Fact Sheet: Outside Activities

Outside employment and external activities, paid or unpaid, may be incompatible with our status as international civil servants, conflict with the best interests of the Organization, or interfere with our ability to serve the UN. We must avoid activities that can adversely impact the Organization or contravene our status as international civil servants. We must devote our time and energy to the mission of the Organisation.

The UN permits staff members’ participation in those outside activities which are beneficial to both the Organisation and its staff members, such as the development of professional and technical skills.

Prior approval from the Secretary-General is required for UN staff members to engage in outside employment and external activities, including teaching or speaking.

Staff members do not require prior authorization from the Secretary-General to engage in an outside activity provided that it is a private, unpaid social or charitable activity with no relation to official responsibilities or the Organisation; compatible with our status as international civil servants; does not create a conflict of interest or interfere with our ability to serve the UN; and takes place outside work hours. Consult the Ethics Office if you wish to serve on any external panels, advisory bodies or committees. Board membership with fiduciary duty (involving duty of care, the duty of loyalty and the duty of obedience) is most often not compatible with our status as international civil servants.

Staff members may vote and belong to political parties, but we must balance our personal activities with the UN’s status as an independent and impartial Organisation and avoid activities that could reflect adversely or diminish the Organisation’s status. We are prohibited from running for public office, at any level. As international civil servants, we do not have the freedom that private persons have to take sides or to publicly express our convictions on controversial matters.

TAKING ACTION

- Be sure to inform the activity organizer that you are participating in a personal capacity and not as a UN representative (UN business cards or email should not be used).
- Do not represent anyone seeking a business relationship with the UN (i.e. provide services, sell products, etc.), even if informally.
- Consult the Ethics Office if you wish to serve on any external panels, advisory bodies or committees.
- Seek approval for an outside activity - review ST/Al/2000/13. The process starts by completing a written description of your proposed activity, for initial review by your supervisor and the Executive Officer or local chief of personnel.
Enquiries to the Ethics Office are confidential. When you are unsure about the right course of action, step up and ask for advice. The Ethics Office will listen to your concerns and guide you. We provide confidential guidance on ethical issues. We’re here to help – contact us to schedule an appointment.

**Ethics Helpline:** +1 (917) 367-9858  
**E-mail:** ethicsoffice@un.org  
**Address:** United Nations Ethics Office, 323 E. 44th St., DC2-0612, New York, NY 10017, USA

**References**

- [ST/SGB/2018/1](#), *Staff Regulations* 1.2 (o), (p)
- [ST/AI/2000/13](#), *Outside Activities* (to be revised)
- [ST/IC/2006/30](#), *Outside Activities* (In effect until further notice)