

Navigating and supporting the careers of women in the UN system

ICAO/UNOPS/UN Secretariat

Today's Hosts



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Housekeeping Rules

- You are muted by default. The chat function is disabled.
- If you have any questions, please submit them through Zoom Q&A button. Kindly keep your questions relevant to the topic and avoid overly personal inquiries, as we aim to address common concerns during the Q&A portion.
- The session will be recorded. The recording and presentation will be available shortly on the [Inter-Agency Career Week webpage](#) with password: **C@re3rW3ek!#**



AGENDA

- The United Nations System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity
- Areas to Explore
- Panel Discussion
- Q&A
- Resources



“Gender parity at the United Nations is an urgent need – and a personal priority. It is a moral duty and an operational necessity.

The meaningful inclusion of women in decision-making *increases effectiveness and productivity, brings new perspectives and solutions to the table, unlocks greater resources and strengthens efforts* across all three pillars of our work.

”

Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres

UN System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity 2017

Taking the imperative of gender parity from ambition to action

Target:

- Reach gender parity at the senior leadership level by 2021 (USGs, ASGs, SRSGs, Special Envoys)
- Reach gender parity across the entire UN System by 2026 and 2028

Impact across the UN pillars:

- **Development:** bringing more women into the labour force would unlock trillions of dollars for developing economies
- **Human rights:** empowerment is the greatest protection mechanism for women's rights
- **Peace and security:** women's meaningful participation has a direct impact on the sustainability of peace

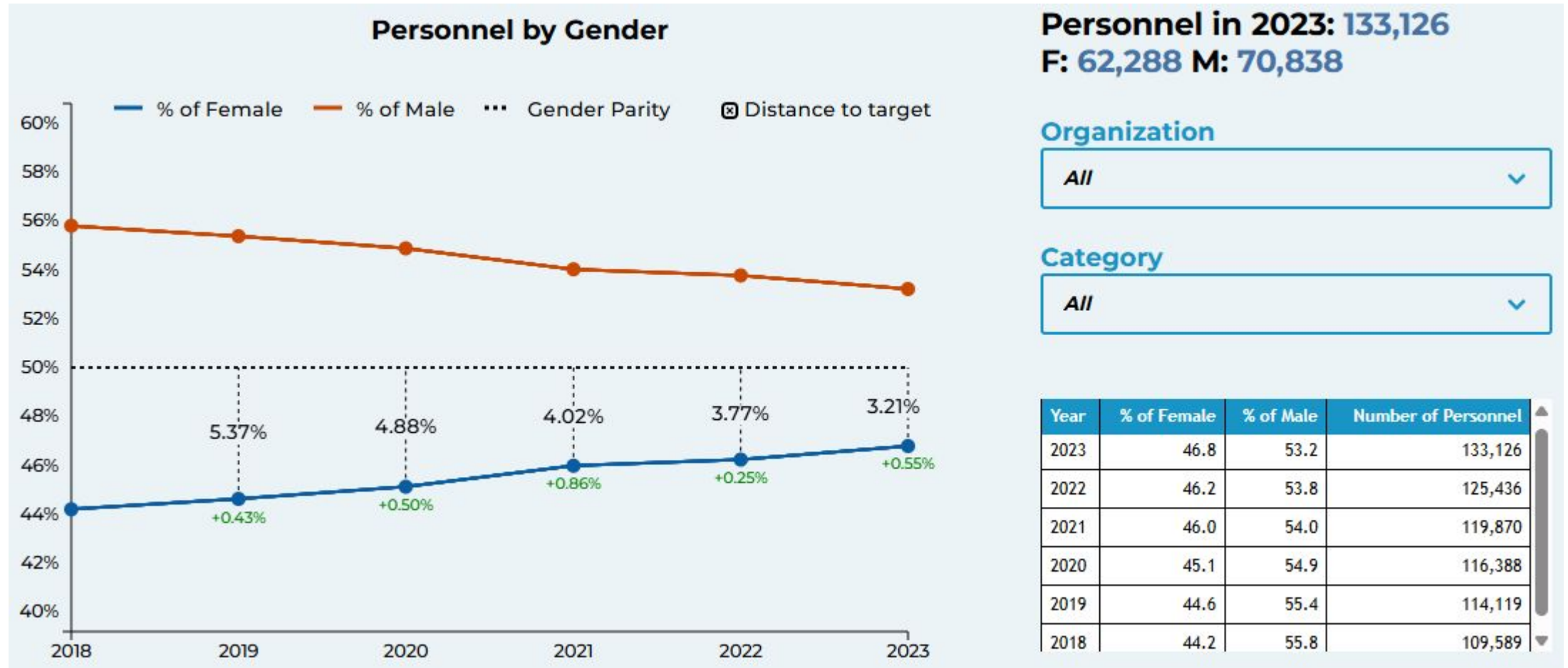
UN System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity 2017

Taking the imperative of gender parity from ambition to action

Business case for gender equality, diversity and inclusion

- Inclusive companies are 1.7 times more innovative.
- Diversity signals an attractive work environment for talent and leads to lower turnover rates.
- Organisations with more diverse top teams are also top financial performers.
- Organisations dedicated to incorporating a variety of perspectives, experiences, and leadership styles consistently outperform competitors with homogeneous leadership teams.

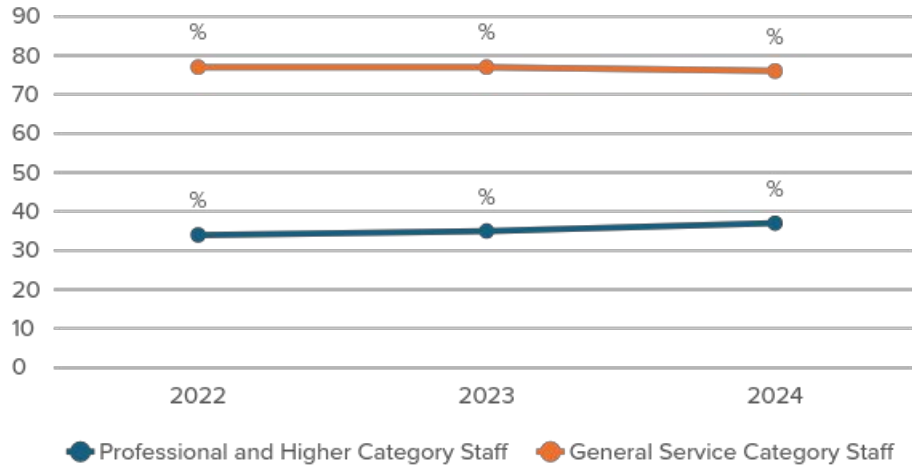
Gender parity in the United Nations System



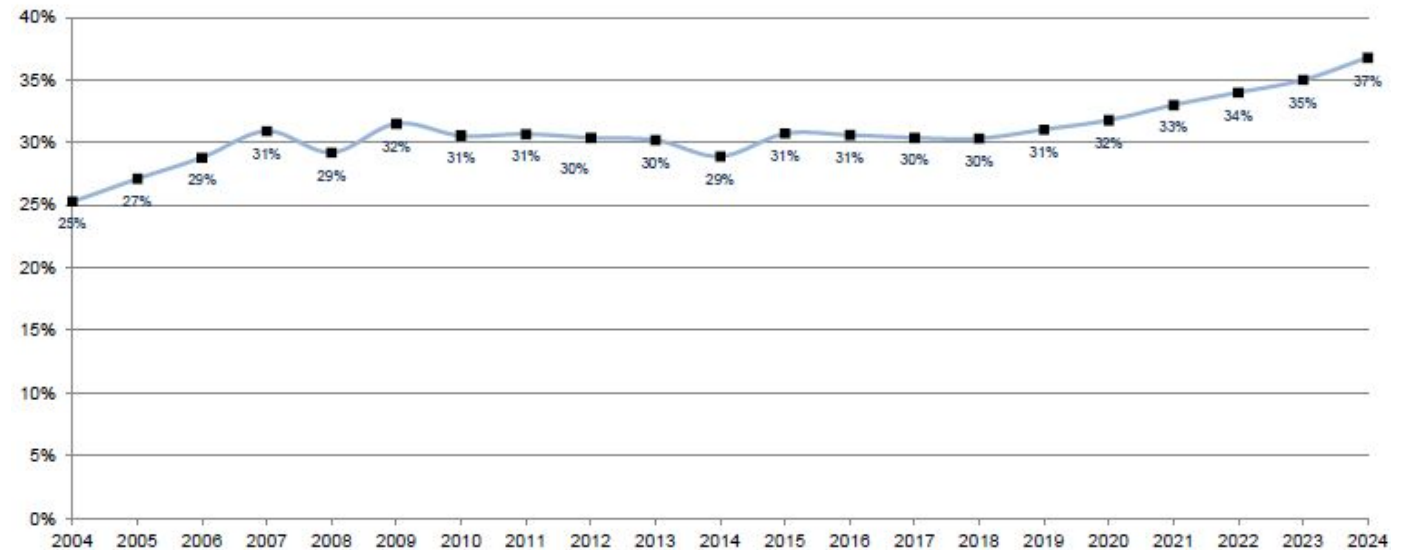
Data Source: United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB)

Gender parity in ICAO

Percentage of women among all staff
2022-2024



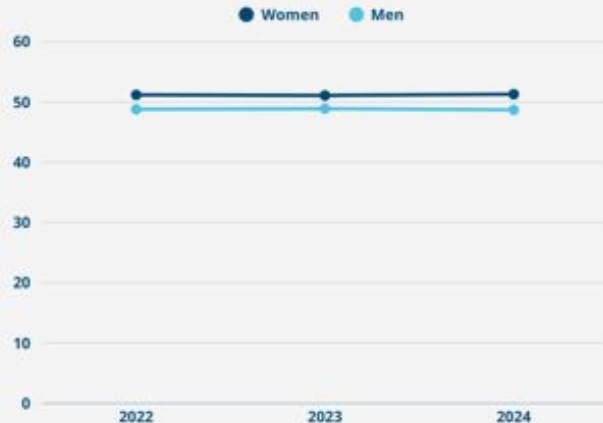
Percentage of Women in the Professional and Higher Categories
2004 - 2024



Gender parity in UNOPS

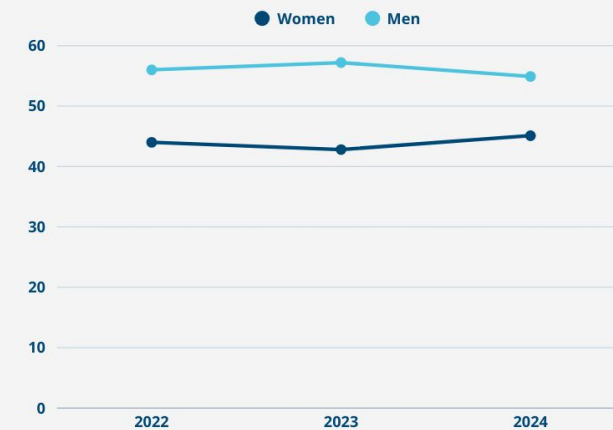
Gender Balance in the Workforce

UNOPS has been sustaining overall gender parity in the workforce since 2021 (parity is considered to be within the range of 47% - 53%). However, this balance is not yet reflected across all business units, regions, and levels. We remain committed to bridging these gaps and turning our ambitions into reality across all facets of our organization.



Gender Balance in Senior Positions

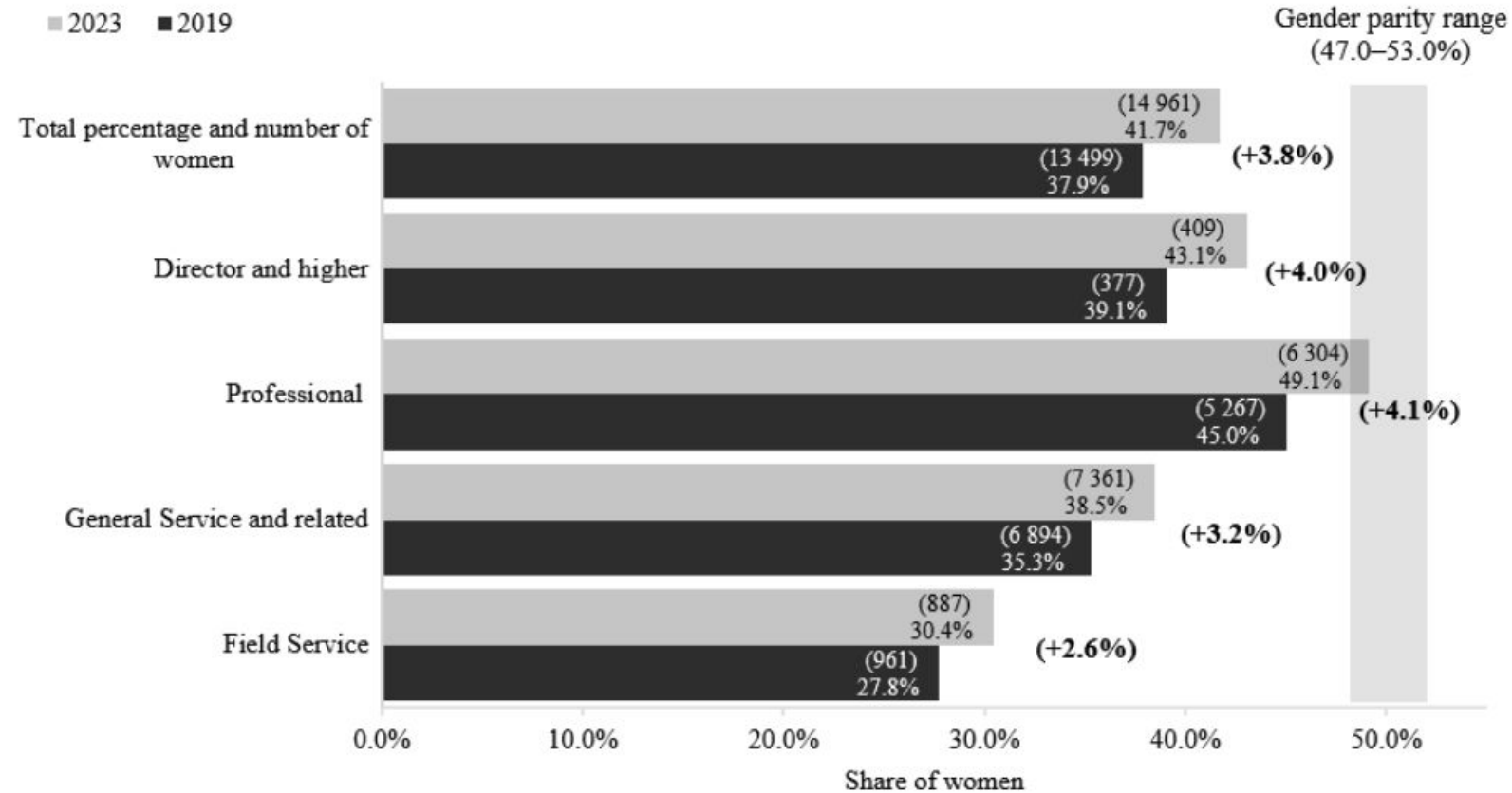
Gender parity has yet to be achieved in senior positions. However, we have seen a modest increase in the representation of women at this levels and remain committed to further progress.



Gender parity in the UN Secretariat

Percentage of women among all staff of the Secretariat, 2019 and 2023

(Population: 35,840 as at 31 December 2023)



Data Source: UN Secretariat Composition Report 2024

Areas to Explore

- Barriers to Women's Career Progression
- The Gap Between Diversity and True Inclusion
- Workplace Dynamics and Gender Bias
- Supportive Policies and Initiatives
- The Role of Allies and Leadership
- Personal and Organisational Commitments

Today's Panellists



Tolulope Agiri

Deputy Director for Human Resources

ICAO



Obianuju Osude

HR Specialist - Diversity, Equity and

Inclusion

UNOPS



Christian F. Saunders

Under-Secretary-General and Special

Coordinator on improving the United Nations
response to sexual exploitation and abuse

OSCSEA



Questions



Tolulope Agiri

Deputy Director for Human Resources

ICAO

Have you observed any obstacles related to career development that women face in the UN workforce, and how do these compare to those faced by women in corporate environments?

Questions



Obianuju Osude

HR Specialist - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

UNOPS

Beyond ensuring equal distribution of posts between genders and surface-level diversity efforts, what can organisations do to create a more efficient workforce and fulfil their mandates, while fostering true inclusion where all women, regardless of race, class, ability, and identity, feel seen, heard, and empowered?

Questions



Christian F. Saunders

Under-Secretary-General and Special
Coordinator on improving the United Nations
response to sexual exploitation and abuse

OSCSEA

- From your perspective as a man and as a UN senior leader, does supporting women's careers create tension between men and women – are we competitors or allies?
- Based on your experience, what are key factors that positively or negatively impact the careers of women and men within the UN?

Closing question

If you had the power to implement one change across all organisations tomorrow to support women's careers, what would it be?



Inclusive practices at work can look like....



Ensuring each participant's opportunity to participate/ share their thoughts



Making an effort to consider opinions that differ from mine



Appreciating ideas and expressing to colleagues their value to the organization



Refraining from making comments based on stereotypes



Showing curiosity about getting to know the cultural background of colleagues



Not permitting discriminatory remarks/jokes



Considering that due to different cultural backgrounds, we have different ways of seeing the world



Stopping people from interrupting each other

Actions for Individuals

The path forward begins with awareness and courage!

- Own your ambition and get clarity on your own goals and aspirations.
- Set short-, medium-, and long-term goals.
- Ask for stretch assignments and mentoring.
- Focus on where you can get visibility.
- Ask for support where needed.
- Build your network.
- Identify the unseen barriers—within our systems and ourselves—that hinder women's career progression.
- Move beyond performative diversity; ask, Who feels heard? Who feels valued?
- Challenge bias where you see it, including in casual conversations and day-to-day decisions.
- Become an active ally—listen deeply, advocate consistently, and use your influence intentionally.

Actions for Organisations

- Audit your workplace dynamics and policies not only for fairness, but for inclusivity in experience and outcome.
- Build and support programs that don't just support women, but also change the conditions that require them to need that support. (Possible areas to address: biased performance evaluations, lack of flexible work)
- Foster leadership that is accountable, transparent, and invested in equity, not just as a value, but as a practice.
- Commit publicly and measure progress relentlessly.

Women's Informal Network (WIN)



Women's
Informal Network
(WIN)

Informal professional network for women in the international development sector

Objective: To promote inspiring women's leadership and strengthen women's managerial abilities by:

- Exchanging advice on **career development**
- Sharing best practices in **Work-Life balance**
- Providing informal **mentoring and coaching**
- Organizing **networking** opportunities
- Inviting **motivational speakers** /stakeholders
- Serving as a focus group on **women-related policy** issues

Membership: Professional women of UN and international agencies

- Currently **over 850 members globally** in 50 different countries from Australia to Zimbabwe
- Members work **across more than 50 organizations** (UN, MDBs, Government, NGOs)
- Chapters in **Rome, New York, Geneva, Vienna**
- Global members can join through **virtual events**
- **Partnerships** with OECD Women's Network, FAO Women's Committee, Women's International Networking, WFP Flock

Interested in Joining? Contact Chitra Deshpande (c.deshpande@ifad.org)



Additional Resources

- [United Nations Gender Portal](#)
- [United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination – HR Statistics](#)
- [UN Women Report on the Improvement in the Status of Women in the UN System](#)



Inter-Agency Career Week 2025

Recommended Sessions

[REGISTER HERE!](#)

Demystifying Job Searching in the UN System (IOM)

Friday, June 20, 2025 - 10:30 to 11:30 CEST (English, Presentation)

Creating Your Personal Learning Strategy (UN Women)

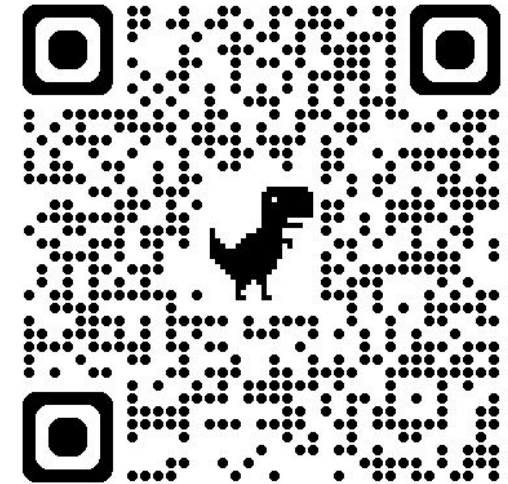
Friday, June 20, 2025 - 16:30 to 17:30 CEST (English, Presentation)

CBI para solicitantes (UNDP)

Friday, June 20, 2025 - 18:00 to 19:00 CEST (Spanish, Career Clinic)

CV writing – transforming tasks into achievements (UNESCO)

Friday, June 20, 2025 - 19:30 to 20:30 CEST (English, Presentation)



THANK YOU! MERCI ! ¡GRACIAS!

The presentation, recording and other resources will be shared on our dedicated Inter-Agency Career Week Page.

Please fill out the [Evaluation Survey](#). Your feedback matters to us!



If you have any questions, please reach out to **Orsolya Kekko** (okekko@icao.int) or **Kirsten Fonager** (kirstenf@unops.org)