SERVICE ORDER No. 26/07

ITU policy addressing harassment, including sexual harassment, abuse of authority, and discrimination

(This Service Order abrogates and replaces Service Order 25/11 of 9 June 2025)

Geneva, 22 October 2026

Section 1: Definitions

The following definitions apply to this policy:

ITU personnel:	staff members, including elected officials and staff on temporary appointments, and affiliate personnel.[1]	
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. The mere expression of disagreement, admonishment, 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.

[1] Affiliate personnel are individuals engaged to perform work or services for a limited period, and whose contractual relationship is not governed by a letter of appointment subject to ITU's Staff Regulations and Staff Rules.

(continued)

	Retaliation:	any detrimental action, direct or indirect, recommended, threatened or taken against anyone because that individual has engaged in an activity protected by the ITU policy for reporting misconduct and protection against retaliation ("whistleblowing").
	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.
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: Purpose and prevention

Prevention is essential in promoting a positive and safe work environment and to protect individuals from abusive conduct; it is a shared individual/organizational responsibility. All ITU personnel, at any level, and in particular at the supervisory level, are responsible for promoting a harmonious work environment free from abusive conduct.

Section 3: Early intervention and informal resolution

3.1 The informal approach aims to address concerns and resolve conflicts as soon as possible in an informal manner. It provides an opportunity to resolve issues and prevent situations from escalating to the point where submitting a formal report of suspected abusive conduct becomes necessary. ITU encourages, but does not impose, the use of informal channels and mechanisms mentioned below, where appropriate. Pursuit of an informal approach is voluntary and it does not constitute formal notice to ITU of any alleged misconduct. It also does not preclude the individual from filing a formal report of suspected abusive conduct in accordance with the ITU policy for reporting misconduct and protection against retaliation ("whistleblowing"). The informal approaches are as follows:

Early direct action

3.2 A victim of abusive conduct, if they feel comfortable and safe, can make their disapproval clearly known to the individual concerned and ask that the behaviour cease; this can be done in writing. There is no requirement for such early direct action to be taken as there may be reasons, such as disparity in status or fear of retaliation, that may make this option difficult.

Managerial intervention

3.3 If a victim of abusive conduct is uncomfortable taking early direct action by themself, they can call on a supervisor or a senior official to address the conduct in question. Such intervention does not preclude the matter from being formally reported.

3.4 Supervisors in ITU have an obligation to assist in resolving the problem and to take action to prevent recurrences. A supervisor approached by an alleged victim of abusive conduct shall inform that person that information about options to address abusive conduct can be obtained from the Ethics Office, including anonymously.

3.5 Supervisors shall provide assistance and/or information in a timely and impartial manner and shall treat the matter with sensitivity and confidentiality to the greatest extent possible. The supervisor's intervention may allow for the matter to be addressed promptly at the managerial level. Supervisors may facilitate a discussion between the alleged victim of abusive conduct and the alleged offender about the conduct in question or request that the Ombudsman facilitate such a discussion (with the consent of the concerned parties). Supervisors may also consider any other appropriate managerial action.

3.6 Supervisors shall keep a record of any managerial intervention carried out to document the action taken and any related outcome.

Informal resolution with the Ombudsman

3.7 A victim of abusive conduct may call on the Ombudsman for informal conflict resolution. The Ombudsman provides confidential, impartial and independent services to address employment-related concerns, including those related to potential abusive conduct.

3.8 Informal resolution efforts include discussing options and referrals, taking into account the wishes of the alleged victim of abusive conduct.

3.9 Informal resolution provides a mechanism for dialogue, identification, and resolution of problems before any recourse to formal mechanisms.

3.10 Informal resolution is a confidential process where the terms of the mechanism are not disclosed to any party outside the process unless agreed by all parties.

3.11 An attempt to resolve the matter by informal resolution does not preclude it from being formally reported. In addition, the informal resolution of a matter involving serious allegations of abusive conduct does not prevent the Secretary-General from taking further action in the interest of the Union and its personnel.

Advice from the Ethics Office

3.12 To promote a "speak up" culture, ITU has set up a helpline managed by the Ethics Office. Notwithstanding the application of Section 4 of this Service Order on reporting of suspected abusive conduct to the Oversight Unit, any person who wishes to remain anonymous and is seeking information on options for addressing suspected abusive conduct and the support available to victims of abusive conduct may submit questions to the Ethics Office via HelplineITU@protonmail.com. The Ethics Office offers confidential advice on the applicable regulatory framework and policies and the options available, and indicate resources available for support. Any discussion with the Ethics Office is confidential, unless agreed otherwise with the concerned person.

Support by the Staff Counsellor

3.13 The Staff Counsellor may provide psychological support and guidance on potential referral to external resources, such as mental health resources.

3.14 Where necessary and appropriate, such support is available to witnesses of instances of abusive conduct.

3.15 Any discussion with the Staff Counsellor is confidential, unless agreed otherwise with the concerned person.

Section 4: Formally reporting abusive conduct, protection against retaliation and inclusion in ClearCheck

4.1 ITU personnel who have information or evidence that abusive conduct may have occurred have a duty to report it in accordance with the procedure outlined in the ITU policy for reporting misconduct and protection against retaliation ("whistleblowing"). Any person, whether or not they are ITU personnel, may also report suspected misconduct, following the steps outlined on the ITU public website. When a formal report is submitted by a person other than the alleged victim of abusive conduct, the Oversight Unit will seek the views of the said alleged victim where possible before deciding whether to proceed with any further action.

4.2 Protection against retaliation is governed by the relevant sections of the ITU policy for reporting misconduct and protection against retaliation ("whistleblowing").

4.3 Where an allegation of sexual harassment is substantiated following the applicable investigation and disciplinary processes, and the disciplinary sanction of dismissal is imposed, ITU shall include the personal information of the individual concerned in the United Nations ClearCheck database.

Section 5: Confidentiality

The confidentiality obligations mentioned in Section 4 of the ITU policy for reporting misconduct and protection against retaliation ("whistleblowing") also apply to cases of abusive conduct.

Section 6: Entry into force

6.1 The procedure described in this Service Order applies to all formal reports of abusive conduct received after the date of promulgation of this Service Order.

6.2 Where all alleged acts occurred before the promulgation of this policy, the definitions of harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of authority and discrimination in the Service Order in force at the time the alleged acts occurred shall apply. However, when any of the alleged acts have taken place since the promulgation of this policy, this policy's definitions will apply.

Doreen Bogdan-Martin
Secretary-General