

Amicable resolution of workplace conflicts – a responsibility of all

The third annual report of the Secretary General on the activities of the integrated Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services (UNOMS) is now available for [download](#).

The report was prepared for the 66th session of the General Assembly and describes developments in the informal system of dispute resolution in 2010. It describes the types of cases received and identifies the broader issues that are often at the core of workplace conflicts. The report also makes recommendations on how to address these issues at various levels, including at the policy level.

In particular, the report underlines that the responsibility for preventing workplace conflicts is a shared one: Trust, appropriate communication, respect and inclusion are essential elements of a working environment. Where these elements are lacking, misunderstandings arise and conflict is likely to ensue. In this respect, managers and staff are both called upon to set the tone for mutual respect and to enhance dialogue through constructive and honest feedback.

With most cases occurring in offices away from Headquarters and in field operations, the report also shows that the case volume of informal resolution has increased by 35 % with a total of 1764 cases in 2010 compared to 1287 in 2009. The top areas of concern for users of Ombudsman services across the integrated office in 2010 can be categorized as job and career (34%), evaluative relationships (20%) and compensation & benefits (15%).

For the next reporting period, the Ombudsman's office aims to further promote the culture of dialogue and mutual problem solving within the UN by reaching out to staff and further encouraging the development of dispute resolution skills.

Other topics covered by the report are:

INCENTIVES FOR INFORMAL RESOLUTION – PROMOTING COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS

Noting the importance of informal dispute resolution, the General Assembly endorsed several incentives to increase the use of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services. The Deputy Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-General for Management have encouraged the utilization of Services provided by the Ombudsman's Office by highlighting the benefits of informal resolution and urging their senior managers to cooperate with and respond to the Office in a timely manner.

REGIONAL IMPACT – DELIVERING IN THE FIELD

After almost one year, the Regional Ombudsman offices in Bangkok, Geneva, Nairobi, Santiago, Vienna and the peace-keeping missions in the Congo and Sudan have collectively handled over 700 cases and have made informal conflict resolution services more accessible to staff in the field.

MEDIATION SERVICE – TAILOR-MADE SOLUTIONS

The Mediation Service has recorded an increase in its overall caseload and in particular in the number of referrals from the Tribunals and the Administration.

The Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services delivers informal and impartial conflict resolution services to the staff of the Secretariat, the Funds & Programmes (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS) and UNHCR.

Find out more at www.un.org/ombudsman