# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT ON ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE AND OTHER ACCOUNTABILITIES AT UNDP

- 1. The administration of justice plays a crucial role in upholding principles of fairness, accountability, and transparency within UNDP. These principles apply to all facets of the Organization including decisions made by management, as well as the conduct of UNDP staff members, other personnel and vendors.
- 2. This report described UNDP's administration of justice framework for the year 1 January to 31 December 2021. Section I deals with the formal system of the administration of justice as it applies to staff members. Section II concerns accountability as applied to other personnel, including UN Volunteers, vendors, and possible criminal behaviour.

### I. STAFF MEMBERS

- 3. The current system of administration of justice at the United Nations was established by the General Assembly in its resolutions 61/261, 62/228 and 63/253, which became operational on 1 July 2009. These resolutions highlight the importance of establishing clear mechanisms for addressing grievances and ensuring due process in employment-related matters. They underscore the UN's commitment to upholding the rule of law and ensuring that justice is available to all UNDP staff members.
- 4. In addition to informal dispute resolution, staff members may pursue resolution of a dispute through a formal appeals process. The first step in the formal system of internal dispute resolution is a Request for Management Evaluation (RME) by which staff members request review of an administrative decision that they consider not to be in compliance with their employment contract or terms of appointment. In UNDP, most RMEs are considered by the Director, BMS, who has delegated authority from the Administrator to decide on the outcome of such requests.
- 5. An RME is a prerequisite in most cases for a staff member to appeal an administrative decision to the UN Dispute Tribunal (UNDT). In addition, a staff member may appeal to the UNDT a decision to impose a disciplinary or an administrative measure following an investigation, or the decision of certain technical bodies. UNDT judgements may be appealed, either by the relevant staff member or by UNDP, to the UN Appeals Tribunal (UNAT). Tribunal decisions are binding on both parties.

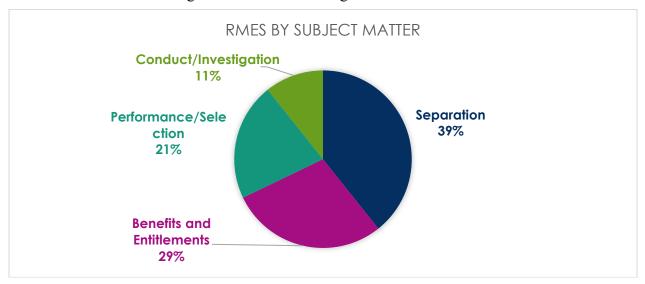
# A. Requests for Management Evaluation (RME)

6. In 2021, UNDP received 30 RMEs, and 28 responses to RMEs were issued. Of these 28 responses, 25 concerned RMEs received in 2021 and three concerned RMEs carried over from 2020. At the end of 2021, two RMEs remained outstanding as the applicable time limit for a reply ran beyond the end of the calendar year.

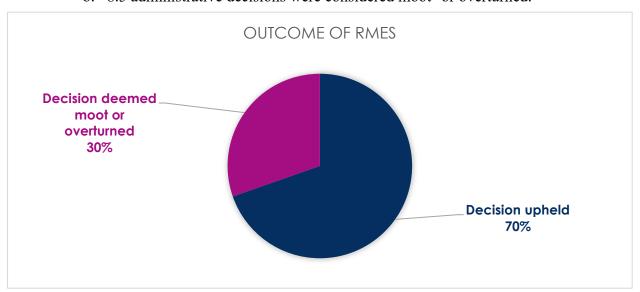
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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Personnel include UN Volunteers, Service Contract holders, Individual Contractors, and Personnel Service Agreement holders.

- 7. The decisions contested by staff members through RMEs during 2021 covered a broad range of topics and specific circumstances, categorized as follows:
  - a. 11 relating to separation.
  - b. Eight relating to benefits and entitlements.
  - c. Six relating to performance/selection.
  - d. Three relating to conduct and investigation.



- 8. The outcomes of the 28 RMEs answered were:
  - a. 19.5 administrative decisions were upheld<sup>2</sup>.
  - b. 8.5 administrative decisions were considered moot<sup>3</sup> or overturned.

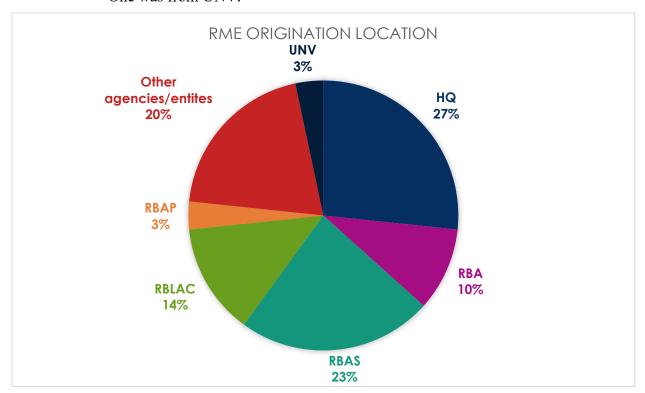


9. Any staff member on a UNDP Letter of Appointment may submit an RME. Of the 30 RMEs received in 2021:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> In some instances, a decision may be partially upheld and partially set aside depending on the RME.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> When a case is dismissed as "moot" it means that the decision contested no longer exists or the contested issue has been resolved.

- Eight were from Headquarters;
- Three were from the Regional Bureau for Africa;
- Seven were from the Regional Bureau for Arab States;
- Four were from the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean;
- One was from the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific;
- Six were from staff members with service limited to other UN agencies; and
- One was from UNV.



# **B.** Disciplinary Action Pertaining to Staff Members

- 10. Article 101, Paragraph 3 of the Charter of the United Nations states that the "paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity". UN Staff Regulation 1.2(b) provides that "[t]he concept of integrity includes, but is not limited to, probity, impartiality, fairness, honesty and truthfulness in all matters affecting their work and status".
- 11. In observance of the above principles, UNDP is committed to preventing, identifying, and addressing breaches of the required standards of conduct committed by UNDP staff members.
- 12. The Administrator or the Associate Administrator imposes disciplinary measures following a thorough process as described in the UNDP Legal Framework for Addressing Non-Compliance with United Nations Standards of Conduct (the "Legal Framework").<sup>4</sup>
- 13. Disciplinary proceedings within the UN system are administrative, not criminal, in nature. Proof beyond reasonable doubt is not a requirement. Where misconduct by a staff member is alleged, UNDP will investigate the matter to determine whether the evidence supports the allegation. Throughout such proceedings, staff members have the right to due process, as detailed in the Legal Framework.
- 14. In UNDP, the Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) is generally responsible for investigating all allegations of misconduct. Investigation reports relating to staff members are submitted to the Office of Legal Services in the Bureau for Management Services, (BMS/OLS) for review and further action.

#### Clear Check

- 15. To help combat against sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse, UNDP continued to use the Clear Check Database ("Clear Check") in 2021. Clear Check is an electronic database containing the names of former UNDP personnel whose conduct resulted or would have resulted in their separation from service or dismissal for misconduct, or the termination of their contract with UNDP, due to the substantiated allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse or sexual harassment. Individuals can also be included if UNDP has come into possession of information confirming that an individual has a criminal record of a serious sexual offence. Clear Check is used by UNDP and other UN entities to prevent the hiring and re-hiring of such individuals within the UN system. Clear Check was created in consultation with other UN entities pursuant to the Report of the Secretary-General on Special Measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, A/72/751.
- 16. In 2021, UNDP added the names of two staff members, and two non-staff personnel, to Clear Check.

# Paragraphs 72(a) and 73 of the Legal Framework

17. Paragraph 72(a) of the Legal Framework provides that, if an investigation subject resigns or otherwise separates prior to the completion by OAI of an investigation report, the investigation report may be finalized at OAI's discretion. Notwithstanding separation, if the investigation report

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The Legal Framework may be found on the UNDP intranet website.<sup>5</sup> Because of the time limits for appeal, the RMEs may have occurred in the previous year.

- is finalized, OAI sends the draft investigation report to the former staff member for comments. After consideration and amendment of the investigation report as appropriate, OAI sends the final investigation report and comments to BMS/OLS for review.
- 18. Following review, the Director, BMS/OLS issues a letter to the former staff member indicating whether, if they had remained on a staff appointment: (i) a recommendation would have been made to initiate charges of misconduct against them, or (ii) they would have been exonerated from the allegations of misconduct, or (iii) the matter would have been dealt as a work performance matter. The former staff member is invited to comment on the letter. The Director, BMS/OLS's letter and the former staff member's comments are placed on the former staff member's Official Status File.
- 19. A similar procedure exists when the subject of an investigation resigns or otherwise separates from service after the investigation report is issued, but prior to the initiation of disciplinary proceedings. In that case, upon review of the investigation report and the comments of the subject thereon, pursuant to Paragraph 73 of the Legal Framework, the Director, BMS/OLS issues a letter to the former staff member as described above.

### Paragraph 72(b) of the Legal Framework

20. When OAI decides that the investigation report concerning an already separated staff member cannot be finalized, the Director, BMS/OLS places a letter in the former staff member's Official Status File indicating that they resigned or their contract expired while under investigation. In both instances, the former staff member is given an opportunity to present comments, and the letter and the comments are placed in the former staff member's Official Status File.

### Paragraph 81(a) of the Legal Framework

21. Under Paragraph 81(a) of the Legal Framework, if a staff member resigns or otherwise separates from service after the initiation of disciplinary proceedings but prior to the imposition of a disciplinary sanction, the Director, BMS/OLS may nevertheless decide that a recommendation would have been made to impose disciplinary sanctions if they had remained a staff member. The Director, BMS/OLS may place a letter to this effect, indicating the relevant recommended sanction, on the former staff member's Official Status File. The former staff member is invited to comment on the letter, and their comments will be attached to the Director, BMS/OLS letter and placed in the former staff member's Official Status File. The Director, BMS/OLS may similarly recommend that the former staff member be exonerated of misconduct and/or that the matter should be treated as a performance issue. In such a case, such a recommendation will be made to the Assistant Administrator and Director, BMS who may formally and fully exonerate the subject, or exonerate the subject and issue a reprimand.

### Clearance or exoneration of the allegations

22. Where the allegations are not substantiated, or do not warrant a disciplinary measure, the staff member may be cleared or exonerated from the allegations.

### C. Disciplinary Action

- 23. In 2021, BMS/OLS received 31 investigation reports, of which 30 were accepted. In addition, BMS/OLS considered 15 open cases from previous years. At the end of 2021, 17 open cases were carried over to 2022.
- 24. Of the 45 open disciplinary cases in 2021, 28 cases were concluded as follows:
  - a. Five cases resulted in the imposition of a disciplinary sanction on a staff member: Three cases led to the staff member's dismissal or separation from service; One case led to a demotion of one level and deferment for consideration for promotion; One case led to a loss of four steps and deferral of within grade salary increment for two years. **Annex A** to this Report contains a summary of the cases resulting in disciplinary measures against staff members in 2021 and other administrative action.
  - b. 15 cases were concluded under Paragraph 72(a) of the Legal Framework and two cases were concluded under Paragraph 81(a) of the Legal Framework with the placement of a note on the matter on the staff member's Official Status File, as the staff member had resigned or otherwise separated from UNDP during the investigation or prior to a final decision on the case. No cases were closed under Paragraph 73 or under Paragraph 72(b). **Annex B** to this Report contains a summary of Actions taken pursuant to Paragraphs 72(a) and 81(a) of the Legal Framework in 2021.
  - c. Four cases were concluded with clearance or exoneration because the staff member provided sufficient evidence to refute the allegations, or the facts established by the investigation report did not rise to the level of misconduct.
  - d. Two cases involved actions taken before the individual was appointed as a staff member, and they were therefore not subject to the Staff Regulations and Rules at the relevant time.
- 25. Staff members appealed two of the disciplinary cases finalized in 2021 to the UNDT.

# D. Appeals to the UN Dispute Tribunal (UNDT) and UN Appeals Tribunal (UNAT)

- 26. As noted above, the relevant staff member may appeal UNDP's response to an RME to the UNDT. The time limit for such an appeal is 90 days from receipt of the reply to the RME, or 90 days from the date on which the reply to the RME would be due. In 2021, three RMEs were appealed to the UNDT.<sup>5</sup>
- 27. During 2021, the UNDT issued 11 judgments (which included appeals filed in previous years) where UNDP was a party. Of the 11 judgments issued, the UNDT upheld UNDP's decision in 10 cases and overturned UNDP's decision in one case.
- 28. During the same period, the UNAT issued 39 judgments pertaining to UNDP decisions. Of the 39 cases, the UNAT upheld UNDP's decision (either upholding or overturning the UNDT's decision) in 37 cases and overturned UNDP's decision in two cases.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Because of the time limits for appeal, the RMEs may have occurred in the previous year.

### II. OTHER PERSONNEL

### A. United Nations Volunteers

- 29. On 1 October 2021, UNV's Unified Conditions of Service for UN Volunteers came into effect and modified the list of disciplinary measures.
- 30. During 2021, 30 cases were reviewed by UNV concerning allegations against UN Volunteers undertaking assignments across the United Nations system. 27 of the 30 cases resulted in the imposition of disciplinary sanctions: one resulted in a letter of censure; ten resulted in non-extension of the UN Volunteer's contract; seven resulted in exclusion of the UN Volunteer from the UNV Talent Pool for five years; two resulted in early separation; and seven resulted in summary dismissal.

### **B.** Non-Staff Personnel

31. UNDP has zero tolerance for fraud, corruption and certain other wrongdoing by any personnel. As UNDP individuals are not staff members. their contract constitutes the Legal Framework governing their employment with UNDP. A breach of the terms and conditions of their contract may lead to the termination or non-renewal of their contract. Such decisions are within the competence and authority of the office for which the non-staff personnel works, because that office is responsible for such non-staff personnel and accountable for their conduct. Annex C to this Report contains a summary of the cases involving non-staff personnel in 2021.

#### C. UNDP Vendors

- 32. Effective governance and integrity are critical to enable UNDP to achieve its mandate. UNDP requires its vendors to comply with the highest ethical standards, and report to UNDP all suspected acts of fraud, corruption and all proscribed practices.
- 33. The Vendor Review Committee (VRC) is an internal administrative body tasked with making recommendations to UNDP's Chief Procurement Officer (CPO) concerning the imposition of proscribed practices. sanctions on vendors who engage in The VRC analyzes OAI Investigation Reports that substantiate actions and omissions by vendors. Sanctions against UNDP vendors are regulated by UNDP's Vendor Sanctions Policy and may range from a censure (letter of reprimand) to a debarment, depending on the type and severity of the proscribed practices. UNDP records the names of sanctioned vendors in an internal UNDP ineligibility list. This information is also shared with the UN Global Marketplace (UNGM) which hosts an ineligibility list that aggregates information disclosed by UNDP and other Agencies, Funds or Programs of the UN System.
- 34. In 2021, the VRC received 15 investigation reports from OAI, three of which were closed in 2021.
- 35. The VRC reviewed and closed 45 cases in 2021 (1 from 2014, 13 from 2016, 9 from 2017, 7 from 2018, 1 from 2019, 11 from 2020 and 3 from 2021). Consequently, 75 vendors (companies, NGOs and individuals) were sanctioned, resulting in 57 debarments and 18 censures.
- 36. In 2021, 11 prospective vendors were placed on interim suspension pending the completion of OAI's investigation or the VRC proceedings.

# D. Possible Criminal Behavior

- In its Resolution 59/287, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to take action 37. expeditiously in cases of "proven [...] criminal behaviour" and ensure that Member States are informed of the actions taken. Further, in its Resolution 62/63, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General "to bring credible allegations that reveal that a crime may have been committed by United Nations officials and experts on mission to the attention of the States against whose nationals such allegations are made, and to request from those States an indication of the status of their efforts to investigate and, as appropriate, prosecute crimes of a serious nature [...]". The UN Management Under-Secretary-General for reports such cases in the on yearly "Information Circular" entitled "Practice of the Secretary-General in disciplinary matters and possible criminal behaviour".
- 38. When an OAI investigation reveals credible evidence that a violation of law has occurred warranting referral to the law enforcement authorities of a Member State, UNDP recommends referral of such matters to the UN Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) for its review and appropriate action. In 2021, UNDP referred to OLA 11 cases of possible criminal behaviour by staff members, and no cases pertaining to non-staff personnel.

# Annex A: Summary of cases resulting in disciplinary measures against staff members in 2021

# **Interference with Investigation**

1. A staff member at the P-3 level was found to have interfered with an authorized investigation by intentionally destroying official UN records relevant to an investigation from another staff member's Organization-issued laptop. The staff member also knowingly made a false statement to the investigators during a witness interview. The staff member's status as a professional staff member and responsibility for sensitive functions were considered aggravating factors. There was no finding of direct financial loss in this case.

Sanction: Separation from service with compensation in lieu of notice and without termination indemnities

# **Improper Recruitment**

A staff member at the NO-A level was found to have shared sensitive and confidential information on multiple occasions with a colleague who was not authorized to be a part of the recruitment and procurement processes. The fact that the staff member did not recognize the conduct as inappropriate, and that the staff member engaged in separate repeated acts of misconduct constituted aggravating circumstances. That the staff member did not act for private gain was a mitigating factor. There was no finding of direct financial loss in this case.

Sanction: Loss of four steps in grade and deferment, for two years, of eligibility for consideration for promotion

# **Entitlement Fraud**

3. A staff member at the G-6 level committed entitlement fraud by submitting a claim to an insurance company for reimbursement of medical expenses that the staff member knew to be false. There was no finding of direct financial loss in this case.

Sanction: Separation from service with compensation in lieu of notice and without termination indemnities

# **Workplace Harassment**

4. A staff member at the G-1 level engaged in physical assault and multiple threats of harm against three individuals. The fact that the staff member's misconduct involved actual physical violence and threats against others at night outside their residences were considered aggravating factors. There was no finding of direct financial loss in this case.

Sanction: Dismissal

# **Sexual Harassment**

5. A staff member at the NO-A level made sexual advances towards two external personnel under that staff member's supervision. In addition, the staff member engaged in abuse of authority by seeking to intimidate personnel through the issuance of "warning letters", which were written in a language that the personnel could not understand. The fact that the staff member's conduct constituted repeated instances of both verbal and sexual harassment, and intimidation were recognized as aggravating factors. There was no finding of direct financial loss in this case.

Sanction: Demotion with deferment, for a period of one year, of eligibility for consideration for promotion

Annex B: Actions taken pursuant to Paragraphs 72(a) and 81(a) of the Legal Framework in 2021

Actions taken pursuant to Paragraph 72(a) of the Legal Framework	
	Workplace Harassment
1.	A former UN Resident Coordinator (RC) was informed that, had the RC remained a staff member, a recommendation would have been made to charge the staff member with abuse of authority and workplace harassment for a) requiring supervisees to complete the mandatory training the RC was supposed to complete, b) demanding access to another staff member's personal phone and c) yelling at another staff members in front of office colleagues. The RC was also found to have sought to interfere with the ongoing investigation and to have committed abuse of authority by instructing supervisees to breach their obligations to comply with an audit and investigation. There was no finding of direct financial loss in this case.
2.	A staff member at the G-2 level was informed that, had the staff member remained in the employ of the Organization, a recommendation would have been made to charge the staff member with workplace harassment. Specifically, the staff member was found to have engaged in unprofessional physical contact with colleagues on three different occasions. There was no finding of direct financial loss in this case.
3.	A staff member at the NO-B level was informed that, had the staff member remained in the employ of the Organization, a recommendation would have been made to charge the staff member with harassing a work colleague through verbal and physical threats on two occasions. There was no finding of direct financial loss in this case.
	Sexual Harassment
4.	A staff member at the P-3 level was informed that, had the staff member remained in the employ of the Organization, a recommendation would have been made to charge the staff member with sexual harassment. The staff member made a sexual advance and touched another staff member in a sexual manner during a work meeting. There was no finding of direct financial loss in this case.
5.	A staff member at the NO-C level with managerial functions was informed that, had the staff member remained in the employ of the Organization, a recommendation would have been made to charge the staff member with sexual harassment of a colleague. The staff member's conduct included sending WhatsApp messages of a personal nature with sexual connotations, sending

repeated invitations to have coffee together, offering to buy presents and arranging for an unsolicited gift to be placed in the colleague's hotel room while they were on official mission. There was no finding of direct financial loss in this case.

	Entitlement Fraud
6.	A staff member at the G-6 level was informed that, had the staff member remained in the employ of the Organization, a recommendation would have been made to charge the staff member with entitlement fraud and false certification for claiming reimbursement for official travel that the staff member had not undertaken. The staff member would also have been charged with misrepresentation for falsely claiming that their UN-issued mobile phone had been lost or stolen. There was no finding of direct financial loss in this case.
	Misrepresentation
7.	A staff member at the G-7 level was informed that, had the staff member remained in the employ of the Organization, a recommendation would have been made to charge the staff member with fraud and misrepresentation in that the staff member offered vehicles for sale, received payment, but did not deliver the vehicles or return the payment. The staff member would also have been charged for misrepresenting that the vehicles were associated with the United Nations. There was no finding of direct financial loss in this case.
8.	A staff member at the P-5 level was informed that, had the staff member remained in the employ of the Organization, a recommendation would have been made to charge the staff member with misrepresentation and forgery by contriving to receive a detail assignment to the U.S. and associated travel claims in order to address personal medical needs. The staff member also misrepresented the number of travelers and mode of transportation related to two Home Leave travels. The staff member further engaged in abuse of authority by requesting that a supervisee carry out the staff member's personal tasks on multiple occasions. As a result of this conduct, UNDP incurred a financial loss, which was recovered from the former staff member's final entitlements.
	Misappropriation of Funds
9.	A staff member at the G-7 level was informed that, had the staff member remained in the employ of the Organization, a recommendation would have been made to charge the staff member with fraud for receiving two salary advances without reimbursing the advances. A recommendation would also have been made to charge the staff member with misuse of authority

	for using ATLAS access rights to falsify records related to the salary advances. As a result of this conduct, UNDP incurred a financial loss which was recovered from the former staff member's final entitlements.
	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
10.	A staff member at the G-2 level was informed that, had the staff member remained in the employ of the Organization, a recommendation would have been made to charge the staff member with sexual exploitation for attempting to introduce a local woman to a newly arrived senior male staff member for the purpose of offering sexual services to that newly arrived individual. It was recognized that in so doing the staff member intended to obtain leverage over the incoming staff member. There was no finding of direct financial loss in this case.
	Unauthorized Outside Activities
11.	A staff member at the G-6 level was informed that, had the staff member remained in the employ of the Organization, a recommendation would have been made to charge the staff member with unauthorized outside activities through ownership of a private company. In yearly financial disclosure statements, the staff member misrepresented ownership in the company. The staff member also used UNDP's DHL account to make a personal shipment without prior approval. There was no finding of direct financial loss in this case.
12.	A staff member at the NO-A level was informed that, had the staff member remained in the employ of the Organization, a recommendation would have been made to charge the staff member with unauthorized outside activities by working for an external company and misusing office equipment, including the printer, to carry out work for that external company. There was no finding of direct financial loss in this case.
	Obstructing an Authorized Investigation
13.	A staff member at the NO-A level was informed that, had the staff member remained in the employ of the Organization, a recommendation would have been made to charge the staff member with obstructing an authorized investigation by instructing subordinates to destroy information relevant to the investigation. In this regard, the staff member failed to disclose a personal relationship with a vendor of the Organization and to recuse themselves when engaged in matters involving the procurement of services to the Organization by the same vendor.
	Gross Negligence

A staff member at the NO-B level with managerial functions was informed that, had the staff member remained in the employ of the Organization, a recommendation would have been made to charge the staff member for inaction as a manager in a conflict of interest between a supervisee and a vendor. Despite being aware of the conflict of interest, the staff member continued to approve payments for procurements conducted by the supervisee. There was no finding of direct financial loss in this case.

# **Forgery**

A staff member at the G-5 level with financial responsibilities was informed that, had the staff member remained in the employ of the Organization, a recommendation would have been made to charge the staff member with forgery for creating 13 fraudulent payment vouchers in order to obtain cash for the staff member's own benefit. As a result of the staff member's actions, UNDP sustained a financial loss, which has been partially recovered from the former staff member's final entitlements.

# Actions taken pursuant to Paragraph 81(a) of the Legal Framework

### **Sexual Harassment**

1. A former staff member at the G-3 level was informed that, had the staff member remained in the employ of the Organization, a recommendation would have been made to impose disciplinary sanctions for engaging in sexual harassment by sending inappropriate and unwelcome WhatsApp messages of a sexual nature to a colleague. The staff member was also informed that sanctions would also have been recommended for misusing UNDP IT resources by storing pornographic material on a UNDP issued laptop and phone. There was no finding of direct financial loss in this case.

# **Workplace Harassment**

A staff member was informed that, had the staff member remained in the employ of the Organization, a recommendation would have been made to impose a disciplinary sanction on the staff member for engaging in various instances of workplace harassment against three colleagues. Specifically, the staff member was found to have inappropriately hugged and kissed a colleague. The staff member was also found to have engaged in repeated improper and unwelcome physical contact with another colleague. There was no finding of direct financial loss in this case.

# Annex C: Summary of cases involving Non-Staff Personnel in 2021

# 1. Fraud

One SC holder was found to have engaged in procurement fraud. The contract was terminated.

# 2. Abuse of Authority x 3

Three SC holders were found to have engaged in activities constituting abuse of authority. A Note to File was placed in each SC holder's personnel file.

# 3. Misrepresentation, Forgery and False Certification

One PSA holder was found to have falsely certified a document. The contract was terminated.

# 4. Failure to Comply with Standards of Conduct x 4

Four SC holders were found to have failed to comply with standards of conduct. The four contracts were terminated.

# 5. Unauthorized Activity x 4

Two UNDP SC holders and two SC holders engaged by UNDP on behalf of another UN Agency were found to have engaged in unauthorized activities. The four contracts were terminated.

# 6. Conflict of Interest x 2

One NPSA holder and one IC holder were found to have engaged in activities constituting a conflict of interest. Both contracts were terminated.