International Labour Organization

Committee on Accountability

Annual report 2022

In 2022, the Committee on Accountability completed its review of four (4) cases that had been referred to it by the Treasurer and Financial Comptroller (TR/CF) pursuant to Article 13.30 of the Financial Rules.

Case No. 1: The Committee examined a case of allegations of fraud against the Staff Health Insurance Fund (SHIF) by a retired ILO official stationed in a field office. The allegations concerned the submission of ten fraudulent claims to the SHIF.

The Committee considered a detailed investigation report prepared by IAO and examined its supporting documentation, including in particular the interview and subsequent communications with one of the doctors who, upon being presented with the suspicious receipts, confirmed the genuine nature of two handwritten ones but denied issuing the ten typed ones bearing a different signature as his own and showing prices of sessions much higher than what he would have charged. Following the interview, two more receipts with the same format and signature as the ones denied by the doctor were obtained by IAO. The Committee also took into account the former official's comments that were submitted in response to its request wherein the former official denied forging the receipts or submitting forged documentation to SHIF and insisted that the claims were genuine. However, upon careful review of the doctor's signatures between the hand-written and typed receipts, as well as the same typographical errors repeated in the typed receipts, the Committee concluded the allegations of fraudulent claims to be clear and unequivocal, and that the actions of the former official were deliberate, fraudulent and violated the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service.

The Committee recommended that all reasonable efforts be made by the Office to recover the amounts disbursed to the retired official in respect of the fraudulent claims, including the pursuit of action at the national level, if necessary. As a United Nations specialized agency, the Committee further recommended that the former official's name be flagged in IRIS and reported in any common screening database used by United Nations system organizations, to prevent any future reemployment and/or engagement whether through external collaboration or other contracts by the ILO or other organizations. Furthermore, the Committee recommended that the SHIF Management Committee consider whether the SHIF coverage for the former official and their dependents should be withdrawn or suspended.

Case No. 2: The Committee examined a case of allegations of fraud by a former ILO official stationed in a field office. The allegations concerned the failure of the former official to pay allowances due to project trainees and to fraudulently alter financial documents so as to conceal the non-payment and subsequent late payment of said expenses.

The Committee considered a detailed investigation report prepared by IAO and examined its supporting documentation, including falsified or altered cash settlement vouchers, different versions of expenditure summary sheets, and bank deposit slips, etc. The Committee also took note that the former official did not respond to its invitation to provide comments and proceeded to conclude that the allegations were clearly substantiated and that the actions of the former official were deliberate, fraudulent, and violated the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service. They also created an important reputational risk for the Organization by taking direct advantage of beneficiaries.

The Committee considered that the matter would have merited being referred for the highest level of disciplinary sanction, if the official had not already separated from the Office. As a United Nations specialized agency, the Committee recommended that the former official's name be flagged in IRIS and reported in any common screening database used by United Nations system organizations, to prevent any future reemployment and/or engagement whether through external collaboration or other contracts by the ILO or other organizations. The Committee further recommended that the Office should verify the latest payment status of the remaining trainees who were unpaid at the time of completing the investigation and ensure that the payments owed to them be settled and that a communication of apology be sent to them.

Case No. 3: The Committee examined a case of allegation of non-declared use of an official sim card for personal reasons by an ILO official at headquarters.

The incident of excessive charges on an ILO official phone allocated to the official occurred over a period of three months before it was discovered and the misuse stopped. The ILO official confirmed removing the sim card from the phone assigned to them and putting it into their personal smartphone. They also admitted the lack of attention or ignorance of Office procedures, resulting in excessive charges. After examining the evidence before it, including additional information submitted at its request from INFOTEC regarding the terms and conditions of relevant phone plans, the Committee concluded that the allegation of non-declared use of official sim card for personal reasons was substantiated. The action taken by the ILO official to remove the sim card from an office phone exposed the Office to financial risk, whether knowingly or out of ignorance.

The Committee concluded that there was insufficient evidence of intentional fraud on the part of the ILO official, but rather gross negligence in view of the duration of the incident and the amounts charged during the misuse, which should be subject to an appropriate disciplinary action. The Committee requested the Office to determine the final amount to be recovered from the ILO official based on the full breakdown of the phone charges and recover it from the monthly salary of the subject official based on an agreed schedule.

Case No. 4: The Committee examined a case of alleged attempted fraud concerning false statements to claim repatriation grant and other entitlements by a former ILO official stationed at the headquarters prior to their resignation from the Office.

The Committee considered a detailed investigation report prepared by IAO and examined its supporting documentation, as well as additional information and documents provided by the former official to the Committee during its proceedings. The latter had not been made available to IAO prior to the completion of the investigation. In accordance with its mandate and operational procedures, the Committee conducted an interview with the former official. In this regard, the Committee noted the information contained in IAO's investigation report was limited, due to the former official failing to authorize disclosure by a third party. As a consequence, the investigation conducted by IAO had been frustrated by the former official's actions.

On the basis of new documents provided by the former official, as well as their replies during the interview, the Committee concluded that it did not possess factual elements beyond reasonable doubt that an attempt to defraud the Office had occurred. The Committee regretted that the former official's failure to fully cooperate with the investigation created additional workload for the Office and recommended that they be reminded of their obligation to cooperate with the investigation process at the same time of being informed of the closure of the case.

The members of the Committee for 2022 were Mr Perrin (Chairperson), Ms Sosic (FINANCE), Ms Beaulieu (JUR) and Ms O'Neill (HRD). Mr Gurzumar (FINANCE) and Ms Mesa (HRD) acted as alternate members for Cases No. 3 and 4 respectively. Ms Zhang (TR/CF) served as Secretary.

Date: July 2023

Christophe Perrin
Chairperson
Committee on Accountability

**Disciplinary sanctions are subject to separate procedures – the outcomes of disciplinary cases are published in an IGDS Information Note each biennium.*