Terms of Reference for Junior Professional Officer (JPO)

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

I. General information

Sustainable Development Areas: Climate Change, Legal Affairs

Sector: Legal Affairs Division, UNFCCC

Duty Stations: Bonn, Germany

Background: The UNFCCC secretariat supports the Convention, its Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement through a range of activities, including substantive and organizational support to meetings of the Parties and the implementation of commitments. It is a dynamic organization working in a politically challenging environment to help address one of the defining issues of our time.

The JPO will work in the Legal Affairs Division. The Division provides legal and procedural advice and services to support (1) the intergovernmental negotiation process, (2) the implementation of the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, and (3) the administration and operations of the UNFCCC secretariat.

II. Supervision

Direct supervisor: Under the overall supervision of the Director of the Legal Affairs division, the JPO will report to Gianluca Crispi, Legal Officer (P-4), Intergovernmental subdivision.

Content and methodology of supervision: The JPO will receive regular short-term guidance from the supervisor, through both a planned and an ad hoc setting as needed. Longer term guidance and feedback will be provided through the Performance Appraisal System (PAS). Regular feedback will be provided by the officer on a weekly basis, both to the supervisor and to the team to support short-term planning.

III. Duties and responsibilities

The JPO will have the following responsibilities:
a) Conduct legal research on a diverse range of assigned issues in international public law involving, inter alia, issues related to climate change law, treaty law and practice.
b) Prepare background papers, studies, reports, etc.
c) Assist in the provision of legal advice to other divisions of the UNFCCC secretariat on the intergovernmental climate change negotiation process, climate change law, and on questions relating to the implementation of the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement;
d) Assist in servicing meetings of the governing bodies and subsidiary, including supporting Legal Officers in respect of substantive agenda items under negotiation. This will also involve the preparation of background materials, summaries of issues and views of delegations, etc.

IV. Qualifications and experience

Advanced university degree (Master's degree or equivalent) in law. A first-level university degree in combination with 2 additional years of qualifying experience may be accepted in lieu of the advanced university degree.

At least two years of relevant work experience in international law and intergovernmental processes, including legal analysis, research and writing.

Fluency in oral and written English is required. Work knowledge of another UN official languages is an asset.

V. Training components and learning elements

The JPO will be able to undertake in-house trainings on the UNFCCC substantive mandate and on and tasks that are necessary for the effective execution of his or her responsibilities at the UNFCCC secretariat. These may include legal research and drafting, rules of procedure of the COP and its subsidiary bodies, substantive climate change laws in various areas of the UNFCCC process.

Upon completion of the assignment the Junior Professional Officer will be able to:

- Possess a clear understanding of substantive, legal, procedural and institutional issues related to the United Nations climate change process.
- Carry out legal research and prepare legal opinions and background information for the meetings of the governing, subsidiary and constituted bodies.
- Plan, organize and service diplomatic conferences, commissions, committees, task forces, expert groups.

The JPO will also have access to mentoring by colleagues in the legal affairs division and will have access to resources to attain the necessary knowledge to perform her/his functions effectively.