



17 June 2009

Ethics in the Office

Introduction

1. This Directive converts ILO Circular No. 662, Series 6, dated 26 April 2006 and entitled *Ethics in the Office* into an IGDS document which supersedes that circular.
2. The Directive is issued pursuant to article 8 of the Constitution of the ILO, article 30 of the ILO Financial Regulations and article 1.2 of the ILO Staff Regulations.
3. In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Charter, service with the International Labour Office is subject to the highest standards of conduct and integrity. These standards are elaborated in:
 - (a) Chapter I of the ILO Staff Regulations;¹
 - (b) the Financial Rules and the Financial Regulations;²
 - (c) the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service adopted by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC);³
 - (d) Office directive, *Rules governing outside activities and occupations*, IGDS No. 71 (Version 1) of 17 June 2009;⁴ and
 - (e) Office guideline, *Conflicts of interest*, IGDS No. 68 (Version 1) of 17 June 2009.⁵
4. In order to foster a culture of integrity and high ethical standards, the following measures have been introduced:
 - A copy of the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service has been issued to each official with a request to sign a statement confirming that they have read and agree to observe these standards.

¹ www.ilo.org/intranet/english/bureau/pers/staffreg/chap1.htm.

² www.ilo.org/intranet/english/support/finas/.

³ The Standards of Conduct are available on the HRD web site and on the ICSC web site icsc.un.org/resources/pdfs/general/standardse.pdf.

⁴ www.ilo.org/intranet/edmsp1/igds/groups/dirdocs/documents/igds/igds_002274.pdf

⁵ www.ilo.org/intranet/edmsp1/igds/groups/dirdocs/documents/igds/igds_002278.pdf

- An Ethics Officer function has been established to ensure support and compliance with ethical standards and to reinforce the possibility for all officials to report cases of disregard for these standards without fear of retaliation.
 - A requirement for the periodic disclosure of interests by all officials.
5. This Directive is effective as of the date of issue.

Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service

6. The Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service were revised and updated by the ICSC in 2001 in consultation with participating organizations and staff representatives.⁶ These standards complement the provisions of Chapter I of the ILO Staff Regulations and guide ILO officials both in carrying out their duties and in the activities they undertake outside the framework of such duties.
7. I attach great importance to these standards and expect all ILO officials to respect and comply with them. Strict observance of these standards is essential for the reputation of the Office as well as for the respect and trust that the ILO should enjoy on the part of its member States, workers' and employers' organizations and the public at large.
8. I have requested that a copy of the revised Standards of Conduct be issued to each official. Each official is requested upon initial appointment to sign a statement confirming that she/he has read the document and undertakes to observe the standards contained therein. The Standards of Conduct and the statement have been distributed through the sectors to each department/unit and to the field through the field office secretariats. These documents can also be downloaded from the Human Resources Development Department (HRD) Intranet site. The signed statements are placed on the personal file of each official.
9. Officials are also encouraged to consult the Principles of Conduct for Staff of the International Labour Office.⁷

Ethics Officer

10. The Ethics Officer function is established with the following responsibilities:
- (a) To provide guidance to HRD to ensure that ILO policies, procedures and practices reinforce and promote the ethical standards called for under the Staff Regulations and the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, and that the ethical standards pertaining to ILO officials are clearly understood.
 - (b) On request, to counsel managers and staff members on questions of ethics and those governing outside activities.
 - (c) To assist, in collaboration with HRD, in designing and promoting programmes to inform and educate staff with a view to increasing awareness on ethical issues.

⁶ Prepared in 1954 by the International Civil Service Advisory Board, precursor of the ICSC.

⁷ www.ilo.org/public/english/ethics/download/principles.pdf.

- (d) To receive complaints of retaliation or threats of retaliation from individual officials who believe that action has been taken against them because they have reported misconduct or cooperated with an audit or investigation.
 - (e) To keep a confidential record of all complaints received.
 - (f) To conduct a preliminary review of the complaint to determine:
 - (i) if the complainant engaged in a protected activity; and
 - (ii) if there is a prima facie case that the protected activity was a contributing factor in causing the alleged retaliation or threat of retaliation.
 - (g) To refer the matter to HRD, where appropriate, for consideration of possible disciplinary action.
11. In exercising these duties, the Ethics Officer is independent of any official, department or other organizational entity of the ILO and reports directly to the Director-General, to whom she/he presents a periodic report.
 12. All offices and officials shall cooperate with the Ethics Officer and provide access to any records and documents requested by the Ethics Officer, except for medical records that are not available without the express consent of the official concerned and other records that are subject to confidentiality requirements.
 13. Officials who wish to address the Ethics Officer should forward all information and documentation available to them in support of their request to: ethics@ilo.org

Disclosure of interests

14. A potential conflict of interest can arise where an official's personal relationships or position in external entities can compromise or be seen to compromise objectivity and impartiality in the discharge of official duties for the ILO (e.g. roles, activities or participation in bodies or groups dealing with ILO matters and activities, close ties with constituents or ILO oversight bodies, etc.). Financial interests of officials as a result of family and personal relationships, gifts, benefits and hospitality received from outside sources, as well as through other business interests such as partnerships and family businesses, are also considered to be one of the main causes of conflict of interest in a public administration.
15. To assist in the prevention of conflicts of interest, each official shall, without prejudice to the obligation to obtain permission to undertake certain outside activities in accordance with the Directive referred to above, complete a Disclosure of Interests Form and submit it to HRD upon initial appointment and regularly thereafter at intervals announced by the Office. These forms are confidential and are therefore placed in the second part of the personal file of each official.
16. Officials are reminded that when confronted with a conflict of interest or by a situation that could lead to a perception of a conflict of interest, they must disclose that interest to their immediate supervisor and jointly take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way which protects the best interests of the Office.⁸

⁸ See Office Guideline, *Conflict of interests*, IGDS No. 68 (Version 1) of 17 June 2009.

Whistleblowing

17. Where an official is aware of a situation that appears to him or her to be incompatible with the standards of conduct or established rules and procedures involving a third party, there are a number of mechanisms for reporting such cases with accompanying protection from retaliation.
18. In cases involving financial impropriety, fraud, presumption of fraud or attempted fraud, Financial Rule 13.10 requires officials to report them to the Treasurer and the Chief Internal Auditor. In accordance with Financial Rule 14.30, the Chief Internal Auditor is also available to receive from individual official's complaints or information concerning the possible existence of waste, abuse of authority or other irregular activities. Both the Treasurer and the Chief Internal Auditor are bound by a duty of confidentiality and no official who provides information to them shall be adversely affected unless this information was wilfully provided with the knowledge that it was false or with intent to misinform.
19. Under Circular No. 649, Series 6, concerning informal conflict resolution mechanisms,⁹ the Mediator can receive, in confidence, information concerning non-compliance with ILO internal rules and procedures (other than Financial Rules), breach of standards of conduct or concealment of such action. Where the Mediator considers that the concern is credible, he or she will report it to the relevant authority for appropriate action.
20. The responsibilities of the Ethics Officer as regards protection against retaliation are specified in paragraph 10 above.

Juan Somavia
Director-General

⁹ www.ilo.org/intranet/edmsp1/igds/groups/circulars/documents/ilogovernance/edms_006333.pdf.