



Office of the
Ombudsman
for United Nations Funds and Programmes

WORKING TOGETHER TO FIND SOLUTIONS

Mediating Around the World

MediationNewsletter

11th Edition

December 2024



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MEDIATION
HIGHLIGHTS

2024



MEDIATION HIGHLIGHTS 2024

Number of Mediation
Cases received in 2024

120

(over 33% increase from last year)

Number of Mediation
Cases closed in 2024

126

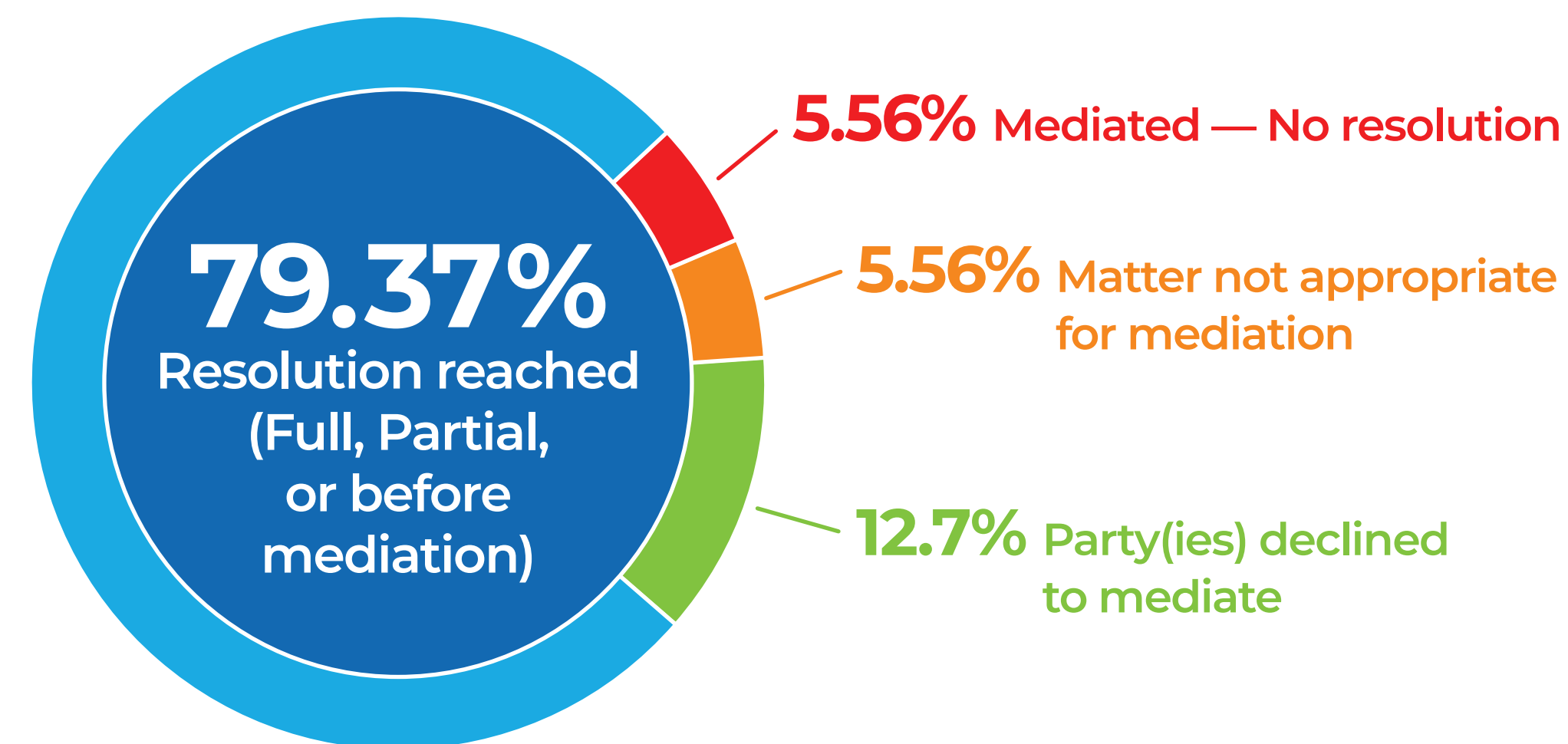
(almost 30% increase from last year)

	Mediation cases received per agency	Mediation cases closed per agency
UNICEF	41	41
UNDP	32	35
UNOPS	27	30
UNFPA	12	12
UN Women	8	8
TOTAL	120	126

Issues Mediated

% of Total
of Case #

Supervisory Relationships	36%
Job and career	25%
Compensation and Benefits	14%
Peer and Colleague Relationship	7%
Safety, Health, Wellbeing, Stress	7%
Organizational, Leadership and Management	5%
Prohibited Conduct and Compliance	5%
Other	3%



CONVERSATION WITH THE MEDIATOR PROGRAMME

37 Country Offices Participated in the “Conversation with the Mediator Programme” in 2024

Burkina Faso
Cameroon
CAR
Guinea-Bissau
Republic of the Congo
Namibia
Lesotho
Panama (April)*
Iran
Gulf Area Office (GAO)
Iraq
Sudan
Bulgaria
Greece
Kosovo
Argentina (May)
Maldives
Fiji (Pacific Islands)
Philippines

Belarus
Turkmenistan
Moldova
Romania
Bolivia
Costa Rica & Nicaragua
Cuba
Papua New Guinea
East Caribbean Area (ECA)
Jamaica
Uruguay
Dominican Republic
Venezuela
Brazil (June)
Armenia (July)
Ecuador (September)
Chile (October)
Guatemala

** (Month) denotes in-person programs*

2437

participants both
online and in-person
(over 59% increase from last year)

75

registrations for an
intake process to
explore mediation

920

participants in
“Conflict Management
and Mediation for
Supervisors”

54

in-person intakes

4

languages
(English, Spanish, French, Armenian)

6

in-person programs

RESTORATIVE MEDIATION

Our office is proud to announce the expansion of our services to include restorative mediation, a tailored approach designed to support teams who have undergone investigative processes or traumatic workplace events. These situations can often leave lasting effects on team cohesion, communication, and trust. Restorative mediation provides a safe and structured space where individuals can share perspectives, address unresolved tensions, and work toward collective understanding and healing.



The process emphasizes reconciliation and rebuilding trust among team members, fostering a deeper sense of connection and shared accountability. By addressing the root causes of conflict and facilitating meaningful dialogue, restorative mediation helps teams move beyond adversity and lay the groundwork for a stronger, more harmonious workplace environment.

This expansion aligns with our commitment to innovation and excellence in conflict resolution. By incorporating restorative mediation into our offerings, we aim to empower teams to recover from challenges, rebuild relationships, and create a foundation for sustainable success and collaboration.

The Mediation Unit will focus more on restorative practices in the coming 2025 year.

UPDATES FROM GLOBAL MEDIATION PANEL & BOARD

Thanking the Board for their Service

After thoughtful reflection, we have decided to retire the International Advisory Board.

We would like to extend our deepest appreciation to its dedicated members. Their invaluable contributions, insightful guidance, and commitment have played a pivotal role in advancing our mediation efforts and supporting our mission. We are incredibly grateful for the time, energy, and expertise they generously shared with us, leaving a lasting impact on our organization and the communities we serve.

In addition to shaping our mediation practices, the board members also contributed significantly through the various trainings and workshops they organized. These sessions equipped our staff and mediators with essential skills, enhanced our mediation techniques, and fostered a deeper understanding of conflict resolution. Their leadership in sharing knowledge and guiding important discussions has been instrumental in the growth and development of the UN workforce and the Global Mediation Panel. Thank you for your service!

Lela Love (*Chair*)

Nadja Alexander

Elena Koltsaki

Laila Ollapally

Geoff Sharp

Jalal El Ahdab

Joyce Aluoch

Karl Mackie



Inclusion in mediation – considerations regarding disabled parties



Dr. Renate Dendorfer-Ditges
Mediator, Global Mediation Panel

In the field of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), the inclusion of persons with disabilities needs increasing attention. Recognizing that inclusion extends beyond physical integration, we have to create environments where all individuals can participate equally. This approach aligns with broader global initiatives, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which stress inclusivity as a cornerstone for sustainable and equitable societies.

Mediation prioritizes impartiality, autonomy, interest-based and amicable resolution. Including persons with disabilities is both an opportunity and a necessity to reinforce these values. In addition, the perspectives of those with disabilities contribute to a culture of respect and mutual understanding.

The *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UN CRPD) provides a legal framework for the full participation of individuals with disabilities in all areas of life. The convention moves away from a care-based approach; instead, it advocates for active empowerment of persons with disabilities.

In 2023, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) published the “ICC Guide on Disability Inclusion in International Arbitration and ADR” (see https://iccwbo.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2023/10/2023_ICC-Guide-on-Disability-Inclusion-in-International-Arbitration-and-ADR-902.pdf). The guide includes practical measures for enhancing accessibility, adapts procedural rules to ensuring venues and proposes digital resources.

One of the guide’s core recommendations is a cultural shift toward inclusion. This means viewing accessibility and diversity as inherent values rather than compliance requirements. The guide also introduces a toolkit for practitioners to facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities. For instance, it provides guidance on addressing disability needs during the procedure, ensuring privacy, and balancing the interests of all parties involved in ADR processes.

Despite this progress, social stigmas and misconceptions often prevent individuals from disclosing disabilities, leading to unaddressed barriers. Moreover, many disabilities are invisible, which can make recognition and accommodation difficult. It is necessary for practitioners to develop sensitivity, recognizing that not every person with a disability will require or desire the same support.

The mediator’s role in ensuring fair communication is vital. By incorporating communication aids such as sign language interpreters, mediators can create spaces where all participants feel respected and understood. Empathy is essential, as is avoiding paternalism toward individuals with disabilities. Maintaining neutrality while remaining attentive to the specific needs of each party is critical in upholding the integrity of the mediation process.

The commitment to inclusion in dispute resolution is a testament of equality, openness, and fair conflict management, where everyone in an organization can contribute and engage in resolving conflicts.

Ultimately, creating accessible ADR practices benefits the organization and all participants of ADR processes. Inclusion allows a perception from a completely different perspective and fosters a richer and innovative solution.

This topic is universal and cross-cultural. It must be in the mind of all ADR practitioners to ensure the dignity of the parties and to promote civility in a safe and accessible as well as useable environment for all participants. In every ADR proceeding, think about concrete measures for the inclusion of disabled people.

INTRODUCTIONS OF NEW TEAM MEMBERS

We are delighted to introduce two new members to our team!

Patrick Voigt, the Ombudsman and Head of the Office, brings a wealth of experience that will strengthen our efforts in resolving conflicts in the UN workplace.

Gergely (Greg) Varga, Mediation Officer, joins us in Panama to support the mediation function; with his fluency in Spanish and mediation experience, the Mediation Unit will reinforce its objective to promote mediation in the UN workplace.

We are confident their skills and enthusiasm will positively impact us as we grow and succeed. Please join us in giving them a warm welcome!

Patrick and Greg's brief bios are included below.



Patrick Voigt



Gergely (Greg) Varga

Q&A with the Ombudsman

Tell us about your approach to conflict resolution?

I generally focus on a few very basic but important points for conflict resolution: Let's say I have a conversation that I know may be conflict-prone between myself and another party. I first make sure I have enough time and can concentrate on the conversation; as well as the other party. "Is this a time that works well for you?" is never a wasted effort, even if it has been pre-scheduled.

Second, I try to follow the models we also teach in our workshops, starting with my own observations "I understand that..," "I noticed..," "To me..."

Third, I try—and that does take particular focus—to avoid accusatory tones or sentences that use "you" a lot. Because it can trigger a defensive approach by the other party.

And I then convey how I'm impacted and what I need to see happen.

Of course when I do this in my work, it's not about me but one or more visitors—I still focus on conveying how the individuals are impacted, and what their needs are. From experience I would estimate that more than 80% of conversations about work conflict issues are fundamentally missing these two pieces: Impact and needs. That sounds like an easy fix but requires deep self-awareness, emotional literacy and the ability to articulate it. We are here to help in that process.

What is the difference between ombuds and mediation interventions?

In a nutshell, an ombuds intervention looks at a spectrum of options that may help resolve a conflict issue for a visitor; while a mediation will always require a second party to be involved and, essentially, negotiated with.

So if a visitor seems to be missing specific information to resolve a concern, we may be able to help obtain this with the help of the administration; and this would be a simple ombuds intervention.

When the issue requires exploring with another party willingness to negotiate or agree on something, for example, specific job parameters with a colleague or manager, or behaviors at the workplace, this is more likely a mediation situation. Mediations tend to focus on specific, tangible outcomes between several parties.

What do you do outside of conflict resolution to recharge?

I'm quite aware that our role dealing with conflicts, in fact sometimes quite tragic situations, can be a bit emotionally taxing for us over time. So getting my work-life balance right is important. I tend to exercise when I can (also to make up for all the baking I do...), and I'm lucky enough to have a lovely dog that gets me out to fresh air early in the mornings. I also do some community work coaching middle-school recreation league basketball. Finally, I usually have one fiction and one non-fiction book lined up when I find a quiet moment.

What is your best advice to someone experiencing a workplace conflict now?

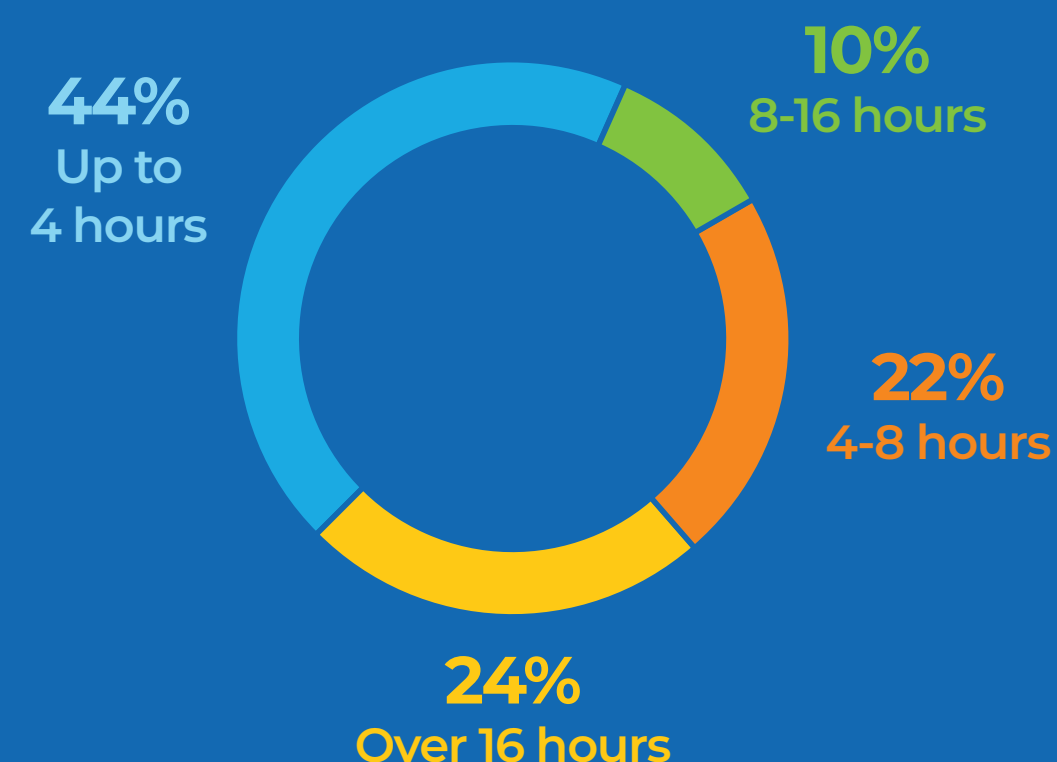
Many years ago a good friend advised me that "it's always good to have options." What may be missing for some colleagues though is a full understanding what those options actually are when facing a workplace conflict situation: Our team is always available to give the confidential space to discuss a conflict, and to explore what options are available.

We are not a last resort nor an escalation mechanism and can be approached at any time, informally.

Regardless of whether someone reaches out to us, my advice would always be that communication is key: Speaking to one another will clarify misunderstandings, address the issue, and provide a basis to moving forward. This applies at work, as well as at home, of course.

FEEDBACK FROM MEDIATION SURVEYS

How long did mediation take?



The mediator was effective in managing the session

4.5/5

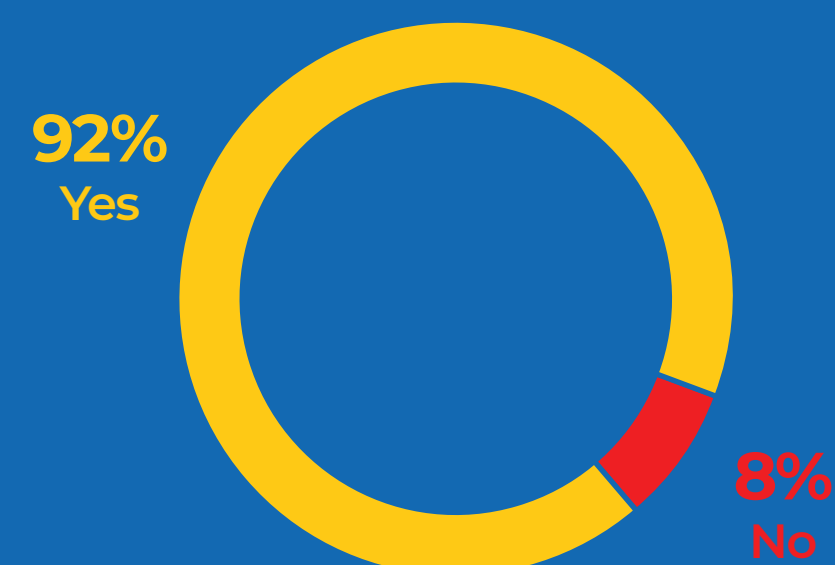
I would choose the same mediator again

4.5/5

Would you recommend mediation to a colleague?

90%

Was an agreement reached during the mediation?



Please rate your overall level of satisfaction with the mediation process

4.3/5

What do Colleagues Who Have Used Mediation Services Say?



"[The mediator] is an excellent professional, very supportive."

"[The mediator] puts you at ease to explore the situation even if you are in distress, he is very knowledgeable and you sense the commitment to assist and bring the case to a positive resolution."

"I am very satisfied with the outcome, and I am certain it would not be possible without mediation."

"It was a good experience because the other party listened to my points and took some actions proposed by the mediator. I appreciated the open discussion and the way the mediator facilitated and summarised the discussion."

"[...] were excellent mediators. They are fair, knowledgeable, empathetic, caring and proactive with ideas and solutions. I have much appreciation for the work they have done for this mediation and I would strongly recommend both for future issues that require an Ombudsman and mediator's intervention."

"[The mediator] was easy to talk to and responded very quickly to my questions and concerns."

"Very positive and useful in cases when there is no open dialogue between parties for some reason."

"[The mediators] undertook the mediation with professionalism and fairness. I very much appreciated their patience and reactivity."

"I have a deep appreciation for [the mediator's] efforts and approach. I am certain that mediation is the most effective way to resolve issues. I hope there will also be concrete results, as well."

"His ability to listen attentively, uphold dignity, seek solutions, and maintain professionalism facilitate constructive negotiation during this process."

"The mediator was very patient and experienced — he never gave up on the process despite the difficulties. Given the confidential nature of the process, I was not fully aware of the other party's point of view. On several occasions, I wanted to give up but believe the mediator managed to keep me engaged."

"[The mediator] was very patient in helping me understand the steps involved in the mediation process. He followed up with me every step of the way to address all my concerns. He was instrumental in involving leadership in the mediation process and in helping me find an agreeable solution for the next six months."

**We would greatly appreciate your
feedback to our mediation services.**

PROVIDE FEEDBACK

**OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
FOR UNITED NATIONS
FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES**

If you'd like to reach out to the Mediation Unit, you can
contact us at:

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The Mediation Unit would like to thank all contributors to this newsletter, as well as our team who worked on this issue:
Kayley LeFaiver (Design and Layout) and Mushegh Manukyan (General Editor, Manager of the Mediation Unit).