

# WIPO



**WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION**  
GENEVA

General distribution

## OFFICE INSTRUCTION

No. 17/2006

### STATEMENT ON HARASSMENT AT WORK

1. This Office Instruction supersedes and replaces Office Instruction No. 15/2004 dated July 22, 2004.
2. WIPO is committed to fostering a positive workplace free of harassment and intimidation, so that all staff members and temporary employees can work together with openness, dignity and respect. Within this framework, the International Bureau will not tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment, including gender or sexual harassment, as well as physical or verbal abuse at the workplace or in connection with work. Such conduct is prohibited and will be subject to appropriate administrative or disciplinary action.
3. All staff members and temporary employees bear responsibility for the maintenance of a work environment free of harassment, in keeping with the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, the WIPO Staff Regulations and Staff Rules, and Office Instructions.
4. Harassment is unwelcome verbal or physical behavior that unreasonably interferes with work or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. It includes conduct, comments or displays, whether made on a cumulative or, in exceptional cases, a one-time basis, and may be related to race, religion, color, creed, ethnic origin, physical attributes, age, gender or sexual orientation and which threatens, demeans or belittles a staff member or temporary employee, or causes personal humiliation or embarrassment, or has the effect of offending, intimidating or discriminating against a person. It may also include bullying and mobbing and may take the form of isolation, gossip or withholding of essential information. Harassment violates the standards of conduct expected of international civil servants.
5. Staff members and temporary employees, therefore, shall avoid actions or words which would prevent the full participation of any of their colleagues in the work of the

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Organization under conditions of equality, dignity and respect. This extends to situations of harassment which occur at or away from the workplace, during or outside working hours, if such situations are linked to working relationships and would affect performance and job security.

6. At the same time, it is the responsibility of all staff members and temporary employees to ensure that satisfactory levels of performance continue to be achieved. Reasonable actions by supervisors to this end are not to be considered acts of harassment. Supervisors have a responsibility to give frank and constructive feedback and to take appropriate corrective action, and may have to take negative decisions on, for example, performance or work assignments, which normally do not, in themselves, constitute harassment. Actions are considered reasonable if taken in the best interest of the Organization, in line with the provisions of the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, WIPO Staff Regulations and Staff Rules, and Office Instructions or accepted principles of managerial and supervisory duties and responsibilities within the UN Common System.

7. Staff members and temporary employees must have *reasonable grounds* before making a complaint of harassment; unfounded complaints may damage relations and operations in the workplace.

8. To the extent possible, staff members and temporary employees shall attempt to resolve complaints relating to harassment in a non-confrontational and informal manner.

9. Any processes established by the Organization will be based on evenhandedness and impartiality and, therefore, the right of all concerned to be treated in a fair and unprejudiced manner throughout the process. For further information on the processes established to ensure that allegations of harassment within the workplace, including sexual harassment, are appropriately addressed, please refer to Office Instruction No. 18/2006 of March 22, 2006 on “The Office of the Ombudsman” and Office Instruction No. 16/2006 of March 22, 2006 on “The WIPO Joint Grievance Panel”.

10. It is a serious matter to commit acts of harassment and equally to make unfounded allegations against someone. In the same way that harassment has a damaging effect on those exposed to such conduct, false and malicious accusations have serious effects on innocent individuals. The consequences for committing harassment or for allegations made in bad faith will be determined by the facts of each case, and the violation may lead to the application of the disciplinary measures referred to in Chapter X of the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules.

[signed by Kamil Idris  
Director General]

March 29, 2006