

**UNECE****UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION
FOR EUROPE**

JUNIOR PROFESSIONAL OFFICER PROGRAMME (JPO)

Chiffre Nr. 2024-1-07

I. General Information

Post Title: JPO in Legal Affairs

Sector of Assignment: Legal Affairs

Organization/Office: United Nations Economic Commissions for Europe (UNECE)/
Environment Division

Location: Geneva, Switzerland

Duration: **Two years with possibility of extension for another year.** The extension of appointment is subject to yearly review concerning priorities, availability of funds, and satisfactory performance

Please note that for participants of the JPO-Programme two years work experience are mandatory! Relevant work experience can be counted. In order to assess the eligibility of the candidates, we review the relevant experience acquired after obtaining the first university degree (usually bachelor's degree).

II. Supervision

Title of Supervisor:
Legal Officer, Secretary to the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee and Assistant to the Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders

Content and methodology of supervision:

The JPO will work under the direct supervision of the Secretary to the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee. The JPO will work closely with other members of the Aarhus Convention secretariat responsible for servicing the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee, the Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders and other subsidiary bodies.

Establishment of a Work Plan: During the first month of the assignment, the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) will work jointly with his/her direct supervisor to finalize an agreed upon work plan in order to monitor his/her work and to facilitate him/her taking on responsibilities. The final work plan will be discussed and mutually agreed by the JPO and his/her supervisor. The JPO will meet regularly with his/her supervisor to receive guidance,

review outputs, update the work plan if necessary and to receive support on his/her learning needs.

Evaluation: The United Nations Performance Evaluation System (e-performance) will serve as a primary platform to evaluate of the JPO's performance. At the end of the year the incumbent's performance will be assessed vis-à-vis the set objectives. In the routine work, the JPO will participate in regular unit meetings in which the work of the unit is discussed, short- to medium-term objectives are agreed, and work carried out is assessed. During the assignment, the level of responsibility and the complexity of the tasks to be carried out by the expert will be gradually increased. Weekly meetings with the supervisor will ensure smooth and predictable two-way feedback.

As a fully integrated member of the Environment Division, he/she will be invited to participate in and contribute to different activities of the Division to maximize the learning elements.

III. Duties and Responsibilities

Within delegated authority, the Junior Professional Officer will be responsible for the following duties:

The JPO will:

1. Support the Aarhus Convention's Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders, the world's first rapid response mechanism to protect environmental defenders, through:
 - Assisting with the handling and investigation of complaints to the Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders concerning the alleged persecution, penalization or harassment of persons seeking to exercise their rights under the Aarhus Convention;
 - Supporting exchange between the environmental, climate change and human rights communities on current challenges, good practices and lessons learned, and assisting in the building of synergies and cooperation;
 - Preparing draft correspondence, statements and press releases for the Special Rapporteur;
 - Undertaking legal research on matters related to the protection of environmental defenders, including climate activists amongst others;
 - Supporting the preparation and servicing of meetings of the Special Rapporteur with Parties, intergovernmental organizations and environmental defenders, incorporating also a gender perspective;
 - Undertaking outreach and public information activities regarding the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and his work;
 - Maintaining the relevant web pages on the UNECE website.
2. Assist in providing expert legal support to the secretariat, and in servicing the Convention and Protocol's compliance mechanisms, including:

- Providing assistance in legal matters arising in the course of the secretariat's work, including in servicing the Convention and Protocol's Compliance Committees;
 - Supporting legal aspects of the work of the Meetings of the Parties and their subsidiary bodies, as necessary;
 - Generally assisting the work of the Convention and Protocol's Compliance Committees.
 - Drafting responses to written enquiries to the secretariat.
3. Assist in preparations for, and servicing of, intergovernmental and expert meetings held under the Convention and its Protocol, as required.
4. Frequently interact with the following:
- Staff within the Section, Division and Department;
 - Staff throughout UNECE and the United Nations;
 - Senior officials in member State missions, delegations, governments, universities, research institutions, non-governmental organizations and other representatives of civil society.
5. Provide support to the secretariat's communication activities.
6. Perform other duties as required.

IV. Qualifications and Experience

Education:

Master's Degree in Law / Master of Laws / LL.M., State Examination in Law, preferably with experience related to environmental law.

Work experience:

At least two years of previous work experience, involving legal issues in the areas of environmental protection, sustainable development, democratization, human rights or civil society engagement. Experience with global or regional environmental legal instruments is an asset.

Languages:

English and French are the working languages of the UN Secretariat. For this position, fluency in English is required. Knowledge of French or Russian is an advantage.

Other skills:

Major computer skills required to work in the office (e.g., such programmes as word, excel,

power point) and willingness to learn new skills.

UN competencies:

PROFESSIONALISM: Shows pride in work and in achievements; Demonstrates professional competence and mastery of subject matter; Is conscientious and efficient in meeting commitments, observing deadlines and achieving results; Is motivated by professional rather than personal concerns; Shows persistence when faced with difficult problems or challenges; Remains calm in stressful situations.

COMMUNICATION: Speaks and writes clearly and effectively; Listens to others, correctly interprets messages from others and responds appropriately; Asks questions to clarify, and exhibits interest in having two-way communication; Tailors language, tone, style and format to match the audience; Demonstrates openness in sharing information and keeping people informed.

TEAMWORK: Works collaboratively with colleagues to achieve organizational goals; Solicits input by genuinely valuing others' ideas and expertise; is willing to learn from others; Places team agenda before personal agenda; Supports and acts in accordance with final group decision, even when such decisions may not entirely reflect own position; Shares credit for team accomplishments and accepts joint responsibility for team shortcomings.

Workforce Diversity

The United Nations believes that an inclusive culture attracts the best talent and encourages all qualified applicants, regardless of gender, disability, sexual orientation, cultural or religious backgrounds, to apply.

V. Learning Elements

On completion of the assignment, the JPO will have/be able to...

The assignment would involve on-the-job learning on the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs, the Convention's Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders and the Convention and the Protocol's Compliance Committees, enabling the JPO to gain hands-on experience in the many aspects of servicing a high profile international environmental treaty.

The JPO would also have the opportunity to work firsthand with other multilateral environmental treaties and international human rights organizations.

On completion of the assignment, the JPO will have improved his/her knowledge of international relations and law making, in particular in the environmental and human rights field. Moreover, he/she has developed skills and gained experience in:

- Working with environmental defenders and other human rights defenders as well as those international and non-governmental organizations working for their protection;
- Drafting legal and other related documents on human rights and the environment;

- Interacting with a broad spectrum of experts and officials from national and international organizations in the field of human rights and the environment;
- Playing an active role (substantively and organizationally) in technical assistance activities (e.g. planning, organizing and servicing meetings and workshops at the national and international level for environmental defenders and other human rights defenders, incorporating also a gender perspective;
- Organizing and servicing intergovernmental and expert meetings: preparing agenda and reports, drafting documentation, assisting chairs in the running of the meeting and handling logistic and organizational aspects related to the organization of UN meetings;
- Assessing legislative and policy documents and elaborating recommendations for future action;
- Coordinating interactions with other multilateral environmental agreements, UN system organizations and mechanisms, other relevant international governmental and non-governmental organizations, and relevant private sector organizations, exchanging information with these organizations and their experts;
- Delivering presentations and representing the UNECE secretariat at international meetings in her/his field of competence;
- Preparing press releases, public relations bulletins and other media work related to her/his field of competence;
- Working in a multicultural work environment;
- Developing a professional network.

VI. Background Information

The UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) is the only global legally binding instrument that gives the public broad and concrete rights to participate in decision-making and to have access to information and justice regarding the environment. In doing so, the Convention links environmental and human rights and aims to protect the rights of both present and future generations to live in a healthy environment.

The Aarhus Convention was adopted on 25 June 1998 in the Danish city of Aarhus and entered into force on 30 October 2001. It is open to accession by any UN Member State. It currently has 47 Parties from Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia and, most recently, Africa, with different social-economic and political backgrounds.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres, in his message to the seventh session of the Meeting the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (Geneva, 18-21 October 2021), stated that:

“Twenty years ago, the Aarhus Convention entered into force, bridging the gap between human and environmental rights. Today, as the devastating effects of climate change continue to ravage the world, the Convention’s core purpose — allowing people to protect their well-being and that of future generations — has never been more critical.”

The Convention links government accountability, transparency and responsiveness with environmental protection and sustainable development and focuses on interactions between the public and public authorities in a democratic context. The cross-cutting rights of the three pillars of the Aarhus Convention are thus fundamental for the attainment of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Of all SDGs, Goal 16 is particularly closely linked to the overall objective of the treaty as the Convention plays a central role in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, and good governance.

Specifically, the Convention aims to:

- Allow members of the public greater access to environmental information held by public authorities, thereby increasing the transparency and accountability of government;
- Provide an opportunity for people to express their opinions and concerns on environmental matters, participate in the decision-making process and ensure that decision-makers take due account of such participation;
- Provide the public with access to review procedures when their rights to information and participation have been breached, and in some cases to challenge more general violations of environmental law.

The Convention has one Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs), which became international law binding its Parties on 8 October 2009. It is the only legally binding international instrument on pollutant release and transfer registers. Its objective is “to enhance public access to information through the establishment of coherent, nationwide pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs).” PRTRs are inventories of pollution from industrial sites and other sources. Although regulating information on pollution, rather than pollution directly, the Protocol is expected to exert a significant downward pressure on levels of pollution, as no company will want to be identified as among the biggest polluters. All UN Member States can join the Protocol, including those which have not ratified the Aarhus Convention and those which are not members of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. The Protocol presently has 38 Parties.

At its seventh session (18-21 October 2021), the Meeting of the Parties, the main governing body of the Convention, adopted a decision establishing a rapid response mechanism for the protection of environmental defenders under the Convention in the form of an independent Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders. This is the world’s first international mechanism to protect environmental defenders. The mechanism deals with cases related article 3 (8) of the Aarhus Convention, which requires each Party to the Convention ensures that no person is “penalized, persecuted or harassed in any way” for exercising their rights in conformity with the provisions of this Convention”. This includes all situations in which members of the public seek access to information, public participation or access to justice in order to protect their right to live in an environment adequate to their health or well-being.

The Aarhus Convention also has an innovative compliance mechanism, an international committee that hears cases brought by members of the public and governments seeking to ensure the Convention’s rights are upheld. The Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee is made up of nine independent legal experts. It underpins the openness and transparency of the Convention and works in a non-confrontational, non-judicial and consultative way.

Since its establishment in 2002, the Compliance Committee has reached a number of significant findings and has been instrumental in helping Parties to meet their obligations and, when necessary, change their legal and administrative systems to ensure that the Convention’s provisions are implemented correctly. The compliance mechanism under the Aarhus Convention has produced rich experience and therefore serves as an example for other international environmental treaties. Similarly, the Compliance Committee of the Protocol on PRTRs has

produced useful guidance material to assist Parties in implementing the Protocol.

The Convention and Protocol's secretariat is based in Geneva, Switzerland and administrated by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The secretariat is a part of the Environment for Europe and Sustainable Development Team located in the Environment Division of the UNECE that is one of the five Regional Commissions of the United Nations. UNECE's major aim is to promote pan-European economic integration. The UNECE includes 56 Member States, located in Europe, North America, Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East (Turkey and Israel).

The secretariat's role includes:

- Assisting Parties in the implementation of the Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs;
- Supporting implementation of the Convention and the Protocol through servicing the Meetings of the Parties and other subsidiary bodies to the Convention;
- Coordinating, organizing and servicing expert bodies (e.g. task forces) and various activities aimed at the sharing of experiences and capacity-building;
- Monitoring and facilitating compliance with the Convention and the Protocol through servicing their Compliance Committees and publicizing the compliance mechanisms. The Compliance Committees review communications, submissions and referrals concerning cases of possible non-compliance, prepare reports and recommendations for decisions, and undertake fact-finding missions;
- Overseeing the reporting mechanism requiring each Party to submit a report on: (a) the necessary legislative, regulatory or other measures that it has taken to implement the provisions of the Convention and the Protocol; and (b) their practical implementation;
- Promoting the Convention and the Protocol to interested UN Member States, including from other regions, encouraging them to accede to the Convention and the Protocol or apply their provisions;
- Promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in relevant international forums;
- Cooperating with other United Nations organizations and other entities as to promote matters related to human rights and the environment in synergy;
- Supporting the Aarhus Clearinghouse on Environmental Democracy and the PRTR Global Portal and websites.

More information on the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol is available through: <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/welcome.html>.

The JPO post is located in Geneva, which has a sizable international community offering diverse social and cultural environment. This will enable the JPO to establish new professional and private connections with colleagues from different parts of the world. It will also help the JPO to gain experience working with different cultures and social backgrounds. Geneva is a safe city, with excellent international air and train connections and a well-organized public transport system. In addition, the surrounding areas offer possibilities for a diverse range of outdoor activities, including watersports, skiing and hiking.

**Bitte senden Sie Ihre JPO-Bewerbung direkt an das
Büro Führungskräfte zu Internationalen Organisationen (BFIO)
unter Angabe der Chiffre Nr. 2024-1-07 auf dem
Bewerbungsbogen**

Alle Informationen finden Sie unter www.bfio.de