

REFERENCE: EOSG/SLA/2024/2

## Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel

The United Nations welcomes applications for the position of Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel, Office of Legal Affairs. This position is at the Under-Secretary-General level and is based at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The Secretariat welcomes applications to supplement the Secretary-General's search and consultations and would especially welcome the applications from women candidates.

**Applications must be submitted through the link to the Senior Leadership Vacancies online form located at the following web address: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/vacancies/index.shtml> by Monday, 10 June 2024 (midnight New York time).**

Further information on OLA is available in the Secretary-General's Bulletin ST/SGB/2021/1 and on the following website: <https://www.un.org/ola/en>

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The Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel is a member of the Secretary-General's [Senior Management Group](#), and serves as a role model for the United Nations Values (Inclusion, Integrity, Humility and Humanity) and Behaviours (Connect and Collaborate; Analyse and Plan; Deliver Results with Positive Impact; Learn and Develop; Adapt and Innovate) Framework, and the desired behaviours of the [United Nations System Leadership Framework](#).

### ***Background***

The Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) of the United Nations was established in 1946 (General Assembly resolution 13(I) of 13 February 1946) as the Legal Department in the United Nations Secretariat. In 1954, the Legal Department was reorganized into the Office of Legal Affairs to more accurately reflect its role in providing legal advice to the Secretary-General and acting on the Secretary-General's behalf in legal matters.

OLA is the central legal service of the Organization and performs the following functions:

- (a) Provides legal advice to the Secretary-General, Secretariat departments and offices, funds and programmes and other United Nations organs, including in support of the Organization's efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals as reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- (b) Represents the Secretary-General in legal conferences and in judicial proceedings;
- (c) Performs substantive and secretariat functions for legal organs involved in public international law generally, as well as those involved in the law of the sea and ocean affairs and international trade law;

and (d) Performs the functions conferred on the Secretary-General in Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations, in the Statute of the International Court of Justice and in other relevant instruments of international law.

### ***Duties and Responsibilities***

The Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, the United Nations Legal Counsel, is accountable to the Secretary-General, and:

- is the senior legal adviser to the Secretary-General, the Secretariat, funds and programmes and other organs of the United Nations. The legal advice the United Nations Legal Counsel provides relates to matters including public international law and the internal administrative law of the United Nations, as well as private international law;
- heads the Office of Legal Affairs, is responsible for the leadership, management and administration of the Office and reports directly to the Secretary-General;
- is responsible for ensuring efficiency, transparency and accountability in the work of the Office;
- is a member of senior-level advisory bodies established by the Secretary-General;
- leads the coordination of the system-wide legal advisers networks, composed of (a) legal advisers of specialized agencies and related organizations, (b) legal advisers and legal liaison officers of entities including United Nations offices away from Headquarters, funds and programmes, regional commissions, ad hoc tribunals and non-judicial accountability mechanisms and field legal officers for United Nations peace operations (peacekeeping operations and special political missions);
- has operational responsibilities, in particular, for supporting United Nations and United Nations-assisted criminal tribunals – including leading their establishment and the implementation of completion strategies – for serving as focal point for cooperation with the International Criminal Court – and for supporting United Nations non-judicial accountability mechanisms, as well as commissions of inquiry, boards of inquiry, investigations and fact-finding missions established by the Secretary-General;
- serves as focal point for UN Oceans and
- represents the Secretary-General at meetings and conferences of a legal nature, and in judicial and arbitral proceedings, and certifies legal instruments issued on behalf of the United Nations.

### ***Education, Skills and Expertise***

The Secretary-General is seeking an individual with the following attributes:

- an advanced university degree (Master's degree or equivalent degree) in law. A first-level university degree in law in combination with two additional years of qualifying experience may be accepted in lieu of the advanced university degree.
- unimpeachable personal integrity and 20 years of proven international legal, diplomatic, policy advisory and advocacy experience, with at least 5 years of high-level experience;

- demonstrated leadership experience with strategic vision and proven skills in managing complex legal issues within organizations, such as an intergovernmental, national or international entities;
- demonstrated ability to work harmoniously in a multi-cultural team and establish harmonious and effective working relationships both within and outside the organization;
- high commitment to the values and guiding principles of the United Nations and good understanding of the United Nations system, including peacekeeping, human rights, humanitarian and development settings and challenges;
- demonstrated aptitude to manage complex situations and emergencies effectively;
- strategic foresight to address new and emerging legal issues and geopolitical dynamics.

### ***Languages***

English and French are the working languages of the United Nations. For this position, fluency in English is required. A working knowledge of French is desirable. Knowledge of other United Nations official language will be an advantage.

### ***Human rights screening***

Individuals who seek to serve with the United Nations in any individual capacity will be required, if short-listed, to complete a self-attestation stating that they have not committed, been convicted of, nor prosecuted for, any criminal offence, including sexual exploitation and abuse, and have not been involved, by act or omission, in the commission of any violation of international human rights law or international humanitarian law, including sexual exploitation and abuse.

### ***Conflicts of interest screening***

All United Nations staff members are expected to uphold the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. Senior leaders in particular, have the responsibility to serve as role models in upholding the Organization's ethical standards.

A conflict of interest occurs when, by act or omission, a staff member's personal interests interfere with the performance of their official duties and responsibilities, or call into question their integrity, independence and impartiality. Risk for conflicts of interest may arise from a staff member's engagement in outside (non-UN) employment or occupation; outside activities, including political activities; receipt of gifts, honours, awards, favours or remuneration from external (non-UN) sources; or personal investment. In particular, no staff member shall accept any honour, decoration, favour, gift or remuneration from any Government (staff regulation 1.2 (j)).

Where a real or perceived conflict of interest does arise, senior leaders are obligated to disclose this to the Organization without delay. In order to avoid real or perceived family influence or preferential treatment and conflicts of interest that could stem from such situations, the United Nations Staff Rules provide that appointments "shall not be granted to anyone who is the father, mother, son, daughter, brother or sister of a staff member" (staff rule 4.7 (a)).

Short-listed individuals will also be required to complete a pre-appointment declaration of interests for senior positions to identify possible conflicts of interest that may arise and to proactively prevent and manage, as much as possible and in a timely manner, situations in which personal interests may conflict or appear to conflict with the interests of the United Nations, should the individual be appointed to this position.

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3 May 2024