

To: All UNDP Staff

From: Mark Malloch Brown
Administrator

Subject: Our Work and Life Programme

In our efforts to renew and revitalize UNDP, I have asked staff to be innovative in examining all aspects of their work. An important part of this undertaking must be greater flexibility in the way we organize our work environment. Many of our existing structures and approaches to work were established at a time where the potential to leverage technology did not exist.

I am pleased to launch the Work-Life Policy and Programme, as approved by the Executive Committee. This new Programme will be subject to review after an initial period of 12 months. Attached please find the Work-Life Policy document and support annexes for the Programme, which have been discussed extensively throughout the organization.

This represents a bold move to introduce greater flexibility and to use information technology more wisely in support of our work. The goal is to help staff to strike a balance between the demands of work and personal commitments as we move to a results-based management of organization, which places a premium on productivity and accountability.

The Office of Human Resources, which has coordinated the work leading to this policy, is committed to provide active support to staff and managers in facilitating its introduction. I would also take this opportunity to thank the Staff Council for their contribution and support to the Work-Life Policy and Programme.

For more information, please visit the new website dedicated to work and life issues which is part of the OHR intranet website <http://www.undp.org/intra/ohr>. The website provides an array of information concerning this new policy, as well as other areas that affect both the workplace and one's personal life.

The success of this new programme will rest with each staff member. I look forward to your support in reshaping our work environment into one that allows all UNDP staff to contribute their best to the organization.

**UNDP's Work Life Programme
Creating the 21st Century Workplace**

1. Perhaps the greatest challenge facing human resource management today is ensuring the continued responsiveness of policies, office structures and systems to the changing profile of our workforce. The demographic issues are well known. The reality that much of our current policies and structure of the workplace are rooted in a dated workforce profile, that was predominantly male and for families with a single income earner, requires the organization to face directly these deficiencies. Together with our staff we must begin to remake the workplace for the 21st century.

2. For some time UNDP has been addressing the issues which broadly constitute the work and life agenda. The breadth of topics contained under this broad heading is significant and touch virtually all staff. The many substantive, monetary and even legal aspects of the issues make addressing all concerns within the same timeframe difficult. With this said, it is equally important for all staff to understand that UNDP is committed to a continuing effort to reform policies and structures to achieve the optimal working environment for all staff. Only with such an approach can it be truly affirmed that its staff are in fact UNDP's most valued asset.

3. Much work has already been completed in revising policies and procedures to accommodate personal issues in the context of working arrangements and related entitlements. Many innovative approaches have been piloted around the organization to address specific personal situations, which provide invaluable practical examples that serve as a basis for the construction of more broad-based policies. UNDP has led and participated in extensive discussions with similarly situated organizations both within and outside the United Nations common system to gain further insights into the complexities of the issues and the practical measures, which can be effectively implemented.

4. Cohesion must be brought to the pilot initiatives to permit these innovations to be extended where appropriate and to provide clear guidance to management and staff regarding the options, which are available and the obligations which accompany these alternatives. In this effort, OHR has worked in close collaboration with the Staff Council, which has provided invaluable insights. Consultations with staff and management at all levels both at headquarters and in country offices have also been undertaken.

5. In this first comprehensive package, the measures targeted on the work and life agenda, are organized into four areas:

- a) Policies which support rotational families serving in country offices
- b) Flexible Working Arrangements
- c) Innovations in Leave Policies
- d) Information and Outreach Programmes

6. For each of these areas, policies and programmes either are already in place or are being introduced to address specific issues confronted by staff in managing the demands of their personal lives and their obligations to UNDP. The goal for each of these measures is the same: to promote the optimal performance by each staff member of his/her work through providing an enabling environment to address critical personal needs. Challenges remain to effectively address complex issues such as the demands faced by couples with dual careers. Many of the innovations presented here offer some potential for partially assisting working couples to meet both professional and personal demands. It is intended to gather creative examples of how policies have been applied to provide illustrations for others.

A. Policies to support rotational families serving in country offices

7. Service in UNDP typically requires mobility on the part of many staff. The demands of rotational assignments for staff working in country offices often fall most heavily on the family. Often assignments which require staff to serve in very difficult locations may even lead to a separation of families. Over the past decade, the United Nations common system has devoted considerable attention to improving conditions of service in field locations with particular attention given to specific issues confronting staff serving in what are classified by the United Nations Security Coordinator as “non-family” duty stations. The introduction of new policies and the administration of existing policies with much greater flexibility have enabled UNDP to ease the burden of rotation on the family.

8. For staff with family obligations, service in country offices poses a special series of challenges, particularly in a non-family duty station where the family is unable to live together on a day to day basis. While no set of special entitlements can fully offset the affects of rotation or replace the joys of daily family life, UNDP, with its United Nations system partners, has introduced measures specifically focused upon facilitating family situations and to assist in meeting the additional financial burdens presented by maintaining separated households. Essentially these goals have been accomplished through a package of entitlements which include the following:

- a) Modified Extended Monthly Evacuation Allowance
- b) Flexible education grant travel
- c) Mission approach.
- d) Flexible home leave travel
- e) Flexible repatriation and shipment arrangements

Modified Extended Monthly Evacuation Allowance

9. This entitlement was established to alleviate hardships of staff members faced with problems of maintaining two households. It applies to staff members serving at duty stations designated as “non family” duty stations for security reasons. Dependent family members are unable to join the staff member at the duty station. Staff members may opt to either settle their family in the place of home leave, the previous duty station or a third country which is usually close to the duty station of assignment.

10. In recent years, OHR, in consultation with BFAS, has expanded the application of the EMEA entitlement to staff members in exceptional circumstances, when families had to be separated due to non-availability of adequate schooling for young children.

Flexible education grant travel

11. The modifications to this entitlement have been introduced to allow family reunions when staff members’ children are attending an educational institution outside the country of the duty station for not less than two-thirds of the school year. Education grant travel includes payment of the child’s travel expenses for one round trip each school year, to the duty station or to a country other than the duty station, to visit a parent. One or both parents may travel in lieu of the child to visit him/her, either at the place of study or elsewhere. When a staff member has two or more children entitled to education grant travel, two parents can undertake the travel, together or separately, or one parent can undertake multiple travels.

Mission approach

12. This entitlement is available to staff members assigned to high-risk areas, so called mission areas, and who, as a result, are separated from their families. UNDP, in consultation with other agencies, designate selected non-family duty stations as mission areas. Assignments to these areas create separations whereby families are obliged to have two households. Under the mission approach, an Administrative Place of Assignment (APA) is established, following inter-agency consultation, for each mission area. Staff assigned to mission areas have the designated APA as their official duty station. The APA is normally a nearby country where the hardship is not severe and adequate educational facilities and reliable transport connections to the mission area exist. However, if staff so wish, the former duty station or the home country or another country may be elected as APA. In addition to the regular entitlements and allowances, staff members also receive a Mission Subsistence Allowance (MSA) which covers the principal living expenses at the mission area. Staff in mission areas also benefit from an increased amount of travel. This enables more frequent reunification with family members as well as provides stress relief.

Flexible home leave travel

13. The modifications to the home leave entitlement extend to all eligible staff, not just those serving in non-family duty stations. These modifications provide greater flexibility to staff, who are serving outside their home country, and their dependants to return to their home country periodically in order to renew personal ties. The staff member may either travel to his/her home country (country of recruitment), or to the spouse's home country. A temporary change in the place of home leave when abnormal conditions prevail in the recognized country of home leave may also be approved.

14. Staff members also have an option to receive a lump sum payment in lieu of existing home leave entitlements. This lump sum is equivalent to 75 percent of the cost of the full economy class fare by the least costly air fare between the duty station and the closest airport to the established place of home leave. In this case, the staff member is responsible for his or her own travel arrangements.

15. While there is no minimum time period for the duration of home leave, staff are still expected to spend a reasonable period of time on home leave.

16. UNDP will in the future be pursuing further flexibility in the home leave entitlement. As originally conceived, this entitlement is intended to facilitate maintaining cultural and family ties during periods of expatriate service on behalf of the United Nations. While traditionally periodic travel has been seen as the best means for maintaining these ties, today there is a growing array of means for maintaining close cultural linkages. To recast the home leave entitlement where travel is presented as an option but not a requirement will require careful assessment and design as well as consultation with United Nations system partners. UNDP is however committed to looking for further innovative approaches in managing this entitlement which will both meet the needs of staff and facilitate the administration of the benefit.

Flexible repatriation and shipment arrangements

17. OHR now flexibly applies the procedures governing shipment of personal effects and the payment for repatriation travel. Staff are permitted to direct shipments to any destination up to the allowable entitlement. Similarly repatriation travel is permitted to any destination up to the cost of travel to the home country.

B. Flexible working arrangements

18. Technological advances combined with a growing array of personal demands in the lives of staff have led to a serious re-examination of the workplace and how it is organized. The question is increasingly apparent: what will it mean in the future to “go” to work? It is recognized to an ever-growing extent that the current structures presented in the classic workplace are not always the most efficient use of resources which in fact may impede optimal creativity and productivity.

19. UNDP is a global organization with operations taking place around the clock in over 135 countries. However, the existing workplace structures force staff to focus their working outputs into a fixed schedule of hours in generally one specific location. The introduction of greater flexibility in the workplace is intended to empower managers to assist staff in achieving optimal performance. Flexible work enables staff to organize work outputs to best meet overall programme objectives as well as to balance the demands of work with other personal issues.

20. In considering possible approaches to the introduction of flexible working arrangements, it is important to acknowledge the underlying commitment of the employment contract. Staff of UNDP are obligated to provide high quality services to the best of their individual abilities consistent with assigned functions. Under the traditional concept of the workplace, the delivery of these services to the organization is facilitated and to a certain extent “ensured” by the requirement that staff work together in both physical proximity and during the same period of time.

21. To move beyond this classic definition of the workplace, it is important to establish guiding principles, which will govern the design and operation of alternative working arrangements. First and foremost the success of any alternative working arrangement is critically dependent upon clear communication between all members of the working team, supervisor, staff member and peers concerning expected work outputs and the context of this work with the larger team. Furthermore, policies which support flexible working arrangements can only be judged effectively if ultimately these policies are applicable to staff at all levels in the organization. Staff with management responsibilities face issues in their personal lives which are no less pressing nor stressful than staff at other levels. No set of policies or models can function effectively in the absence of dialogue. This is a shared responsibility which is central to the implementation of any modifications to the classic workplace.

Guiding principles

22. With the wide range of work assignments which exist in UNDP, it must be acknowledged that flexible working arrangements are more easily put in place for some jobs than others.

As a first guiding principle therefore, the policies ***are intended to facilitate flexible working arrangement but do not create an entitlement for such arrangements.***

The effective utilization of these policies will depend to a large extent on a collaborative approach by individual managers and staff members with some external guidance and counseling where needed.

23. A second guiding principle for the management of flexible working arrangements is ***that the introduction and operation of flexible working arrangements can not represent additional costs for the organization.***

Beyond the current restrictive financial climate, it should be understood that this is the beginning of the transformation of the workplace. It will take several years before the organization can adapt more easily its

allocation of resources used to support the existing workplace to enable direct financial support to alternative working arrangements. Furthermore while it is true that often productivity gains are realized through the use of flexible working arrangements, the initial impetus to the introduction of such arrangements is to meet the personal needs of a staff member. Therefore, it is not reasonable in extending this facilitation to staff, that the organization be burdened with additional costs.

24. A final guiding principle is that ***the productivity level achieved under flexible working arrangements must be confirmed by management as consistent with the level established under the standard structure.***

While this last principle may seem apparent, it is in fact one of the greatest challenges in managing flexible working arrangements. In the current workplace, staff have individual performance plans which specify broadly expected outcomes. Productivity levels however are not precisely established. Full time employment is still largely defined through the recording of time and attendance. Under flexible working arrangements, staff attendance during a specific period of time becomes an unimportant if not irrelevant factor. Therefore work planning between supervisor and staff member becomes very critical, and realistic and specific output targets must be established. Ultimately it is the primary responsibility of management to verify that individual performance goals are met. Under flexible working arrangements, this verification should be focused upon work outputs.

25. The policies (with supporting guidelines) presented here address three forms of flexible work:

- a) Flexible work schedules
- b) Telecommuting
- c) Part-time work schedules

While there exist other forms of flexible work, the policies, which follow, capture the approaches which have proven to be most effective both in serving the personal needs of staff and the capacity to manage these arrangements.

Flexible work schedules

26. Since 1991 UNDP has had in place a limited policy concerning flexible work schedules, also known as staggered hours. Under the current policy, core working hours are established where all staff are expected to be present. These hours at Headquarters, 10:00am to 4:00pm, are intended to guide managers in the organization of activities, such as meetings, where the input of all staff may be required. Outside of the core hours, it is anticipated that staff can complete more substantive functions which may not require interaction with other staff. Staff are expected to work the number of hours per day which have been established under the common workweek. Starting and ending times are permitted to vary to meet external personal needs of staff.

27. The flexi-time model currently in place accommodates to a limited extent the needs staff may face on a day to day basis. It does not however in any fundamental manner provide for a significant adaptation of working hours to facilitate major issues or activities which staff may wish to pursue. Two additional models are now being introduced which can permit greater adaptation of the workday thus providing a significant potential for staff to pursue external interests. It is important for all staff to understand that these models do not create entitlements to specific working arrangements, such as deferment or accrual of compensatory time off, when the exigencies of work require a staff member's presence. The objective is flexibility in work consistent with the demands of the work programme at any particular point in time. These two models are designed to support either a scheduled break for external activities or permit the completion of ten days of work in nine.

A scheduled break for external activities

28. UNDP recognizes the need to support the continuous learning of its staff. The only option now available to staff to pursue organized courses is to select from courses which are offered at times which fall outside regular working hours. This restriction limits the learning options available. Under a scheduled break for external activities, staff will be permitted breaks of up to three hours per day two days per week to pursue an external activity such as an external learning programme. These six hours away from the office would be compensated through adding two hours per day to the remaining three days per week, or alternatively one hour per day for all five days with the sixth hour added to one selected day.

29. Under this option staff are not permitted to sacrifice lunch hours in lieu of additional work hours. The break from the working day must follow a scheduled pattern for a specified period and be agreed by the immediate supervisor before formal commitments to an external activity are made. With this option, UNDP is tangibly supporting efforts by staff to pursue learning or other important external activities. Staff are obliged to meet their commitments to the organization and managers must be consulted to ensure that the scheduled break for an external activity does not present a significant disruption to operational activities.

Ten days of work in nine

30. The capacity to restructure the work schedule to facilitate gaining more concentrated free time can be highly motivating for staff. Through adding a small amount of work time to each working day, outside organizations both in the public and private sectors have successfully managed programmes permitting staff to take every alternate Friday off. This facility to “harvest” more free time for staff has proven to be not only popular but also promotes productivity by focusing attention to the completion of assignments in the revised working period and contributes to the creation of a less stressful work environment.

31. Organizations that have introduced this flexi-time model have found it requires the managerial discipline to ensure that meetings are not scheduled on Fridays. It requires therefore the organization to determine which day for all staff would be the potential free day every other week. While this discipline is often elusive, the potential benefits for staff to meet external obligations to family or regularly engage in other activities are significant. The resulting improved mental well being for all staff can only benefit the organization in the execution of work.

32. The determination of the time that must be added to each working day is simple. At Headquarters, staff would have to work an additional forty-five minutes per day to avail themselves of this flexi-time option. Again supervisors must be closely consulted to ensure that there is staggered utilization of the alternate work-free Friday. In duty stations where Friday is part of the weekend, the alternative day off would fall on the last day of the working week. Alternatively, country offices could conclude that the first working day of the week would serve as the best day for supporting this programme. While the introduction of the ten days of work in nine is based upon shifting hours of work, the objective and the underlying determination which support it is that work goals can be accomplished flexibly. Where this option is applied, there may arise occasions where work demands would prevent a staff member from enjoying a specific alternate Friday off. When the immediate demands of work impede the normal application of this model, this *does not* imply the deferral of the day off to another day or the accrual of free days to be enjoyed at a future time.

33. The effective management of flexi-time options requires as a prerequisite a sense of trust and responsibility on the part of staff and management. These options are presented to assist staff in pursuing external interest and obligations. Experience has shown that abuse of flexi-time is limited with productivity gains far outpacing any abuse. By demonstrating trust in staff to meet their responsibilities to the organization while at the same time displaying a heightened sensitivity to issues staff face in their lives, expanding flexi-time options for UNDP staff is a cost effective means to realize these goals.

34. The introduction of either new flexible working arrangement together with staggered hours should take place following a detailed discussion of the implications for the work programme of the section or

unit. In this regard, managers are encouraged to discuss the possible introduction of flexible working arrangements on a section-wide basis. It is important that the impact of implementing a flexible work arrangement also take into account the distribution of work with colleagues and co-workers. Discussions regarding work schedules to ensure coverage at all times are essential to the smooth integration of flexible working arrangements into the work programme of the section or unit.

Telecommuting

35. No other area of the work and life agenda holds greater potential for the radical reshaping of the workplace than the rapidly developing initiatives in telecommuting. The fundamental issues posed by telecommuting to the concepts of supervision, teamwork and the organization itself are staggering and unavoidable. The technological wave, which continues to sweep through all organizations, challenges UNDP to address these issues squarely or risk finding existing organizational structures obsolete and uncompetitive in an unpredictably short period of time.

36. While technology underpins much of the telecommuting concept, it also is the source of its limitations. To effectively implement a telecommuting arrangement both the staff member and his/her office must be able to support the telecommunication/automation platform that makes the separation from the workplace an insignificant factor. Effective utilization of office automation technologies is an integral feature of work for staff at every level. No longer is the ability to operate a computer for text processing, telecommunication and data management viewed as a discreet set of skills but rather as an essential prerequisite for the modern workplace. The responsibility to comprehend and apply computer-based approaches to every day work increasingly rests primarily with the individual. While the organization facilitates the introduction of automation technologies to the work place, formal organized training will not be a regular feature for most new computer applications. The establishment of a telecommuting work arrangement therefore pre-supposes the capacity of the staff member, supervisor and colleagues to work effectively in the virtual environment.

37. Attached as Annex 1A, are the telecommunication/computer specifications necessary to support a telecommuting workplace away from the office. These specifications cover the equipment, software and telecommunication interface which are minimally necessary to support work away from the office. The capability to set up and maintain this platform must rest with the staff member. The cost of the computer equipment may be fully or partially supported by the organization. This is dependent upon which option for telecommuting governs the working arrangement. UNDP has piloted two types of telecommuting which will now serve as the models for broader application. These models support either full time work away from the office, i.e. the creation of an alternate dedicated worksite or scheduled periodic work away from the office typically in the close vicinity.

An alternate dedicated worksite

38. In its fullest expression, telecommuting can in fact eliminate the need to be physically present in the office. While at this point, full time telecommuting has been piloted only to a limited extent, it is envisaged that this form of work will become increasingly popular as staff at all levels become more comfortable with both the technical and inter-personal aspects of telecommuting. At this point in time, full time telecommuting is considered most viable for highly specialized work where the service is delivered primarily through automated systems. To consider the creation of a full time telecommuting arrangement, the staff member and the supervisor must first address together several issues:

- i. Does the nature of the work easily support execution away from the office?
- ii. Can an individual work plan be crafted which specifies measurable outputs to be achieved within fixed timeframes?
- iii. Can the work of the staff member be easily integrated with the work of colleagues in the office?

- iv. Are the costs of telecommuting sustainable for the staff member and the office?

While the specific answers to these issues will vary in each situation, UNDP has established a structure to facilitate the assessment of the conditions which must be met for a staff member and supervisor to establish a formal telecommuting arrangement. Attached in Annex 1B is a structured compact which addresses each issue where the terms of the telecommuting arrangement are specified. At the end of the compact both staff member and supervisor establish the terms of the arrangement. It is understood by both parties that the arrangement can be terminated at the end of the agreed term by either party with a return to the traditional working environment consistent with the employment contract of the staff member.

39. Telecommuting can take place from a site as close as the normal commuting distance from the office or as far as from another country on another continent. Depending upon this distance, the creation of a telecommuting arrangement may require an adjustment in the conditions of service for the staff member. Entering into a telecommuting arrangement on a full time basis does not necessarily change the contractual status under which a staff member is employed. Where there is no change in duty station required to establish the alternate dedicated worksite, conclusion of the telecommuting compact would be sufficient to establish the arrangement. For nationally recruited staff, telecommuting arrangements are at this point restricted to alternate dedicated worksites within the country.

40. For an internationally recruited staff member who will physically relocate to another country to establish the alternate dedicated worksite, this may require an adjustment in the conditions of service to recognize this change. Consistent with the time-bound nature of telecommuting arrangements, OHR has determined that a modified use of the 300 series or ALD contract would possibly serve as an appropriate contractual basis for supporting telecommuting arrangements which require a change of duty station. Currently encumbered posts within the office structure can be frozen to support the funding of the ALD contract. These posts would remain frozen for the duration of the telecommuting arrangement and would support the re-integration of a staff member into the office who has not been otherwise reassigned or promoted to another post within the organization. If, at the conclusion of the telecommuting arrangement, the staff member elects to return to the original post, the original contractual status will be reinstated. The modifications of the ALD contract for telecommuting from a different duty station are attached in Annex 1C. It should be noted that employment under an ALD contract is intended for a normal continual duration of three years with a maximum possible duration of four years. Telecommuting arrangements therefore will be similarly time-bound. Alternatively, employment under 100 or 200 series contracts could be applied in a telecommuting arrangement if application of these contract modalities can be both cost effective and specifically time-bound.

41. Where telecommuting has been arranged as a full time form of employment, the cost of computer equipment (up to the cost of equipment, which would be normally provided by the organization for a standard employment arrangement) can be applied to support telecommuting. Additional costs for peripheral equipment such as printers, scanners, cameras and modems should be met by the staff member. Equipment purchased by UNDP to support a telecommuting arrangement must be entered into the equipment inventory of the office concerned and returned to the organization at the conclusion of the telecommuting arrangement.

42. Telecommunication costs related to the maintenance of a telecommuting arrangement incurred by the staff member must be borne by the staff member. Much like the transportation costs incurred by staff who commute to work under the standard working arrangements, the telecommuting costs incurred by a staff member should be seen as simply the intrinsic costs of this mode of employment. With respect to the cost for the occasional travel by a telecommuting staff member to the office for consultations and work planning, it should be possible for offices to demonstrate savings in other areas e.g. mission travel, which may be used to offset these costs. Offices should be aware that, at the minimum, telecommuting staff should be present in the office for one week per annum to review the work arrangement and arrange for continuation or re-integration into the office.

Scheduled periodic work away from the office

43. A form of telecommuting which will more likely become common in the near future will be a hybrid form of employment which combines work within the standard office with periodic work from an alternate site. At present, under informal arrangements, staff have been permitted to work occasionally from home and are listed for attendance purposes as if present at work. For the occasional need to work from home to support a particular assignment or for a very short unforeseen personal need, UNDP will leave the current informal approaches in place. These approaches depend upon close communication between staff member and supervisor to ensure that the occasional work from home meets the staff member's commitments to the organization.

44. Under the arrangements for scheduled periodic work away from the office, a staff member may for up to two days per week work from an alternative site. This work must be supported by a telecommunications/automation platform that meet the specifications provided in Annex 1A. An employment compact must also be established between the staff member and the supervisor for telecommuting as provided for in Annex 1B. This compact must be supplemented by establishing the schedule for work away from the office. This schedule should provide for clearly established times when the staff member will be in the telecommuting mode. Since the telecommuting arrangement will be combined with work in the office, no change in the existing employment contract will be needed.

45. With a hybrid working arrangement, the organization will be required to maintain working facilities in the office for the staff member. While these facilities may be used by other staff, temporary assistance or consultants during the scheduled periods of telecommuting, it is unlikely that the organization will realize any significant resource savings through this telecommuting arrangement, which can be applied to assist in meeting the costs of creating a viable work platform at the alternate site. Therefore under this arrangement, the cost for the computer equipment and related telecommunication connections must be borne entirely by the staff member. Similarly telecommunication costs incurred by the staff member in support of the telecommuting arrangements also must be met by the staff member.

46. As with full time telecommuting, the arrangements for scheduled periodic work away from the office should be established for a maximum of one year. These arrangements will be subject to review and the concurrence of the both the staff member and the supervisor for extension.

47. Similar to the approach for introducing flexible work arrangements, the introduction of telecommuting should take into account the impact on the work of colleagues and co-workers in the section or unit. For telecommuting to work effectively, means of communication not only between the staff member and supervisor but also with peers must be established.

Part time work schedules

48. Part time employment has long been a possible employment mode though rarely utilized. In the past staff had the option of either full time work or half time. This limitation made part time employment unattractive for both the staff member due to the significant loss of income and to the supervisor due to the loss of staff capacity. To improve the utility of this approach to work, UNDP is now introducing the possibility of working in a graduated manner from fifty percent through to one hundred percent of the established work time. Using a graduate approach, compressed work schedules may be useful in addressing the needs of families with childcare responsibilities and for staff approaching retirement as a gradual means to transition towards separation. It is also possible to envisage the use of compressed work schedules for reduced working hours during summer periods.

49. By dividing the workweek into half-day segments, the typical workweek contains ten segments. With a minimal threshold of five segments or fifty percent to support staff member status through ten percent or half-day increments, work schedules can be compressed from fifty to ninety percent of full employment. Establishment of compressed work schedules are dependent upon agreement between staff member and supervisor concerning the structure of work and the delivery of sufficient productivity to support the office work programme. While this determination may be difficult with a highly compressed

schedule, e.g. fifty or sixty percent of full employment, it should be possible to establish compressed schedules of eighty or ninety percent of full employment through advanced work planning.

50. Under the compressed work schedule, compensation is adjusted to the agreed proportion of work. Due to the need to maintain adequate coverage however, it is not possible to proportionally adjust the provision of medical insurance benefits. Staff working under a compressed work schedule will be required to meet the difference in cost for full coverage under their selected medical plan and the proportion covered by the organization. In Annex 2, a costing sheet is provided to support assessment of the affect on the compensation package the entry into a compressed work schedule would bring.

51. Introduction of compressed work schedules must be for a specified period of time of not less than six months and not more than twelve. As with all flexible working arrangements, the initial introduction and continuation will be subject to agreement by both the staff member and immediate supervisor. The schedule of work segments under a compressed work schedule should be established and maintained for the agreed period.

C. Innovations in leave policy

52. The United Nations system has always maintained progressive policies in the area of leave. Recent innovations in the adaptation of uncertified sick leave to support personal days off continue an approach which aims at providing staff with maximum flexibility to meet personal commitments and interests which require time away from work. Under the work and life programme, UNDP is now introducing further flexibility in leave provisions and will be putting forward for consideration at the United Nations common system level proposals to support the introduction of new leave provisions. The innovations in leave policy, which either have recently been introduced, are being introduced now or will be proposed, cover the following areas:

1. Use of uncertified sick leave for personal days
2. Refinement in adoption leave policy
3. Creation of a "leave bank" for personal emergencies
4. Flexible application of Special Leave Without Pay
5. A proposal for paternity leave

Use of uncertified sick leave for personal days

53. In circular UNDP/ADM/99/26 dated 30 March 1999, OHR advised all staff that uncertified sick leave, up to seven days per year, can now be taken as personal days off. This change facilitates meeting unforeseen demands where a staff member's presence is required, e.g. to be with a sick family member. This innovation provides much needed flexibility for staff to respond to unplanned events. The approval of this change by the General Assembly is a welcome recognition that issues such as support to families during periods of illness, bereavement and a long overdue acknowledgement of fathers' needs at the time of the birth of a child can be flexibly accommodated.

Refinement in adoption leave policy

54. The existing personnel policy provides for up to eight weeks special leave with full pay for staff who adopt a child. Under these provisions the extension of adoption leave has been discretionary and normally only granted to female staff unless the male staff member is a single parent.

55. Consistent with UNDP policy on gender with the objective of creating gender neutral policies, the proviso that allows adoption leave only to female staff unless it is a single parent family is now eliminated.

All eligible staff who legally adopt a child under the age of six will be granted adoption leave. As stated in the existing provisions, it is requested that requests for special leave for adoption be submitted well in advance of the period anticipated for the leave.

Modification of Special Leave with Full Pay for personal emergencies

56. Each year staff who have accrued an excess of sixty days annual leave lose these excess days. While our current leave provisions are generous, there are rare occasions where staff exhaust annual leave and yet may face a personal emergency which may require the application of Special Leave Without Pay. OHR intends to modify the policy governing special leave with full pay to provide for the provision of paid leave for short periods due to personal emergencies in cases where annual leave and advanced annual leave have been exhausted. This modification recognizes in effect that a “leave bank” exists where excess annual leave, which has been previously “lost”, will be utilized for the benefit of staff who may need special assistance.

57. Eligibility for staff to receive the modified special leave therefore must meet two basic criteria: firstly the annual leave and advanced annual entitlement has been exhausted and secondly, the need for the leave must be an unforeseen family emergency, i.e. assistance to a family member following illness or accident, bereavement leave to attend the funeral following the death of an immediate family member or addressing needs following a natural disaster (emergency home repair or securing alternate accommodations).

58. Special leave for family emergencies may be granted to staff for up to a maximum of ten days per annum. Requests for special leave must be made to the Director, Office of Human Resources, with supporting justification confirmed by the immediate supervisor. Granting of special leave is entirely discretionary and dependent upon sufficient leave available in the leave bank to meet the request. A staff member may only present a request for special leave with full pay for a family emergency one time per annum.

Flexible application of Special Leave Without Pay

59. Special Leave Without Pay (SLWOP) is an option that the organization makes available to staff for a defined period to meet an elder or childcare need. Furthermore, SLWOP could be a useful option for a staff member who may need a period of time away to accompany a spouse who is relocating for employment purposes.

A proposal for paternity leave

60. As with the small refinement now introduced for adoption leave, UNDP is committed to creation of personal policies which are gender neutral and recognize that all staff have needs and interests which require the creative support of the organization. The issue of paternity leave is not new. The recent small changes approved by the General Assembly, which permit use of uncertified sick leave for paternity leave is a welcome beginning but more is needed. UNDP supports the introduction of a paternity leave entitlement by the United Nations system.

61. The introduction of a new leave entitlement will require the concurrence of the common system partners. UNDP is prepared, as it has in the past with other innovations in United Nations conditions of service, to take the lead in presenting for common system consideration a policy on paternity leave. UNDP will present to the forthcoming session of CCAQ a proposal for the creation of a paternity leave entitlement.

62. The UNDP proposal will put forward a plan for paternity leave, which will provide for eight weeks paid leave following the birth of a child. It is recognized implicitly in the United Nations system adoption leave that the difference between the sixteen weeks provided for in maternity leave and the eight

weeks for adoption leave, is for the period of preparation for delivery and recovery by the mother following the birth of the child. It is precisely during this period when paternity leave is most needed.

63. Support by the father during the period of recovery and the opportunity for the father to bond with the child during these precious early days of life amply justify the creation of the paternity leave policy. Furthermore, if UNDP truly wants to support a gender neutral working environment pro-active measures are needed not just in the work place but also beyond. The demands of life, which all staff must face, and which until now have only been partially recognized as the primary responsibility of women logically call for innovations in leave policy. UNDP is now in active consultations with United Nations common system partners seeking support for this proposal. Staff will be advised of developments in the consultative process.

D. Information and outreach programmes

64. As positive as any set of policies can be intended, their value can only truly be measured in their implementation. UNDP recognizes the need for change, in its programmes, in its workforce and logically in its workplace. The challenges to maintain a dynamic, motivated, relevant organization are many and accelerating. Managers and staff need help in coping with the demands of the modern workplace. The policies set in place by UNDP under the work and life programme are a beginning but more is needed.

65. Where organizations have moved ahead in the introduction of flexible work programmes, the effectiveness of these programmes is directly related to the follow up the organizations have pursued in their implementation. Staff and in particular managers need guidance in functioning in the modern workplace and simply in understanding how best to approach using the tools the work and life programme is making available.

66. Therefore together with the measures put forward in this circular, OHR is initiating information and outreach programmes which will provide practical information and support to staff and management. These programmes will include lectures, seminars and a dedicated page on the OHR intranet website to work/life issues. The programmes will be organized into two broad subject areas:

1. The 21st Century Workplace;
2. Creating the Work/Life Balance

67. While we recognize that the range of subjects, which could be included under these headings, is great, OHR has focused on these areas which in our view are most closely supported in the measures provided under the Work and Life Programme. With the issuance of this policy, OHR has established dedicated pages on the OHR Intranet website to work/life issues. This site can be accessed at: intra.undp.org/ohr/worklife. Under The 21st Century Workplace, issues related to the introduction and management of flexible working arrangements will be addressed, including presentations of best practices models and advice concerning first steps an office may wish to take to support flexible work. Under Creating the Work/Life Balance, issues related to the wellness of staff and the major personal issues which most staff must face at some time during their working lives will be covered. Given the number of staff who in the next few years will be entering retirement, detailed attention will be given to issues related to retirement. UNDP has a special responsibility to assist these staff with one the most fundamental work/life transitions.

68. As we noted at the outset, the pace of change, which confronts the organization today, is accelerating. Simply refining existing human resource management programmes will not meet the challenges for maintaining a dynamic and motivated staff. OHR has engaged in extensive consultations within the organization and outside in the development of this initial package of measures for our Work and Life programme. The invaluable collaboration with the Staff Council in refining the measures and developing practical means to facilitate implementation must be gratefully acknowledged.

