

**Chief Executives Board
for Coordination**

CEB/2009/HLCM/HR/36

22 May 2009

Meeting of CEB HR Network

UN, New York

18th Session, 23-25 June 2009**Mandate of the HR Network's UN Staff / Stress Counsellors
Special Interest Group**Note by the UN Staff/Stress Counsellors Special Interest Group**I. BACKGROUND**

The UN Staff/Stress Counsellors Special Interest Group (SCSG) is comprised of mental health professionals and social workers in the positions of Staff/Stress Counsellors in UN and affiliated organizations. Membership in the SSCG is open to all counsellors throughout the UN System. The cooperation amongst the UN Staff Counsellors goes back to the late 1990s. The first meeting was organised by the counsellors of WFP in 2000, when they invited colleagues from other organisations to join them and share their work experiences and visions about the future direction of staff counselling in the UN. This meeting marked the beginning of the "Network" and represented the first organized opportunity for UN system counsellors to support one another. The group then met regularly every year and gradually expanded to include counsellors of other UN organisations. Meetings have been focused on discussing different aspects of counselling work and on exploring new techniques and approaches appropriate to the counsellors' world of work. Such events stimulated sharing of knowledge and resources amongst and creation of a counselling referral mechanism within the UN system¹.

II. TERMS OF REFERENCE

- i) Promote consistent, professional staff / stress counselling practices in the UN system;
- ii) Identify best practice examples in the practical work and policy areas that may be beneficial to harmonize across the UN System;
- iii) Enable and encourage interagency cooperation and sharing of resources for the benefit of staff well-being and welfare, in particular the management of staff & organizational stress;
- iv) Work to increase the resources available for staff/stress counselling within the UN system;
- v) Provide peer / professional support for the UN System Staff/Stress Counsellors;
- vi) Improve professional skills of its members through skills training at the annual meeting;
- vii) Maintain a website used for sharing professional resources.

¹ The first meeting of the UN Staff Counsellors in 2000 was attended by FAO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN NY and WFP, as well as by a counsellor from MSF Holland. The following meetings were joined by many more counsellors coming from DPKO (MONUC, ONUCI, UNAMA, UNAMI, UNIFIL, UNMIK, UNMIS, UNMISSET.), IAEA, ICC, ICRC, ICTY, ILO, IOM, ITU, UNESCO, UNOG, UNON, UNSECOORD/DSS, WHO, WIPO, WMO, World Bank and WTO.

III. RELATION WITH THE HR NETWORK

The SSCG was established as a subgroup of the HR Network in March 2009. The subgroup will report on its work to the HRN at its bi-annual meetings (Spring and Summer) and on an ad hoc basis when necessary on the following, or any other related issues that may emerge:

- i) Identification of, advice on and advocacy for improvements in the existing human resources management systems, policies and practices relevant to staff well-being and welfare;
- ii) Analyses of common stresses and stress risks for UN System staff and of counselling practices in the UN system and elsewhere, as a basis for advising on minimum standards and best practices for counselling services;
- iii) Identification of needs for and gaps in counselling services available in the UN system, to recommend adequate counselling resources to meet staff needs;
- iv) Collaborative efforts undertaken among counsellors for supporting staff and managers, and cooperation and links by the SSCG with other UN System bodies (e.g., UN Medical Directors Group, IASMN/UNDSS Working Group on Critical Incident Stress, etc.);
- v) Other issues related to counselling or to the well-being of staff that the HRN may request to be studied or commented on;
- vi) Participate or lead the HR Network Working Group on issues of relevance.

IV. LEADERSHIP OF THE SSCG

- i) The SSCG will be led by a Coordinating Committee (CC) of three members, each representing a different UN system organization. The CC will be elected at the annual meeting to serve a two year term;
- ii) The Coordinating Committee will:
 - facilitate development of the group's workplan;
 - ensure that the activities defined by the workplan are on track and monitor the work of topic-focused working groups;
 - liaise and facilitate the collaboration between SSCG and the UN Medical Directors group, the IASMN and UNDSS/CIMSU, UN Ombudsman offices and other bodies; and
 - serve as the main interlocutor with the HR Network;
- iii) The Coordinating Committee will regularly consult with and be supported by an advisory team comprised of the heads of counselling services in larger agencies such as UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, World Bank, WHO.

V. SSCG MEETINGS:

- i) An annual meeting of the large group of UN Counsellors will include training and learning sessions in areas of professional practice and discussion of issues related to policy and guidance on staff well-being and welfare. Where necessary, working groups will be organised on key issues for follow up. An external facilitator will be appointed to facilitate the annual meeting, in collaboration with the Coordinating Committee;
- ii) The Coordinating Committee will meet once a year, in between the annual meetings.
- iii) Minutes of the annual and the CC meetings, including workplan summaries, will be taken and shared with all SSCG members in the form of a report;
- iv) A summary of the annual meeting, including agenda, work plans and recommendations will be shared with the HRN by the CC soon after the meeting;
- v) Organisations should ensure that their counsellors can take part in the SSCG annual meeting.