

Subject: Alternate working arrangements in the context of COVID-19

Dear Colleagues, below kindly find a note from DMSPC on alternate working arrangements in the context of COVID-19. The information is also available on the [UN.org/coronavirus](https://www.un.org/coronavirus) website and on iSeek.

In an effort to contain the spread of COVID-19, the Secretary-General and the respective heads of entity in several duty stations across the world have recently decided to restrict physical access to UN premises while keeping offices open virtually.

In all entities at all duty stations where such decisions have been made, staff members are required to work remotely, unless their physical presence in the building is required to carry out essential work. This is neither an optional nor a voluntary telecommuting agreement between managers and staff members but a mandatory requirement by the Organization. All must comply.

Concretely, it means that staff members are requested to discharge their functions from a remote location, generally their home, as an alternate work arrangement. This measure is commensurate to the extraordinary situation we face and is meant to facilitate business continuity of the Organization at a time where it is essential to reduce social contact to a minimum.

As such, it should not be confused with flexible working arrangements as regulated by ST/SGB/2019/3 and ST/IC/2019/15 and there is no need for staff members to fill any agreement or form. However, at the end of every week, staff should ensure that telecommuting days are entered into Umoja. Staff should select the new “Telecommuting-COVID-19” type from the drop-down menu when recording in Umoja.

In light of the growing numbers of universities, schools and day care closures and other disruptions to family support services, the requirements regarding core working hours’ periods are thus also temporarily lifted, on the understanding that staff members will work for the required number of hours and will continue to deliver on their assigned tasks. Managers are required to show full flexibility to the extent possible and staff members to be responsible and inform their managers if they cannot work full-time and need to avail of leave.

The Organization will aim to progressively provide, to the extent possible, the necessary equipment to all staff members. Staff members who do not have at this time an Organization-provided laptop but who possess one, are called on to use their private equipment during this time of crisis to help the Organization face this challenge and keep operations running as smoothly as possible.

For staff members who cannot discharge their usual functions remotely and who have not been required to physically report to duty, managers are requested to temporarily assign other functions and activities that can be undertaken remotely, such as online training and professional development courses.

Should none of the above be possible, the head of entity may approve placing such staff members on special leave with full pay (SLWFP) and in such is the case, would not be required to exhaust annual leave before being placed on SLWFP. Such SLWFP must be recorded in Umoja by the HR Partner using the new Action Reason for the Special Leave with Pay Personnel Action – “COVID-19”.

To ensure that alternate working arrangements in the context of COVID-19 are implemented successfully, all supervisors are asked to exercise maximum flexibility.