# UNITED NATIONS ASIA NETWORK for DIVERSITY & INCLUSION (UN-ANDI)

# Report of the United Nations Asia Network for Diversity & Inclusion (UN-ANDI) survey on racism and racial discrimination in the United Nations system


**3 October 2023**

# Contents



The following appendices relating to the UN-ANDI survey data are presented separately:

# United Nations Asia Network for Diversity & Inclusion (UN-ANDI) survey on racism and racial discrimination in the United Nations system

## I. Introduction

### A. What is UN-ANDI?

1. The United Nations Asia Network for Diversity & Inclusion (UN-ANDI) is a global network of like-minded Asians of the United Nations system who strive to promote a more diverse and inclusive culture and mindset within the UN. After more than two and a half years of groundwork, this dynamic group was created in May 2021 with the hope that it would grow steadily through an increase in membership among UN personnel from Asia. UN-ANDI is the first ever effort to bring together the diverse group of personnel (staff, retirees, consultants, interns, diplomats and others) from Asia and the Pacific (nationality/origin/descent) in the UN system.

2. The mission of UN-ANDI is to work towards a culture in which inclusivity is integrated in all aspects of work and life in the Organization and diversity is the foundation of talent and productivity. We believe that we all have the power to stop discrimination, eliminate oppression and bring an end to ignorance and indifference. We stand against racial prejudice and intolerant attitudes and actions around the world and within the Organization.

3. We strongly support all initiatives promoting inclusion, justice and dignity and combating racism and discrimination in all their forms, inside and outside the United Nations. We believe that our perspectives and observations will enrich the discussion on any organizational culture-related issues and facilitate the journey together towards the paradigm that is ingrained in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

4. We focus on the following six important areas as the mandate of UN-ANDI:

- *Organizational culture*: providing a safe space for discussing issues relating to the organizational culture and attitudes and experiences of staff from Asia and the Pacific.
- *Representation levels*: reflecting on the level of representation of staff from Asia and the Pacific in the organizations of the United Nations system, including at the senior levels (P-5 and above).
- *Zero tolerance*: standing against any form of discrimination, racism, biases, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of power and authority.
- *Institutional barriers*: identifying and addressing institutional barriers to achieving a more diverse and inclusive organizational culture and an enabling work environment that works for all staff.
- *Mutual understanding*: enhancing our mutual understanding within the region while supporting and empowering each other.
- *Raising awareness*: working towards raising awareness of the contributions and perspectives of UN personnel from Asia and the Pacific.

## B. Why a UN-ANDI survey on racism and racial discrimination in the United Nations system?

5. Since UN-ANDI was formed in 2021, one of its wider goals has been to engage with the United Nations Administration collaboratively on issues concerning racial discrimination and racial bias in the entities composing the United Nations system. With the tragic killing of George Floyd in the United States, issues of racism moved to the forefront with the Black Lives Matter movement, including the relevance of these issues for the United Nations Secretariat and the agencies, funds and programmes.

6. UN-ANDI has closely watched the events around the Black Lives Matter movement unfold, as well as how the United Nations has engaged its personnel in awareness-raising, dialogue and discussion on the issues of racial discrimination and bias. As it is a network of individuals from diverse backgrounds, the issues under discussion have been of keen interest to it as members have expressed having directly experienced racial discrimination, as well as the sense that this network of individuals was somehow not included in the discussions. In 2021, various incidents in the United States, in particular in New York, of violence and attacks against individuals of Asian descent/origin highlighted for UN-ANDI members their distinct identity and the cost of staying silent instead of voicing their concerns in significant discussions on racial discrimination and racial bias.

7. UN-ANDI has been heartened by the Secretary-General's efforts to unite staff against racism and to take concrete steps to formalize his strategic action plan to move cultural change forward within the United Nations. To add its voice to this important initiative, UN-ANDI launched a short survey in June 2022 that was open to all personnel of the United Nations Secretariat and the agencies, funds and programmes, as well as to the wider UN-ANDI membership.

8. This survey is an initial benchmarking exercise with the following objectives:

- To initiate preliminary discussions for individuals of Asian nationality/ origin/descent on their specific experiences of racism and racial discrimination in the United Nations system, which may differ from those of other groups
- To recommend proposals to change the culture
- To raise awareness of key inequities and indignities suffered by the Asian community in the United Nations system
- To empower the Asian community in the United Nations system to speak up and be an active part of changes impacting them

# II. Executive summary of survey responses

## A. Survey responses on general questions

9. The UN-ANDI survey was released on 10 June 2022 through SurveyMonkey for a period of three weeks to the UN-ANDI membership, as well as to the wider United Nations system. The deadline to complete the survey was extended for a further three weeks as the New York-based UN Staff Union and the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council provided their assistance to disseminate the UN-ANDI survey through their broadcast messages.

10. The questions in the survey were drafted by a group of UN-ANDI core members, and the survey was distributed on behalf of the coordinators of UN-ANDI in five languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Hindi.

11. There were 599 survey respondents from across the United Nations, with participation across categories, grades, ages, genders and education levels. The results are intended to be shared with the UN-ANDI membership and United Nations Administration partners working on anti-racism initiatives.

12. The majority (93 per cent) of individuals responding to the survey identified as Asian or of Asian descent/origin, 3 per cent identified as not Asian or of Asian descent/origin, and 4 per cent were unsure. Those who indicated that they were unsure commented that their background or heritage linked to areas such as the Middle East, Türkiye and the Pacific Islands.

13. While the majority (65 per cent) of individuals expressed pride in being seen as Asian in the United Nations, a significant proportion were either uncomfortable to be seen as Asian (13 per cent) or were afraid to be associated with being or to be identified as Asian (2 per cent). On whether individuals identified more with their descent/origin or their nationality, more indicated that they identified with their Asian descent/origin (17 per cent) rather than nationality (11 per cent), while the majority (60 per cent) found that this did not apply to them.

14. Around 92 per cent of respondents were current or former United Nations staff (91 per cent and 1 per cent, respectively), and the remainder (8 per cent) were diplomats, consultants, interns and volunteers. While the majority (71 per cent) of the United Nations staff worked at headquarters duty stations, a significant share (27 per cent) worked in field and country offices.

15. Of those who responded, 51 per cent identified as female and 46 per cent as male, and the remainder (3 per cent) preferred not to say their gender. The largest number of responses came from those who identified as being in the 41–50 age range, at 36 per cent, while those ages 31–40 and 51–60 responded equally, at 26 per cent. Another 7 per cent of respondents were 30 years old or younger, while 4 per cent were 61 years old or above.

16. In terms of the breakdown by category of staff, 55 per cent of the responses were from the Professional category (P-1 to P-5), with 8 per cent at the P-5 level, while around 28 per cent were from General Service staff. Senior officials, diplomats, National Professional Officers, interns, United Nations Volunteers and consultants represented 11 per cent of the survey respondents; and 6 per cent preferred not to give their grade. Thirteen were at the D-1 and D-2 levels and two at the Assistant Secretary-General and Under-Secretary-General levels, representing 3 per cent of survey respondents.

17. With regard to level of education, which is of significant interest to those of Asian origin/descent, 60 per cent of all respondents said that they had a master's degree, 23 per cent reported having a first degree and 7 per cent reported having a doctoral degree.

18. Around 42 per cent of those who responded had been at their current duty station for less than 5 years, while 27 per cent had been there between 5 and 10 years and a further 22 per cent between 11 and 20 years.

19. Finally, the survey found that 24 per cent of those who responded had worked for the United Nations for less than five years. The majority, or 37 per cent, of the respondents had worked for the United Nations between 11 and 20 years, 21 per cent between 5 and 10 years, and 14 per cent between 21 and 30 years.

## B. Survey responses on questions of racism and bias

20. A high percentage (61 per cent) of those who responded to the survey said that they had experienced racism in general to varying degrees. Another 22 per cent said that they had not experienced racism, while 18 per cent preferred not to say. The responses demonstrate that the issues of racism, discrimination and bias are widely experienced by United Nations personnel of Asian descent, who expressed a need for these issues to be addressed. While the questions were framed broadly, the participants' responses also indicated personal experience of the issues or related behaviours.

21. For the behaviours or issues generally seen as *problematic in the UN context*, stereotyping of people of Asian origin/descent was identified as the biggest problem faced, indicated by 51 per cent of survey participants (306), followed by limited access to high-profile and visible assignments, career advancement, promotions, and learning and development opportunities, at 37 per cent (220). Nearly a third of participants (189) considered that being treated as invisible and not being seen or heard in the workplace was the third-biggest problem they faced.

22. Other significant behaviours or issues included unfair and biased selection and recruitment processes, identified by 29 per cent of participants (176), and microaggressions, indicated as problematic by 24 per cent (144). Seventeen per cent of participants (100) reported having suffered from biases, harassment, including sexual harassment, and discrimination.

23. Alarmingly, 2 per cent of survey participants (14) indicated that they had faced physical assault or attacks (including intimidation and threats to use violence), while 13 per cent (64) had faced verbal and/or emotional abuse in the workplace.

24. Among the survey participants, 64 per cent identified two or more of the above-mentioned issues as their biggest problems, while 32 per cent faced four or more of the issues as personnel of Asian nationality/origin/descent in the UN system.

25. For the question on *specifically work-related issues*, the biggest problem identified by over a third of the participants (220) was limited access to high-profile and visible assignments, career advancement, promotions, and learning and development opportunities. The next significant issue, indicated by almost a third of the participants (178), was being treated as invisible and not being seen or heard in the workplace. Twenty-one per cent of the participants (126) indicated limited access to strategic meetings, discussions and decision-making bodies that directly influenced their work as problematic. Fifteen per cent of participants (88) identified unfair assessment or evaluation of work performance as an issue, while 11 per cent (66) indicated limited access to workplace-related social activities and gatherings.

26. With regard to the link between origin/descent and nationality, a quarter of the participants perceived that they were not treated the same way as persons sharing the same nationality as them but not of Asian origin/descent (for example, a British national of South Asian origin/descent, an American national of Arab origin/descent or a Canadian national of Chinese origin/descent).

## C. Emerging patterns of inequities

27. Based on in-depth analysis of the data, a number of patterns emerged, including the following:

- Women were more likely to perceive racism than men. Given the findings in the survey, this is unlikely to be coincidental.

- Participants from the 41–50 and 51–60 age groups were more likely to perceive racism. Likewise, the findings in the survey are unlikely to be coincidental.
- Education level is positively correlated with the likelihood of experiencing racism: survey participants who reported high education levels tended to perceive that they had experienced racism and bias. This could be due to personal experiences and/or understanding of racism and bias.
- Personnel at the senior executive levels (Under-Secretary-General, Assistant Secretary-General, D-2) were less likely to report having experienced racism, whereas staff at lower grades (P-1, P-2, P-3) were more likely to report having experienced it.[1]
- Staff from the UN Secretariat were less likely to report racism and bias than their counterparts in other UN entities and specialized agencies, funds and programmes. The reasons for this were not explored in the survey; however, they could form part of the discussions with the Administration on what its comparable experience has been.

28. Relevant reports and surveys on racism and racial discrimination conducted by United Nations entities, including the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) issued in 2023 ("2023 JIU report"),[2] were consulted, given their broader outlook, which also addressed the issues faced by people of Asian origin/descent. In particular, the analysis conducted in this survey found consistency with trends identified in the 2023 JIU report.

## D. Survey responses on the role of UN-ANDI

29. The survey also included questions on the role of UN-ANDI. Most survey respondents considered that UN-ANDI could be helpful in raising awareness of the workplace issues and discrimination faced by persons of Asian nationality/origin/descent in the United Nations system. This is the first time that a group is dedicated to advocating and advancing the rights as well as concerns of the Asian community at the UN. By conducting this comprehensive survey targeting the Asian community, the collected data could be used as a benchmark showing the current state of concerns and to strategize approaches to addressing the issues identified. In addition, UN-ANDI would be in a better position to advise senior leadership with the data and to quantify the various concerns of the Asian community.

30. The survey also gauged the expectations of the survey respondents through the open-ended question on what UN-ANDI could achieve. Most of the respondents expected UN-ANDI to identify the institutional barriers in the work environment and to establish patterns of these barriers by gathering relevant statistics for benchmarking. Secondly, they expected UN-ANDI to work on establishing a mechanism to address racism and racial discrimination, such as how people would raise their grievances and which individual or entity would deal with such cases. Thirdly, the survey respondents expected UN-ANDI to advocate a fair representation of staff of Asian nationality/origin/descent through systemic changes to recruitment

[1] Due to the relatively limited sample size, the results of the statistical analysis do not reflect the overall experience of UN personnel of Asian descent. It does, however, show some trends of racism and bias.

[2] United Nations, "Strategic action plan: report of the Secretary-General's Task Force on Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for All in the United Nations Secretariat", December 2021, available at https://hr.un.org/page/united-against-racism; JIU, "Review of measures and mechanisms for addressing racism and racial discrimination in United Systems organizations: managing for achieving organizational effectiveness" (JIU/NOTE/2022/1/Rev.1).

practices and a true reflection of the global population/nationality/racial ratio, as there was a clear mismatch between the current staffing representation and the world in which we live. Fourthly, respondents asked UN-ANDI to provide a safe space for members of the Asian community to freely talk about their experiences (both positive and negative) without fear of retaliation or a negative impact on their career progression or job security. Lastly, the respondents considered that UN-ANDI should also raise awareness of racism and racial discrimination against community members. Nearly half of the respondents expected UN-ANDI to focus on all these areas.

31. The survey also provided an opportunity to express additional issues of concern to the respondents, including the freedom to reflect on both the concerns that they were not able to express in response to the prior questions of the survey and their suggestions on future UN-ANDI work. UN-ANDI conducted word frequency analysis of the open-ended responses for the purpose of thematic analysis. Based on the findings, a few important thematic areas emerged for UN-ANDI's further attention in promoting and raising awareness about discrimination against UN personnel of Asian nationality/origin/descent:

(a) *Selection to higher-level posts (promotions) related issues*: career advancement, providing accurate data on staff members in ranking person/post promotion, equality in human resources assessment.

(b) *Recruitment*: oversight of recruitment process, credibility of competency for recruitments, recruitment biases (in favour of certain nationalities and regions at the UN), greater Asian representation at decision-making levels (P-5 and above).

(c) *Raising awareness through various forms of communication*: media presence; promoting equality; discuss, reflect, represent; provide space for discussion; bring organizational reflection; and representation through communication (such as sharing generic information on apparent discrimination).

(d) *Support for victims of discrimination*: institutionalize awareness of regional biases, create tools and mediation services, provide referral mechanisms for legal advice, provide tactics on how to address workplace discrimination and microaggressions, document cases of discrimination.

(e) *Addressing all forms of discrimination*: act in solidarity with all groups facing racism and racial discrimination, address racism within the Asian communities, address racism and racial discrimination in duty station (outside of the UN).

(f) *Diversity in language and career opportunities for non-English or non-French speakers*: valuing language abilities of speakers of Asian languages, trusting Asian colleagues on language-related tasks (drafting and editing papers, proofreading).

(g) *Ensuring accountability*: ensuring that managers are accountable to address harassment based on race at the workplace and hold accountable the individuals who carried out racism and racial discrimination acts.

(h) *Promoting equality*: as an overarching theme to guide the future work of UN-ANDI.

# III. Comments from survey participants


32. Survey participants took time to share examples of racism and bias they experienced at work, how they were perceived and treated at work by colleagues and managers, and the complex ways in which they were impacted, in recruitments and in respect of their career prospects and career development. UN-ANDI considers that these comments reflect painful personal experiences which require serious attention and immediate corrective measures by the Administration. Some comments of survey participants are provided below:

**A. Some comments relating to deep-rooted racism in the United Nations organizational culture**: racism and racial discrimination/inclusion/cultural diversity/awareness-raising/conscious and unconscious biases/sensitivity training/intersectionality of race, gender and age/addressing privilege and superiority/institutional barriers/long-term measures

- *"Changes of attitude towards Asians should occur from top leaderships. The top leaders then can motivate others."*
- *"I hold two Asian nationalities and look like none. Probably this has helped me and shielded me from any unwanted attention It's been years of institutional problem and it has been seen and intentionally ignored. Really important and should be enhanced."*
- *"Anti-Asian discrimination should not be a seasonal project within the UN. There should be continued advocacy to provide momentum at least over the next few years until such time, a review of the situation is warranted."*
- *"Low cultural knowledge/sensitivity among a lot of staff at UNOG. Many people assume I am from China simply because I look Asian. Difficult to have these conversations with Europeans because they believe that racism is an American problem."*
- *"Racial discrimination is a serious issue but the majority of staff who are from the WEOG region do not fully understand what we are going through in the workplace and in our daily life."*
- *"We need to conquer invisible and systematic racism towards the UN-ANDI community."*

- *"Many multinational companies have made so much way on non-discrimination and protecting values that the UN had set out in 1945... We had no clue that we were to pay a bigger price and struggle even more – against those who think they are superior than us. It is the UN rules and regulations who need to remind those that colonialism has ended and this organization had been exactly established to that end."*
- *"I am uncomfortable in that the narratives on race within UN context are largely focused on people of African descent. It is deplorable that Asians are even being neglected in the relevant dialogues."*
- *"Being discriminated against despite doing very hard work and ... sacrifices is really demoralizing and causing mental health issues. It feels like every hard work, sacrifice and hardship I do, doesn't matter because I am Asian."*
- *"I feel the discrimination I'm faced with comes from being Asian descent and young(er), and female. Not sure if only addressing the racial aspects is enough to address the issues."*
- *"We should work with other similar groups as well as the senior administrators in the UN to address systemic racism against people of color and developing nations."*

**B. Some comments relating to the low level of staff representation from Asia and the Pacific in the Professional and higher categories, including at the decision-making levels**: regional diversity of staff/recruitment/career progression/senior-level positions/language criteria and regional languages/structural barriers/conscious biases/tangible impact of racism/long- and short-term measures

- *"The UN works best when different nationalities are represented all the way to the top. Cultural/linguistic cliques weaken UN institutions."*
- *"The issue starts even with your name; I have been told while recruiting to not select names that are Asian. In fact, pick names that are Western names as it is likely that they are graduated from accredited universities and also easier for them to fly to duty stations. This will help bring efficiency to the work. In most cases it is the leadership allowing such things to happen. It is easier for an Asian to get a general staff contract, but when it comes to P it is really hard to be shortlisted."*
- *"Very important to understand that despite the fact that we have years of experience we are blocked from senior management level positions."*
- *"Investigate how come most of P5 and D selection are from Western world and most of Asian nationality is limited to P2-P3 profile."*
- *"Diversity is measured by representation at the highest level. Rich countries create unequal access to opportunities for their citizens at the senior level and entry level on the professional track (unpaid internships, JPOs, etc). We cannot create a more fair world by advancing the inequality of access to opportunity."*

- *"Since everyone in the UN system wants to ascend towards their career goals, this must be applied equally across all races so that equal representation is achieved."*
- *"Look at the race/country distribution you will find significant White/European staff members composition chart. And look at the management side Asian Directors & Managers are hard to find. That's the situation at the UN."*
- *"Asia is the biggest continent but unfairly represented in the UN, in particular OHCHR. Recruitment to the UN should be based on national level competition like YPP. Comparing Western candidates against Asian candidates is not often fair e.g., considering knowledge of French as requirement for a post."*
- *"I have been really concerned about the underrepresentation of Asian staff in the UN system. I am the only one from Asia in my current office, so have no chance to discuss about the issue in a safe way."*
- *"Fair and transparent process of recruitment where hiring is truly based on requirements of the job and not to tailor fit the requirements based on the pre-determined candidate."*

# IV. Recommendations to address racism and bias against personnel of Asian origin/descent in the United Nations system

33. UN-ANDI recognizes that eradicating racism and bias against all groups involves long-term strategies and initiatives addressing the complex issues of racism and bias within the United Nations system, which comprise structural, systemic, institutional, cultural, interpersonal, internalized and other challenges.

34. Based on the survey findings and comments provided by the UN-ANDI survey participants, there are two clear areas in terms of addressing racism and bias against personnel of Asian origin/descent in the United Nations system that would need the attention of the UN Administration, UN staff federations and staff unions, managers and all UN staff as well as Member States:

(a) Addressing deep-rooted racism in all its forms and dimensions in the United Nations organizational culture;

(b) Addressing the low level of staff representation from the Asia and the Pacific region in the Professional and higher categories, including at the decision-making levels, in all organizations of the United Nations system.

35. As the two areas are intertwined, UN-ANDI recommends the following long-term measures for immediate consideration of all stakeholders of the UN system: the Administration of UN system organizations, UN staff federations and staff unions, managers and all UN staff as well as Member States.

## A. Addressing deep-rooted racism in all its forms and dimensions in the United Nations organizational culture

| *Focus area* | *Goal* | *Recommended actions* |
|---|---|---|
| **Inclusion** | **1. To ensure inclusion as a part of all aspects of work and life in the United Nations system, including the dialogue on racism** | 1. Inclusion of UN-ANDI and personnel of Asian descent/origin in organizational discussions on racism and bias is crucial, so as to include their experiences and specific perspectives<br>2. Inclusion of personnel of Asian descent/origin in working groups, work teams, management teams, review bodies, recruitment/selection/ grievance/disciplinary panels, committees, advisory boards, commissions, etc. |
| **Cultural diversity** | **2. To accept and celebrate the diversity of cultures in the United Nations system by recognizing and respecting it and providing equal opportunity in all areas of work and life** | 3. The core value of respect for cultural diversity should be evaluated in the individual performance appraisal of all staff and managers, with care and appropriate sensitivity rather than using it as a default value<br>4. In all group settings of work, the appropriate code of conduct should be presented to ensure that all involved parties are aware of the importance of respect for cultural diversity and agree:<br>– To avoid stereotyping people from different cultures<br>– To respect and work seamlessly with the different attitudes and strengths<br>– To have patience with individual styles and approaches |
| **Awareness-raising** | **3. To raise awareness of cultural diversity in the United Nations system and beyond, through training programmes as well as social activities** | 5. Develop cultural sensitivity training programmes that are mandatory for all UN-affiliated personnel with a focus on general stereotypes and biases related to personnel of Asian descent/origin<br>6. Develop tailored mandatory sensitivity training for supervisors, managers, including hiring managers, and decision makers with specific focus on stereotypes and biases related to personnel of Asian descent/origin during recruitments and selections/promotions<br>7. Provide more opportunities for cultural and social activities organized by staff unions, staff interest groups and cultural societies in the UN system, including UN-ANDI |
| **Conscious and unconscious biases** | **4. To recognize and address all types of biases as an integral part of all action** | 8. United Nations organizations as well as staff federations and staff interest groups should identify all existing and possible types of biases |

| *Focus area* | *Goal* | *Recommended actions* |
|---|---|---|
| | **plans addressing racism and racial discrimination** | 9. Address the impacts of conscious and unconscious biases and eliminate all such biases with appropriate policies and measures, including by introducing appropriate features in the recruitment and selection systems |
| **Intersectionality of race, gender, age and other factors** | **5. To pay special attention to understanding and addressing the complex intersectionality between race, gender, age and other factors** | 10. Conduct an in-depth inquiry and analysis into the intersectionality of race, gender, age and other factors affecting the organizational culture and the work environment<br>11. Formulate effective strategies and appropriate policies to address the impact of intersectionality, including in the recruitment and selection systems |
| **Privilege and superiority** | **6. To align all rules, regulations, policies and practices in the organizations of the United Nations system with Article 1 (3) of the Charter, which asserts that one of the purposes of the UN is to promote and encourage respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion** | 12. Address the divide between staff from developing and developed countries (or the global North and the global South), as there is both subtle and obvious discrimination observed in the form of superiority or a privileged/entitled class and this aspect is not captured by any study or office<br>13. Develop policies to address and eliminate privilege and superiority based on race, class, origin, grade, nationality (e.g., donor vs. non-donor country, global North vs. global South, etc.) or any other factor, as addressing racism, racial discrimination and other biases cannot be eliminated without addressing privilege, superiority and power |
| **Fear of retaliation** | **7. To create an enabling environment that encourages staff to speak up on any kind of mistreatment, discrimination, abuse of power or harassment** | 14. Use staff interest groups to build trust among staff so that staff will not be reluctant to report when their rights are violated<br>15. Provide safe spaces through formal and informal avenues, in addition to staff unions and staff interest groups, to build staff confidence in existing mechanisms and processes for incident reporting |
| **Institutional barriers** | **8. To strive to create an organizational culture in the organizations of the United Nations system without any form of discrimination, racism, biases, etc.** | 16. Introduce changes to recruitment and selection policies to ensure fair and objective talent decisions that improve diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace by minimizing biases and uncovering the potential within each job candidate<br>17. To understand, identify and analyse the existing institutional barriers that hinder the fostering of an organizational culture without any form of discrimination, racism, biases, etc. |

## B. Addressing the low level of staff representation from the Asia and the Pacific region in the Professional and higher categories, including at the decision-making levels, in all organizations of the United Nations system

| *Focus area* | *Goal* | *Recommended actions* |
|---|---|---|
| **Regional diversity of staff** | **1. To achieve greater geographical representation and regional diversity in the workforce of the United Nations system** | 1. Ensure that recruitment and selection assessments are free from bias; and review all test content for cultural sensitivity and to ensure that assessments are equitable and free of content bias across cultural, regional and gender groups<br><br>2. Introduce blind hiring practices to eliminate conscious and unconscious biases affecting candidates from the global South, in particular candidates from Asia and the Pacific<br><br>3. Implement measures with an exclusive focus on increasing the representation of staff from Asia and the Pacific in the organizations of the UN system in the Professional and higher categories, including in senior and decision-making positions<br><br>4. Establish regional guidelines to strike a good balance between developed and developing countries in geographical distribution<br><br>5. Institute an agreed approach in the organizations of the UN system for maintaining geographical and regional diversity among posts that are not subject to equitable geographical distribution or an established system of desirable ranges, as those posts constitute the majority in the organizations of the UN system |
| **Recruitment** | **2. To ensure equality, inclusion and diversity in the staffing pattern of the United Nations system in a real and meaningful sense** | 6. Remove barriers, if any, for qualified staff from underrepresented countries who are serving in the General Service category from competing for Professional positions<br><br>7. Introduce recruitment-related outreach activities by the UN system organizations in all Member States of the global South, including Asia and the Pacific, for all posts, with a focus beyond the posts that are subject to established quotas and desirable ranges<br><br>8. Create and financially support, in collaboration with Member States, internships, Junior Professional Officer programmes and other similar programmes for candidates from developing countries, as these are important entry points to get a regular job in the UN system |

| *Focus area* | *Goal* | *Recommended actions* |
|---|---|---|
| **Career progression** | **3. To intensify efforts to achieve geographical representation of all countries in the Asia and the Pacific region, together with balanced regional diversity** | 9. Conduct an audit of the career progression of personnel of Asian descent/origin to understand the issues and obstacles<br>10. Conduct an in-depth examination of the root causes of stagnated careers of personnel of Asian descent/origin and implement measures to address disparities at specific grade levels based on the findings<br>11. Establish effective mentoring and coaching programmes for career advancement and upward mobility for staff of Asian and Pacific origin/descent<br>12. Conduct workshops/webinars, in collaboration with subject matter experts, organized by the Administration as well staff federations and staff unions |
| **Senior-level positions** | **4. To achieve greater geographical representation and regional diversity in senior and decision-making positions** | 13. Ensure more staff from the Asia and the Pacific region in senior and decision-making positions in all organizations of the UN system<br>14. Introduce equity in the composition of the executive-level positions (ASG, USG) in the UN system, and senior levels (P-5, D-1, D-2), demonstrating regional, geographical and gender diversity and equitable representation of the global South<br>15. Establish guidelines focusing on improving regional diversity among staff at the senior and decision-making levels in the organizations of the UN system |
| **Language criteria and regional languages** | **5. To consider language diversity as an asset for understanding national, cultural and regional differences and delivering the mandate of the United Nations effectively** | 16. Recognize and celebrate cultural diversity in the use of national/regional languages of the Asia and the Pacific region beyond the six official UN languages<br>17. Accept competence in all other languages, including regional languages, when there is a second working language requirement, in the recruitment and selection systems of the UN system organizations<br>18. Recognize the importance of regional languages in the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals |

| *Focus area* | *Goal* | *Recommended actions* |
|---|---|---|
| **Structural barriers** | **6. To identify and remove structural barriers to achieving greater geographical representation and regional diversity in the organizations of the United Nations system** | 19. Conduct an in-depth analysis of the duration of appointments and grade level to assess the rate of career progression of staff from the Asia and the Pacific region to understand and address the biases in selections/promotions as well as the issue of career stagnation of staff at the same level for long periods |
| | | 20. The Administration, staff federations and Member States should make an assessment, in monetary terms, of the tangible impacts of racism on staff productivity and organizational capacities for programme delivery (especially implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals) |
| | | 21. The General Assembly and other governing bodies of the UN organizations should monitor the real-time progress in achieving regional diversity in the UN organizations, including the recruitment and promotion patterns of staff from the Asia and the Pacific region |

# V. Conclusion

36. UN-ANDI supports the various ongoing initiatives within the United Nations system, which indicate a clear acknowledgement that racism and bias exist, as well as a willingness to take a hard look at the issues. In particular, the recent United Nations system-wide survey by JIU and the related 2023 JIU report have comprehensively and effectively highlighted many of the same issues faced by personnel of Asian origin/descent as those of other groups facing racism and racial discrimination.

37. The majority of the UN-ANDI survey respondents (61 per cent), or **three in every five** respondents, noted that they had experienced racism and bias, as well as the distress caused to them in terms of health, career and well-being. They also mentioned their lack of trust and confidence in the system, including existing recourse mechanisms. The individual experiences of the UN-ANDI survey participants were similar to those of the participants of the JIU survey (2023 JIU report, para. 64), in which they reported lower perceptions of equality of opportunity, support from senior leadership and organizational intolerance than those who did not have such experiences.

38. The findings of the UN-ANDI survey on racism and racial discrimination conducted in 2022 are generally consistent with the findings in the 2023 JIU report that “racism and racial discrimination are widespread throughout the United Nations system, and the magnitude of these issues … is considerable”. The review of JIU, furthermore, found that **one in every five** surveyed respondents had experienced racial discrimination or harassment, with racism and racial discrimination in the UN system organizations being referred to as “major and underrecognized problems that require urgent whole-of-system responses”. The 2020 United Nations survey on

racism, for its part, found that **one in every three** respondents had experienced discrimination, and of that figure, 21 per cent experienced it frequently.

39. A specific finding from the 2023 JIU report of significance to personnel of Asian origin/descent is that the "likelihood of experiencing racism and racial discrimination is higher" among black/African descent, Indigenous, South Asian and Middle Eastern/North African respondents and that members of all these groups are at least three times more likely than their white counterparts to face it. Participants of the UN-ANDI survey included at least two of the identified groups: South Asian and Middle Eastern/North African.

40. In the organizations of the United Nations common system, staff from Asia and the Pacific constitute only about 19 per cent of the Professional and higher categories, according to the 2021 report of the International Civil Service Commission (A/76/30). The largest number of unrepresented (17) and underrepresented (8) countries were in the Asia and the Pacific region. Twelve countries did not have staff in 15 of the organizations, with seven of these countries from Asia and the Pacific. The report of the Secretary-General's Task Force on Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for All in the United Nations Secretariat confirms that there is a significant lack of diversity in senior managerial positions (P-5, D-1 and D-2) in the United Nations. Only 16 per cent of staff at the P-5, D-1 and D-2 levels were from Asia-Pacific States as of 31 December 2020. Among promotions at the P-5, D-1 and D-2 levels, only 14.5 per cent of staff were from Asia-Pacific States during the period 2018–2020.

41. Thus, among staff in the Professional and higher categories in the UN organizations, there is disproportionate representation among regional groupings. There is also a significant lack of diversity in senior managerial positions in the UN organizations. This disparity, directly and indirectly, contributes to the current organizational culture that enables racism and racial discrimination. Hence, all organizations in the UN system should implement measures to reduce the proportion of the most highly represented regional groups and to increase the proportion of less represented regional groups, thereby reducing the overall imbalance among regional groups and achieving greater regional diversity within the workforce. If the UN is serious about addressing racism in its organizations, it is equally essential to ensure that staff from the Asia and the Pacific region are in decision-making positions.

42. The review of JIU found that staff from countries of the global South, where the population is predominantly of colour, tend to be in lower, less well-paid grades and, therefore, hold less authority in decision-making than those from countries where the population is predominantly white and from the group of Western European and other States. This issue of discrimination in seniority and authority for decision-making in the United Nations system emerged as a major macrostructural issue to be addressed (2023 JIU report, para. 74). The UN-ANDI survey confirms this important fact, which reveals the existence of clear conscious biases against staff from the global South in selection and promotion systems in the UN organizations. Structural issues in the policies of the UN system enabled this situation historically through the remnants of institutions such as slavery and colonialism.

43. The findings of JIU confirm the unequal representation of various racial groupings in senior-level positions and different patterns in promotion among those groupings. It recommended an analysis of the relationship between duration of appointments and grade level in order to determine the rate of career progression by racial group, using the existing human resources data for various regional groupings. The responses of personnel in the JIU common system-wide survey indicated that, while personnel who self-identified as black/African descent, South Asian or Middle Eastern/North African spent more time in their rank to achieve career advancement, a different pattern held for those who self-identified as white (2023 JIU report,

para. 52). The UN-ANDI survey findings support this and, therefore, UN-ANDI makes a similar recommendation to examine the biases in selections/promotions as well as the career stagnation of staff members of Asian origin/descent and staff from the Asia and the Pacific region, as well as staff from the global South, at the same grade levels for long periods, in some cases until their retirement.

44. Another critical issue revealed through the comments from the UN-ANDI survey participants was the divide between staff from developed and developing countries, or the global North and the global South, and the associated subtle and obvious discrimination observed in the form of superiority or a privileged/entitled class. To date, this aspect has not been part of any studies on organizational culture or considered under the purview of any programme or office. In addition, staff and managers are not comfortable in raising this issue broadly, or especially together with racism or intersectional analysis.

45. The above-mentioned issue relating to superiority/privilege encompasses another dimension of discrimination that emanates from the negative treatment of staff from the global South by managers from the global North and even, in some cases, from the global South. These highlighted issues have serious implications for decisions on selection, performance appraisal and work distribution, as well as other areas of work and life.

46. Institutionalized racism is intertwined into the systems, processes and policies of the UN organizations. All surveys, including the UN-ANDI survey, on racism and racial discrimination point to the fact that Western-centric models such as the competency-based interview process in the staff selection system are hindering candidates from the Asia and the Pacific region. When recruitments and selections are based on Western-centric models of competency-based interviews and selection processes, candidates from the West or the global North receive certain privileges and advantages over others. Staff from Asian cultures tend not to be vocal about their accomplishments as required in competency-based interviews, which disadvantages them. Hence, the UN system needs to introduce approaches that would preserve the cultural identities of their staff while providing them with equal career advancement opportunities in the UN organizations.

47. While language bias at the UN is clearly placing staff from developing countries at a disadvantage, it is even more so for staff from Asia and the Pacific. While staff from Asia and the Pacific speak many regional languages, the majority speak only one UN working/official language, English. As the UN promotes multilingualism, it should also focus on being more inclusive and not use the requirement for competence in both working languages, English and French, in the recruitment and selection process, as this requirement excludes and discriminates against staff from Asia and the Pacific. There should be a clear and visible balance between the official languages of the UN and the importance of regional and national languages in delivering the mandates of the UN around the world, including the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the countries of the global South.

48. Tackling racial discrimination in the UN system organizations not only is an ethical issue but also offers benefits for the organizations. Racism is a business issue because it affects the performance and the productivity of the organizations of the UN system. Racism and racial discrimination cause significant financial losses to all parties. Staff members suffer from loss of income, health, morale, enthusiasm and job satisfaction during their career span, while organizations suffer in terms of loss of time, resources, talent, committed staff, quality of work, timely delivery, productivity and reputation, among others. The review of JIU also highlighted the effect of racism and racial discrimination on an organization’s health, adaptability, productivity, economic returns and growth. The Unit found that racism and racial discrimination

generated high stress levels, with effects on health and productivity. It is therefore important to assess the tangible impacts of racism, in monetary terms, on staff, organizations and their capacities for programme delivery, especially the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Such an exercise is critical if the UN organizations are genuinely committed to eliminating racism within.

49. Racism and racial discrimination are real and pressing issues within the organizations of the UN system. Racism and racial discrimination are systemic, structural and institutionalized. Hence, the UN leadership needs to understand how racism "works" in the UN system organizations in order to eliminate it.

50. UN-ANDI emphasizes that all UN system organizations must develop and implement long-term measures to address racism and racial discrimination through a collective effort involving all stakeholders, including staff interest groups such as UN-ANDI.

51. UN-ANDI expresses its dedicated support to the wider recommendations by JIU in its system-wide review of racism and racial discrimination in United Nations system organizations, as well as the strategic action plan of the Secretary-General's Task Force on Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for All in the United Nations Secretariat.

52. UN-ANDI believes that the findings of its survey on racism and racial discrimination and the recommendations presented in this report are useful to all leaders and managers in the UN system organizations, staff federations, staff unions and staff as well as Member States and other stakeholders striving to create an organizational culture free from any form of discrimination, racism and biases.

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