



**SMC paper on restrictive job openings requiring field experience  
submitted by the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council**

**25 August 2021**

Recently, the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council has been receiving complaints from professional staff concerning job vacancies at OCHA and OHCHR requiring field experience as a requirement for positions at Headquarters as well as duty stations/country offices away from Headquarters. Some job openings not only require field experience but also recent field experience and/or field experience in a particular region. While some posts may require field experience to effectively carry out the functions of the position, others such as Human Rights Officer positions, in particular at the junior and middle levels and at headquarters, do not necessarily require such experience as skill sets are transferable. By including such restrictive criteria in job openings, many highly qualified staff members who are eager to gain additional experience, including in the field, are not able to do so, which unfairly affects their career development.

ST/SGB/2002/5 introduced the new staff selection system to allow the Organization to meet the challenges ahead and to develop a more versatile, multi-skilled and experienced international civil service, based on the predicted needs of the Organization. The new system was designed, inter alia, to select staff on the basis of merit, demonstrated competencies and performance, through a competitive process where the paramount consideration is the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, with due regard to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible and to the gender distribution goals set by the General Assembly; to ensure that selection decisions made by the heads of departments/offices are based on objective, job-related criteria, following confirmation by the central review bodies of compliance with the relevant procedures; **to promote greater mobility of staff among functions, departments, occupations, duty stations, field missions and organizations of the United Nations system; to provide more career opportunities and career development for staff; and to promote greater integration among staff throughout the Secretariat.**

Overly restrictive job openings, in particular those requiring field experience and even recent field experience and/or field experience within a particular region are having the effect of frustrating career opportunities for many staff at headquarters duty stations, which does not appear to be in line with the overall policy of promoting mobility and career opportunities. In addition, even if designated as “desirable” such restrictive criteria often become “required” when hiring managers need to reduce the number of candidates in order to come up with the short lists. These requirements are also discriminatory against persons with disabilities who are not able to work in field duty stations due to their lack of accessibility. Geographic distribution will also be aided by removing such restrictive criteria as well.

These restrictive criteria, which are not based on any rules and in some cases appear to be arbitrary, not only create a barrier to career development but also hamper mobility for many staff, including those who wish to work in duty stations/country offices away from Headquarters. The UNOG Staff Coordinating Council hereby requests that the matter be referred to the Working Group on Selection to further analyse this issue and to develop recommendations to ensure that qualified staff with transferable skills are able to voluntarily go to the field to further their careers in line with the stated policy of increasing opportunities for mobility, career development, and greater integration among staff of the Secretariat.