**The situation of workers at the United Nations facilities in the City of Knowledge in Panama City**

On 13 July 2020, the Special Rapporteur addressed a letter to the Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, concerning **the situation of workers at the United Nations facilities in the City of Knowledge in Panama City, reportedly exposed to toxic and otherwise hazardous elements inside these buildings (**[**AL OTH 55/2020**](https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownLoadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=25441)**)**.

According to information received, workers at the United Nations facilities in the City of Knowledge in Panama City, previously occupied by the United States military, raise complaint that they have suffered and continue to struggle with associated health impacts, and are unable to access their right to an effective remedy from the United Nations.

Chief among the concerns raised is the dismissal of requests for an independent medical evaluation, repeatedly made by workers over the past three years because of their concerns regarding the short- and long-term health effects their exposure to toxic substances. Further, allegations of abuse of power and direct and indirect threats of retaliation against those voicing their concerns and expectations regarding the situation are of great concern.

In a [**response of 2 September 2020**](https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownLoadFile?gId=35546), the Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support noted that the Occupational Safety and Health team in the Department of Operational Support have engaged quite extensively with staff and management at the United Nations offices in Panama City.

It was agreed that having identified the concerns, the best way to resolve the issue was to conduct an on-site assistance mission. Terms of reference for the mission were drawn up and a site visit by a Medical Officer and two Occupational Safety Officers was agreed to take place from 10 to 14 February 2020.

Unfortunately, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic caused this on-site assessment to be put on hold. As soon as international travel resumes and the safety of the staff conducting the assessment can be assured, the mission will be rescheduled for a later date.