

Remarks for the 94<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee meeting  
Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme  
Kelly T. Clements, Deputy High Commissioner  
Agenda item 2(c) – Oral Update on Integrity  
8-9 September 2025

Mister Chair,  
Distinguished delegates,

Thank you for the strong support expressed for our workforce during this difficult period. As you just heard from the Director of Human Resources, UNHCR is inevitably becoming smaller, and no part of the organization has been spared.

Even as we become smaller, our commitment to integrity and to supporting our workforce remains strong. We have built a solid foundation of support functions to strengthen integrity across UNHCR, including a mature enterprise risk framework, an organization-wide strategy and action plan against sexual misconduct, ongoing code of conduct dialogues around ethics and ethical leadership, and a culture of mediation first. Faced with the current reduction in funding, we aim not to lower our standards, nor lose the significant advances that we have made over the last years, including in the interagency.

Yet, the massive downsizing and resource constraints mean there are initiatives we may no longer be able to afford. One example is NotOnlyMe, a groundbreaking platform I have described in previous Standing Committee sessions. We launched it 2 years ago to support victims of sexual harassment. In just two years, 180 people have used it to access psychological care, store evidence safely, and decide whether to come forward through formal processes. We received testimonials from some of the users – one in particular stood out: she said “It is a tool that gives victims a hand when they most need one. A hand that can be invisible, which helps with the built-in fear that victims carry. It gives victims a voice at a time when they can’t hear their own. It gives victims hope. Hope in a next step. Hope in better humans. Hope in justice. Hope in a system. And most importantly, hope in healing.” (End quote.) It has made a real difference. But without additional funding, we may have to shut it down next year. And inevitably, there are other efforts that we will have to reduce with a smaller budget, given the impact on headquarters and operational contexts alike.

Understandably, downsizing has also heightened risks to morale across the organization. The Ethics Office and the Ombuds and Mediation Office both play a strategic role in supporting the organization through this transition. Each offers confidential and impartial support to both colleagues and leadership. This year, the Ombuds and Mediation office has placed even greater emphasis on preventive measures through ubuntu cafés, mediation campaigns, and informal first approaches to resolve tensions, prevent escalation, and generate systemic insights to rebuild trust, increase engagement with colleagues, and reinforce organizational values. And these preventive initiatives likewise require ongoing resources.

As many of you have rightly noted, major downsizing increases the risks of misconduct. Following an organization wide rapid fraud risk assessment, the Enterprise Risk Management Service disseminated key messaging and tips and checklists to reinforce vigilance. We asked

every colleague—regardless of grade, contract type or location—to remain attentive, diligently apply existing controls, and speak up quickly if something does not look right, and report suspicious activities through the appropriate channels. The Ethics Office continues to play a key role in this effort, not only by promoting a speak-up culture, but also by administering the UNHCR's policy on protection against retaliation—ensuring that colleagues who report misconduct in good faith are protected and supported. And we are also making other changes to increase internal controls, such as consolidating transactions through the global shared services we are setting up in Budapest.

Another area in which we continue to invest is the organization's risk appetite. UNHCR's Global Risk Appetite Statement was prepared at the end of last year. However, due to the new realities and drastic changes, we are currently adapting it to the evolving situation.

In the spirit of efficiency, our efforts also include partnership with others. For example, this year, in collaboration with the UN Special Coordinator on Improving the UN Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, we are funding 9 local non-governmental organizations working to raise awareness of sexual exploitation and abuse among affected communities. Support is provided through small-scale grants provided by a Community Outreach and Communications Fund managed by ICVA. This is increasingly important, as resources everywhere are running short and the risks of sexual exploitation and abuse are increasing.

In closing, let me recall that when we met on this topic a year ago, some of you expressed interest in more frequent conversations on other areas of integrity and oversight. And since, we have organized additional broad briefings throughout the year for Committee members. As per usual practice, you will hear from the Inspector General and Director of Evaluation during their ExCom updates on oversight and evaluation, the IG's report is already available on our ExCom site and provides insights on misconduct-related items. Today's integrity briefing is focused on the broader approach to integrity we take at UNHCR, and you will have the opportunity to hear from entities that work on the less formal resolution pathways to address integrity challenges and workplace concerns.

On this note, I am pleased to be joined on the podium by the Director of the Ethics Office, the Ombudsman and Mediator, the interim Chief Risk Officer and the Principal Advisor on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment. They have deep expertise in their respective fields and together they form an integral part of upholding UNHCR's organizational culture of respect, integrity and accountability during these challenging times.

Integrity is essential to the trust placed in us by the people we serve and by you. That is why I urge you to continue supporting our integrity efforts. We cannot afford to lose the progress we have made.

Thank you.