



## UNITED NATIONS Ombudsman & Mediation Services

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### Delivering in Africa - Portrait of the **Regional Branch in Nairobi**

The United Nations Office of 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 Nairobi (Kenya), serving staff in South and South-East Africa.

The branch in Nairobi is headed by Regional Ombudsman Mr. Nicholas Theotocatos (U.S.A.). An attorney with a specialization in conflict resolution and mediation, Mr. Theotocatos also has extensive experience in the field of Human Rights and has been serving as the Ombudsman of the International Organization for Migration. He is supported by Ms. Caroline Gitau (Kenya). The Office provides services such as conflict resolution, coaching, shuttle diplomacy and mediation.

*“A lean compromise is better than a fat lawsuit”.*

*George Herbert (1593 – 1633)*

### **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.



**Regional Ombudsman Nicholas Theotocatos  
(Nairobi)**

### **The work of the Regional Branch in Nairobi**

Mr. Theotocatos notes: *“Since the establishment of the Regional Branch in Nairobi my outreach efforts have been aimed at demonstrating the utility and value of a third party in resolving conflicts. As an impartial and neutral Ombudsman and Mediator my role is not to deliver a Solomonic Judgement but to empower staff to find amicable solutions agreeable to all parties involved. This is achieved by expanding the options of the parties rather than focussing on outcomes on the basis of right and wrong.*

*As Ombudsman and Mediators our techniques and skills are used to expand the pie, rather than to distribute it and I feel that this is what makes informal resolution of cases unique. In this regard the rising number of Mediations conducted demonstrates the trust that is already placed in this system.*

*However, the challenge remains to explain more broadly to stakeholders and colleagues the added value of a third party neutral in resolving cases informally”.*

## Types of issues

Since the Office's establishment in early 2010, issues brought to the Ombudsman in Nairobi 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.

## 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.



UNON Compound (Nairobi, Kenya)

**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 Nairobi is located at UN Avenue, Gigiri, X-level 2 East Wing Room 226.*

*Central case intake:*

*Use the Secure Contact Form to contact one of the Ombudsmen or Mediators confidentially, send an email to [ombudsmediation@un.org](mailto:ombudsmediation@un.org) or call +1 917 367 5731 (New York).*

*Services are available in all six UN languages. Find out more at: [www.un.org/ombudsman](http://www.un.org/ombudsman).*

***"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