An ILO free from sexual harassment
A right and our joint responsibility

The ILO is committed to ensuring a safe and harassment-free working environment and a culture of mutual respect across the Organization. All staff have the responsibility to uphold the highest standards of behaviour, and actively prevent sexual harassment and misconduct.

What you should know

Sexual harassment is defined as “any conduct of a sexual nature in the workplace or in connection with work, which, in the perception of the recipient, can reasonably be seen as creating an offensive, intimidating, hostile or humiliating working environment for that person or is used as the basis for a decision which affects that person’s employment or professional situation” (ILO Staff Regulations).

Anyone can be sexually harassed and sexual harassment can take many forms including:

- Sexual comments or jokes – in person, via e-mail or social media;
- Displaying images of a sexual nature that objectify women or men;
- Staring or leering in a sexually suggestive manner or wolf whistling;
- Inappropriate touching, such as pinching, patting or unwanted hugging;
- Unwelcome sexual advances or pressure to meet outside the work environment;
- Implicit or explicit reference to currying sexual favours in return for specific assignments, job security, or promotions;
- Any form of physical sexual assault;
- It may be a pattern of behaviour or a single incident;
- It may occur between people of the opposite or same sex;
- Whether the sexual harassment was intentional or not – it is how the behaviour is perceived that counts.

The policy covers harassment at the workplace, but also at social events outside of the ILO, on duty travels, training or missions.

Do not fail to act

The ILO is responsible for ensuring that any workplace misconduct, including sexual harassment, is properly addressed. All staff members must be aware of the need to prevent sexual harassment and to ensure that it is properly addressed when it does occur.

All managers are required to take appropriate action to prevent and respond to incidents of sexual harassment using prompt and effective measures. If cases are brought to your attention you must act.

Any staff member who experiences sexual harassment, or who has knowledge of potential cases, should inform a higher-level chief or the Director of the Human Resources Department (HRD).

Those who report incidents will be supported in an environment that takes this issue seriously.

Speak up if you feel that you are being sexually harassed

Depending on the nature of the behaviour and the impact caused, you may be
able to address the matter directly with
the person concerned. In many cases,
particularly if the offending behaviour is not
intended to cause harm or distress, it should
be possible to correct the situation through
dialogue.

If this is not possible, then it is important
that you seek help from someone you trust.
The sooner the situation is made known, the
easier it is to make it stop.

**How to take informal action**

Even if you are not sure whether the
situation falls within the boundaries of
sexual harassment, you can use informal
procedures to discuss and clarify the nature
of the problem in the strictest confidence. It
is important to identify someone you trust
to help you make it known that you are
finding the behaviour of someone else to be
offensive.

You might first seek the help of your
responsible chief or a higher-level manager.
If you don’t feel at ease with that option, you
might seek assistance from the Mediator,
the Staff Welfare Officer, HRD, the Staff
Union, a colleague or former colleague, or a
representative of the Medical Service.

**How to take formal action**

If you wish to pursue a formal process, you
can submit a written complaint, including
a detailed written statement of the facts,
to the Director of HRD. You may want to
seek guidance from a representative of the Staff
Union or from HRD concerning formal
procedures.

Your complaint will be reviewed to
determine if there is a need for a fact-finding
investigation. In that event, independent
external investigators will be hired and their
report will be submitted to the Director-
General.

If allegations of sexual harassment are
substantiated, the Director-General will
ensure that appropriate disciplinary sanction
and any other administrative measures are
taken.

**What to do if you are told that your
behaviour is causing offence**

If you are told by someone, or by a third party
on behalf of someone else, that your behaviour
is causing offence, then you must take this
seriously. It doesn’t matter whether you
intended to cause harm or not – you must stop.

Take steps to correct your behaviour and
apologize for any offence or distress that you
have caused.

If you do not understand why you are causing
offence, or consider that the offence caused
is not reasonable then you must seek advice
and guidance. You may consider consulting
the Mediator, HRD, a higher-level chief, or a
representative of the Staff Union.

It is incumbent on everyone to consider the
impact of their behaviour on others and to
react constructively when offence is caused.

**Protection against retaliation**

The ILO is here to support you, and will take
steps to ensure that there is no victimization
or retaliation against those who exercise their
right to complain and report harassment. All
reported cases will be reviewed and actions will
be taken where sexual harassment is found.
Where appropriate, sexual harassment will be
referred to the national authorities for further
review.

**Who to contact**

**Mediator:** Antonio Augusto Cuesta de Queiroga
mediator@ilo.org

**Staff Welfare Officer:** Daniela Menes
menes@ilo.org

**Medical Service:** medical@ilo.org

**Human Resources Department:** Faith O’Neill
oneill@ilo.org

**Staff Union:** syndicat@ilo.org

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