



UNITED NATIONS Ombudsman & Mediation Services

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Delivering in Europe and Central Asia: **the regional branch in Vienna**

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 Vienna serves staff at the United Nations Office at Vienna and other Secretariat entities in Europe and Central Asia.

The Vienna branch is headed by Regional Ombudsman Gang Li, who has significant experience in the field, including with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In his work, Mr. Li is assisted by Kavita Verma.



Gang Li, Regional Ombudsman in Vienna

How do we work?

Ombudsmen and mediators use a collaborative approach that emphasizes looking at disputes 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 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.

Our office provides direct access to neutral and independent ombudsman and mediation services for staff members at all levels. In its initial years of operation, the office has helped hundreds of staff members to settle their workplace disputes. We see it as our role to assist staff and management and to empower the parties to resolve conflicts through dialogue and negotiation.

Gang Li

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 E-1119/1120 at the Vienna International Centre.

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