



UNSOm guidelines on personal use of social media

Annex (additional to broadcast email 'Guidelines for UNSOM and UNSOS personnel on personal use of social media')

UN Standards and Rules on Communication

As international civil servants, UN staff members are expected to abide by the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. As such, when using social media, staff members are expected to embody the principles and core values of the United Nations mentioned here below.

1. Conduct of a UN Staff Member:

The following are the values and principles that should guide staff members when expressing personal opinions or views on social media:

a. The Charter of the United Nations:

Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations establishes the universal standard for all staff members employed by the United Nations as the “highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity”.

This is one of the key principles of the Code of Conduct expected of all staff members and this applies to personal opinions/views expressed in social media.

b. United Nations Staff Rules and Regulations

Rule 1.2 of the United Nations Staff Rules and Regulations titled ‘Basic Rights and Obligations of Staff’ states as follows:

- *“(f) While staff members’ personal views and convictions, including their political and religious convictions, remain inviolable, staff members shall ensure that those views and convictions do not adversely affect their official duties or the interests of the United Nations. They shall conduct themselves at all times in a manner befitting their status as international civil servants and shall not engage in any activity that is incompatible with the proper discharge of their duties with the United Nations. They shall avoid any action and, in particular, any kind of public pronouncement that may adversely reflect on their status, or on the integrity, independence and impartiality that are required by that status;*
- *(i) Staff members shall exercise the utmost discretion with regard to all matters of official business. They shall not communicate to any Government, entity, person or any other source any information known to them by reason of their official position that they know or ought to have known has not been made public, except as appropriate in the normal*



course of their duties or by authorization of the Secretary-General. These obligations do not cease upon separation from service;”

c. Standard of Conduct for the International Civil Service issued by the International Civil Service Commission of 2013

The following provisions from the Standard of Conduct apply to UN staff members:

Article 42 titled ‘Personal Conduct’ states that, *“The private life of international civil servants is their own concern and organizations should not intrude upon it. There may be situations, however, in which the behavior of an international civil servant may reflect on the organization. International civil servants must therefore bear in mind that their conduct and activities outside the workplace, even if unrelated to official duties, can compromise the image and the interests of the organizations. This can also result from the conduct of members of international civil servants’ households, and it is the responsibility of international civil servants to make sure that their households are fully aware of this.*

2. Requirement for Authorization before issuing statements

Staff members shall refrain from sharing information on behalf of the UN and are required to seek prior authorization especially where such information relates to the purpose, activities or interests of the UN and is not done in the normal course of official duties.

ST/AI/2000/13 titled ‘Outside Activities’ requires authorization before engaging in the outlined activities where such are carried out outside of official duties and which relate to the United Nations. Section 4 titled ‘Activities related to the United Nations’ states as follows:

“4.1 Under staff rules 101.2 (p), 201.2 (p) and 301.3 (p), except in the normal course of official duties, prior authorization is required to engage in any of the following acts, if such act relates to the purpose, activities or interests of the United Nations:

(a) Issuance of statements to the press, radio or other agencies of public information;

(b) Acceptance of speaking engagements;

(c) Taking part in film, theatre, radio or television productions;

(d) Submitting articles, books or other material for publication.”

3. Sharing of confidential/sensitive information

Article 39 of the Standard of Conduct for the International Civil Service issued by the International Civil Service Commission of 2013 titled ‘Use and Protection of Information’ states



that, “*Because disclosure of confidential information may seriously jeopardize the efficiency and credibility of an organization, international civil servants are responsible for exercising discretion in all matters of official business. They must not divulge confidential information without authorization. International civil servants should not use information to personal advantage that has not been made public and is known to them by virtue of their official position. These obligations do not cease upon separation from service.*”

4. Information and documents that shall not be shared on social media

ST/SGB/2007/6 titled ‘Information sensitivity, classification and handling’ in Section 1 titled ‘Classification Principles’ classifies the information and documents deemed classified and cannot therefore be shared with the general public including on social media platforms.

It states that, “1.1. *The overall approach to classifying information entrusted to or originating from the United Nations is based on the understanding that the work of the United Nations should be open and transparent, except insofar as the nature of information concerned is deemed confidential in accordance with the guidelines set out in the present bulletin.*

1.2 Information deemed sensitive shall include the following:

- (a) Documents created by the United Nations, received from or sent to third parties, under an expectation of confidentiality;*
- (b) Documents whose disclosure is likely to endanger the safety or security of any individual violate his or her rights or invade his or her privacy;*
- (c) Documents whose disclosure is likely to endanger the security of Member States or prejudice the security or proper conduct of any operation or activity of the United Nations, including any of its peacekeeping operations;*
- (d) Documents covered by legal privilege or related to internal investigations;*
- (e) Internal inter-office or intra-office documents, including draft documents, if disclosure would undermine the Organization’s free and independent decision-making process;*
- (f) Documents containing commercial information, if disclosure would harm either the financial interests of the United Nations or those of other parties involved;*
- (g) Other kinds of information, which because of their content or the circumstances of their creation or communication must be deemed confidential”*

From the foregoing therefore, any staff member who shares information deemed confidential on social media is in breach of the Organization’s rules.



5. Use of social media using Organizational resources

ST/SGB/2004/15 titled 'Use of Information and communication technology resources and data' in Section 4 titled 'Limited personal use' provides that,

"4.1 Authorized users shall be permitted limited personal use of ICT resources, provided such use:

(a) Is consistent with the highest standard of conduct for international civil servants (among the uses which would clearly not meet this standard are use of ICT resources for purposes of obtaining or distributing pornography, engaging in gambling, or downloading audio or video files to which a staff member is not legally entitled to have access);

(b) Would not reasonably be expected to compromise the interests or the reputation of the Organization;

(c) Involves minimal additional expense to the Organization;

(d) Takes place during personal time or, if during working hours, does not significantly impinge on such working hours;

(e) Does not adversely affect the ability of the authorized user or any other authorized user to perform his or her official functions;

(f) Does not interfere with the activities or operations of the Organization or adversely affect the performance of ICT resources."

Staff members using the Organization's information and technology resources for their personal use therefore have an obligation to uphold the highest standard of conduct as international civil servants and may only use social media platforms in accordance with the rules of the Organization.