



**Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States**

**by Mr. Fabio Cannizzaro**

**Counsellor**

**Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations**

**at the Sixth Committee**

**on the Agenda item 152:**

**“Administration of justice at the United NationsA**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY –**





Still on **access to justice**, in order to foster trust and accountability, the internal system of administration of justice at the UN must allow both staff and non-staff personnel to access and protect their rights. Therefore, it is crucial to explore how to ensure access of non-staff personnel to the formal system, taking into account budgetary constraints.

We also continue to advocate for a system in which the Tribunals can grant anonymity to victims and witnesses if circumstances so require. We thus welcome the increase, for both Tribunals, of the percentage of judgments in which the name of the applicant or appellant was anonymized. Such a safeguard can help **protect parties and witnesses against retaliation**, a risk that could dissuade personnel from taking action to defend their rights. Ensuring protection against retaliation is crucial to fostering a safe environment where staff can speak up without fear of retribution. In this context, encouraging whistleblowing by UN staff (in both the formal and informal systems) is also essential for promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity within the organization. By reporting rights violations, misconduct or unethical behaviour, whistle-blowers can help identifying issues that could harm the UN's mission and credibility.

**Second**, as regards specifically the **informal system**, we commend the continued encouragement and expansion of the use of the “informal first” approach. We reiterate our support for promoting non-confrontational resolutions of disputes, also with a view to avoiding unnecessary litigation. This time- and cost-effective alternative to protracted litigation must be effectively available to all, including non-staff personnel whose number in the Secretariat keeps increasing. It is remarkable that, in 2023, the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services already observed a significant increase of 37 per cent in the number of cases received from non-staff personnel, although in absolute terms the figures are still low (from 182 cases in 2022 to 224 in 2023). The regularization of the pilot project to enable non-staff personnel to access the Ombudsman and Mediation

services within existing resources was an important development and will certainly result in an increase of the number of cases. However, it will also be essential to introduce adequate tools to provide non-staff personnel, especially in remote duty stations, with equitable and effective access to these services.

**Third**, we would like to provide brief comments on the following **general points**.

As regards **multilingualism**, we welcome all the initiatives mentioned in the reports aimed at providing relevant information in the six official languages of the UN, as well as the possibility for the parties before the Tribunals to request translation and interpretation into any language required for the proceedings. This contributes to the effectiveness, efficiency, and accessibility of the UN internal justice system.

As regards **workplace behaviour**, we stress the importance of addressing workplace conflict and inappropriate and abrasive behaviour, discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority. We praise the Anti-Racism Office for striving to bridge the awareness gap about racism and racial discrimination in the workplace, and we fully support its endeavours. These forms of behaviour are unacceptable in the workplace and should not be tolerated.

We also fully support the revised **mental health** and **well-being strategy** endorsed by the UN for 2024 and beyond, including the envisaged efforts to ensure successful "return to work" modalities.

Finally, we emphasize that a gender-responsive approach to the administration of justice is essential to ensuring progress towards **gender equality** in access to justice for all.

To conclude, we express our appreciation for the continued efforts to improve the administration of justice system at the UN and encourage all relevant actors to

pursue their endeavours to improve the dispute resolution mechanisms. At the same time, it is essential to address the root causes of such disputes and tackle them proactively.

Thank you.