



General Assembly

Distr.: General
23 August 2013

Original: English

Sixty-eighth session

Item 141 of the provisional agenda*

Human resources management

Activities of the Ethics Office

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [60/254](#), entitled “Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations”, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually on the activities of the Ethics Office and the implementation of ethics policies. The report also includes information on the activities of the Ethics Panel of the United Nations, as mandated by the Assembly in its resolution [63/250](#) on human resources management. It covers the period from 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2013.

* [A/68/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. The present report, the eighth since the establishment of the United Nations Ethics Office in January 2006, was prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution [60/254](#), paragraph 16 (i), by which the Assembly requested annual reporting on the activities of the Office and the implementation of ethics policies.
2. The report provides an overview and assessment of the activities of the Ethics Office from 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2013, pursuant to its mandate to foster an organizational culture of integrity, transparency and accountability. The Office has undertaken several initiatives that promote an ethical culture, including providing support for ethical leadership behaviour, promoting workplace conversations about ethics, conducting ethical risk assessments and developing evaluative metrics.
3. The Ethics Office provides direct services to United Nations staff at all levels and addresses hundreds of specific requests for services annually. Highlights of this reporting period include: responding to 459 confidential ethics advice requests; reviewing 4,630 financial disclosure files during the 2012 cycle of the Organization's financial disclosure programme; retaining a new external reviewer for the financial disclosure programme, which resulted in reduced costs; holding 60 outreach events, which enabled the Office to interact directly with over 700 United Nations staff; expanding the library of ethics training materials; advancing coherence and policy development; conducting 13 confidential ethics induction sessions with senior leaders; and responding to 49 inquiries concerning the Organization's protection against retaliation policy, including conducting 15 preliminary reviews of workplace retaliation complaints.
4. The report provides insight into the 2012 ethics and reputational risk assessment for United Nations field operations, conducted by the Office. The assessment identified the most significant ethical and reputational risks facing peacekeeping, developed quantifiable measures for ethical risk and culture, and presented recommendations, several of which are being implemented.
5. The Ethics Office has initiated significant regulatory and policy reviews on financial disclosure and protection against retaliation, for the purpose of programme strengthening.
6. The report complies with General Assembly resolution [63/250](#), entitled "Human resources management", in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to include information on the activities of the Ethics Committee (currently the Ethics Panel of the United Nations).

II. Background and general information

7. The Ethics Office was established by the Secretary-General as an independent Secretariat entity upon approval of the General Assembly at the 2005 World Summit (see Assembly resolution [60/1](#), para. 161 (d)). Pursuant to Secretary-General's bulletins [ST/SGB/2005/22](#) and [ST/SGB/2007/11](#), the mandate of the Office includes:

- (a) Administering the Organization's financial disclosure programme;

(b) Providing confidential advice and guidance to staff on ethical issues, including administering an ethics helpline;

(c) Administering the Organization's protection against retaliation policy;

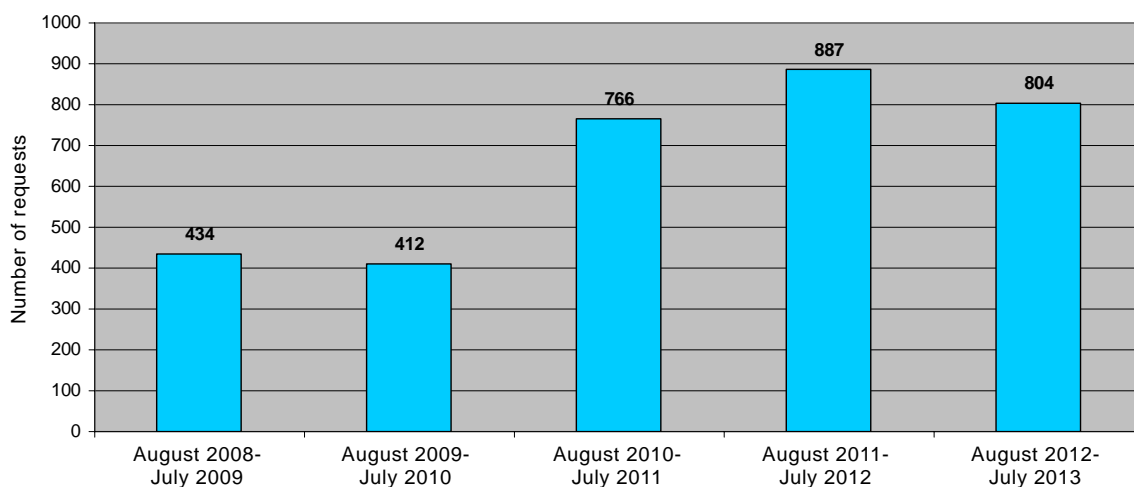
(d) Developing standards, training and education on ethical issues, in coordination with the Office of Human Resources Management and other offices, as appropriate, and conducting ethics outreach;

(e) Providing support for ethics standard-setting and promoting policy coherence among the United Nations Secretariat and the Organization's funds and programmes.

8. In undertaking its responsibilities, the Ethics Office provides assistance to the Secretary-General in ensuring that all staff members observe and perform their functions consistent with the highest standards of integrity required by the Charter of the United Nations.

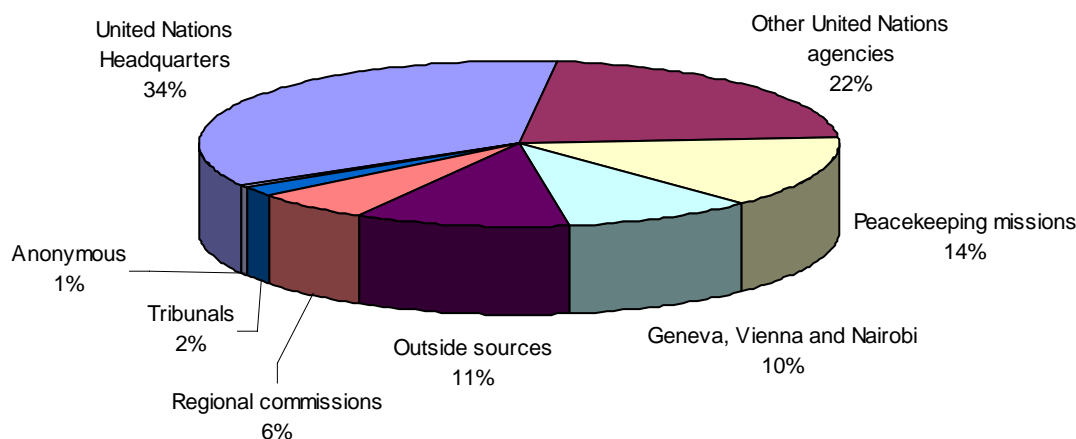
9. From 1 August 2012 through 31 July 2013, the Ethics Office received a total of 804 requests for its services from Secretariat offices, including headquarters, regional commissions, peacekeeping operations and special political missions. As reflected in figure I below, the Office's commitment to expanded outreach, awareness-raising, and ethics education over the last three reporting periods has resulted in significantly increased use of the Office by staff. Sustained interaction remains essential to promote standards and reinforce ethical workplace behaviour.

Figure I
**Overall requests for Ethics Office services by reporting cycle,
August 2008-July 2013**



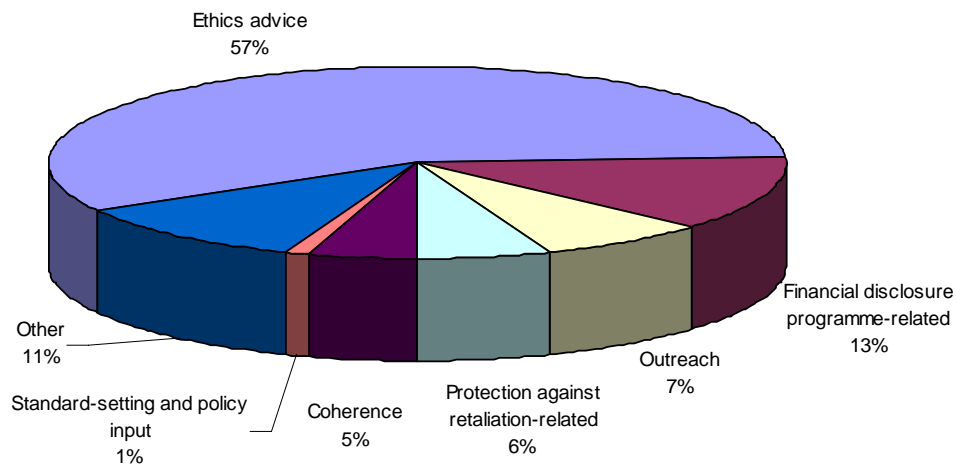
10. The Ethics Office regularly receives requests for services from multiple locations and entities (see figure II below). As the Office is staffed solely in New York, concerted efforts are necessary to reach staff globally. The results of wider engagement are reflected in the steady increase in the percentage of service requests made outside Headquarters: 48 per cent in 2009-2010 and 66 per cent in 2012-2013.

Figure II
Service requests by source, 1 August 2012-31 July 2013



11. Providing comprehensive coverage of ethics concerns, the Ethics Office responds to requests regarding general ethics advice, training, the financial disclosure programme, protection against retaliation, standard-setting and policy support. As shown in figure III below, ethics advice continues to account for the majority of service requests received by the Office.

Figure III
Service requests by category, 1 August 2012-31 July 2013



III. Activities of the Ethics Office

A. Advice and guidance

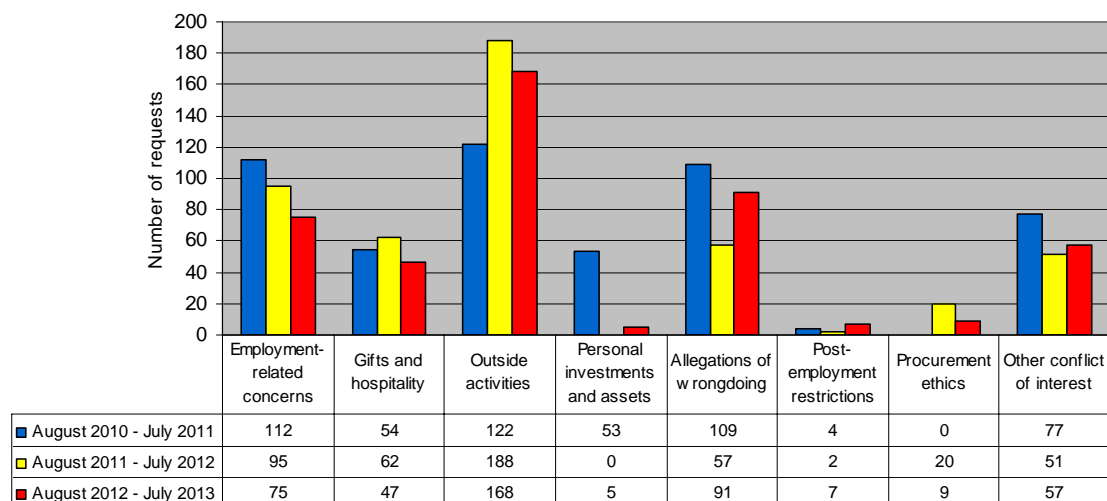
12. The Ethics Office serves as an independent, confidential and impartial entity dedicated to providing timely and quality advice. The Office assists staff in

upholding the highest levels of efficiency, competence and integrity by providing advice on relevant standards of conduct and by clarifying staff and Organizational obligations. In helping staff to make decisions consistent with the values and rules of the Organization, the Office provides an essential risk prevention function.

13. The Ethics Office provides advice to staff on various concerns, including actual or perceived personal conflicts of interest, engagement in outside activities, the acceptance of gifts and honours, personal investments and assets, and other employment-related issues. While offering a secure and confidential resource for staff, the Office does not replace existing mechanisms for the reporting of misconduct or the resolution of grievances. The independent and confidential nature of the Office facilitates its approachability and builds trust. The Office represents neither Management nor staff and remains impartial and advisory in nature.

14. As stated in paragraph 3 above, the Ethics Office received a total of 459 requests for ethics advice and guidance, representing 57 per cent of all requests received. Figure IV below presents the categories of requests for advice received over the last three reporting periods.

Figure IV
Requests for ethics advice by cycle, August 2010-July 2013



15. The overall number of requests for ethics advice has remained relatively constant over recent reporting cycles. This usage rate reflects the importance that staff and managers attribute to the advisory services of the Ethics Office. The Office continues to provide assistance to United Nations personnel in navigating complex workplace issues and devising appropriate courses of action. Recently, the complexity of advice requests has notably increased, indicating that staff turn to the Office for assistance with situations that present multiple issues, factual complexity and uncertain consequences.

16. As shown in figure IV above, the largest number of advice requests received annually focus upon “outside activities”. This demonstrates strong awareness by staff of the requirement to seek prior approval for certain types of outside activities to avoid adversely impacting the United Nations or their status as international civil

servants. The Ethics Office regularly provides advice on approval procedures and the appropriateness of contemplated activities.

17. The Ethics Office continued to provide independent ethics advice to the Procurement Division, Department of Management, on issues related to the ethics, anti-corruption and corporate compliance programmes of vendors seeking to do business with the United Nations. These efforts focused primarily upon (a) the suitability of external ethics and compliance experts retained by vendors to verify that the vendor has implemented ethics, anti-corruption and compliance programmes that meet the United Nations expectations; and (b) whether the vendor's materials and expert's report provides sufficient reassurance that the vendor has met reinstatement requirements.

18. Over the past 36 months, the Ethics Office has responded to queries from the Procurement Division concerning 28 vendors at various stages of the reinstatement process. Advice for each reinstatement matter requires multiple reviews and close liaison with other departments. The Office has worked closely with the Division and others in matters relating to third-party due diligence, reputational risk and potential organizational and personal conflicts of interest.

19. In keeping with its role in promoting accountability and transparency, the Ethics Office provided independent ethics advice to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General on mitigating ethical and reputational risks that could arise from multi-stakeholder partnership initiatives. Similar conversations were held with the Board of Auditors and the United Nations System Staff College.

20. The Ethics Office has continued to provide independent advice to the Department of Management and the Department of Field Support with respect to the compliance monitorship for two critical services vendors that support peacekeeping efforts. The monitorship establishes a contractual oversight mechanism through which the vendors may continue to provide services, provided that their employees comply strictly with United Nations policies applicable to the vendors. The first year of the monitorship has been completed and all recommendations made to the vendors by the monitors are in the process of being implemented.

21. Staff view the Ethics Office as an independent body that serves as an office of confidential record. During the reporting period, the Office received 58 notification inquiries concerning individual workplace issues where further action on the part of the Office was not requested or required. Receipt and secure retention of this information allows staff who do not wish to pursue either informal or formal actions to nonetheless voice concerns and have them placed on record.

22. The Ethics Office responded to inquiries from many United Nations entities for information-sharing, best practices, policies, advice and guidance, including the United Nations University, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Civil Aviation Organization, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

B. Financial disclosure programme

23. The Ethics Office administers the Secretariat's financial disclosure programme, which serves as an essential means to identify, manage and mitigate the risk of personal conflicts of interest for the purpose of protecting the integrity of the Organization. Under the programme, designated staff members, including all staff at the D-1 level and above and those whose principle duties involve procurement and investment, are obliged to file annual disclosure statements. The review of financial disclosure statements is outsourced to an external vendor.

24. During the 2012 annual filing cycle, beginning 1 March 2012 and covering the financial disclosure reporting period from 1 January to 31 December 2011, a total of 4,630 filers participated in the programme, including 1,249 new or non-recurrent filers. A total of 99.9 per cent of the participants (or 4,626 staff members) complied with their filing obligation, which equals the rate achieved for the 2011 filing cycle, establishing consecutive cycles of the highest overall compliance level in the history of the programme.

25. The Ethics Office provided support to staff experiencing technical difficulties and responded to individual queries within a 48-hour window. For the 2012 filing cycle, the Office received over 6,200 queries and requests for assistance, covering a broad range from technical issues and programme administration to compliance concerns. It notified departmental focal points and respective heads of departments regarding internal follow-up with those staff members who failed to complete their disclosure obligations. Such a measure helps to ensure that gaps in compliance are detected early and that remedial measures are pursued promptly.

26. The verification of filer information to ensure accuracy and completeness is an integral part of the financial disclosure programme. During the 2012 filing cycle, 226 participants were selected using a stratified random sample for verification. All verification participants submitted complete third-party documentation.

27. During the 2012 filing cycle, the programme's external reviewers identified 55 filers (1.2 per cent of the filing population) as having a total of 67 items or activities that gave rise to potential or actual conflicts of interest requiring resolution. Of these 67 matters, 9 related to financial holdings, 41 related to outside activities and 17 related to family relationships. The reviewers, in consultation with the Ethics Office, issued individual recommendations on mitigating and managing the conflicts. Table 1 below provides a comparative breakdown of the number of remedial actions taken during 2011 and 2012. Where an item no longer presented a potential conflict of interest, no further action was required.

Table 1
Remediation of conflict of interest cases in the 2011-2012 filing cycles

	<i>Number of conflicts</i>		<i>No further action</i>		<i>Obtain approval</i>		<i>Recusal</i>		<i>Managed account</i>		<i>Other</i>	
	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>
Financial interests	14	9	3	0	1	0	10	7	0	0	0	0
Outside activities	65	41	10	1	47	30	1	9	0	0	7	8
Family relationships	24	17	3	0	0	0	20	12	0	0	1	0
Total	103	67	16	1	48	30	31	28	0	0	8	8

28. Under the financial disclosure programme, the Ethics Office responded to 103 requests for advice on a broad range of related issues, including personal investments, outside activities and family relationships.

29. By the close of the 2012 filing cycle, only 4 of 4,630 filers (less than 0.1 per cent) had failed to comply with their obligations under the programme. These cases were referred to the Office of Human Resources Management for appropriate action.

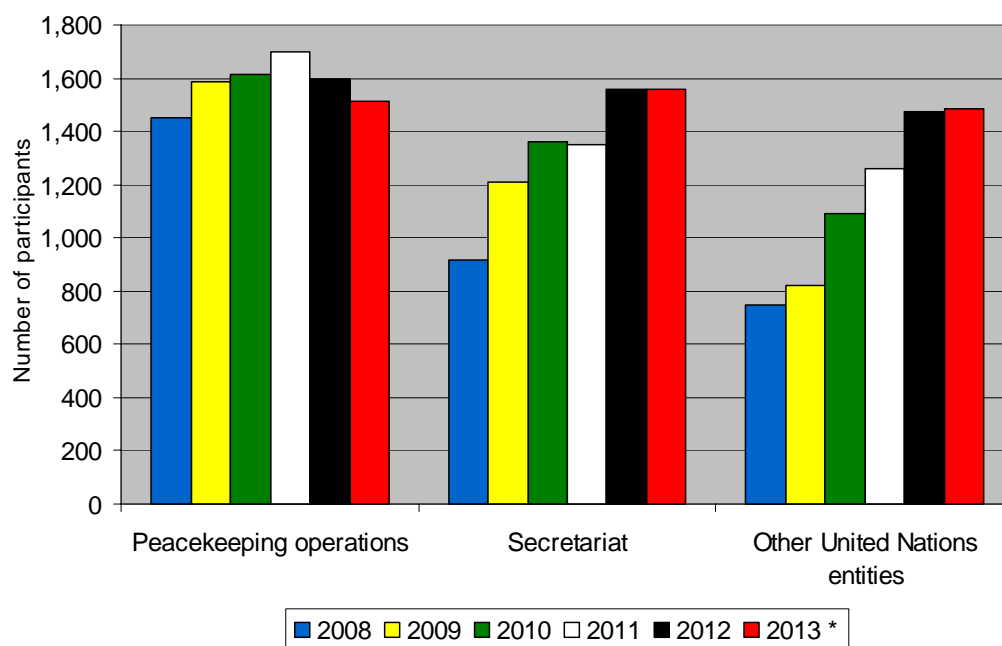
30. In its resolution [63/250](#), the General Assembly endorsed a recommendation by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that in future reports on the activities of the Ethics Office the Secretary-General provide data, by duty station, on the number of individuals covered by the programme; the number of individuals who have complied with their filing obligations; the number of individuals who have failed to comply with those obligations; and the reasons for their failure to comply. Information concerning the 2012 financial disclosure programme by department or office within the Secretariat may be found in the annex to the present report.

31. The United Nations voluntary public disclosure initiative encourages senior officials at the level of Assistant Secretary-General and above to publicly disclose private interests and outside activities. A total of 116 senior officials took part in the 2012 cycle, representing a participation rate of 85.9 per cent. Of these participants, 80 officials (69 per cent) opted to publicly disclose a summary of their assets, liabilities and outside interests. The remaining 36 officials (31 per cent) publicly affirmed that they had completed their confidential financial disclosure as required by the Organization. The voluntary disclosures of senior officials are posted on the website of the Secretary-General. Compared to the previous cycle, the participation rate experienced a slight decrease (from 93.5 per cent in 2011 to 85.9 per cent in 2012), which may be attributed to turnover in the population of senior officials in 2012.

32. Regarding the 2013 filing cycle which commenced on 1 March 2013, a total of 4,558 staff members were enrolled as of 31 July 2013. Figure V below provides a graphic comparison of annual filing cycle participation levels in the financial disclosure programme, by organizational grouping. Table 2 below shows the breakdown in figures by organizational grouping. While the number of filers for the 2013 cycle remains largely consistent with that of 2012, the total number has increased significantly over time from 1,704 filers in 2006, representing an increase of 167 per cent. While filers from the Secretariat, including peacekeeping operations, continue to constitute the majority of the total population, the number of filers from other United Nations entities has increased from 339 in 2006 to 1,484 in 2013.

33. The 2013 filer population reflects the high level of awareness by programme managers of the need to reduce ethics risks and manage potential conflicts of interest.

Figure V
Financial disclosure participation by entity and filing year, 2008-2013



* As of 31 July 2013.

Table 2
Financial disclosure participation by entity and filing year, 2008-2013

	<i>Peacekeeping operations</i>	<i>Secretariat</i>	<i>Other United Nations entities</i>	<i>Total by year</i>
2008	1 449	919	750	3 118
2009	1 584	1 212	822	3 618
2010	1 614	1 360	1 091	4 065
2011	1 697	1 351	1 258	4 306
2012	1 600	1 558	1 472	4 630
2013*	1 515	1 559	1 484	4 558

* As of 31 July 2013.

34. In addition to serving the Secretariat, the Ethics Office administers the financial disclosure programme for other United Nations entities that opt to participate on a cost-sharing basis.¹ Approximately one third of the total filing population in the financial disclosure programme each year comes from other United Nations entities (see table 2 above). The Office provided technical and substantive guidance, including review methodology, to other United Nations entities that are establishing their own programmes.

35. In its resolution 66/234 on human resources management, the General Assembly endorsed recommendations by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that the Secretary-General explore all available means of obtaining financial disclosure programme review services at a lower cost, consider the possibility of consolidating the review function with information technology services and keep the matter of filing periodicity under review. Following the expiration of the contract with the programme's initial external review vendor in January 2013, the Secretariat procured external review services and certain information technology services from another vendor in accordance with established procurement procedures. A lower unit cost has been obtained and the overall costs of the programme have been contained through contractual agreements. As previously reported, the Secretariat is identifying funds for the development of a new technology platform for the programme. The Ethics Office continues to consider the matter of filing periodicity, bearing in mind the Organization's ethics and reputational risk profile.

36. Moreover, in the same resolution, the General Assembly endorsed a recommendation by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for a review of the regulatory framework of the financial disclosure programme to provide the Ethics Office a greater role in determining the filing population, and to devise a more focused set of eligibility criteria. The review will consider other measures to address conflicts of interest and will be conducted by the Office in consultation with other offices concerned, including the Office of Human Resources Management and the Office of Legal Affairs.

37. The financial disclosure programme enhances staff awareness concerning personal conflicts of interest. Since 2006, the programme has reviewed over 23,000 individual financial disclosure statements. In excess of 109,000 e-mail messages have been exchanged and telephone calls have been made between staff and the programme's external reviewer, during which advice and guidance were provided. The enhanced awareness of conflicts of interest is further evidenced by the overall decrease in the number of conflict cases concerning financial assets. While 58 such cases were reported in the 2010 programme filing cycle, only 14 cases arose in 2011 and 9 in 2012, as shown in table 1 above.

¹ The following United Nations entities currently participate in the programme: the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research; the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute; the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS; the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa; the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); the United Nations Compensation Commission; the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; the United Nations Institute for Training and Research; the United Nations University; and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

38. The financial disclosure programme has contributed significantly to raising staff awareness and ensuring adherence to integrity standards. Staff members are more aware of personal conflicts of interest and are more inclined to avoid situations that give rise to conflicts of interest. As staff in general, and senior officials in particular, become more conscious of conflict of interest risks, ethical risks are better managed.

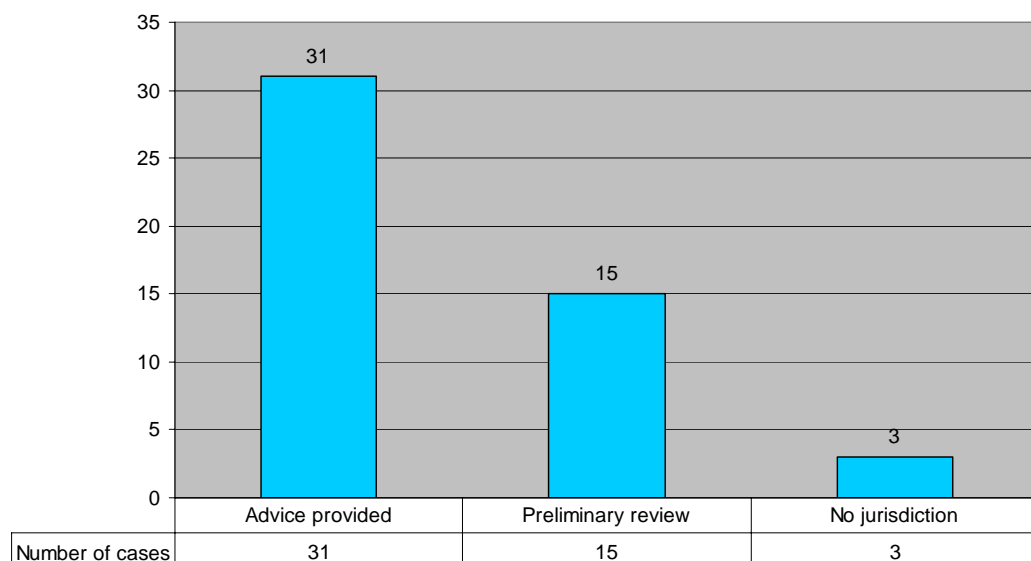
C. Protection of staff against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits or investigations

39. Secretary-General's bulletin [ST/SGB/2005/21](#), entitled Protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits or investigations, entered into force in January 2006 and, together with the establishment of the Ethics Office, was an essential element of organizational reform as mandated by the 2005 World Summit. In recognition of the importance of transparent and accountable governance, and the capacity for corruption to cause enormous damage, the whistleblower protection policy was enacted to encourage staff members to report fraud, waste, corruption and other serious forms of misconduct.

40. Pursuant to Secretary-General's bulletin [ST/SGB/2005/21](#), the Ethics Office receives complaints of retaliation and conducts preliminary reviews to determine whether a complainant engaged in a protected activity and, if so, whether the protected activity was a contributing factor in causing the alleged retaliation. If the Office determines that a prima facie case of retaliation has been established, the matter is referred to the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) for investigation. The Ethics Office makes a final retaliation determination subsequent to its receipt and review of the relevant investigation report and supporting evidence.

41. From 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2013, the Ethics Office received 49 inquiries relating to the Organization's protection against retaliation policy. Regarding those inquiries where staff members alleged retaliation in accordance with Secretary-General's bulletin [ST/SGB/2005/21](#), the Office initiated 15 preliminary reviews, as shown in figure VI below. Of these, the Office completed 12 preliminary assessments and referred 3 of the cases to OIOS for investigation subsequent to prima facie retaliation findings. While it was determined that there was no prima facie case of retaliation for nine of the completed assessments, three preliminary reviews are ongoing.

Figure VI
Actions taken on requests for protection, 1 August 2012-31 July 2013



42. As to the 34 inquiries that did not involve preliminary review assessments, 3 fell outside the jurisdiction of the Ethics Office. The remaining 31 inquiries involved the provision of advice and guidance on, inter alia, the content and applicability of the protection against retaliation policy, and misconduct reporting requirements. Staff members seeking recourse for workplace concerns not covered by the policy were directed to the Management Evaluation Unit, the Office of Staff Legal Assistance, the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, and other relevant offices.

43. The Ethics Office may recommend to the Secretary-General interim protection measures for complaints referred for investigation. During the present reporting cycle, the Office facilitated interim protection measures for two complainants. One complainant was placed on special leave with full pay pending completion of the investigation process, while an alleged retaliatory investigation against the other was suspended.

44. During the reporting period, the Ethics Office received investigation reports from OIOS for one prima facie retaliation case referred for investigation in 2010-2011 and two cases referred in 2011-2012. The Ethics Office is awaiting receipt of the investigation reports for the three prima facie cases referred to OIOS in the present reporting cycle.

45. With regard to the case referred in 2010-2011, subsequent to its independent assessment of the OIOS investigation report and supporting materials, the Ethics Office determined that retaliation had not been established.

46. Regarding the two cases referred in 2011-2012, the Ethics Office completed its review of the investigation report and supporting materials for one of the cases, and determined that retaliation had occurred as alleged. Pursuant to this finding, the Office has recommended to the Administration that disciplinary action be taken against the investigation subject and that specific remedial actions be taken to

eliminate the adverse impact on the complainant of the retaliation that was experienced. The Office's review of the investigation report for the second case is ongoing.

47. As previously reported, despite the intent of the protection against retaliation policy to encourage the reporting of serious misconduct harmful to the Organization, the overwhelming majority of reports of misconduct cited in retaliation complaints involve allegations of harassment harmful to the individual staff member. The policy continues to be utilized as a grievance and labour dispute mechanism, with complainants contemporaneously availing themselves of other available recourse mechanisms. With regard to the prima facie retaliation findings reached by the Ethics Office in three cases in 2012-2013, all three involved initial harassment complaints by the relevant staff member against supervisors.

48. The Ethics Office has initiated an independent and comprehensive review of the existing protection against retaliation policy and practices. The review focuses on enhancing the ways in which the Organization encourages the reporting of serious misconduct, protects whistleblowers from retaliation and intervenes to prevent retaliation from occurring. As requested by the General Assembly in its resolution [67/255](#), the Secretary-General will report to the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session on the modalities and recommendations for enhancing the protection against retaliation policy.

49. Since 2010, the Ethics Office has taken several measures to advance protection against retaliation, including (a) successfully using an alternative investigating mechanism when OIOS could not conduct an investigation owing to a conflict of interest; (b) protecting the confidentiality of individuals who seek protection; (c) developing and implementing protection against retaliation standard operating procedures; (d) implementing a rigorous practice of reviewing completed investigation reports, including the evidence and witness statements; (e) exercising its independent judgement when making the ultimate decision as to whether workplace retaliation occurred; and (f) embarking upon an ambitious outreach and educational campaign for staff, to encourage staff to speak up and report workplace concerns.

D. Outreach, training and education

50. Pursuant to its mandate to strengthen an ethical culture throughout the Organization, the Ethics Office provides extensive outreach and consultation opportunities to staff based outside New York. During the reporting period, field visits were conducted to the Regional Service Centre at Entebbe, Uganda, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Europe, the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, FAO and the World Food Programme.

51. During the outreach missions, the Ethics Office held face to face meetings with approximately 700 individuals. It conducted individual consultations with staff and management, organized town hall meetings and provided targeted ethics presentations and briefings.

52. The new website of the Ethics Office had its first full year of activity in 2012-2013, with more than 60,000 individual visits. Available to all staff via iSeek and to the public via www.un.org, the website offers a central resource for information relating to ethics in the United Nations, and is available in all six official languages. The website is the Organization's central repository for ethics education and outreach.

53. Pursuant to its mandate to develop standards and education on ethics, and to ensure annual ethics training for all staff in collaboration with the Office of Human Resources Management, the Ethics Office expanded its training library so that it can provide education on issues responsive to staff needs. The Office's training strategy encompasses three levels: (a) initial awareness-building; (b) basic ethics education and training; and (c) advanced training to build ethical decision-making skills. The Office employs multiple modalities to deliver ethics education, noting the ever-changing capacity of technology to advance learning.

54. Online training is best suited for establishing basic expectations for ethical behaviour. The Office of Human Resources Management and the Ethics Office have redesigned the introductory online ethics training programme, which dates from 2007. The revised programme, which is based on training developed by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, should be deployed in 2013-2014. Even as new training is developed, the legacy online training continues to be used by staff at all levels. Since that programme was launched in 2005, more than 54,000 persons have completed the online integrity awareness initiative module, including 4,325 persons during the current reporting period.

55. Ethics education is essential to ensuring that staff members fulfil their obligations as international civil servants. In 2012-2013 the Ethics Office launched leadership dialogues to ensure that all staff participate in annual ethics training. With support from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, OHRM and the Department of Management, the Ethics Office developed a self-executing discussion guide on what it means to be an international civil servant, focusing on the United Nations oath of office. Through a traditional management cascade process, starting with the Secretary-General's senior leadership team at his September 2012 retreat, successive layers of management were asked to lead their immediate staff in a guided conversation on the meaning of international civil service. As of 31 July 2013, 28 departments have participated in the leadership dialogues and 13 department heads have certified completion. By relying upon "line of sight" managers to lead the discussions, the Organization does not need to resort to outside facilitators. This initiative enhances ethical leadership and exemplifies "tone from the top" support for ethics.²

56. During 2012-2013, the Ethics Office began development of a new training programme that will reinforce the application of ethics standards and cover outside activities and employment, conflicts of interest, gifts and favours, confidentiality, reporting concerns, and prevention of retaliation. This modular programme can be delivered by headquarters and field-based training staff, without the need for outside facilitators. During the reporting period, the Office distributed the newly revised

² Related information about promoting ethical leadership and culture can be found in section III.F below.

document, entitled *Putting ethics to work: a guide for UN staff*, which will serve as a companion guide to the basic programme.

57. Advanced ethics education assists staff in thinking critically about issues of ethics and integrity, and engaging in ethical decision-making to solve real-world dilemmas. Delivery of the workshop, “Professional ethics and integrity in our daily work”, continued in New York and at other duty stations throughout 2012-2013. Since the launch of the workshop in 2006, more than 14,500 staff members system-wide have participated. In the current reporting year, approximately 500 staff members system-wide participated in workshop sessions.

58. The Procurement Division’s online training module, entitled “Ethics and integrity in procurement”, continued into its fourth year. During the reporting period, 161 persons completed the programme, which is mandatory for Division staff and recommended for those with procurement-related duties.

59. The General Assembly, in its resolution [65/247](#), endorsed the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that the Ethics Office conduct mandatory ethics induction briefings for senior leaders to positively impact the Organization’s culture of ethics, integrity and accountability. In the current reporting period, the Director of the Ethics Office conducted 10 confidential ethics induction briefings with incoming and newly appointed Assistant Secretaries-General and Under-Secretaries-General, including Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General.

E. Standard-setting and policy support

60. During the current reporting period, the Ethics Office commented upon the revision of the Secretary-General’s bulletin on the status, basic rights and duties of United Nations staff ([ST/SGB/2002/13](#)), following approval by the General Assembly of revisions to the Staff Regulations of the United Nations and Staff Rules, and the 2013 standards of conduct for the international civil service. The Office provided input on the proposed amendments to the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules. With observer status in the Management Committee, the Director of the Ethics Office is positioned to identify and offer ethical insights that may arise in connection with these deliberations.

61. The Ethics Office continued to collaborate with other departments within the Secretariat in examining issues relating to personal and organizational conflicts of interest, and aspects of the terms and conditions for the recruitment of certain types of personnel.

62. Moreover, the Ethics Office held consultations and provided substantive policy advice to other United Nations entities in relation to their development of ethics-related standards governing staff conduct and behaviour, and on the establishment of ethics offices and policies.

F. Ethical leadership, culture and metrics

63. The 2013 cycle of the Secretary-General’s senior manager’s compacts included the objective of supporting the Organization’s commitment to an ethical culture. The

Director of the Ethics Office was tasked with conducting confidential ethical leadership behaviour assessments for all Under-Secretaries-General who signed such compacts. This initiative enabled members of the senior leadership team to consider the way in which specific behaviours impact their ability to serve as ethically committed leaders. Aggregate data from both the 2011 and 2013 cycles of this assessment can be used to help develop a model of ethical leadership for senior leaders.

64. In 2012 the Ethics Office undertook a formal ethics and reputational risk assessment of United Nations field missions in response to two parallel directives. In its resolution [66/234](#), the General Assembly endorsed a request by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that the Secretary-General devise appropriate ethics evaluation criteria in order to determine whether the objectives of promoting high standards of integrity and a culture of ethics were being achieved. In late 2011 the Under-Secretary-General for Field Support tasked the Office with conducting an assessment of ethical risk particular to peacekeeping operations.

65. The resulting research examined ethical risk and organizational culture considerations. It studied the extent to which staff believe they work in and contribute to a culture informed by ethics and integrity. The assessment systematically identified the likelihood of risk occurrence and the potential seriousness of such risks impacting the ability of the United Nations to fulfil its peacekeeping mandate. This approach provides baseline metrics for tracking the impact over time of the Organization's commitment to ethics in the workplace.

66. The assessment utilized best practices in social science research and incorporated lessons learned from the conduct of similar ethical risk assessments in the private and public sectors. Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups were collected from 519 individuals based at Headquarters and eight field missions, including international and national staff, managers, leaders and military and police observers. Quantitative data was collected from 2,322 staff members through a confidential online survey that examined 10 standard baseline measures of ethical culture and the seriousness and likelihood of 18 discrete ethical risks.

67. Both data sets, when interpreted, reflect strengths and concerns about ethics and integrity in the workplace. During the qualitative interviews, staff articulated six major themes: accountability; bureaucracy and effective management; sexual exploitation and abuse; expectations of international civil servants; independence and impartiality; and third-party risks. They expressed concerns about speaking up, favouritism, impunity and compliance with behavioural standards. Notwithstanding these expressed concerns, staff members wish to be engaged in the greater United Nations mission; they are eager to engage in conversations about ethics; and for the most part, they wish to work in a culture characterized by fairness and respect. United Nations staff are eager to seek ways to enhance trust, credibility and transparency.

68. The report included a number of indicative recommendations, including:

- Continue raising awareness of the Organization's expectations about what it means to be an international civil servant
- Reinforce managers as key influencers on ethical conduct in the workplace

- Enhance individual perceptions of fair treatment in the workplace
- Enhance group perceptions of fair treatment in the workplace
- Ensure that reports of misconduct can be made without fear of workplace harm or retribution
- Reduce pressure to bend rules in order to get work done
- Raise confidence that ethics concerns will be handled properly
- Ensure that rules are applied the same way, in good times and in bad
- Respect and promote a sense of safety for those who speak up and issue challenges
- Ensure that promotion decisions are based on merit, not favouritism

69. Since the report was issued, the Under-Secretary-General for Field Support has received mission-specific reports for the eight field missions that participated in the research. Special Representatives of the Secretary-General were asked to develop action plans responsive to their own data. Management is considering extending this research to selected field missions in order to expand baseline measures on culture and risk. The Organization is separately reviewing its internal practices and policies on the conduct of internal investigations, including the initiation of reports, fact-finding and the disciplinary process. Leadership dialogues (see paragraph 55 above) in part address two findings from this study: enhancing appreciation of what it means to be an international civil servant; and considering the impact of bureaucracy on effective management. The work of the Ethics Office in support of both the Procurement Division and the proposed partnership facility helps to address third-party relationships and their inherent ethical risks.

IV. Ethics Panel of the United Nations

70. In April 2013 the United Nations Ethics Committee was renamed the Ethics Panel of the United Nations, subsequent to a request made by the General Assembly in its resolution [66/234](#) and the issuance of Secretary-General's bulletin [ST/SGB/2007/11/Amend.1](#). The Ethics Panel is mandated to establish a unified set of ethical standards and policies of the Secretariat and of the separately administered organs and programmes, and to consult on important and particularly complex matters having system-wide implications. The Panel is chaired by the Director of the Ethics Office.

71. The Ethics Panel is composed of the heads of the ethics offices of the funds and programmes and the Secretariat.³

72. In the course of the reporting period, new heads of the ethics offices in UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund, and the World Food Programme were appointed on either a full-term or temporary basis. The new members received both in-person orientation briefings from the Chair of the Ethics Panel and technical advice on common ethics office functions.

³ The Ethics Office provides direct services to UN-Women, pending the designation by that entity of its own ethics officer.

73. From 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2013, the Ethics Panel met in nine formal sessions. It focused on enhancing consistency in the application of standards and common mandates, and reviewed lessons learned from protection against retaliation policy implementation. In particular, it considered the effect of recent United Nations Dispute Tribunal decisions on the operations of an ethics office. Member offices continue to develop ethics training and diversify delivery methods. By sharing materials, Panel members are able to offer high-quality materials in a cost-effective manner.

74. Emerging ethical challenges posing individual, institutional and process risks continued to receive attention by the Ethics Panel. These issues included the use of social media, risk assessments, third-party due diligence and challenges to decisions or advice of an ethics office. In addition, the Panel considered the parameters of confidentiality of an ethics office within the context of its core functions.

75. As mandated, the Ethics Panel reviewed the annual reports of member ethics offices. The review serves to promote coherency in the reporting of activities, assessing effectiveness and consolidating best practices.

76. The Ethics Office and members of the Ethics Panel participate in the activities of the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations. The Network was established in June 2010 in support of the Secretary-General's efforts to promote system-wide collaboration on ethics-related issues within the United Nations family. It serves as a broad forum of ethics functions from United Nations-system entities, affiliated and other international organizations, and international and regional financial institutions. The Network provides support for professional development, benchmarking and the exchange of ethics policies and practices. The fifth meeting of the Network, held in Paris from 3 to 5 July 2013, was hosted by UNESCO.

77. Within the United Nations system, the Ethics Panel remains the sole mechanism to promote the coherent and consistent application of ethical standards, and to consult on important matters having system-wide implications. Since its establishment, this mechanism has raised awareness about issues of individual and institutional integrity in the United Nations family, including conflict of interest risks that could otherwise cause reputational harm, and has contributed to enhancing harmonized ethics and integrity policies and practices among member organizations.

V. Observations and conclusion

78. A strong ethics function significantly contributes to enhancing an organizational culture of ethics and integrity, and promoting public trust in the United Nations. It supports accountability and promotes workplace respect, stewardship, transparency and integrity. The ethics function should continue to receive the strongest possible support, both politically and financially, in order to fulfil its mandate.

79. The Ethics Office is monitoring effects on its independence and confidentiality as a result of recent decisions of the United Nations Dispute Tribunal. Increasing expectations in connection with administering policies on protection against retaliation, which have arisen because of those decisions, require advanced legal analysis of evidence, causation and liability. This trend could fundamentally

threaten the nature of ethics offices as confidential advisers and trusted counsellors and educators.

80. The provision of ethics services must be aligned with a clear understanding of the ethical risks which the Organization faces. The Ethics Office has developed criteria by which to measure risks and the impact of mitigation efforts over time. The Office will work with other departments and offices in an effort to ensure that issues relating to individual integrity, institutional integrity and process risks are duly considered in the United Nations enterprise risk management model.

81. The Ethics Office, together with other relevant offices, promotes accountability. Some of the Office's contributions include:

- Annually administering the United Nations financial disclosure programme to over 4,600 staff members and the voluntary public disclosure initiative to over 140 senior leaders
- Responding to approximately 800 ethics service requests annually
- Strengthening the “tone from the top” commitment to United Nations ethical values, through the annual ethical leadership behaviour assessment for senior managers
- Developing evaluation tools to measure the commitment of the United Nations to an ethical organizational culture
- Conducting the first-ever ethics and reputational risk assessment for United Nations field operations
- Revising and modernizing its ethics website
- Expanding the United Nations ethics education library to build ethics awareness, promote compliance and enhance ethical decision-making
- Launching the leadership dialogue initiative to ensure that all managers have annual conversations about ethics with staff who report directly to them
- Serving as an independent adviser on procurement ethics and corporate compliance to ensure that the United Nations has high confidence in the integrity and ethical business practices of its vendors

82. The Ethics Office remains an advocate of the ethical principles of the United Nations and continues to promote a culture committed to ethical conduct and institutional integrity. Involvement of the Office in conversations about strategic issues facing the Organization, such as fundraising, human rights, enterprise risk management, use of social media, privacy and partnerships, enables the United Nations to consider the ethical implications of such issues. By so doing, the United Nations gives voice to its values.

83. **The General Assembly is requested to take note of the present report.**

Annex

Financial disclosure programme compliance level, 2012

<i>United Nations entity</i>	<i>Required filings</i>	<i>Completed filings</i>	<i>Non-compliant(s)</i>
United Nations Secretariat			
Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions secretariat	2	2	0
United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination	2	2	0
Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate	3	3	0
Department for General Assembly and Conference Management	25	25	0
Department of Economic and Social Affairs	52	52	0
Department of Management	261	261	0
Department of Political Affairs, including special political missions	360	360	0
Department of Public Information	33	33	0
Department of Safety and Security	26	26	0
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	45	45	0
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	29	29	0
Economic Commission for Africa	98	98	0
Economic Commission for Europe	11	11	0
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	47	47	0
Ethics Office	14	14	0
Executive Office of the Secretary-General	20	20	0
Office for Disarmament Affairs	5	5	0
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	28	28	0
Office of Administration of Justice	1	1	0
Office of Internal Oversight Services	18	18	0
Office of Legal Affairs	22	22	0
Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict	1	1	0
Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict	4	4	0
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	20	20	0
Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services	2	2	0
Office of the Special Adviser on Africa	4	4	0
Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States	4	4	0
Office of the President of the General Assembly	3	3	0
Peacebuilding Support Office	7	7	0
Regional commissions New York office	1	1	0
United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund	68	68	0
United Nations Office to the African Union	6	6	0

<i>United Nations entity</i>	<i>Required filers</i>	<i>Completed filings</i>	<i>Non-compliant(s)</i>
United Nations Office at Geneva	83	83	0
United Nations Office at Nairobi	44	44	0
United Nations Office at Vienna	15	15	0
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	81	81	0
Research and training institutes	12	12	0
International tribunals and verification commissions	101	101	0
Subtotal (excluding peacekeeping operations)	1 558	1 558	0
Peacekeeping operations	1 600	1 597	3
United Nations bodies/agencies and others	1 472	1 471	1
Total	4 630	4 626	4