



UNITED NATIONS Ombudsman & Mediation Services

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Delivering in the field - Portrait of the **Regional Branch in Kinshasa**

The United Nations Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services (UNOMS) has seven regional branches that provide informal conflict resolution services to employees of the UN Secretariat including staff in peacekeeping missions. One of those branches is located in Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo), serving a total of some 9,000 UN personnel working in MONUSCO and the surrounding field operations in Western and Central Africa. To better serve this large constituency, the Regional Ombudsman also regularly conducts visits to deep field locations in these missions, such as Bouake and Daola in Cote d'Ivoire; Goma, Bukavu, Bunia and Kisangani in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The branch in Kinshasa is headed by Mr. Gang Li (China) who has long-standing work experience in the field, including with UNHCR. Mr. Li is supported by Ms. Maria Montiel (Costa Rica) who previously served as a United Nations Volunteer (UNV) with UNOCI and also worked with the Ombudsman's Office of Costa Rica. Mr. Li and Ms. Montiel provide services to all staff within the mission area, including conflict coaching, facilitation, shuttle diplomacy and mediation.

"Le grand professionnalisme et la diplomatie de (...) ont permis le règlement de cette situation et je pense que de telles actions font honneur aux principes qui sont chers à l'Organisation des Nations Unies et renforcent d'avantage le prestige de Votre organization".

Anonymous feedback from a visitor

The nature of informal resolution

The Ombudsmen and Mediators use a collaborative approach to look at disputes from all perspectives with the objective to identify possible ways forward. The parties remain in control of the resolution process and determine the outcome that best meets their needs. Such an informal approach also allows for swift and sustainable solutions to disputes.

The work of the Regional Branch in Kinshasa



Regional Ombudsman Gang Li (Kinshasa)

Mr. Li notes: *"Our Regional Office provides direct access to neutral and independent Ombudsman and Mediation Services for over 9000 staff members. Due to the challenging living and working conditions at the peacekeeping missions and especially at hardship and deep field locations, conflicts are part of the daily lives of all who serve in the field. In its initial years of operation our Regional Office in Kinshasa has helped hundreds of staff members to settle their workplace disputes in an informal manner and works to promote a culture of trust and conflict prevention.*

In addition, a major impact of our presence in the missions has been the establishment of our Office as an institutional capacity to promote amicable conflict resolution in the field missions. We see it as our role to assist staff and management to promote good management culture at all levels and to empower the parties to resolve conflicts through dialogue and negotiation".

Types of issues

Since the Office's establishment in 2010, issues brought to the Ombudsman in Kinshasa for informal resolution were mainly related to: (1) job and career; (2) interpersonal relationships; and (3) compensation and benefits. Other issues relate to unfair treatment, abuse of authority, safety, health and work/life balance.



Regional office building in Kinshasa

Guiding principles of an Ombudsman

Independent – An Ombudsman is independent in structure and function from all United Nations organs and officials and has direct access to the Secretary-General.

Neutral and Impartial – An Ombudsman does not take sides in a conflict. S/he reviews each situation objectively and treats all parties equally.

Confidential – An Ombudsman does not keep records for the United Nations or any other party. S/he holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence, and does not disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so.

Informal – An Ombudsman does not participate in any formal adjudicative or administrative procedure relating to concerns brought to his/her attention.

Contact the Ombudsman if you have a work related concern and you:

- Don't know who to talk to
- Would like a confidential or "off-the-record" conversation
- Don't know how to address your concerns
- Have not yet decided on a course of action
- Are uncertain of possible consequences
- Have pursued formal redress and want to explore alternatives

Contacting an Ombudsman is always a good first step!

The Regional Office in Kinshasa is located at MONUC HQ, 12 Av. des Aviateurs, Kinshasa – Gombe.

Tel: 243 818 90 5470 or 39 0831 24 5470, Email: li36@un.org

Tel: 1 917 367 5731 (New York), Email: ombudsmediation@un.org

Find out more at: www.un.org/ombudsman and use the Secure Contact Form to contact one of the Ombudsmen or Mediators confidentially. Services are available in all six UN languages.

"Just as the United Nations addresses conflicts around the world, so must we also pay close attention to resolving and managing conflicts within the organization. I therefore encourage all of you to make use of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services".

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon