



19 September 2023

Secretary-General's bulletin

Gender Focal Points in the Secretariat

The goal of attainment of gender balance¹ in the United Nations system has been reiterated in numerous General Assembly resolutions² and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and by the Commission on the Status of Women. The Assembly, in its resolution [72/147](#), requested the acceleration of the efforts for the achievement of 50/50 gender balance at all levels throughout the United Nations system, including in the field and in peacekeeping missions. Furthermore, in Article 8 of the Charter of the United Nations it is stipulated that the United Nations shall place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs.

In support of efforts to achieve gender balance, the present bulletin outlines the functions and responsibilities of Gender Focal Points. Their work is guided by the respective strategies and accountability frameworks put in place by the Secretary-General.

Section 1

Selection, eligibility criteria, management and coordination of Gender Focal Points

1.1 The head of entity³ has the overall responsibility for the achievement of gender balance in the entity concerned, including the responsibility for ensuring that the entity has a Gender Focal Point and at least one alternate (hereinafter referred to as Gender Focal Points).⁴

1.2 The head of entity appoints Gender Focal Points after receiving expressions of interest from staff who are willing to serve as Gender Focal Points.

¹ In the present bulletin, gender balance is synonymous with gender parity.

² See General Assembly resolutions [49/167](#), [49/222 A](#), [50/164](#), [51/67](#), [51/226](#), [53/119](#), [53/221](#), [55/258](#), [61/244](#), [63/250](#), [65/247](#), [67/255](#), [70/133](#), [72/147](#), [74/128](#) and [76/142](#).

³ For the purposes of the present instruction, the term “head of entity” has the same meaning as that given to the term in footnote 1 of [ST/SGB/2019/2](#).

⁴ Certain entities, including the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations, have Gender Advisers and Gender Focal Points performing work pursuant to the provisions of Security Council resolution [2242 \(2015\)](#). Those Gender Focal Points and Gender Advisers do not have the same functions as the Gender Focal Points under this Secretary-General's bulletin unless they are specifically assigned to perform the functions of both Gender Focal Points and Gender Advisers.



1.3 Gender Focal Points should normally be appointed from among staff at the P-4 level and above. In determining the appropriate level of the Gender Focal Point and the number of alternates, the nature and size of the entity concerned should be taken into consideration. Large entities may have multiple Gender Focal Points and smaller entities may appoint an appropriately qualified staff member from the General Service and related categories.

1.4 The head of entity shall ensure that the Gender Focal Points can participate in information sessions and capacity-building opportunities and are able to dedicate sufficient time to the performance of the functions and responsibilities set out in section 2 of the present bulletin. Normally, this would amount to 20 per cent of their official work time. The time allocated and the functions to be performed by the Gender Focal Points shall be communicated to them by their head of entity and reflected in the workplan of the Gender Focal Points.

1.5 The network of Gender Focal Points is coordinated by the Office of the Focal Point for Women in the United Nations System, at the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)⁵ (hereinafter referred to as the Office of the Focal Point for Women).

1.6 The head of entity should provide the Office of the Focal Point for Women with up-to-date contact information for all Gender Focal Points.

1.7 To ensure that the head of entity is provided with independent and impartial support from the Gender Focal Points and to avoid any conflict of interest, staff representatives, or staff in the immediate office of heads of entity, shall not be eligible to serve as Gender Focal Points. Gender Focal Points who are also voting members of central review bodies shall recuse themselves from meetings of the central review bodies that are considering cases that relate to the entity in which the Gender Focal Points are serving.

1.8 Staff representatives and other staff are encouraged to bring relevant gender issues to the attention of Gender Focal Points for review and action in accordance with this bulletin.

1.9 Heads of entity shall ensure that their proposed programme budgets include resources sufficient for the Gender Focal Points to perform their functions and responsibilities as set forth in section 2.

Section 2

Functions and responsibilities

The Gender Focal Points shall perform the functions and responsibilities set out in the present section.

2.1 Gender Focal Points support heads of entity in fulfilling their responsibility for the achievement of gender balance in their entity. Gender Focal Points shall act as

⁵ The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, to be known as UN-Women, was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution [64/289](#) of 2 July 2010. The mandate of UN-Women, which was set out in paras. 51 to 56 of that resolution, was to consist of “the consolidated mandates and functions of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, with the additional role of leading, coordinating and promoting the accountability of the United Nations system in its work on gender equality and the empowerment of women” (para. 53). In para. 11 of its resolution [74/128](#) and its resolution [76/142](#), the Assembly reaffirmed “the important role of UN-Women in leading, coordinating and promoting accountability of the United Nations system in its work on gender equality and the empowerment of women”.

advocates and liaison between the staff and the heads of entity to address systemic issues and/or changes to processes that have been demonstrated to exert a disproportionate impact on staff based on their gender. This may include:

- (a) Actively supporting the head of entity in raising awareness on gender balance issues;
- (b) Initiating and supporting training possibilities within entities on gender sensitivity, work/life balance and career path strategies. In United Nations peace operations, this should be executed in coordination with the Gender Advisers;
- (c) Developing recommendations for addressing gender-based workplace concerns in consultation with the conduct and discipline teams or conduct and discipline focal points, as applicable;
- (d) Encouraging gender-balanced participation in training programmes, panels and other career development opportunities.

2.2 Gender Focal Points shall make themselves available to staff and provide information on relevant gender-related issues. This may include:

- (a) Providing information to staff on policies relevant to advancing gender balance in the workplace, for instance, on standards of conduct, flexible working arrangements and family-friendly policies. In peace operations, this should be executed in coordination with the Gender Advisers;
- (b) Serving as a conduit for channelling concerns of staff relating to gender balance to their head of entity, the Office of the Focal Point for Women or other relevant offices;
- (c) Providing information to staff on avenues for addressing situations of gender-based workplace concerns, including harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination and abuse of power. This may be done in consultation with conduct and discipline teams or conduct and discipline focal points, as applicable.

2.3 Gender Focal Points assist and advise the head of entity in ensuring that gender perspectives are taken into consideration in the selection of staff for temporary or fixed-term positions. This may include:

- (a) Supporting and monitoring progress towards the achievement of gender balance goals;
- (b) Assisting the head of entity in workforce planning in order to reach gender balance goals and/or departmental strategies;
- (c) Supporting outreach efforts to attract women candidates; or candidates from underrepresented Member States;
- (d) Supporting hiring managers in ensuring that gender bias is not a factor in the recruitment process, including promoting training to tackle unconscious bias for all involved in the recruitment process;
- (e) Supporting hiring managers in identifying suitable panel members to establish gender-balanced panels;
- (f) Participating, if possible, in selected interview panels in an ex officio capacity and expressing their views on whether the interviews were gender sensitive;
- (g) Reviewing long lists of applicants in selection processes, where feasible.

2.4 When the Gender Focal Points are undertaking the functions and responsibilities set out in section 2.3 above, they shall be informed of upcoming recruitments as early as possible and shall be granted access to all necessary information and processes.

Section 3
Monitoring

3.1 Gender Focal Points shall regularly monitor progress made towards the achievement of gender balance goals in their respective entities and, as appropriate, shall be invited to and participate in joint meetings between the Office of Human Resources or local administrative offices and entity leadership to assess such progress.

3.2 Gender Focal Points shall assist, as appropriate, the Office of the Focal Point for Women in the promotion by that office of efforts to achieve and ultimately maintain gender balance in the Secretariat by contributing data, ideas, comments and experiences on issues affecting the status of women in the Secretariat, as well as annual updates on their ability to carry out their functions, particularly with regard to time and resource allocation.

Section 4
Authority and respect for confidentiality

4.1 Gender Focal Points shall have access to all information necessary for the discharge of their functions, including access to statistics on gender balance in their respective entities; access to information on forthcoming vacancies and human resources policies and practices affecting gender balance goals; and access to staff of the local human resources or Executive Office, and senior management of the respective entity, as required to carry out their functions.

4.2 In discharging their functions, Gender Focal Points shall respect the confidentiality of all information received that is of a confidential nature.

Section 5
Final provisions

5.1 The present bulletin shall enter into force on the date of its issuance.

5.2 Secretary-General's bulletin [ST/SGB/2008/12](#) of 1 August 2008, entitled "Departmental focal points for women in the Secretariat", is hereby superseded.

(Signed) António **Guterres**
Secretary-General
