

Addis Ababa, 20 August, 2020

Dear Secretary-General,

The staff representatives of the Staff Unions and Associations that are members of the Staff Management Committee wish to express their dismay and disappointment with the recently published global survey on racism, which has subsequently been removed after it drew widespread criticism and a deep sense of discomfort due to the racial 'color-coded' categorization among other issues.

Various questions received justifiable criticism, starting with the very first, which uses the descriptor "yellow" as a racial category. The Staff Unions and Associations made their objections to this terminology clear two weeks prior to the survey's publication, when we collectively provided inputs to the draft survey, upon request from management.

It has become clear to us, that none of the comments and feedback we provided, were retained by management and incorporated in the survey.

We are sure that you understand how not being heard, particularly when being asked to provide inputs, makes people feel.

Mr Antonio Guterres  
Secretary General  
United Nations

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What is most disturbing to us collectively is that the embarrassment and negative impact on our organization could have easily been avoided, had the voice of staff representatives been heard and respected. Questions should also be asked as to why the survey was commissioned from an external provider and not developed using internal resources. Given the reputational harm this survey has caused due to the widespread reporting already, we seek your assurances that adequate and appropriate accountability will be measured out.

On the critical issue of racism within the organization, which you rightly diagnosed as a problem at the town hall convened by the New York Staff Union on 4 June 2020, you entrusted the Office of Human Resources and the Ombudsman and Mediation Service with initiating a conversation with staff in coordination with the Staff Unions. We regret that to date, coordination with the Unions on the matter has been limited. As this unfortunate incident has shown, the fact that our comments were disregarded yielded a negative impact on all stakeholders.

The staff management consultative mechanism, when applied meaningfully and in good faith, is there to benefit not just the staff but indeed the image and reputation of our organization.

This recent example is just one of the many instances where we, as duly elected staff representatives feel that our inputs are not valued or worse, ignored.

Mr Antonio Guterres  
Secretary General  
United Nations



We ask therefore that credibility, good faith and meaningfulness in the staff management consultative mechanisms are restored and taken seriously, for the sake of the value and relevance of our organization for generations to come, lest the world will ignore the United Nations.

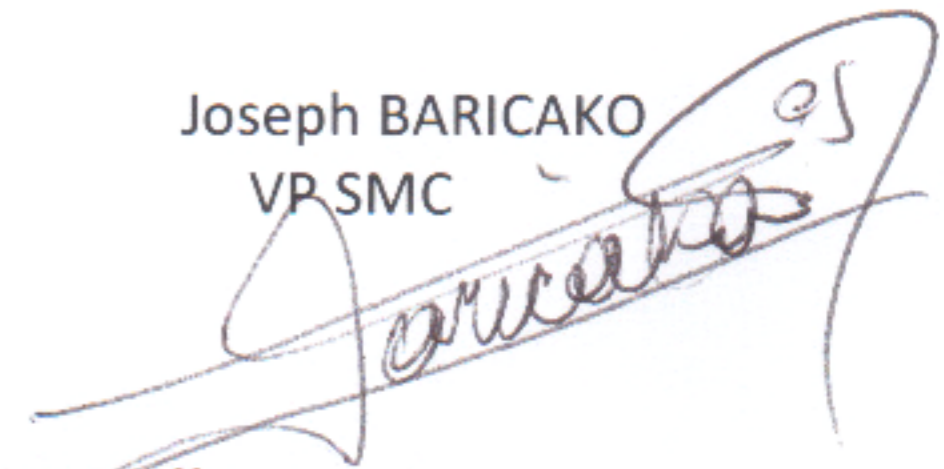
Meanwhile, the Unions and staff associations will continue to work on the matter of racial equity within our organization, in line with our firm commitment to our constituents.

We remain as willing partners to combine our efforts with those of the administration.

Please accept Sir, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Mr Antonio Guterres  
Secretary General  
United Nations

Joseph BARICAKO  
VP SMC



On behalf of:  
ESCAP Staff Association  
Staff Council of ECA  
Staff Council of ECLAC  
Staff Council of ESCWA  
UN Criminal Tribunals Staff Union  
UN Staff Union (New York)  
UN Staff Union Nairobi

UN Staff Union Vienna  
UNDP/UNOPS/UNFPA/UN Women Staff  
Council  
UNHCR Staff Council  
UNICEF Global Staff Association  
United Nations Field Staff Union  
UNOG Staff Coordinating Council

CC : Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet  
Ms. Catherine Pollard, USG of Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance  
Ms. Shireen L. Dodson, United Nations Ombudsman