

Audit Committee 2010

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to thank Mr. Schellekens for his excellent presentation and congratulate him with the work done by the Audit Committee.

The Staff Committee is very pleased with the first report of the newly established Audit Committee, [CA/24/11](#). As you know governance issues are a matter of concern to staff; effective accountability mechanisms play an essential role in this. This is one of the reasons why the Staff Committee supported the establishment of an Audit Committee.

The Staff Committee agrees with the recommendations of the Audit Committee set out in CA/24/11. We agree in particular that an anti-fraud policy and a Code of Conduct are essential for the EPO.

We also agree with the Audit Committee that a whistle-blowing policy is necessary. In this context we refer to the recent ILO-AT judgment, ILO-AT 2984, which is an example of what can happen in the absence of an effective whistle-blower policy. In the case in question the staff representation raised concerns about the actions of a former senior manager. Rather than impartially investigating the matter, the Organisation responded by attacking an individual staff representative. This behaviour has now been condemned by the ILOAT as harassment, but it is clear that in a climate where even staff representatives are attacked for raising concerns, staff are not going to come forward and report suspected misbehaviour for fear of retribution. A proper whistle-blower policy also permits such reports to be investigated in a professional manner by an independent authority, and this can prevent such issues becoming public unnecessarily as in the case mentioned.

In our opinion the possibility to report suspected fraud or other misbehaviour without fear of retribution, and the confidence that such reports will be properly examined and where appropriate investigated, is of utmost importance to safeguard the integrity of this Organisation.

On another point: we note that Audit Committee plans to meet the Head of the Human Resource department in order to get an overview of the approach taken and the control of HR-management within the EPO. We would be grateful if the Audit Committee would also meet the staff representation to hear our views on this important topic.

Ladies & gentlemen, I thank you for your attention.