FICSA Statement on World Mental Health Day, 10 October 2020

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Geneva
9 October 2020

To: All members

From: Tanya Quinn-Maguire – FICSA President

World Mental Health Day, 10th October 2020

World Mental Health Day is recognized on 10 October each year. FICSA has prioritized staff mental health and well-being for many years, and it is crucial during these difficult times more than ever to bring the conversation around mental health and well-being to light.

UN staff are committed to endlessly making a positive impact in our world. While this can be rewarding, it can take a toll on mental health and well-being. As UN staff across the world, you may undergo stress, witness tragedy, and bear a great deal of responsibility and pressure.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought additional challenges to our lives and it may have increased the prevalence of poor mental health in our workforce. As our world continues to grapple with and recover from this pandemic, it is crucial that we shed light on the mental health risks that will no doubt persist past this pandemic. Anxiety related to the uncertainty, social isolation, fear for family, friends and self has affected many of us. Grief and loss are an issue for many of our personnel.

This pandemic has disproportionally affected those most vulnerable to mental health issues: people with mental health conditions, many experiencing even greater social isolation than before; families juggling childcare and work; young people, and those who have remained separated from their families.

Not just for one day

That is why, this year, the United Nations Common System will promote conversations and activities around mental health and well-being **throughout the entire month of October**. This year, the United Nations System is moving from observing World Mental Health Day to recognizing World Mental Health Month. This is an opportunity to ensure UN personnel:

- Know that the UN is taking action to support their mental health
- Understand the impact of mental health conditions and reduce stigma and discrimination
- Consider what action they can take to support their own mental health and wellbeing

A Coordinated approach

You will probably already have seen messages within your organization during World Mental Health Month highlighting that events and activities will be organized across the UN-System with the goal to raise awareness about workplace mental health and well-being and to mobilize efforts around the implementation of the United Nations System Workplace Mental Health Strategy launched by the Secretary-General in 2018. **Please see the attached calendar of events for a reminder of the events open to all**. FICSA encourages you to share this information with all of your staff, if you have not already done so.

World Mental Health Month 2020 will focus on providing access to resources and visibility for all. Different aspects and angles to mental health will be explored and conversations about how we can take care of ourselves, reduce stigma, and work together to create a healthier workforce will be promoted.

This is a call for action to every person in the United Nations to take part to this month's campaign. We encourage you to engage in the activities proposed through media campaigns, to take part to panel discussions, and to start conversations with your colleagues around mental health and well-being.

This is an unprecedented time in the history of the United Nations. The Secretary General has reiterated his support for promoting and protecting mental health during this time. We need work as one, to build resources and capacity in support of this issue.

What you can do:

- Check the updated [Mental Health Strategy website](#) for detailed information about the UN World Mental Health Month and share it with colleagues

- Check the **UN World Mental Health Month Calendar of Events** and invite colleagues to join the centralized panel discussions, talks and roundtable discussion, etc.

- Follow **@UN4mentalhealth** social media accounts on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) and repost #MentalHealthMatters related hashtags.

- **Share articles** about UN World Mental Health Month that will be featured on UN Yammer, organizations intranets, UN public website and UN radio.

- Share your organization´s **Wellbeing Resources** with colleagues

- **Host discussion/sharing session** with all interested colleagues about mental health:
    - [UN resource Understanding Mental Health](#)
    - [UN resource Recognizing signs of poor Mental Health](#)
    - [UN resource Mental Health Strategy Summary](#)

- **Involve managers and colleagues** to carry out activities around mental health in their respective offices
    - Be aware that most of the activities will have to be held remotely, but also that some colleagues are already going back to the office, so try to give the option to held activities on- and offline to support togetherness even so for remote working and for those back in the office too.
    - General activity ideas for those teams that are still working remotely:
        - share online posters/backgrounds branded to the UN World Mental Health Month
        - facilitate little online mindfulness sessions
        - invite to virtual conversations over tea/coffee
        - do virtual quizzes on mental health topics via Kahoot, Mentimeter
        - take advantage of virtual all staff meeting and have a 15 min (or more) intervention

    - General activity ideas with as much as possible respecting COVID-19 precautionary measures to "welcoming back" those teams back in the office:
        - share table displays
        - invite to conversations over tea/ coffee
        - do quizzes on mental health topics
        - take advantage of all staff meeting in the office and have a 15 min (or more) intervention