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INFORMATION CIRCULAR N° 31

Subject: Attempted Fraud through the Electronic Mail System

1. A number of staff have recently reported messages of apparently fraudulent nature sent to their UNOG electronic mail account from external sources. Typically, addressees receive unsolicited personal investment proposals and are encouraged to communicate their bank accounts or other personal information, and even to initiate financial transactions.
2. Official e-mail addresses of staff are listed in the UNOG Telephone Directory. They are, therefore, considered as being in the public domain. While office e-mail facilities are intended for work-related purposes only, it is not United Nations policy to block external sources from sending messages to valid UNOG electronic mail addresses. Staff are expected to review incoming electronic mail with the same degree of critical discernment and circumspection as they would apply to regular postal mail.
3. Incoming messages that attempt to fraudulently take advantage of the credulity of the recipient, like those of otherwise offensive nature, should be reported to the Investigation Unit, UNOG Security and Safety Section, accompanied by a hard copy of the message. Substantiated complaints will be forwarded to the Police. It must, however, be understood that to date, the means to pursue the authors of such attempts are very limited.

Vladimir Petrovsky
Director-General