



Geneva, 9 June 2025

SERVICE ORDER 25/09

POLICY FOR REPORTING MISCONDUCT AND PROTECTION AGAINST RETALIATION ("Whistleblowing")

(This Service Order abrogates and replaces Service Order No. 20/06 of 10 September 2020)

Section 1: Definitions

The following definitions apply to this Service Order:

"Misconduct": any failure by ITU personnel to comply with their obligations under ITU's regulatory framework. Misconduct may also include assisting in, or contributing to, the commission of misconduct.

Misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

"Abusive conduct": any harassment, including sexual harassment, abuse of authority and/or discrimination. This also includes defamatory actions that damage a staff member's reputation or professional image. The mere expression of disagreement, admonishment or criticism, or similar action regarding work performance or conduct within a supervisory relationship, when made in good faith, will not be considered abusive conduct.

"Abuse of authority": the improper use of a position of influence, power or authority against another person, for example when a person uses their influence, power or authority to improperly influence the career or employment conditions of another, including, but not limited to, appointment, assignment, contract renewal, performance evaluation, working conditions, secondment, transfer or promotion. Conduct that creates a hostile or offensive work environment that includes, but is not limited to, the use of intimidation, threats, blackmail or coercion may also constitute abuse of authority.

"Discrimination": any unfair treatment or arbitrary distinction based on a person's race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, age, language, social origin or other similar shared characteristic or trait.

"Harassment": any unwelcome conduct that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another person when such behaviour interferes with work or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Harassment may take the form of words, gestures or actions that annoy, alarm, abuse, demean, intimidate, belittle, humiliate or embarrass another. Harassment will often consist of a series of incidents, but it may be brought about by a single incident.

"Retaliation": any detrimental action - direct or indirect - recommended, threatened or taken against anyone because that individual has engaged in an activity protected by the present policy.

"Sexual harassment": any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or perceived to cause offence or humiliation, especially when such behaviour interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Sexual harassment may occur in the workplace or in connection with work but may also occur outside the workplace and outside working hours, for example during official travel or social functions related to work. Sexual harassment may occur through a single incident or through a pattern of conduct. In assessing the reasonableness of expectations or perceptions, the perspective of the person who is the target of the conduct shall be considered. Sexual harassment may involve any conduct of a verbal, non-verbal or physical nature, including written and electronic communications.

"ITU personnel": a) ITU elected officials; b) ITU appointed staff (including staff members holding a short-term contract and those on secondment); c) interns; d) junior professional officers; e) external professionals working as consultants under a Special Service Agreement (SSA) with ITU.

"Participant in an investigative process": any individual who is involved in an administrative process investigating allegations of misconduct. The definition covers: a) any person who reports suspected misconduct; b) alleged victims or affected persons; c) witnesses of misconduct; d) investigators; e) support persons (e.g. interpreters, security);

f) experts; g) alleged offenders; h) any other persons called upon to cooperate during an investigation.

Section 2: Reporting misconduct

- 2.1 ITU personnel who have information or evidence that misconduct has occurred have a duty to report it. The investigative process for all cases of suspected misconduct follows the procedure outlined in the ITU Investigation Guidelines. However, for cases of alleged retaliation, both the intake and the preliminary review are conducted by the Ethics Office. The same rules and procedures for intake and preliminary assessment that apply to the Oversight Unit are equally applicable to the Ethics Office when handling intake and preliminary assessment of suspected retaliation cases. Should the preliminary review in a case of suspected retaliation point to a *prima facie* determination of retaliation, the matter will then be forwarded by the Ethics Office to the Oversight Unit for investigation.
- 2.2 A report of suspected misconduct should describe, as precisely as possible, the acts, behaviour, language or situation that are believed to have constituted misconduct and the circumstances under which they took place and give any other relevant documentation or evidence. A report should include, to the extent available:
- The name, work location and job title of the alleged offender
 - Date(s) and location(s) of incident(s)
 - Description of incident(s)
 - Names of any witnesses
 - All available supporting documentation
- For cases of suspected retaliation, reports, including anonymous ones, must be submitted to the Ethics Office at: HelplineITU@protonmail.com.
- For all other cases of suspected misconduct, reports, including anonymous ones, must be submitted to the Oversight Unit. Reports to the Oversight Unit may be made via the secure external hotline,¹ in person, by phone or in writing to the Chief of Internal Oversight or any employee of the Oversight Unit, or by e-mail to: investigations@itu.int or ituhotline@proton.me.
- 2.3 A report of suspected misconduct may be made at any time after the incident has occurred and is not subject to time limits. However, early reporting is strongly encouraged as any delay may impede the effective consideration of the conduct in question.
- 2.4 Knowingly making false or unfounded allegations of misconduct, including false or unfounded allegations of retaliation, may amount to misconduct, which, if established, may result in administrative action, including disciplinary action pursuant to the relevant provisions of the ITU Staff Regulations and Staff Rules.

¹ Details of the latest reporting mechanisms will be updated on the Oversight Unit's page on the ITU Corporate Portal.

Section 3: Prohibition of retaliation

- 3.1 ITU personnel are expressly prohibited from engaging in any form of retaliation against a person who reports suspected misconduct, be they ITU personnel, an external third party or any other participant in an investigative process. Such conduct, if established, amounts to misconduct, which may result in administrative action, including disciplinary action pursuant to the relevant provisions of ITU's regulatory framework.
- 3.2 Protection against retaliation for non-ITU personnel: ITU will endeavour to ensure that external persons who report suspected misconduct are protected from retaliation by ITU personnel, with any protective measures to be determined by the Secretary-General on a case-by-case basis.

Section 4: Confidentiality

All ITU personnel who are aware of reports filed, including those submitted anonymously, or of measures that have been taken or are under way to address misconduct, shall respect the confidential nature of the matter by exercising the utmost discretion to protect the rights of all individuals involved. In all such matters, ITU personnel must not disclose information or documentation to any individual who does not have a "need to know" in order to perform official ITU duties in connection with this Service Order and the ITU Investigation Guidelines. A staff member who fails to observe these obligations may be subject to administrative action, including disciplinary action, pursuant to the relevant provisions of the ITU Staff Regulations and Staff Rules.

Section 5: Interim protective measures

Participants in an investigative process may be afforded interim measures as necessary to safeguard their interests, upon decision by the Secretary-General. Such interim measures may include, but are not limited to, temporary reassignment within or outside the department or unit, temporary suspension of the action reported as retaliatory, or placement on administrative leave with full pay.

Section 6: Final corrective measures

If it is determined, based on the facts and evidence set out in the investigation report, that the allegations of misconduct have been substantiated to the relevant standard of proof, appropriate administrative action shall be taken.

Section 7: External reporting

- 7.1 ITU personnel must report any suspected misconduct using the channels described in this policy, enabling ITU to take the actions necessary to address any allegations in accordance with its established investigative and, if appropriate, disciplinary procedures.
- 7.2 However, protection against retaliation shall be extended to a member of ITU personnel who reports suspected misconduct to an entity or individual outside of the established internal channels where they can prove all of the following:

- a) They had a reasonable basis to believe that such external reporting was necessary to avoid a significant threat to a person's health or safety or substantive damage to ITU's operations; and
- b) ITU's internal response was inadequate because the member of ITU personnel had previously reported (other than anonymously) the suspected misconduct pursuant to this policy and: i) ITU failed to inform the staff member in writing of the status of the matter within six months of such report; or ii) the relevant person has reasonable grounds to expect that they will not be able to report the suspected misconduct pursuant to any of the established internal mechanisms because all such avenues would subject such person to retaliation within ITU; or iii) the relevant person has reasonable grounds to expect that they will not be able to report the suspected misconduct pursuant to any of the established internal mechanisms because all such avenues will create a likelihood that evidence relating to the suspected misconduct will be concealed or destroyed; and
- c) They did not accept any payment or any other benefit from any party for such report; and
- d) Such reporting is done in a way that complies with confidentiality requirements, the contractual obligations of the member of ITU Personnel and the due process rights of all involved and does not damage ITU's reputation or cause it to violate its obligation to protect the confidential information of third parties.

7.3 External reporting shall not be used to express disagreement with advice or recommendations previously provided by an internal mechanism, or to express disagreement with the result of an Oversight Unit investigation or a related process.

Section 8: ITU elected officials and members of the Oversight Unit

Allegations of suspected misconduct (including retaliation) by ITU personnel of the Oversight Unit or by ITU elected officials are dealt with in accordance with Articles 26 and 27 of the ITU Internal Oversight Charter.

Section 9: Entry into force

The present policy shall enter into force on the date of promulgation of this Service Order.

Doreen BOGDAN-MARTIN
Secretary-General