This brochure presents the policy adopted by the executive heads of all organizations of the United Nations common system to promote a supportive work environment which will promote productivity and enable staff members to respond to the conflicting pressures of work and of family life.

As the organizations of the United Nations common system reform to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, they are under obligation to create a supportive work environment which will promote productivity and enable staff members to respond to the conflicting pressures of work and of family life.

The pointers in the workplace are clear: mandates are increasing in number and complexity; resources are finite; more has to be done with less; better “quality” services are expected; stress is omnipresent.

At the same time, changing demographics and societal trends have profoundly affected the workplace: a larger proportion of the work force is female; there are more and more working mothers; couples increasingly pursue dual careers; more employees deal with the problems of elderly parents; family situations and structures are even more diverse.

To increase productivity, organizations must attract and retain top quality staff; to attract and retain such staff, organizations must innovate personnel policies and practices which will facilitate the reconciliation of between work and family responsibilities. Measures which allow employees to meet...
their family responsibilities alongside those arising out of their work are recognized to be all the more important in an expatriate setting if organizations are to maximize their utilization of human resources.

If they do not, they will be viewed as poor employers, lose competitiveness, efficiency and, in the long run, effectiveness. The ever-increasing body of evidence based on cost/benefit evaluations of organizations’ programmes highlights the fundamental linkages between family-supportive policies and a number of quantitative and qualitative factors which are directly beneficial to employers: lower absenteeism, reduced incidence of stress-related illness, improved employee morale, additional output due to increased focus and motivation and a reduction in recruitment and retention problems. The benefits which will accrue can be expected to outweigh any costs which may be associated with the introduction of such measures.

Because it makes good business sense, many organizations have already instituted a number of measures in recognition of the need to provide a work environment which is supportive of an employee’s personal and family life: flexi-time, part-time work, adoption leave, unpaid leave for dependant care are examples of such measures. There is however the need to address the issue in a more integrated fashion as has been underscored by employers across the board.

In an era of downsizing, where staff and managers are looking for more productive ways to work, staff motivation and the reduction of stress are, more than ever, crucial ingredients to success. The institutionalization of the work/family agenda demands that managers are held accountable for the effective utilization of the human resources for which they are entrusted and that they understand and accept that work family issues are legitimate in a business context.

The organizations of the United Nations common system are therefore committed to introducing - as best fits each organization’s structure and mandate - a work/family agenda which may include:

- enhanced flexibility in the organization of working time and in the work place;
- leave arrangements which will allow staff to attend to personal emergencies and family obligations;
- assistance with dependent care and other family support services.

**Enhanced flexibility** may include:

- alternative or reduced work schedules;
- flexi-place - home-based work or telecommuting.

**Changed family-related leave arrangements** may take account of:

- leave for maternity, paternity or adoption;
- leave for emergencies.

**Other family support services** may include advice and referral assistance with:

- spouse employment;
NOTES:

Alternative work schedules are not intended to reduce the number of hours worked. They simply allow for the work schedule to be restructured so that work can be performed at times mutually convenient to the staff member and the organization without compromising orderly business processes. They include flexi-time arrangements and compressed work schedules. Flexi-time provides flexibility in choosing starting and quitting times (and length of lunch break) within limits. The flexible periods surround core periods when all staff must be present. Compressed work schedules compresses a standard five-day work week or two work weeks ("fortnight") into fewer than five or 10 days. Such arrangements may be of four 10-hour days or three 12-hour days or - more common in government agencies - a fortnight of nine approximately 9-hour days with a free day in the second week.

Reduced work schedules may include:

- part-time work, either on a regular or temporary basis;
- job sharing;
- phased or partial retirement.

Regular part-time allows for less than full-time work. Compensation and benefits are prorated. Temporary part-time provides for less than full-time work to be undertaken on a temporary basis. Compensation and benefits are prorated. Job-sharing is a full-time job shared by two staff members, each working on a part-time arrangement. Phased or partial retirement is an option for staff members near retirement who may reduce their hours for a period of time (say, over two years) or alternatively, work a full schedule for only part of a year (say, for six months).

Flexi-place refers to work done away from the main offices of the organizations either at home - home-based - or at some other "satellite" office. The work may be a particular task and hence temporary or more regular and long term in nature. Staff are usually connected to the main office by computer or other electronic means - hence telecommuting.

Enhanced family-related leave provisions relate to leave to care for family members under defined circumstances and include the following:

- Parental leave: paid or unpaid leave allowing parents to care for a child in the case of a birth or adoption;
- Maternity leave: a form of paid parental leave for women related to pregnancy and childbirth;
• *Paternity leave*: a form of paid parental leave available to men. Also known as attendance leave.
• *Adoption leave*: a form of paid parental leave available to women and single men who legally adopt a child.
• *Family leave*: paid or unpaid leave allowing any family member to care for another family member in the event of sickness or injury.

Short-term leave may also be granted in the event of *emergencies* such as:

• the death of a spouse, domestic partner, child or parent;
• illness of a spouse or child requiring hospitalization;
• death or serious illness of a brother or sister;
• death of an in-law;
• serious illness of a spouse, child or parent away from the normal duty station.

Family support services provide expert assistance and supporting materials to help staff members (and their families) adjust to relocation or cope with other transitional difficulties and hence focus time and energy on their work. They may include:

• advice on child care, schooling and housing in a given location;
• counselling and practical support for the spouses of staff members and candidates for jobs in obtaining employment;
• the provision of child care facilities;
• counselling retired staff.
For further information about this policy, contact the secretariat of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. Telephone: 917 3276