



Secretariat

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INFORMATION CIRCULAR N° 28

Subject: Flexible Working Arrangements at the United Nations Office at Geneva

1. I am pleased to announce that flexible working arrangements will be introduced at the United Nations Office at Geneva on a trial basis effective 1 June 2003, pursuant to ST/SGB/2003/4. The introduction of this arrangement implements action 29 of the report of the Secretary-General on Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change (document A/57/387).
2. The annex to this memorandum contains detailed guidelines, information on the programme's options, and a description of roles and responsibilities.
3. I would emphasize that professionalism, integrity, and teamwork are key to the success of the programme, as are the principles set out below:
 - There is no right or entitlement to flexible working arrangements. They require a specific agreement and are purely voluntary for all concerned.
 - Productivity and quality of outputs must be maintained at the same level or enhanced following the introduction of flexible working arrangements.
 - No extra cost may be incurred by the Organization as a result of flexible working arrangements.
4. All arrangements will need to take into account the needs of service, our peak work periods, the needs of our clients, and are subject to periodic review.
5. The following four options are available under the programme:
 - a) Staggered working hours (see ST/AI/408)
 - b) Compressed Work Schedule (10 Working Days in 9)
 - c) Scheduled break for external learning activities
 - d) Work away from the office (telecommuting)

Option "a" may be combined with option "b", "c" or "d". The other options may not be combined. With the exception of option "a", staff members may not combine part-time work with flexible working arrangements.

6. I am asking all Directors/Chiefs to ensure that discussions with staff are held at the work unit level, in order to determine interest in the options available in the programme and their feasibility, as well as to develop plans for the re-arrangement of work. Plans for the arrangements will be developed on a quarterly basis. Directors/Chiefs will subsequently meet with unit chiefs/supervisors to review requests and plans.

7. I have entrusted to the Directors/Chiefs the overall authority to ensure effective and efficient implementation of the programme. In making their decisions, the Directors/Chiefs will take into account the impact of the arrangements on the implementation of work plans, and on clients. The decision on each applicant will also be determined by past productivity patterns and punctuality of the staff member, after consultation with work unit chiefs, and the staff member if necessary.
8. An assessment will be conducted at the conclusion of the three months to determine continuation of the arrangement for each participating staff member. An overall assessment of the programme will be conducted at the end of the three months trial period from the introduction of the programme.
9. Implementation of the flexible working arrangements will be the responsibility of the individual Departments/Services. Managers should exercise their authority in an equitable and unbiased manner. The Human Resources Management Service is available to provide guidance and to answer any questions that may arise concerning flexible working arrangements and their implementation in Geneva.

(Signed) Sergei **Ordzhonikidze**
Director-General

Guidelines on Flexible Working Arrangements

I. Background

1. Technological developments and new social trends have encouraged employers in both public and private sectors to introduce measures that assist staff in reconciling work and family responsibilities. The objective is to help attract and retain talented and motivated employees of both genders. These new patterns of work offer greater flexibility in how and where work is done and provide arrangements that address personal and family needs.
2. The UNOG programme will start on 1 June 2003. An assessment will be conducted at the conclusion of one/ three months to determine continuation of the arrangement for each participating staff member. An initial evaluation of the programme will be made after three months to capture, among other things, any changes in productivity, staff morale and client service and to address any issues that may have arisen.
3. The introduction of this programme implements action 29 of the report of the Secretary-General on Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change and ST/SGB/2003/4.

II. Options under the Programme

4. The following four options are available to those staff wishing to participate in the programme:
 - a) Staggered working hours as per ST/AI/408;
 - b) Compressed Work Schedule: ten working days in nine;
 - c) Scheduled break for external learning activities; and
 - d) Work away from the office (telecommuting).

Staff members who choose option "a" may also avail themselves of option "b", "c" or "d". The other options may not be combined. With the exception of option "a", staff members may not combine part-time work with flexible working arrangements.

5. Staff are not permitted to use their lunch hour or technical breaks for the purpose of gaining additional time within these arrangements. As usual, prior approval of Section/Unit chiefs is required for annual leave.

III. Guiding Principles

A. *Mutuality of Agreement*

6. ST/SGB/2003/4 states: "There is no right or entitlement to flexible working arrangements. They require a specific agreement and are purely voluntary for all concerned". The main guiding principle is that these policies are intended to facilitate flexible working arrangements and do not create an entitlement for such arrangements.
7. All flexible arrangements are subject to agreement by the staff member and the supervisor. Managers and staff are encouraged to rethink the manner in which the work is currently performed and how it could be done in different and better ways so as to allow staff members who wish to do so to make use of any of these arrangements, subject to work requirements and the exigencies of service.

B. *Productivity and quality of work*

8. ST/SGB/2003/4 states: "Productivity and quality of outputs must be maintained at the same level, or enhanced, following the introduction of flexible working arrangements." No compromises can be made with regard to quantity and quality of outputs, as well as service to clients. Plans for the re-arrangement of work must be approved by the Head of the Department/Office or the Director of the Division, prior to the beginning of the programme. The productivity level achieved under flexible working arrangements must be at least equal to the level established under the standard structure.
9. Participants who are not able to deliver at their optimal workload level will have to discontinue their participation in the programme. Abuse of the programme will result in the automatic ending of flexible arrangements for the staff member concerned.

C. *Costs*

10. ST/SGB/2003/4 states: "No extra costs may be incurred by the Organization as a result of flexible working arrangements". This includes costs for all necessary hardware (computer, printer, telephone, modem) that may be required to perform the tasks at a location away from the office, or communication costs.

D. *Applicability*

11. ST/SGB/2003/4 states: "In determining whether to approve individual arrangements, heads of departments or offices are expected to exercise their managerial discretion and judgement in a reasonable manner. Certain types of flexible working arrangements may not be possible for some jobs. Similarly, increased demands and requirements may lead to suspension of flexible working arrangements at certain periods." Some posts lend themselves more easily to flexible arrangements than others. Certain jobs may be excluded from some arrangements due to the nature of their functions, the opening hours of the units, etc. Staff are not permitted to substitute their lunch hour for additional work hours. Technical staff members are not permitted to use breaks (in the areas where they have been instituted) for the purpose of gaining additional time, since these breaks are an important tool to protect the health and safety of staff in positions carrying a specific risk.
12. Equally, there may be certain periods in an office work cycle during which some flexible arrangements are more suitable than others. Managers are requested to use their discretion in applying flexible measures with judgment, optimizing the benefits to staff and to the Organization while minimizing potential problems.

IV. Options for Flexible Working Arrangements

A. *Staggered Working Hours*

13. Core hours at UNOG are from 10h00 to 16h00. During these hours, staff must be present, except for one hour for lunch. Starting and ending times on either side of the core hours are permitted to vary to suit the personal needs of staff. Staff are expected to work the number of hours per day that have been established under the common workweek in Geneva, i.e. eight hours plus a break of one hour for lunch. Flexible working hours within an office or team should be discussed and agreed upon among team members to maximize the benefits to staff and the Organization.
14. Supervisors should ensure that all staff have information on existing arrangements on staggered working hours, and are encouraged to agree to those hours whenever possible.

B. *Compressed work schedule: Ten working days in nine*

15. Under this option, the number of hours that would normally have been worked during a period of ten days are compressed into nine days. This requires staff to extend their work hours during the nine days to cover the hours that would have been worked on the tenth day. This redistribution of normal working hours will provide staff with the opportunity to take one day off of the normal workweek, every other week.
16. Essential functions must be covered every day of the working week including those days where some staff working compressed work schedules avail themselves of a day off. Total productivity of the office must be at least equivalent to that under normal work schedules.
17. In the case of unforeseen events or emergencies, staff members will be required to come to work on the day that would otherwise be an off day. Days taken off under this option cannot normally be carried forward or accumulated.
18. If an official holiday observed by the United Nations falls within the 10-day period, the staff member may have the option to suspend the arrangement or to work on a nine in eight days basis, subject to the agreement of the manager/supervisor. The hours of the ninth day should be distributed among the eight days.
19. If the "designated" day falls on an official holiday observed by the United Nations, the staff member may take the "designated" day on a different day during the same 10-day period, subject to the agreement of the manager/supervisor.
20. If a staff member is sick on the "designated" day, that day will still be considered as the day off for purposes of this option. No sick leave will be granted.
21. Staff members wishing to avail themselves of this option should approach their immediate supervisor. Compressed work schedules affect not only individuals but also teams and larger work groups. Team members should feel comfortable with the arrangements and all staff must be treated fairly. Agreements between staff members and managers on compressed schedules must be in writing as reflected in an Agreement on Compressed Work Schedule.
22. Where staff members take days off under compressed work schedules, this arrangement will be recorded in the time and attendance module of IMIS as "regular day off".

C. *Scheduled break for external learning activities*

23. Staff members wishing to attend courses relevant to their professional development at universities or other learning institutions during core hours may request breaks of up to three hours per day for a maximum of two days per week. The hours spent away from work have to be made up by adding the corresponding number of hours to each of the remaining full working days.
24. The scheduled break for external development activities must follow a scheduled pattern for a specified period. Supervisors may request staff members to submit supporting documentation/certificates from educational institutions. Requests from staff members should be discussed with supervisors well before any commitment to undertake a course or study is made.
25. Agreements covering the period of absence and a schedule of how hours will be made up must be made in writing in an Agreement on Scheduled Break for External Learning Activities.

D. *Work away from the office (Telecommuting)*

26. Where the nature of the work permits, staff members may spend up to two days per week working from an alternative work site (remote place). Staff members must be reachable by telephone and/or e-mail and are expected to work the full number of work hours for that day. It is a prerequisite for this arrangement that staff members have their own appropriate hardware and software installed at the remote work place. Appropriate provisions will depend on the tasks to be carried out, but will normally include a computer, a printer and access to the Internet plus a telephone.

27. Any cost involved in carrying out assignments from the remote work place will be borne by the staff member. The United Nations will not meet the cost of hardware/software nor of operating costs such as telephone calls and use of the Internet.
28. Any work away from the office during regular office hours requires prior agreement by the direct supervisor. The nature of the staff member's work will be a key factor in deciding whether the arrangement is feasible. Clearly not all jobs are suitable for this type of flexibility on a continuous basis. For certain specific assignments or on the rare occasions where staff are prevented from reaching the office due to a *force majeure* event and are in a position to accomplish their tasks from outside the office, staff members may request an occasional day away from the office on an ad hoc basis. For the "work away from the office" arrangement, it is required to present an agreed upon work product afterwards.
29. Where staff and supervisor agree on the arrangement on a continuous basis, specific work outputs and means of communication for the duration of the staff member's absence must be specified in writing as reflected in an Agreement on Telecommuting.
30. This agreement also includes a waiver releasing the Organization of all responsibility in the case of damage to property at the work site and a provision that any claim for service-incurred accident would have to be supported by evidence that the accident was in fact service related. A copy of the agreement must be submitted to the Human Resources Management Service for the staff member's file.

V. Roles and Responsibilities

31. *Head of Department/Office*: The Director, Division of Administration, in consultation with Directors/Chiefs of services, communicates overall policy and guidelines. He/she monitors overall implementation of the programme in UNOG.
32. *Directors*: Directors decide on division-wide requests and plans. They authorize individual participation of staff in their Division. They also decide on the introduction, continuation or termination of arrangements in organizational units under their supervision.
33. *Branch/Service/Section/Unit Chiefs*: The Chiefs are responsible for discussing the programme with their staff; develop plans; implement and monitor the programme to make sure that productivity and quality of work, as well as service to clients are not compromised; and make recommendations to their Director, through their own supervisor where applicable, on whether a particular agreement should be entered into.
34. *Staff*: Staff undertake to abide by the agreements signed and to participate with professionalism, integrity and teamwork, and will ensure that their productivity level is not adversely affected.
35. *Time & Attendance record keepers*: Time and attendance record keepers are responsible for monitoring and recording T&A, including in IMIS. As in current practice, prior approval is required for annual leave.
36. *Human Resources*: The Human Resources Management Service will be available to provide guidance and to answer any questions that may arise concerning flexible working arrangements and their implementation in Geneva.

AGREEMENT ON STAGGERED WORKING HOURS

I. Staff member:

Name:	Functional Title:
Division/Unit:	Ext: Room No:

II. Supervisor:

Name:	Functional Title:
Division/Unit:	Ext: Room No:

III. Staff members are expected to be present during the core working hours established at UNOG (from 10h00 to 16h00). Staff must complete the balance of the working hours for each day before, after, or partly before and partly after the core period. A total of eight hours must be worked each day. Staff are not permitted to use their lunch hour or technical breaks for the purpose of gaining additional time within this arrangement.

IV.

Agreed work schedule

Department core working hours: 10h00 to 16h00

Daily starting time: _____
Daily finishing time: _____

Total daily working hours: _____

IV. Starting date for this Arrangement (first day of the period when staff member will begin working staggered hours:

V. Ending date for this Arrangement:

I understand UNOG's policy on STAGGERED WORKING HOURS as specified in the IC/Geneva/2003/28 of 30 May 2003 and its attachments. I agree to the duties, responsibilities, obligations and conditions outlined in that document.

I understand that STAGGERED WORKING HOURS is a re-arrangement of working hours that can be altered or withdrawn by UNOG.

Signed: _____	Date: _____
Staff Member	
Signed: _____	Date: _____
Supervisor	
Signed: _____	Date: _____
Director	

**FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS IN UNOG
ATTENDANCE SHEET FOR COMPRESSED WORK SCHEDULE (10 IN 9)
FOR THE MONTH OF YEAR**

Day/Dates	Time in	Time out	Total No of hrs worked in the 10 in 9 schedule, excluding one hour for lunch	For authorized overtime/comp time of GS staff
M				
T				
W				
Th				
F				
M				
T				
W				
Th				
F				
M				
T				
W				
Th				
F				
M				
T				
W				
Th				
F				
M				
T				
W				
Th				
F				
M				
T				
W				
Th				
F				

Name and Signature of staff member:

Name and Signature of first level supervisor:

Date:

Date:

AGREEMENT ON COMPRESSED WORK SCHEDULE
(Ten Working Days in Nine)

Staff member:

Name: _____ Functional Title: _____
Division/Unit: _____ Ext: _____ Room No: _____

Supervisor:

Name: _____ Functional Title: _____
Division/Unit: _____ Ext: _____ Room No: _____

- a. Staff members will work nine out of 10 working days; one of the 10 days will be designated a day off. The time that would have normally been worked on the designated off day will be divided as equally as possible among the other nine days.
- b. If there is a particular demand for a specific day to be designated a day off under this scheme, there may be a need to rotate the day of the week designated as a day off between participating staff within a working unit. To avoid the absence of many staff on the last day of the two-week period, the designated day off need not necessarily be the tenth consecutive day, but may be any day within the 10-day period. Thus, staff may in some instances avail themselves of a day off without necessarily first having "banked" the necessary working hours, as long as the difference is made up within the two-week period.
- c. A designated day off may not be carried forward from one two-week period to the next.

For Geneva

Agreed working hours on each of nine days to be worked must make up the total hours of 10 working days, i.e., 80 hours, excluding one hour for lunch. To make up the difference under the compressed work schedule, one extra hour may be worked for each of eight days (equalling 9 hours of work, excluding a one hour lunch break) while a normal eight-hour day (excluding a one hour lunch break) is worked on a 9th day. A 10th day will be designated a day off.

On eight days of the nine, Daily starting time _____
 Daily finishing time: _____
On one day of the nine, Starting time _____
 Finishing time: _____

Total daily working hours in eight days of the nine: _____
Total working hours in one day of the nine: _____

Total working hours in nine days: _____

Starting date for this Arrangement (first day of the period when staff member will have the tenth working day off):

Ending date for this Arrangement:

Participating staff are obliged to maintain a written record of the time they start, and end, work on each of the nine working days. Such records are to be made available to the supervisor concerned for verification. It is the responsibility of supervisors to ensure that the agreed arrangements are adhered to by participating staff. A sample attendance sheet is attached to this Agreement.

I understand UNOG's policy on COMPRESSED WORK SCHEDULE as specified in IC/Geneva/2003/28 of 30 May 2003 and its attachments. I agree to the duties, responsibilities, obligations and conditions outlined in that document.

I understand that a COMPRESSED WORK SCHEDULE is a re-arrangement of working hours that can be altered or withdrawn by UNOG.

Signed: _____ Date:
Staff Member

Signed: _____ Date:
Supervisor

Signed: _____ Date:
Director

Copy to: Human Resources Management Service

AGREEMENT ON
SCHEDULED BREAK FOR EXTERNAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

I. Staff member:

Name: _____ Functional Title: _____
Division/Unit: _____ Ext: _____ Room No: _____

II. Supervisor:

Name: _____ Functional Title: _____
Division/Unit: _____ Ext: _____ Room No: _____

III. Beginning date for this Agreement: _____

IV. Ending date for this Agreement: _____

V. Days of the week for scheduled break (maximum 2 days)

Day 1: _____ Day 2: _____

VI. Hours for scheduled break (maximum 3 hours per day)

No. of hours and time (day 1): _____

No. of hours and time (day 2): _____

VII. Normal Working Hours: _____

VIII. Days of week when hours will be made up: (May not include lunch hour)

Day 1 _____ Hours _____

Day 2 _____ Hours _____

Day 3 _____ Hours _____

I understand UNOG's policy on SCHEDULED BREAK FOR EXTERNAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES as specified in IC/Geneva/2003/28 of 30 May 2003 and its attachments. I agree to the duties, responsibilities, obligations and conditions outlined in that document.

I understand that a SCHEDULED BREAK FOR EXTERNAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES is a re-arrangement of working hours that can be altered or withdrawn by UNOG.

Signed: _____
Staff Member

Date: _____

Signed: _____
Supervisor

Date: _____

Signed: _____
Director

Date: _____

Copy to: Human Resources Management Service

AGREEMENT ON WORK AWAY FROM THE OFFICE
(Telecommuting)

I. Staff member:

Name:	Functional Title:	
Division/Unit:	Ext.	Room No:

II. Supervisor:

Name:	Functional Title:	
Division/Unit:	Ext.	Room No:

III. Location of work place (remote work place):

Tel. No(s):	Fax No.:
E-mail address:	

IV. Work to be undertaken away from the office:

Specific outputs:

V. Days of week covered by this Agreement (max. 2 days):

Agreed working hours:

VI. Other aspects of this Agreement (if required):

VII. Starting date of Agreement: End date:

- 1) I understand UNOG's policy on WORK AWAY FROM THE OFFICE (telecommuting) as specified in IC/Geneva/2003/28 of 30 May 2003 and its attachments. I agree to the duties, responsibilities, obligations and conditions outlined in that document.
- 2) I understand that I am responsible for providing all necessary hardware (computer, printer, telephone, modem) that may be required to perform the tasks stipulated in this document at the remote work place.
- 3) I will be responsible for upgrading hardware should this be required to perform the tasks stipulated in this Agreement.
- 4) I will be responsible for meeting the cost of any and all repairs to such hardware.
- 5) I will be responsible for operating costs, e.g., for telephone calls and use of the Internet.
- 6) I will be responsible for furnishing and maintaining my remote work place in a safe manner.

- 7) I release the United Nations from any liability for damage to property at my remote work place and understand that any claim for compensation for service-incurred injury would be subject to the submission of evidence that the injury was due to work done for the United Nations.
- 8) I understand that 'WORK AWAY FROM THE OFFICE' is a re-arrangement of work site that can be altered or withdrawn by UNOG.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Staff Member

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Supervisor

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Director

Copy to: Human Resources Management Service