



# UN WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING STRATEGY SUMMARY

A STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN 2018-2023

## WHY DO WE NEED A MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING STRATEGY FOR THE UN SYSTEM?

Working within the United Nations system can provide us with a strong sense of purpose and opportunities for helping others. It can also be challenging.

In 2015, over 17,000 United Nations system staff members across 11 United Nations entities completed the Global Well-Being survey. Approximately half of all United Nations staff members reported experiencing symptoms consistent with a mental health condition. This is greater than what is seen in the general population, and staff who had worked at the UN longest were more likely to experience poor mental health.

## WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW ABOUT GOOD MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING?

Our mental health directly influences how we think, feel and act: it also affects our physical health and impacts on those around us – both loved ones and work colleagues. Work, in fact, is one of the best things for protecting our mental health, but it can also adversely affect it.

Good mental health and well-being is not a black and white, on-off experience. We can all experience days, weeks or months where we feel resilient, strong and optimistic, regardless of events or situations. Often, that can be mixed with or shift to a very different set of thoughts, feelings and behaviours; or not feeling resilient and optimistic. For about 25% of us, that may shift to having a significant impact on how we think, feel and act in many parts of our lives, including relationships, experiences at work, sense of connection to peer groups and our personal sense of worth, physical health and motivation.

## WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?

Despite significant and ongoing investment in mental health and well-being, the

well-being of UN staff members is declining. The 2015 Global Well-Being survey found that 50% of UN staff members reported experiencing symptoms consistent with a mental health condition, which is significantly higher than the general population. Staff who had worked at the UN longest were more likely to experience poor mental health.

The 2015 Global Well-Being survey also found that 25% of UN staff members reported experiencing symptoms consistent with a mental health condition that had a significant impact on their work, relationships, and overall well-being. This is a significant finding that highlights the need for a comprehensive mental health and well-being strategy for the UN system.

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## HOW WAS THE UN WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING STRATEGY DEVELOPED?

The Strategy was developed in partnership with the UN Staff and Stress Counsellor Group, the UN Medical Directors, the HR Network, the UN Ombudsman and the UN Staff federations. The Project Team included IAEA, ILO, IOM, FICSA, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOG, UN Secretariat, UN-Women, WHO and the World Bank.

The Strategy was endorsed by the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and, therefore, applies to all UN system entities. Secretary-General Guterres formally launched the Strategy in October 2018.