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Report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority

Executive summary**

Summary

The Independent Task Force (ITF) on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority was commissioned by UNICEF to “assess patterns of workplace gender-related discrimination, harassment and abuse of authority in UNICEF; consider best practices from within the United Nations and other institutions in addressing similar issues; and provide actionable recommendations to UNICEF”.

Co-Chaired by Dr. Purnima Mane and Dr. Debrework Zewdie, the ITF comprised eight other members with diverse expertise and backgrounds, including leaders from the public and private spheres, international development agencies, academia and the United Nations. The members of the ITF took up the role on a voluntary basis.

Recognizing that this endeavour was not an evaluation nor a research project, the experts of the ITF used a methodology that would allow them to understand the broader culture of UNICEF in which gender-discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority took place. The methodology built on interactions with staff through multiple avenues, the review of relevant internal and external documents, earlier studies, good practices and the analysis of available data.

In undertaking the initiative, the ITF committed to three important principles.

Early in its engagement, the ITF identified fundamental issues, such as abuse of authority and other symptoms of an unhealthy workplace, which, if not addressed,

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** The executive summary of the report is being circulated in all official languages. The full report is available in English on the UNICEF website (see annex).



would undermine even the best of policies. The severity of these issues led the ITF to give more weight to listening to staff to gain a deep understanding of the work culture that appeared to effectively conceal workplace misconduct.

The review was kept independent of UNICEF to avoid any perception that the findings and recommendations were unduly influenced. The aim was to provide an honest report that was both constructive and useful.

An iterative approach was taken, with findings and recommendations shared with UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta H. Fore and the Deputy Executive Director, Management, on an ongoing basis, the first of which were shared as early as September 2018. The ITF aimed to contribute to a seamless transition from recommendations to action.

The ITF concluded that significant change in the work culture, particularly in management-staff relations and the way the organization treated its staff, and a transformation of the Division of Human Resources and the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations were paramount.

Professional change-management support is required to expedite the transformative organizational change proposed by the ITF. To implement the recommendations of the ITF as well as those of other relevant studies commissioned by UNICEF, investment in an independent change-management team is recommended by the ITF.

The ITF believes that translating intent into action to change work culture is not an easy process, but it is a feasible one. The recommendations of the ITF are designed to assist UNICEF to do so. It is the hope of the ITF that the recommendations will be taken seriously to build a better UNICEF to serve the children who need its services.

I. Background and purpose of the Independent Task Force

1. Upon assuming her duties as UNICEF Executive Director in January 2018, Henrietta H. Fore committed to take action to end discrimination, harassment and abuse of authority in every UNICEF office. The Executive Director commissioned several reviews aiming to address different facets of harassment. Among them, she established the Independent Task Force (ITF) on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority to “assess patterns of workplace gender-related discrimination, harassment and abuse of authority in UNICEF, consider best practices from within the United Nations and other institutions in addressing similar issues; and provide actionable recommendations to UNICEF”.

2. In addition to the two Co-Chairs, the ITF is made up of eight members with diverse expertise and backgrounds, including external leaders from the public and private spheres, international development agencies, academia and the United Nations. Collectively, the members of the ITF have a wealth of experience, including with workplace issues of gender equality, discrimination, abuse of authority and harassment as well as inclusiveness and equity. The membership of the ITF was determined on the basis of recommendations from UNICEF regional offices, country offices and National Committees, and its members took up the role on a voluntary basis.

3. Two bodies were created to inform the work of the ITF, as needed. An internal reference group comprising 18 staff members selected by UNICEF acted as a staff sounding board for the ITF. The membership of the Internal Reference Group comprised representatives of all grades and was diverse in terms of both gender and geography. A stakeholder group consisted of senior colleagues with responsibility for policies and procedures relevant to the work of the ITF. Their role was to help the ITF understand the policies and contexts of UNICEF and the United Nations. The Stakeholder Group comprised 15 senior UNICEF staff, plus a representative of the United Nations Office of Staff Legal Assistance and the Office of the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes. In addition, UNICEF dedicated staff to support the ITF as a secretariat.

4. Throughout the project time frame, from August 2018 to May 2019, the Co-Chairs met regularly with the Deputy Executive Director, Management, and, separately, with the UNICEF Executive Director. These discussions were an opportunity for the Co-Chairs to give feedback on the findings, provide a progress update on the development of the report and share the proposed recommendations as they took shape. Two consultations between the Executive Director and the full composition of the ITF, and multiple consultations between the Executive Director and the Co-Chairs, were held to seek the Executive Director’s views on specific elements of the report.

5. Early in its engagement, the ITF identified fundamental issues, such as abuse of authority and other symptoms of an unhealthy workplace, which, if not addressed, would undermine even the best of policies. The severity of these issues led the ITF to give more weight to listening to staff to gain a deep understanding of the work culture that appeared to effectively conceal workplace misconduct. The scope of the ITF terms of reference evolved accordingly. At its first meeting, on 20 August 2018, the ITF agreed that abuse of authority would be given prominence in its research — despite its being omitted from the original title of the ITF — alongside gender-discrimination, sexual harassment and harassment; and emphasized its independence from UNICEF to ensure that all pertinent areas would be equally addressed. This decision was later validated in various discussions with staff, including the Internal Reference Group and the Stakeholder Group.

6. Although the ITF fully supported the Executive Director's goal to move forward swiftly, the members felt that it was critical to give adequate time to hear directly from staff, including those based in the field. Each ITF member visited a UNICEF office close to their home base or along their travel routes, at no cost to UNICEF, to get a general sense of the workplace culture and to actively seek out the engagement of staff. To complete these visits, UNICEF and the ITF agreed to a three-month extension of the original time frame.

7. The ITF also proposed to take an iterative approach to the recommendations, enabling UNICEF to take early action, rather than wait for the final report. Notably, a set of interim recommendations was shared with the Executive Director as early as the end of September 2018 and was made available to all staff. This was followed in December 2018 by specific advice to hire an external consulting firm to serve as a change-management team, to overlap with the ITF and assist UNICEF in planning and implementing the culture and management changes recommended by the ITF and the other relevant reviews (see para. 15). At the request of the Executive Director, the ITF developed draft terms of reference for the change-management team and provided advice on the job profile of the vacant post of Deputy Executive Director, Management, to ensure that it retained overall responsibility for change management and for engendering a culture of change.

II. Methodology

8. Recognizing that this endeavour was not an evaluation nor a research project, the experts of the ITF used a methodology that would allow them to understand the broader cultural context in which gender-discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority took place in UNICEF. The methodology of discovery built on interactions with staff through multiple avenues, the review of relevant internal and external documents, studies and good practices and the analysis of available data. The ITF estimates that it spoke to over 350 staff members. The findings were analysed through the lens of the extensive experience and expertise brought by the ITF members to pinpoint the root causes that encouraged workplace misconduct within UNICEF. The recommendations were arrived at by applying and adapting solutions that have worked elsewhere to the specific circumstances in UNICEF.

9. For the duration of the initiative, the ITF prioritized hearing directly from staff. In addition to an intranet page and a space on the UNICEF social-networking service, Yammer, a confidential email account was established, and staff were encouraged to share with the Co-Chairs their experiences of harassment of all kinds and with the investigative and disciplinary processes. A large number of emails was received, which led to further conversations with concerned staff. The report reflects the extensive testimony, which turned out to be worrying across the board.

10. Members of the ITF conducted interviews with key representatives at headquarters and regional and country offices, including staff counsellors, the Global Staff Association, the Ombudsman, the United Nations Globe, the Office of Staff Legal Assistance and regional directors, country representatives and gender advisers, among others.

11. In addition to interacting with individual staff members who came forward and interviewing representatives of relevant key groups, the ITF wanted to understand the underlying workplace culture and capture the views of managers and staff in UNICEF offices in both the field and headquarters. Nine field offices were visited on three different continents by members of the ITF, who spoke separately with managers and staff. The meetings with staff were organized by the local staff association and

conducted as structured focus-group discussions, ensuring that there would be no attribution of views to individual staff members (the agreed guidance for these discussions is provided in annex 6 of the report). In total, the ITF held 25 focus-group sessions, including in both headquarters and the field.

12. The ITF also consulted with the internal reference group on 10 August 2018 and 18 September 2018, and with the Stakeholder Group on 5 and 20 September 2018. On 8 February 2019, the ITF held a joint meeting with both the Internal Reference Group and the Stakeholder Group to discuss their initial responses to the interim recommendations that had been shared and update them on the progress made thus far.

13. The ITF members reviewed relevant UNICEF policies related to human resources and investigations and compared them to practices within their own organizations and their specific areas of work and research, drawing on their experiences and expertise. Unfortunately, the ITF was limited in the extent to which it could openly discuss the practices of other organizations, as many such practices are not in the public domain and were shared with the ITF confidentially by organizations and companies within the members' professional networks.

14. Separately, the ITF reviewed a large number of analytical discussion papers which put forward lessons and best practices; kept abreast of the progress in other organizations; and monitored emerging materials related to the #MeToo movement and #AidToo initiative. A selection of the documents reviewed is listed in annex 7 of the report.

15. In particular, the ITF reflected on the findings and recommendations of key work streams initiated by the Executive Director over the course of 2018 and found that many of the findings reviewed confirmed those of the ITF, namely:

(a) The independent panel review of the UNICEF response to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse;

(b) A review by the law firm Morgan Lewis of the conduct of the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigation regarding investigations that involved an allegation of sexual harassment or misconduct;

(c) A detailed examination of gender equality within UNICEF through the Economic Dividends for Gender Equality (EDGE) Certification.

16. In addition, at the beginning of 2018, UNICEF was already partnering with the Harvard Kennedy School to conduct behavioural-science studies. The students looked at the ways in which organizational design could contribute to gender equality at all levels as well as to diversity and inclusion. Two extensive reports were presented to the Executive Director of UNICEF, one on inclusivity and belonging and the other on retention and promotion.

17. In early 2019, the Secretary-General released the report on the "Safe Space: Survey on Sexual Harassment in our Workplace", which presented findings on sexual harassment across the United Nations system and related entities globally.

18. While drawing on the results of analyses, such as the UNICEF Global Staff Survey 2017, the subsequent 2018 Global Pulse Survey and data provided through the EDGE certification process, the ITF also undertook some data analysis of its own. Unfortunately, the ITF was not granted access to raw human-resource data and thus was not able to conduct extensive analyses on the recruitment, separation and career progression of staff or the use of various categories of non-staff, as originally planned. The ITF was limited to using the data made available directly from the UNICEF Division of Human Resources and the Office of Internal Audit and Investigation. This

put severe limitations on the analysis by the ITF of gender-discrimination, diversity and inclusion.

19. It should be noted that during the term of the ITF, many work streams to address harassment and related issues were initiated within the United Nations system as well as within UNICEF, and that the landscape was rapidly evolving. The ITF is particularly aware of steps taken by UNICEF in the past 12 months in this regard. While it is too early to evaluate the success and impact of these steps, the ITF followed their development with interest and many are referenced throughout the report. In particular, the ITF took note of an internal whole-of-organization strategy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, launched in January 2019, that is currently being rolled out across the organization. Amendments have been made to several internal policies, including the UNICEF Executive Directive on the prohibition of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority; the UNICEF policy on the disciplinary process and measures for misconduct; and the UNICEF policy on whistle-blower protection against retaliation. The Executive Director also endorsed the full use of flexible and family-friendly work policies in a message to all staff in February 2019.

20. UNICEF has taken steps to augment the investigative capacity of the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations with the addition of 10 posts; develop a new investigations case-management system; and strengthen human-resource capacity to coordinate initiatives on gender in the workplace. In addition, two new posts were filled in the Office of the Executive Director: Senior Coordinator, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Workplace Abuse, in February 2019, and Principal Adviser, Organizational Culture, in June 2019. The ITF is also aware that UNICEF is in the process of developing helpful pocket guides and schematics for “where to go when” to support staff in navigating the complaints process.

III. Summary of key findings

21. UNICEF staff at all levels work hard in difficult and often dangerous environments to accomplish the organization’s mandate to protect children’s rights and achieve results for every child, every day. There is a visible strength of community among UNICEF staff and a remarkable pride in working for the organization. Staff endeavour to demonstrate the organization’s core values of care, respect, integrity, trust and accountability and are its greatest assets in fulfilling its mandate. However, the findings of the ITF indicate, that despite good intentions, UNICEF is not living those values when it comes to this most important resource.

22. For example, while the UNICEF workplace culture is centred on results for children, UNICEF does not appear to give equal importance to how those results are achieved. This appears to be a misinterpretation of results-based management, which has been embraced by UNICEF with great enthusiasm over the past 15 years. It is both a moral imperative and good business sense to aim for optimal outcomes for children by protecting and supporting those who work tirelessly in their pursuit.

23. Looking deeper, the ITF findings indicate that this singular focus on what must be achieved has allowed an authoritative culture to take root. This “results at any cost” approach has created an environment in which offenses go unreported or uninvestigated and unpunished by the set rules, as long as programmatic results are achieved, and has enabled gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority, which thrive in such conditions.

24. Furthermore, dysfunctional support from systems designed to provide checks and balances on the exercise of authority, such as human resources, the complaint

system and internal communication with staff, have exacerbated the negative consequences of this existing culture. This has led to increased stress, frustration and fear among staff, resulting in worryingly low levels of trust in management throughout the organization. Numerous interviews and meetings with staff, both individually and in focus groups, across the globe and confidential emails received by the Co-Chairs of the ITF, paint a picture of an organization in which innovation, critical voices and complaints are stifled by fear of repercussions.

25. A radical culture change to embed the UNICEF core values of care, respect, integrity, transparency and accountability is needed to set the organization on a path to positive change and towards a workplace that is free from gender-discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority.

A. Change starts at the top

26. This culture change hinges upon changing mindsets and attitudes as well as systems and policies. UNICEF needs to take a robust position on change at the senior level and enact transformative action to demonstrate that the organization is serious about change.

27. In addition, the people-management skills of senior staff need to be assessed through feedback from multiple sources and measured and valued alongside the achievement of programmatic results. This approach needs to be explicitly incorporated into management accountabilities, in the selection and promotion criteria for supervisory positions and in training for all potential managers. Managers demonstrating strong people-management skills should be recognized; and managers demonstrating harmful people-management practices should be removed from managerial responsibilities if their behaviour is not responsive to remedial training.

B. Change includes everyone

28. Today, the UNICEF workplace culture is marked by sharp divides between “us” and “them”. Such divides are expressions of power differences and are apparent not only between genders and between races and ethnicities, but also between managers and teams, international and national staff and staff and contracted employees (non-staff).

29. Fiefdoms were reported in several offices. Those offices have developed their own microcultures defining how things are done and what behaviours are acceptable, often in ways that are not commensurate with UNICEF values or established policies. While UNICEF has comprehensive policies on paper, in offices that function like fiefdoms, they may not be implemented and usually there are no negative consequences for those who flout them. A renewed commitment is needed at all levels and by all staff to the inclusive values and policies of UNICEF, as is an agreement on practical ways of working towards a more coherent, inclusive culture – a culture of “us”. This requires, among other things, purposefully addressing the long-standing divides.

30. The ITF concluded that significant cultural change, particularly in the management culture and the way the organization engages with staff, and a transformation of the Division of Human Resources and the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations are paramount.

C. Transforming human-resources management

31. Everyone who works with and for UNICEF has the right to be treated fairly. This can happen only with a Division of Human Resources that has a strong corporate mandate and leadership capable of providing professional, objective and impartial advice to both managers and staff.

32. Rather than being neutral and caring with regard to employees, the Division of Human Resources has a reputation among staff of being susceptible to manipulation by managers. In fact, staff perceive the Division as an enabler of the uneven application of human-resource policies and local mismanagement. The ITF is aware of the UNICEF “human resources reform” efforts; however, a complete transformation of human-resources management is required for the Division to regain the trust of staff. This will entail developing a new “people strategy” to support culture change; assessing and improving the competencies and skills of all human-resources staff globally; strengthening the Division’s capacity to ensure the uniform application of policies and practices across offices; and developing the capacity to provide professional human-resources analytics to underpin management decisions. Direct reporting lines from all human-resources staff to a transformed, centralized human-resources function will protect them from undue pressures and enhance their role as honest brokers.

33. To provide swift recommendations before the escalation of a grievance relating to discrimination in human-resources processes, such as selection, promotion, rotation and post abolition, a simple and independent first-line review mechanism should be established. UNICEF should also undertake an in-depth review of its career-mobility practices and examine how its policies might contribute to talented staff, especially women, leaving the organization.

D. A justice system to trust

34. Following discussions with staff, it is evident that, as currently configured, the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, which investigates misconduct and operates as the justice system, is not appropriately set up to investigate sexual harassment, harassment or abuse of authority. UNICEF staff report a deeply rooted lack of trust in the independence, speed and impartiality of the existing complaint mechanism. They perceive it as ineffective in both investigating complaints and sanctioning perpetrators. They do not trust the confidentiality of investigations and they fear retaliation. Staff have witnessed that those who raise complaints are further harassed or marginalized or have their careers derailed, resulting in many complainants leaving the organization. The lack of staff with specific skills to investigate sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority is a major lacuna. In general, the investigative function of UNICEF has failed staff, and many staff members report feeling that the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on prohibited behaviour is empty rhetoric. The data on the volume, timeliness and outcomes of investigations support staff perceptions.

35. The management of the complaint mechanism should, wholly or in part, be shifted to a third party that is experienced in staff misconduct investigations, including sexual harassment, and in international organizations and can effectively balance independence and transparency with due process and speed. Protections against retaliation should be strengthened in practice, in line with the recent reform of the UNICEF policy to protect whistle-blowers from retaliation.

E. Effective internal communication

36. Effective internal communication forms the third pillar of essential systems to support a healthy organizational culture. Although UNICEF is well known for its externally focused communications to advocate for children, the ITF found that UNICEF had a risk-averse approach to internal communications, particularly regarding the topic of workplace gender-discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority. The ITF found that UNICEF was missing opportunities at all levels to build a forward-leaning, inclusive organization that welcomes creative thinking, a diversity of opinions and constructive dissent using fresh, interactive and appealing technologies and platforms. Two-way communication at the team level facilitated by managers will help to heal the divides in the organization; improve job satisfaction by empowering staff to shape their workplace and become champions of change; and ultimately reduce incidents of abuse of authority and other forms of harassment.

F. Professional change management

37. Professional change management is required to support organizational change, particularly change as transformative as that proposed by the ITF. To implement the recommendations of the ITF report as well as those of other relevant studies UNICEF must invest in an independent change-management team. This team will assist UNICEF to develop a prioritized and phased implementation plan, establish its own culture change-management architecture and measure and communicate progress to staff to eradicate gender-discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority in all its forms.

IV. Recommendations

A. Change starts at the top

38. In UNICEF, where the management culture has been based on the power given by a hierarchical structure, a fundamental change in mindset through introspection is required to bring about a radical change in the organizational culture. This change needs to start at the top, trickling down to management at all levels. Zero tolerance for gender-discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority should be embraced and implemented by all in its truest sense and not as mere lip service. In order to achieve this culture change, the ITF recommends that UNICEF:

1.a Articulate and drive a new management culture commensurate with the organization's values, in a broad dialogue across UNICEF. This should reflect that management is moving from the traditional "command and control" culture to one in which managers lead by example, using inclusive decision-making, motivation and empowerment of teams and individuals. In this culture, managers will accept accountability, welcome checks and balances, appreciate feedback and foster humility and self-awareness.

1.b Develop new managerial competencies for people management that reflect UNICEF's values and the new leadership culture and incorporate these into management selection processes and performance evaluation review process criteria. These new leadership standards should be communicated throughout the organization so that staff understand what to expect and feel empowered to speak up when those standards are not met by their supervisor.

1.c Establish managerial accountability through the development of key performance indicators for people management, based on the new competencies and

measured through multi-rater feedback in the performance evaluation review. Those meeting the standard should benefit from positive reinforcement; and there should be clear repercussions for those who do not (i.e., remedial training, downgrading or departure from the organization).

1.d Make visible changes by removing people-management responsibilities from managers who consistently do not live up to the organization's values.

1.e Offer comprehensive training in people management to current managers commensurate with their responsibilities (and any additional training to address individual skills gaps) and ensure that all new managers receive training in people management before they take on their responsibilities and benefit from ongoing coaching.

1.f Ensure that all managers are fully apprised of procedures pertaining to identifying and reporting incidents of gender-discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority, and know their responsibilities and accountabilities vis-à-vis victims, witnesses and perpetrators.

B. Change includes everyone

39. Given the findings of the ITF, UNICEF needs to define what the desirable workplace norms should be, while being mindful of the value systems in the surrounding society. As discussed, a respectful and value-driven workplace culture has a positive impact on organizational performance. While culture change is not easy, it is possible and, in this instance, imperative. The ITF recommends that UNICEF:

2.a Draw up a code of conduct that articulates an organizational identity and how core values are operationalized, is subject to organization-wide consultation and dialogue, and is supported by awareness building and training, including for new incoming staff as a part of a universal induction and onboarding programme. The code of conduct should be signed and regularly reviewed by all current and future employees as a commitment to UNICEF's workplace culture.

2.b Derive a revised set of core competencies and functional competencies, as appropriate, from the code of conduct and ensure that these do not remain competencies on paper only by adequately incorporating them into all relevant human resource processes and measuring both managers and staff on these competencies.

2.c Seek to purposefully address all organizational divides, including through the following:

Gender

i. Monitor and annually report data disaggregated by location to the lowest possible level, while preserving confidentiality, on gender gaps and equality issues, including but not limited to recruitment, selection, compensation and career-advancement opportunities, including the rotation programme, and take timely corrective actions;

ii. Implement a gender-sensitivity training for all staff, to include non-binary expressions of gender identity, with specific modules for those responsible for human resource processes and for people management;

iii. Undertake systematic and structured exit interviews to understand what drives resignations and separations from the organization, particularly for women;

- iv. Survey, monitor and report disaggregated data on sexual harassment, including all types of harassment and microaggressions that create a hostile work environment for women.

Diversity

- v. Monitor and annually report data disaggregated by location to the lowest possible level, while preserving confidentiality on diversity and pay gaps, including but not limited to recruitment, selection, compensation and career-advancement opportunities (i.e., the rotation programme) and take timely corrective actions;
- vi. Implement a diversity and inclusion training for all staff, with specific modules for those responsible for human resource processes and people management;
- vii. Undertake systematic and structured exit interviews to understand what drives resignations and separations from the organization, particularly for minority groups;
- viii. Survey, monitor and report disaggregated data on all types of harassment and microaggressions that create a hostile work environment for minority groups;
- ix. Establish an institutional focal point with adequate authority to survey, monitor and report on diversity and inclusion in UNICEF, and propose remedial action to senior management.

International staff/national staff

- x. Embark on a comprehensive review of the international, national and general service staff divides with a view to modernizing and harmonizing human resource policy frameworks for all categories of staff. This will be a long-term project and needs to include a review of everything from roles, job profiles and competencies to career advancement opportunities and total compensation;
- xi. In the short to medium term, UNICEF should ensure a work environment with clear career paths for national and general-service staff. Qualified national staff should receive serious consideration for international professional positions.

Staff and non-staff

- xii. Put in place human resource systems that provide regular data on the sizeable, locally managed non-staff workforce, including numbers, locations, profiles and functions;
- xiii. Ensure that the non-staff assignments are truly temporary and time-bound in nature and that non-staff are not working side-by-side with staff in the long term doing the same job as staff without the corresponding compensation and benefits;
- xiv. Review and revise the human resource policy for non-staff to ensure that they benefit from the same protections against misconduct and retaliation as staff.

Managers and staff

xv. Demonstrate in practice that complainants, those critical of management and those speaking up or taking initiative, do not face repercussions but are encouraged and given a platform to speak up;

xvi. Monitor the career paths of those who file complaints to ensure that no retaliation or marginalization is detected, and that swift action is taken to protect and support the complainant;

xvii. Recognize and reward managers who create an environment of intellectual diversity in which all staff are encouraged to participate, voice dissenting opinions, make suggestions and take initiatives; pay special attention to soliciting and hearing the voices of minority groups and women.

C. Transformation of the Division of Human Resources

40. A healthy culture rests on living the organization's values every day. Organizations with healthy and inclusive cultures welcome checks and balances. In most organizations, these are largely provided by the human resource function. As discussed in the previous section, the ITF's findings point to serious shortcomings that will prevent the UNICEF human resource function from playing this vital role. The ITF recommends that UNICEF:

3.a Develop a people strategy aligned with its business strategy/plan and its core values to support both the organizational realignment and the culture-change efforts. This strategy should strengthen and clarify the corporate mandate of the Division of Human Resources, articulate and reaffirm its role as the honest broker and provide practical direction, based on data, on workforce planning and management as well as policy development.

3.b Professionalize the human resource function throughout the organization by:

i. Developing benchmark competencies for each role and grade level in human resources throughout the organization;

ii. Assessing the capabilities of existing human resource staff against those benchmarks and providing remedial skills training to close skill gaps whenever possible, offering reassignment outside of the human resource function or ensuring departure from the organization, as appropriate.

3.c Make the necessary changes in the reporting relationships of decentralized human resource staff to ensure the human resource mandate is delivered equitably across UNICEF and enable field-based human resource staff to stand up to local managers who demonstrate poor people-management practices. This will require matrix management with the primary reporting relationship to the Division of Human Resources and secondary reporting line to the director or representative in the field.

3.d Build a human resource analytics function to regularly produce relevant, timely and high-quality human resource analytics based on reliable data to inform management decisions and ensure monitoring and implementation of human resource policies, practices and accountability.

D. Reform human resource policies and practices

41. The ITF identified four critical areas of policy and practice for change that would address the following: i. the lack of measuring and evaluating people skills and

people management; ii. the lack of accountability for people management; ii. the vulnerability of many human resource processes to manipulation, discrimination and abuse; and iv. the need to increase flexibility in the workplace.

42. The ITF recommends that UNICEF:

4.a Fundamentally reform the annual performance evaluation with respect to managerial accountability by placing people-management behaviours at the centre of the evaluation, together with programmatic results, also measured through other means, by:

i. Incorporating the redefined people competencies (staff) and people-management competencies (supervisors and managers) into the performance evaluation report to be evaluated along with programmatic results;

ii. Instituting regular anonymous multi-rater feedback in the performance-evaluation report on results and people behaviours for staff and results and people management for supervisors and managers, underpinned by a rigorous training programme. The feedback should:

- Be considered in the evaluation
- Be shared with the staff in question in aggregate
- Be made available during the management group review where top and bottom performers are discussed at the end of the performance evaluation report cycle
- Be filed in the performance-evaluation report system

43. Once this reform has taken root, UNICEF should consider taking a holistic approach to performance management at the organizational level by better harmonizing the management, monitoring and evaluation of results for children with management, monitoring and evaluation of the performance of its people.

4.b Strengthen the checks and balances against discrimination, favouritism and abuse of authority by ensuring that career-impacting decisions, such as promotion, reassignment, rotation, etc., are based on the entire career of the staff member and not only the last performance evaluation report, guaranteeing that in every review process, a single strong voice cannot derail a career.

4.c Establish an independent, simple and informal appeal mechanism (one reviewer or a small panel) to review staff complaints related to a decision made in the performance management process and/or in connection with the human resource processes discussed above. This review would, as may be warranted, recommend actions to the Deputy Executive Director, Management, to resolve the issue. The Deputy Executive Director would then decide whether to take any or all actions recommended. A mechanism for early resolution of complaints related to human resource decisions has been shown to reduce workplace conflicts and formal complaints in other organizations.

4.d Improve and fully implement the workplace flexibility policies by developing a greater variety of flexible work options adapted to the needs of staff, recognizing that the needs may vary from office to office and global to local. UNICEF will need to ensure monitoring and reporting on managerial implementation and uptake/approval rates.

E. A justice system to trust

44. The ITF concluded that UNICEF's investigative function needs a total overhaul and mere corrective adjustments, such as augmenting its resources, will not be adequate. To win back confidence and trust, UNICEF will need to restore the independence of its justice system by outsourcing all or part of the process to a third party that is experienced in handling discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority complaints in global organizations. The ITF recommends that UNICEF:

5.a Ensure that disciplinary action is taken against proven perpetrators and that they are not put on long administrative leave with full pay, rotated within the organization or allowed to resign without repercussions. This also includes ensuring that those dismissed due to misconduct cannot be rehired in any capacity by UNICEF or its partners and third parties working with UNICEF — and ideally by any organization within the United Nations system.

5.b Ensure that staff are protected against retaliation by strengthening the mandate and capabilities of the Ethics Office and safeguarding its independence.

5.c Demonstrate that complainants' careers are not derailed as a result of filing a complaint. This requires monitoring of human resource decisions impacting the complainant's career. Conversely, UNICEF will also need to ensure that the complaint system is not abused. Preventing frivolous or ill-informed complaints is best done by clearly communicating the definitions and examples of discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority on the one hand and what is appropriate use of authority on the other.

5.d Ensure that all staff involved in a complaint investigation, including those against whom a complaint is launched and witnesses are interviewed, are treated with the dignity and respect deserved by all UNICEF staff throughout the investigative process, and the different aspects of the investigation are kept strictly confidential.

5.e Outsource the following parts of the process at minimum to provide independent, confidential channels for reporting, adequate safeguards against manipulation by management and more transparent, unbiased reporting of outcomes:

- The receiving of complaints through safe, credible and confidential channels (e.g., a hotline) made available in multiple locations and in multiple languages, and the recording, cataloguing and triaging of those complaints
- An audit function at the tail end of the process, involving the review of each case before it is closed, including any investigative findings and disciplinary measures proposed; and
- Regular (quarterly and annual) reporting on complaints received, complaints closed without investigation, complaints investigated, outcomes of investigations and disciplinary measures taken. The annual reporting should include demographic parameters at a level that still protects confidentiality

5.f Consider the following three options in regard to the core investigative work, written in the order of preference from the ITF:

- i. Full outsourcing of the investigation;
- ii. Partial outsourcing of the investigation;
- iii. Internal reforms without outsourcing the investigation.

F. Effective internal communication with staff

45. Internal communication is integral to organizational culture and needs to play an important role in the culture-change process. The current approach to internal communications needs to be recast and elevated and the centrality of communication to effective management needs to be internalized by every manager. To this end, the ITF recommends that UNICEF strengthen its internal communications with the necessary human and financial resources in the following ways:

6.a Reconceptualize its internal communications approach and develop a cohesive internal-communications strategy that emphasizes two-way communication, invites staff to participate and is action-oriented, genuine, trusted and sought out by staff. It should reinforce the application of core values and evaluate the extent to which staff voices are being heard.

6.b Train and support UNICEF managers so that they improve two-way communication within their teams to:

- Improve the work of the organization, because it solicits creative thinking from everyone, particularly those directly responsible for programme implementation
- Reduce the divides that fracture the organization (by gender, national/international, professional/general service, race, etc.)
- Improve job satisfaction, because all staff will feel empowered and engaged in shaping their workplace
- Build trust by progressively demonstrating that UNICEF welcomes diverse opinions and constructive dissent

6.c Ensure strategic-communications advice to senior management about how to best share information with UNICEF staff.

6.d Support the entire organization, but especially the nascent change management process, in transparently communicating about progress (or lack thereof) on institutional priorities.

6.e Develop policy and procedures and associated roles and responsibilities for internal and external communication on issues pertaining to workplace gender-discrimination, sexual harassment and abuse of authority, including investigations, aligned with organizational values and branding.

G. Professional change management

46. The ITF recommends that on receipt of this report, the Executive Director communicate as quickly and as clearly as possible to UNICEF staff and the UNICEF Executive Board on how the organization will respond to the recommendations. This communication would also serve as a charge to the change-management process. The ITF understands that change, particularly changes as transformative and multifaceted as those proposed here, is a challenging undertaking. In December 2018, the ITF recommended to the Executive Director that UNICEF bring on board an external consulting firm to overlap with the ITF and serve as a change-management team to assist UNICEF in planning the culture and management changes recommended here and in other relevant reviews. Working from the Office of the Executive Director, this change-management team should:

7.a Develop a comprehensive, prioritized and sequenced implementation and institutionalization plan.

7.b Propose the structure and governance of an internal group to manage the change process over a period of two years. This group will:

- Be led by a senior full-time appointee in the Office of the Executive Director, reporting directly to the Executive Director to ensure its ability to coordinate change across the organization
- Have the resources and authority to ensure compliance across the organization, particularly among managers at all levels who will need to model the behaviours expected during the culture change journey
- Ensure that the change-management process models inclusive, two-way communication and broad engagement across the organization, including with the Global Staff Association
- Project manage the change process and support the Executive Director and the senior management team, including by establishing a system to monitor, evaluate, report on and communicate on progress on a quarterly basis
- Develop the institutional capacity to ensure ongoing oversight of the reforms and the sunsetting of its operations

V. Conclusion

47. Throughout the path of discovery, the ITF members have observed the strong intent and resolve of the Executive Director to make UNICEF an excellent workplace. She has demonstrated an openness to bringing about the changes needed to achieve this and to taking the recommendations of the ITF seriously. However, it will take action, not just words, at all levels of management, to convince UNICEF staff of management's genuine desire to bring about this change. Culture change is not an event, but a journey that needs the complete and unequivocal engagement of all managers. That engagement will help staff to believe in and trust the change process and play their part in ensuring its success. The trust that has been lost will have to be regained.

48. Critical elements to regaining that trust include: communication of expected outcomes at the end of this journey of culture change, consistency of action and intent throughout the process and regular reporting on where things stand. Management will have to pay close attention to the planning, communication and monitoring of the outcomes envisioned through the change-management process and ensure that the necessary mechanisms and support systems, including policies, management practices and consistent oversight from senior management, are put into place. These will foster the planned change and help it to take root. More importantly, it will build staff confidence that this change is not a passing whim of management, but here to stay, by engaging them in the change and making them proud of the organization for which they work.

49. The ITF is confident that UNICEF will take the recommendations to heart and move on them with the help of the change-management team, the internal support and oversight team, all its managers and the involvement of staff at all levels. Translating intent into action to change work culture is not an easy process, but is definitely a feasible one. The recommendations of the ITF are designed to assist UNICEF in doing so and the organization's strong motivation and commitment to take these recommendations forward will make the goal more attainable, placing UNICEF in the lead within the United Nations system on effectively managing change.

Annex

Report of the Independent Task Force on workplace gender-discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority

Due to space limitations, the report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority is not contained in the present annex. The report is available from:

https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/Independent-Task-Force_report_EN.PDF
