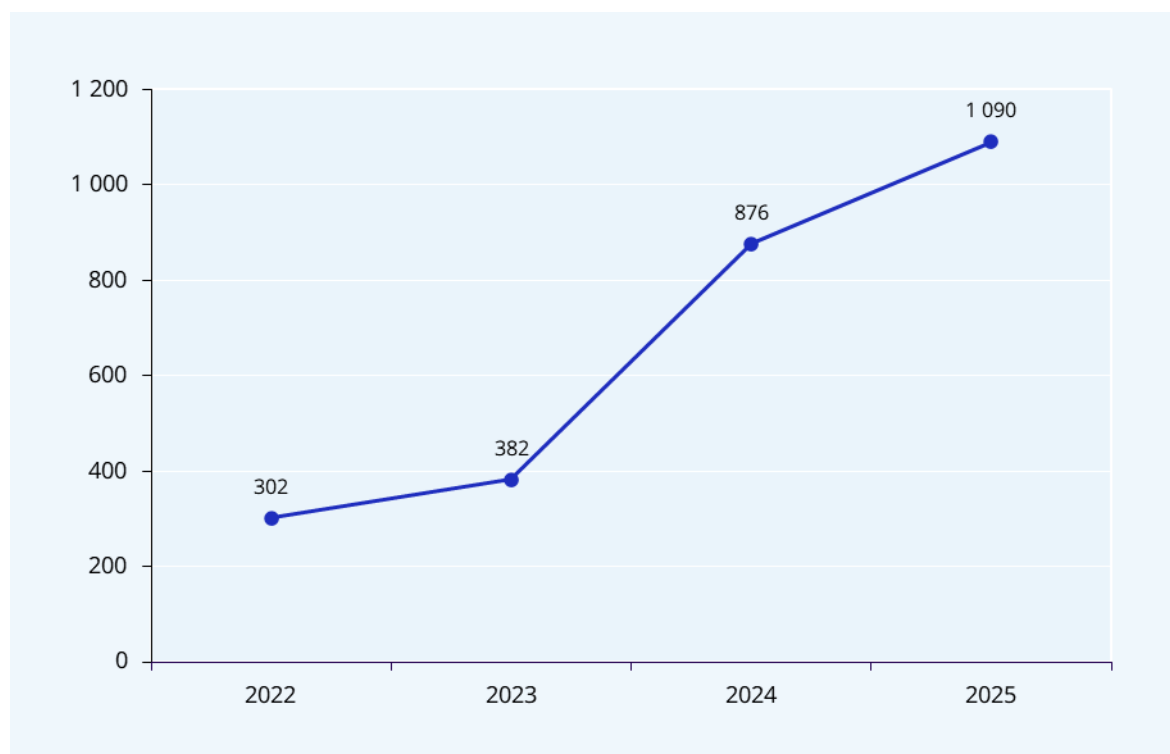
policies, align more closely with UN-wide standards, and identify concrete opportunities to enhance its prevention and response efforts. By analysing regulatory frameworks, coordination mechanisms, victim-centred approaches and good practices across the UN system, the review provides an evidence base that can help the ILO benchmark its progress and guide future improvements.

20. The PSEA Officer also supported the Office's contributions to the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, specifically in relation to PSEA-related indicators. The results of this exercise will inform the ILO's contribution to the UN Secretary-General's annual report on the implementation of UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 2025/4, Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system.

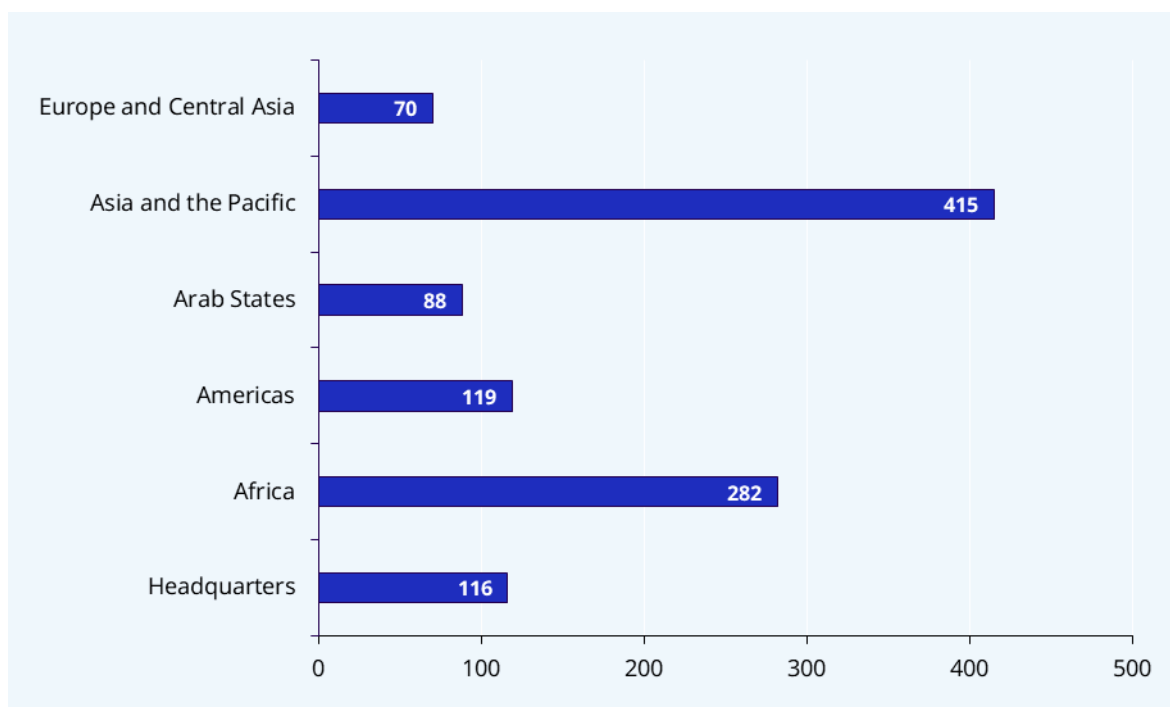
Insights from the 2025 PSEA survey

21. The ILO continues to participate annually in the UN system-wide PSEA survey, which provides critical insights into staff perceptions of SEA.⁷
22. In 2025, the Office achieved a record level of participation, with 1,090 respondents across 101 locations, compared with 876 in 2024 and 382 in 2023. This significant increase in participation may be related to the extensive promotional and awareness-raising efforts led by the PSEA Officer, and underscores the importance of the sustained engagement of headquarters, regional and country offices.

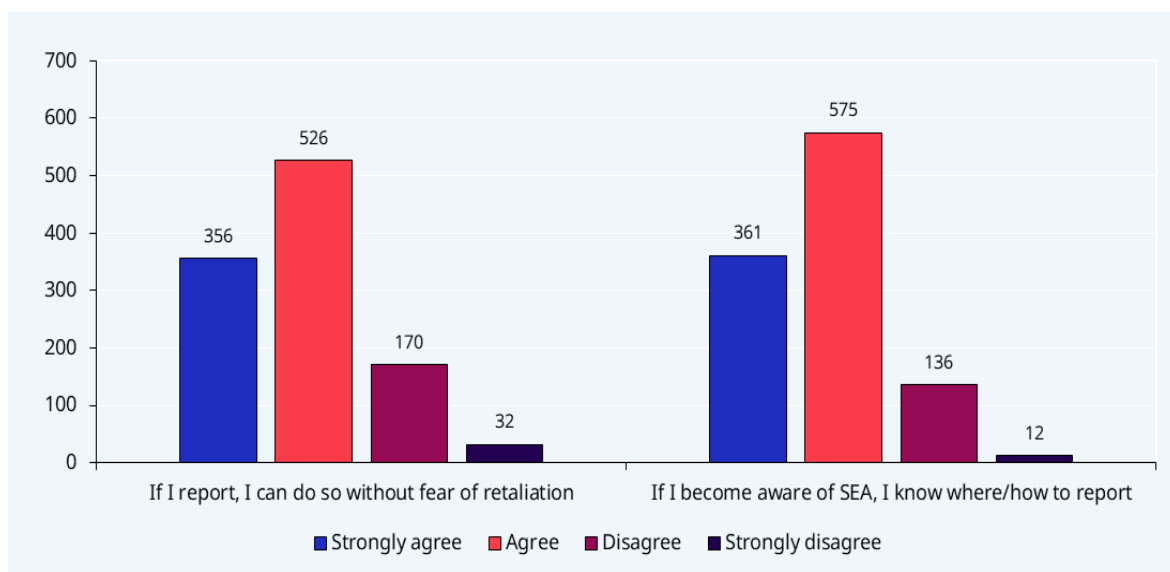
► **Figure 2. ILO staff participation trend, 2022–25**



⁷ Since 2024, the survey has also included dedicated questions on sexual harassment and other forms of abuse of power, enabling more comprehensive insights into staff experiences and perceptions in relation to various types of misconduct.

► **Figure 3. Survey respondents by region, 2025**

- 23.** Survey findings show that most respondents are aware of the ILO's standards of conduct in relation to the prohibition of all forms of SEA. Ongoing PSEA training sessions and awareness-raising initiatives appear to be strengthening staff knowledge and attitudes. Nonetheless, the results point to persistent concerns, including hesitation to report witnessed or suspected misconduct due to fear of retaliation and uncertainty about reporting channels.

► **Figure 4. Knowledge of reporting mechanisms versus reporting confidence**

- 24.** These insights provide a good evidence base to identify remaining gaps and to shape targeted actions that reinforce a culture of trust, transparency and accountability across the Office. They also underscore the need for sustained, coordinated follow-up at headquarters, regional and country levels through regular engagement, innovative learning approaches and active promotion of existing reporting and protection against retaliation mechanisms. Such

continued efforts will be essential to fostering lasting behavioural change and ensuring that all staff feel empowered to speak up and are confident in the systems designed to protect them.

► Insights from the PSEA/PROSPECTS pilot

25. Under the leadership of the PSEA Officer and the Partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities (PROSPECTS) global team, a pilot initiative to assess the capacities of PROSPECTS implementing partners to prevent and respond to SEA was conducted in the reporting period. This initiative responds to recent external assessments,⁸ the ILO's commitment to align with the [UN Protocol on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving implementing partners](#), as well as to identified gaps in PSEA-related due diligence for implementing partners.
26. The pilot aimed to test the [UN harmonized PSEA Capacity Assessment tool](#), evaluate partner capacities across diverse operational contexts and generate recommendations to inform the integration of PSEA due diligence into other relevant ILO projects. PROSPECTS was selected as the pilot development cooperation programme due to its multi-country footprint, partnership with other UN entities, and direct and extensive engagement with beneficiaries, non-governmental and civil society organizations.
27. Non-governmental organization partners with direct beneficiary contact across eight PROSPECTS countries were included. A total of 34 assessments were reviewed, combining existing UN assessments and those initiated by the ILO. Of these, 71 per cent of partners demonstrated full PSEA capacity, while 9 per cent showed medium capacity and 20 per cent low capacity. Analysis of partners with medium or low capacity revealed important gaps in mandatory PSEA training (present in only one of ten), survivor referral systems and investigation procedures. Moderate gaps emerged in vetting procedures and reporting mechanisms. In contrast, most implementing partners had PSEA policies and contractual clauses in place.
28. The pilot revealed the following operational challenges:
 - the technical nature of the assessment process required extensive and regular technical guidance, as many staff members found it difficult to interpret criteria and verify evidence. Therefore, online mentoring sessions, ad hoc guidance and tools were provided;
 - the process proved time-consuming, requiring substantial follow-up with implementing partners that frequently submitted incomplete information;
 - response rates from implementing partners were slow, likely because the assessment was not yet linked to contracting or routine due diligence requirements, reducing its perceived urgency.
29. The pilot generated the following key recommendations:

⁸ See, for example, Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN), *MOPAN Assessment Report: ILO*, Paris, 2021.

- (i) targeted support should prioritize the weakest areas – mandatory PSEA training, survivor assistance and referral pathways, and investigation procedures – while also strengthening vetting systems and reporting mechanisms;
- (ii) the ILO should consider joining the [UN Partner Portal](#) to benefit from the online assessment tool, avoid duplication of efforts and streamline access to valid and existing assessments conducted by other UN entities;
- (iii) internal capacity to conduct due diligence with implementing partners must be reinforced through dedicated staff time and continued technical mentoring;
- (iv) PSEA capacity assessments should be expanded to all types of implementing partners involved in the delivery of ILO activities. These assessments should be fully embedded into existing partner due diligence processes to ensure their timely completion, reinforce PSEA as an eligibility requirement and strengthen overall risk management.

► Relations with the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee

- 30. The first formal engagement of the PSEA Officer with the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee took place in September 2025, during which the PSEA Officer introduced the scope of her role, presented the activities undertaken to date to advance the Office's commitments and briefed the Committee on the findings of the Joint Inspection Unit review.
- 31. Acknowledging the Committee's critical role in strengthening oversight and accountability across the Office, the PSEA Officer expresses appreciation to the Committee's members for their advice and guidance. The Officer remains available to continue reporting on progress, challenges and lessons learned in the implementation of PSEA measures, with a view to ensuring that the PSEA function continues to benefit from the Committee's expertise.

► General observations

- 32. The current global context is marked by heightened levels of precarity, vulnerability and social tension. Such conditions inevitably exacerbate risks of SEA, particularly in environments facing economic insecurity or unequal power dynamics. In this context, the Office's responsibility to uphold the highest standards of safeguarding and accountability is of particular importance. Continued vigilance and sustained institutional commitment remain essential to preventing harm and to ensuring that the trust placed in the ILO, its staff and all parties engaged in its activities is upheld.
- 33. Ensuring adequate, predictable and sustainable resourcing for PSEA is a key enabler of this commitment. Over the past biennium, the Office has made tangible progress through targeted investments, strengthened systems and innovative approaches. Looking ahead, continued consolidation of the PSEA function – including through the establishment of a core position in line with the adopted programme and budget – will further support the effective and consistent delivery of the Office's safeguarding responsibilities.
- 34. Preventing and responding to SEA requires a holistic, organization-wide approach. Building a safe and respectful environment – one in which all staff, partners and beneficiaries feel safe and supported to speak up – remains central to the credibility and effectiveness of the Office's

safeguarding framework. This entails strengthening awareness, enhancing reporting mechanisms, reinforcing managerial accountability and ensuring that all individuals involved in ILO activities understand their obligations and the consequences of misconduct.

- 35.** The efforts made by the Office constitute a strong foundation for further improvements. By continuing to draw on international best practices and deepening cooperation across the Office, the ILO is well positioned to further reinforce its PSEA mechanisms and uphold the highest standards of conduct in all its activities.

Geneva, 27 January 2026

Houda Tahiri
PSEA Officer