



UNITED NATIONS Ombudsman & Mediation Services

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

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 Bangkok (Thailand), serving the staff at ESCAP including the six regional offices and two regional institutes. The Bangkok branch also provides services to employees of other Secretariat entities located in the South, Central and East Asia Regions and the Pacific.

The branch in Bangkok is headed by Regional Ombudsman, Ms. Susan John (USA), who brings to this position broad experience of the UN, having worked for peace-keeping missions in Kosovo and Haiti as well as in Vienna and in New York. Ms. John has a background in law and alternative dispute resolution and is a certified mediator. Ms. John is supported by Ms. Vanviva Bhumibhanit (Thailand). The Office provides services such as conflict resolution, coaching, shuttle diplomacy and mediation.

"I thank you very much for your support and guidance, which has enabled me to remain mostly serene as well as professional over the last several weeks".

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 Bangkok

Ms. John notes: *"In the months since the establishment of this office, there has been a steady increase in the number of individuals seeking our services on a wide range of workplace concerns. It is heartening to*



Susan John and Vanviva Bhumibhanit,
Regional Ombudsman Office, Bangkok

note that employees are indeed coming forward with their concerns despite my being told that the general culture in the region would tend towards not doing so. This can perhaps be attributed partly to the outreach work that Vanviva and I have been undertaking and also to our demonstrated commitment to maintain confidentiality. Words of appreciation and support that we often receive simply for the fact that an office such as ours exists as a place that employees can turn to informally are most encouraging and help re-affirm my own belief in the power of collaborative and informal approaches to conflict resolution".

Types of issues

Since the Office's establishment in November 2010, issues brought to the Ombudsman in Bangkok 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.



UNOMS Bangkok Conference Room used for Mediation

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 is located on the ground floor of United Nations Conference Centre, UNESCAP, Rajadamnern Nok, Bangkok, Thailand.

Tel: 66 2 288 1276 (Bangkok), Email: john5@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