

30 March 2026

Dear Colleagues,

I refer to your letter addressed to the Secretary-General, received on 11 March 2026, concerning the recent communication to Heads of Entities on physical office presence. The Secretary-General has asked me to respond on his behalf.

At the outset, I wish to clarify that the communication issued to Heads of Entities does not introduce a change to the Organization's existing policy framework on flexible working arrangements. The applicable administrative issuance, including ST/SGB/2019/3, remains in effect. The Memorandum was intended to provide managerial guidance in light of evolving operational requirements in certain duty stations, particularly those involving regular in-person intergovernmental engagement, and reflects considerations that have arisen in specific contexts. As such, it does not constitute a policy change that would trigger formal consultation requirements at the level of the Staff-Management Committee (SMC).

Implementation of any such guidance remains fully within the authority of Heads of Entities, who are responsible for applying the existing policy framework in a manner that takes into account operational needs, local conditions and the well-being of staff. This includes the continued exercise of managerial flexibility, as provided under the current policy, including with respect to individual telecommuting arrangements and exceptional circumstances.

We recognize that working environments and operational realities vary significantly across duty stations, including in locations affected by crisis, security constraints or limited infrastructure. It is precisely for this reason that the existing framework entrusts Heads of Entities and managers with the discretion to determine appropriate modalities, consistent with policy and responsive to conditions on the ground.

We also acknowledge the importance of maintaining open channels of dialogue with staff and their representatives. In this regard, I would encourage continued engagement at the level of duty stations and entities, including discussions between Staff Representatives and Heads of Offices, to ensure that implementation reflects both operational requirements and staff perspectives.

Finally, I wish to assure you of the commitment to fostering a modern, inclusive and supportive working environment, including through flexible working arrangements, while ensuring that it can effectively deliver on its mandates and meet the expectations of Member States.

I thank you again for your letter and for your continued engagement.

Yours sincerely,



E. Courtenay Rattray
Chef de Cabinet