



UNITED NATIONS Ombudsman & Mediation Services

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Delivering in Western Europe: **the regional branch in Geneva**

The Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services has seven regional branches that provide informal conflict resolution services to Secretariat staff worldwide. The regional branch in Geneva serves staff at the United Nations Office at Geneva and other Secretariat entities in Western Europe.

The Geneva branch is headed by Regional Ombudsman Louis Germain, who has extensive experience in the field of dispute resolution and human resources management. In his work, Mr. Germain is supported by Elena Dumitru.



Louis Germain, Regional Ombudsman in Geneva, (right) and Elena Dumitru (left)

How do we work?

Ombudsmen and mediators use a collaborative approach that emphasizes looking at disputes together from all perspectives. The objective is to identify ways of moving towards a resolution of the conflict by assessing options, clarifying positions and understanding needs. From the moment a staff member

The response to the establishment of the regional branch in Geneva has been overwhelmingly positive. Follow-up action is immediate, accessibility greatly improved and there is a renewed confidence in the confidentiality principle of the informal process. We are also working with key stakeholders to develop more mechanisms for handling conflict resolution in the workplace.

Louis Germain

contacts an ombudsman, he or she remains in control of the process, as no steps are taken without his or her consent, consultations are confidential and no records are kept. Moreover, ombudsmen cannot be called to testify in formal proceedings.

In some cases, it is appropriate to try mediation. For mediation to be an option, all those involved must agree to participate. Successfully mediated cases have the benefit of being acceptable to everyone involved because the parties have determined the outcome that best meets their needs (win-win solution).

Types of issues

The Office facilitates the resolution of a wide variety of workplace concerns. No issue is too small or too big. Staff are encouraged to contact the Office as early as possible, before the issue escalates and becomes more complicated.

Core principles

Independence The Office is independent in structure and function from all United Nations organs and officials. It is guided by the Charter of the United Nations, the staff rules and regulations and the principles of fairness and justice, not by the interests of a particular entity, department or individual within the Organization. The United Nations Ombudsman has direct access to the Secretary-General.

Neutrality and impartiality Ombudsmen do not take sides in a conflict. They look at each situation objectively and treat all parties equally.

Confidentiality All communication with an ombudsman is confidential. Information shared with an ombudsman will not be disclosed without permission.

Informality Ombudsmen do not participate in formal adjudicative or administrative procedures relating to concerns brought to their attention, nor do they keep records for the United Nations or any other party. They do not make binding decisions or mandate policies. They do, however, identify trends, issues and concerns, and report them to the Organization.

Contact UNOMS if you have a work-related concern and you:

- Don't know who to talk to and need a sounding board
- Would like a confidential, 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 started to pursue formal redress and want to explore alternatives

Contacting an ombudsman is always a good first step!

The regional branch is in room 13, Villa "Les Feuillantines", 13 avenue de la Paix, Geneva.

The Office's ombudsmen and mediators can be contacted confidentially by e-mail (ombudsmediation@un.org), telephone (+1 917 367 5731) or secure contact form (www.un.org/ombudsman). Informal conflict resolution services are available in the six languages of the United Nations.

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