

Canada 

**UNGA 75 CANZ Statement – Administration of
Justice**

October 15, 2020

Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak today on behalf of Australia, New Zealand, and my own country, Canada.

Since the commencement of the administration of justice system in 2009, CANZ has recognized the importance of building an effective, fair, transparent, and impartial internal justice system at the United Nations. Effective administration of justice is essential in enabling the UN staff to produce its best work, attracting and retaining the best and most qualified professionals from around the world, and ensuring that the Organization upholds its own ideals and values.

CANZ thanks the Secretary-General, the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, and the Internal Justice Council for their reports. CANZ notes with concern recurring issues raised in these reports, including those related to the performance of the Tribunals, transparency, protection against retaliation, and the continued high rate of self-representation. We are pleased, however, to note some positive developments.

CANZ commends the publication of the Digest of Case Law of the UN Dispute Tribunal and the UN Appeals Tribunal. This Digest, together with the outreach initiatives conducted by the Office of Administration of Justice over the last year, raise awareness about the internal justice system among United Nations staff. By facilitating access to the jurisprudence of the Tribunals and knowledge of the system itself, these efforts support greater transparency and access to justice.

While the backlog of old cases remains a significant problem, CANZ notes with appreciation the efforts made to reduce this backlog and, as a result, the decrease in the number of pending cases. We welcome the Internal Justice Council's recommendations to promote further efficiency and transparency.

The Office of the UN Ombudsman and Mediation Services continues to report that many people seeking assistance are afraid to speak out because of the risk of retaliation. All parties and participants in internal justice processes should be safeguarded from retaliation. CANZ supports the recommendations made by the Internal Justice Council to protect parties and witnesses. Protection from retaliation is crucial to a strong internal justice system.

The Office of the UN Ombudsman and Mediation Services has identified trends and systemic issues underlying workplace conflicts, including the rise in harassment of female managers, inappropriate and prohibited behaviours, and well-being issues. CANZ is concerned about the harm that is caused to individuals and to the organization by racist, sexist, and other discriminatory attitudes and behaviours. CANZ is pleased to see that the Office of the Ombudsman has highlighted the need for honest conversations on these subjects. CANZ is also pleased, particularly in these unprecedented times, to see that the Office is taking seriously the important issues of mental health and the personal needs of non-staff.

CANZ welcomes the efforts made by the Office to promote a harmonious working environment where all can thrive in an atmosphere of dignity and mutual respect. We note with appreciation the roll-out of the civility campaign. Improving workplace environments leads to better morale and productivity of staff members, in addition to preventing some workplace conflicts.

It is up to all Member States and the United Nations Organization to work together to ensure the development of a transparent, fair, impartial, and efficient system of administration of justice. CANZ countries will continue to engage constructively with Member States on this important issue.

Thank you.