



# UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT

## GUIDELINES FOR THE PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

*February 2019*

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UN staff have an important role to play as the face of the Organization, including on social media.

The UN respects the inviolability of staff members' personal views and convictions, including their political and religious convictions, as well as their right to freedom of expression through their own personal social media accounts. As international civil servants, staff members are required to be mindful at all times that their conduct on social media must be consistent with the principles set out in the [United Nations Charter](#), and must comply with the [United Nations Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service](#), [United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules](#), [Status, basic rights and duties of United Nations staff members](#), and with the [Media Guidelines for United Nations Officials](#).

Staff are encouraged to promote a better understanding of the objectives and work of the Organization through social media and to advocate for the ideals, principles and values enshrined in the United Nations Charter, the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other decisions taken by the Organization. Any comments or statements posted by staff on personal social media should be consistent with the ideals of peace, respect for fundamental human rights, the dignity and worth of the human person and the equal rights of men and women, respect for all cultures, and must not discriminate against any individual or group of individuals.

A staff member's activity on personal social media, even when unrelated to official duties, may reflect on the Organization and may expose the United Nations to reputational risk. As international civil servants, staff have a duty to be and appear to be both independent and impartial. As such, staff must ensure that the expression of their personal views and convictions on social media does not adversely affect their official duties, reflect poorly on their status as international civil servants or call into question their duty of loyalty, impartiality and responsibility to the Organization.

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These guidelines are a reminder of the value of tact, discretion, care and good judgment when using personal social media.

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- **Think before posting** and use common sense. Is the substance of a post in line with the impartiality required of and conduct befitting an international civil servant? Could it be interpreted in any way other than how it was intended? Is it a comment that could be made to the media or at a public event? If not, don't post.
- Even if a disclaimer is added, such as "views expressed are my own", your **behaviour on social media is not exempt** from the impartiality and conduct required, and befitting, of an international civil servant.
- The use of the name and emblem of the United Nations to further personal or third-party interests is prohibited as it is reserved for the official purposes of the United Nations. However, this does not apply to the **automatic generation of the UN emblem** by a social media platform when you identify yourself as UN personnel.
- **Be aware of privacy settings** and manage them accordingly. No matter how restrictive your privacy settings are, nothing on social media is private so you should ensure that what you post on social media is always consistent with how you wish to present yourself to the public. Everything posted online, even in a private group and/or if it is later edited or deleted, can easily become public and spread more widely than intended.
- Even if it is not stated publicly on your social media profile, your status as a **UN staff member is not private** and can be discovered through a basic Internet search.
- **Remember that official information that has not been made public cannot be disclosed through social media, except with prior authorization.** Be sure to protect internal, sensitive, privileged and/or confidential information where disclosure would have an adverse impact on the Organization's interests, operations and activities. This includes, at times, information about official travel and locations. It follows that you must obtain express permission for disclosure on social media of any information that has not been made public. This obligation does not cease upon separation from service.
- Don't use a **professional email address to set up personal social media accounts.**
- Don't use a **pseudonym or false name to make comments** or publish content related to the United Nations.
- **Be mindful of sharing and liking** posts from other accounts, which could be interpreted as an endorsement of the facts and opinions such posts represent.
- **Respect the privacy** rights of colleagues, partners and beneficiaries, particularly when posting photos and videos. Do not post information or images of beneficiaries, partners or colleagues in a personal capacity without their express permission.
- If you're not sure about whether your social media activity is consistent with your obligations as an international civil servant, **consult your supervisor, the Executive Office, the local administrative or human resources office, or the Ethics Office** for advice and guidance.