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Human resources management

Overview of human resources management reform for the period 2019–2020 and an outlook beyond

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The year 2020 marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and the beginning of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development (see General Assembly resolution [75/1](#)). The world has made remarkable progress towards achieving a shared vision of leaving no one behind, protecting the planet and promoting peace. At the same time, the year 2020 has been marked by increasing threats to human well-being, prosperity and security. At such a juncture, the United Nations must be able to demonstrate its capacity to adapt and respond to unforeseen challenges and demands.

The Secretary-General's new management paradigm ([A/72/492](#)) and the ensuing reforms endorsed by the General Assembly brought about the most significant change in the organizational landscape and the ways in which the United Nations works in decades. From a human resources management perspective, this has accelerated the momentum for change and the pace of transformation of all human resources management functions.

The present report provides an update to the General Assembly on the implementation of the human resources management strategy ([A/73/372](#)) in the period 2019–2020. It presents the progress made in building a forward-looking, needs-responsive and integrated human resources management system.

The General Assembly is invited to take note of the report.



I. Introduction

1. The Secretary-General's new management paradigm (A/72/492) and the ensuing reforms endorsed by the General Assembly brought about the most significant change in the organizational landscape and the ways in which the United Nations works in decades. This momentum of change necessitated a reorientation of all human resources functions to employ a new, systemic approach to their management. Rather than separate human resources areas and a succession of discrete initiatives, the human resources reform efforts have been directed to building a results-focused, client needs-responsive and integrated framework, capable of anticipating and reacting to the fast-paced change of the operational environment of the United Nations Secretariat and its entities.

2. In the present report, the Secretary-General highlights how the Organization-specific and broader context have influenced the human resources reforms. The achievements and results of the reforms are emphasized, rather than the inputs and activities that they have required.

3. Linkages between the organizational environment and the Secretariat's human resources system have been outlined in section II, in order to put the human resources reform efforts into perspective. The three strategic, longer-term outcomes that the reforms will ultimately achieve are outlined in section III. In section IV, the progress made in the attainment of each reform outcome in the period 2019–2020 is described under human resources result areas that provide information about the strategy (overall intent) and the major developments to date. Lastly, in section V, conclusions are presented and the way ahead and priorities for the near future are outlined.

II. Drivers for change

4. Drivers for change¹ are the factors that provide the rationale for the human resources reform efforts and are both external (those outside the Organization's control) and internal (those within). Many relate to the common goals of the international community as articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals. Several are specific to the United Nations system. The internal drivers for change are derived from the Secretary-General's management reform and other mandates and are unique to the United Nations Secretariat. The drivers for change are examined through the lens of their impact on the human resources system of the Secretariat. The list is not exhaustive but reflective of the ongoing analysis taking place to sharpen the focus, speed up progress and achieve the meaningful and lasting impact of human resources management reforms in the foreseeable future.

A. External drivers

5. In recent years, complex interlinkages between the effects of climate change, migration crises, peace and security, demography and development have proved that action must be taken to address them concurrently "through reinvigorated multilateralism" (General Assembly resolution 75/1) and following the road map of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The growing interdependence between country, regional and global action requires enhanced synergies between the normative and operational support functions of the United Nations system, and a more

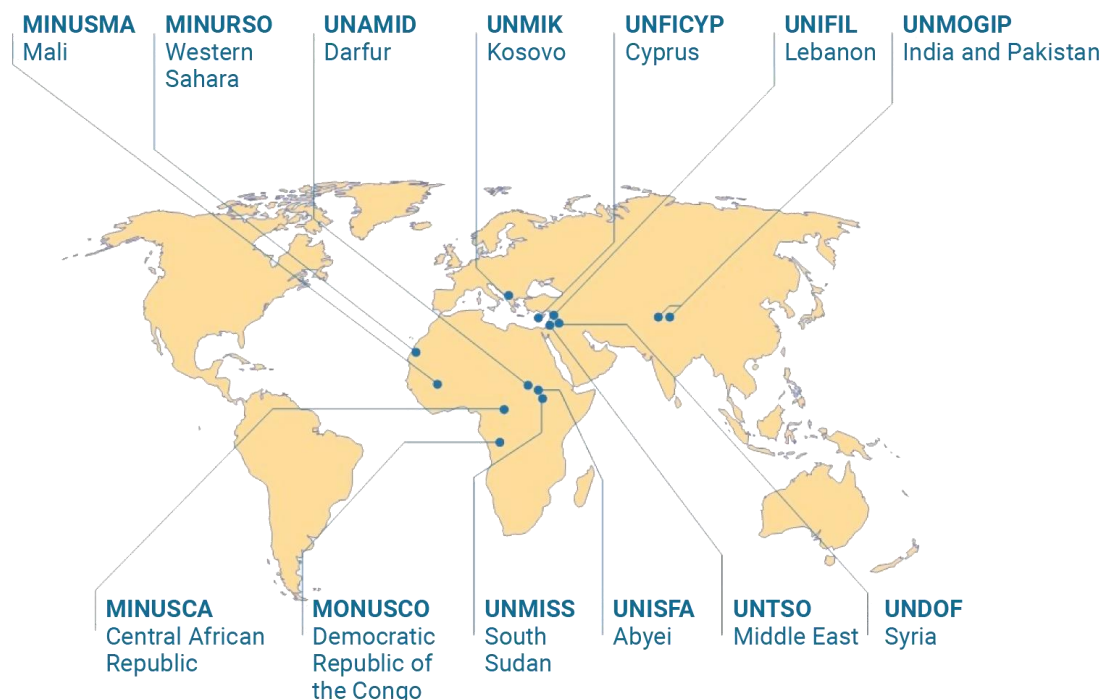
¹ Many of the drivers for change referred to in the present report have been outlined in reports and discussion papers on the future of work by the High-level Committee on Management of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

systemic approach of engagement, planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting. From a human resources perspective, the shift requires a new, more proactive approach in strategic and operational workforce planning, an enhanced workforce focus on the part of human resources service providers, and sound support networks enabling managers and staff to achieve impact and results.

6. Current United Nations peacekeeping operations are shown in the map below.

Map

United Nations peacekeeping operations



Abbreviations: MINURSO, United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara; MINUSCA, United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic; MINUSMA, United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali; MONUSCO, United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; UNAMID, African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur; UNDOF, United Nations Disengagement Observer Force; UNFICYP, United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus; UNIFIL, United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon; UNISFA, United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei; UNMIK, United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo; UNMISS, United Nations Mission in South Sudan; UNMOGIP, United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan; UNTSO, United Nations Truce Supervision Organization.

7. Owing to the protracted nature of crises in many humanitarian and conflict-affected settings, adequate provision for business continuity and enhanced duty of care must be prioritized. The frequently changing deployment context also necessitates rethinking of approaches to career enhancement, notably to staff mobility.

8. Fixed, traditional, hierarchical ways of working limit the capacity of organizations to operate with speed and agility in increasingly complex environments. Dynamic, team-centred organizations enable the rapid realignment of activities as needed, which requires readjustment of structures, performance management and learning processes.

9. Global, regional and local social justice movements have changed how staff members, managers and organizations view workplace culture, conflict management, conduct and discipline. Definitions of diversity and inclusion, historically viewed in the United Nations system through the dual lenses of geographical and gender balance, have broadened.

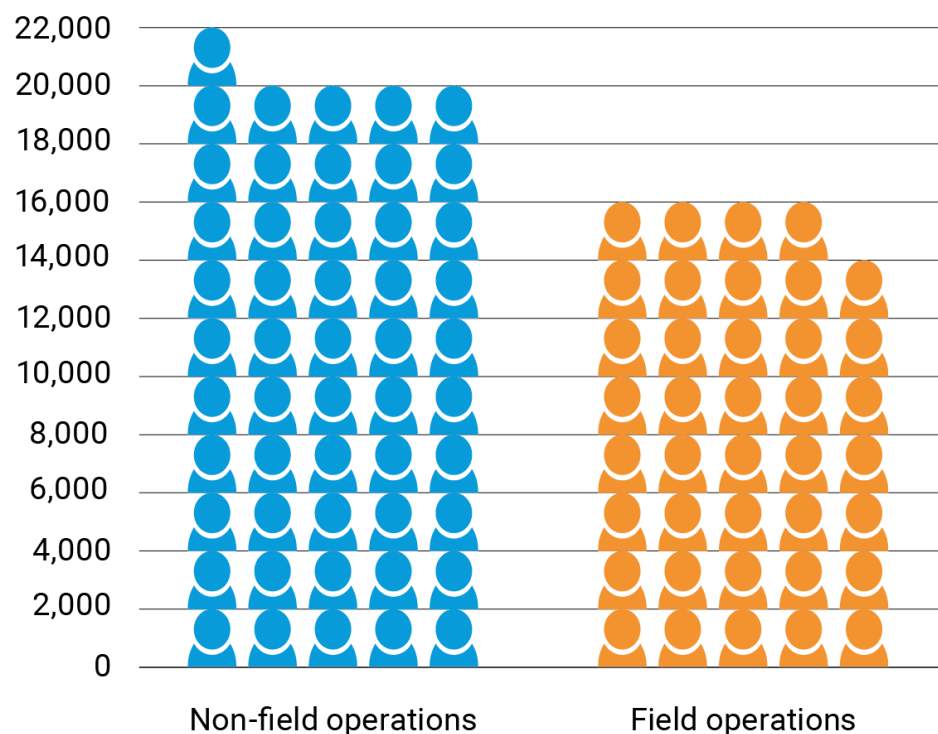
10. Breakthroughs in technology, for example, blockchain, biometrics recognition, machine learning and robotic process automation, offer opportunities to expedite and improve human resources processes. At the same time, technological innovations have given rise to new cybersecurity and privacy concerns, which have increased noticeably in the technology-dependent environment of working during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Efforts to proactively identify opportunities for human resources process innovations will have to go hand in hand with heightened vigilance about cyberspace threats.

B. Internal drivers

11. In view of the large percentage of United Nations staff in field operations, the delegation of authority framework, a cornerstone of the Secretary-General's management reform, has brought decision-making close to the point of delivery (see figure I).

Figure I

Staff in field and non-field operations as at 31 December 2019



12. A simplified, flexible human resources policy framework, coupled with effective and tailored human resources services delivery supports decentralized decision-making and serves the needs of larger and smaller client entities alike, operating in different contexts.

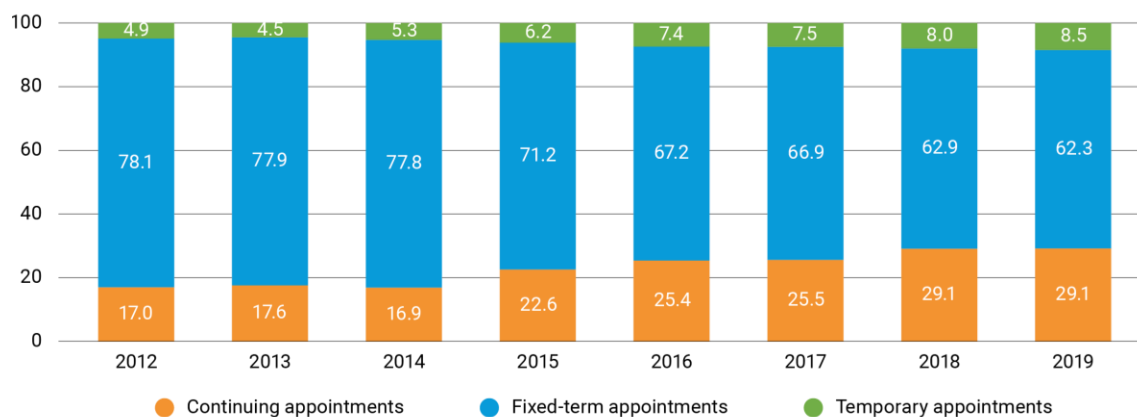
13. The implementation of the delegation of authority framework has also required a more robust accountability system. This has resulted in increased expectations from leadership to operationalize a profound cultural transformation that is more focused on results than on processes, values innovation and demonstrates a greater readiness to take prompt corrective action when required. The strengthened leadership accountability system has also brought about a renewed focus on developing tailored training and capacity-building that empowers leaders and managers to operationalize the cultural shift required.

14. Increasing demands to deliver results in the United Nations Secretariat have come with new challenges in the financial landscape. The unprecedented liquidity crisis and the increased degree of funding earmarking in the United Nations system have led to continued cost pressure and less financial predictability. This has had implications for workforce planning and appointment modalities, leading to a reliance on a dynamic mix to bridge scale, capacity and skill mix requirements effectively. The use of these modalities over time in the United Nations Secretariat is illustrated in figure II below.

Figure II

All staff of the Secretariat by appointment type as at 30 June for 2012 to 2015 and as at 31 December for 2016 to 2019

(Percentage)



15. The United Nations workforce must reflect the diversity of the peoples that it serves. Upon assuming office, the Secretary-General placed a renewed emphasis on enhancing diversity. With regard to Member State representation, progress has been made in recent years in decreasing the number of underrepresented countries and increasing the number of countries within range. The percentage of female staff members has increased steadily over the years.² The progress made is illustrated in figures III–V below.

² Regional diversity and gender parity data are based on staff in the Professional and higher categories and in the Field Service category with permanent, continuing and fixed-term contracts and exclude staff on temporary appointments.

Figure III
Representation of Member States under the system of desirable ranges as at 31 December for 2017 to 2019

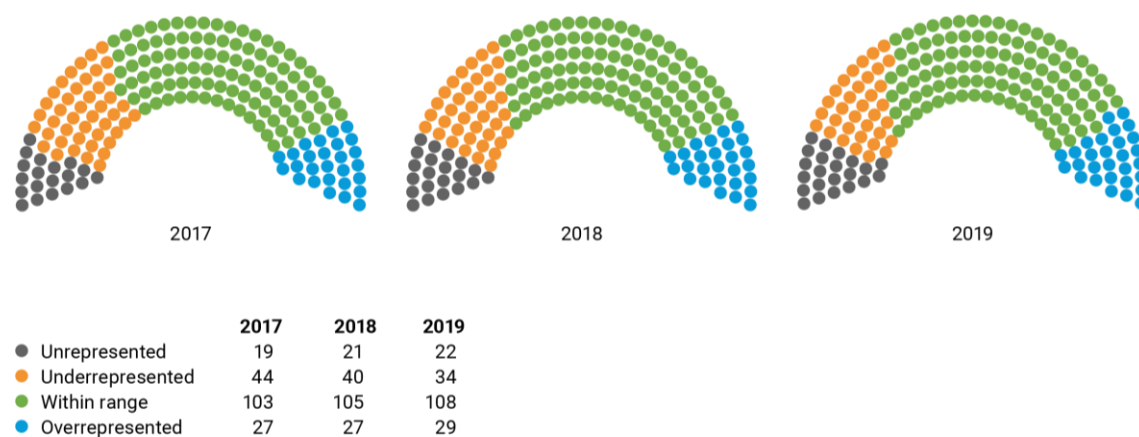


Figure IV
International staff by regional group as at 31 December for 2017 to 2019
(Percentage)

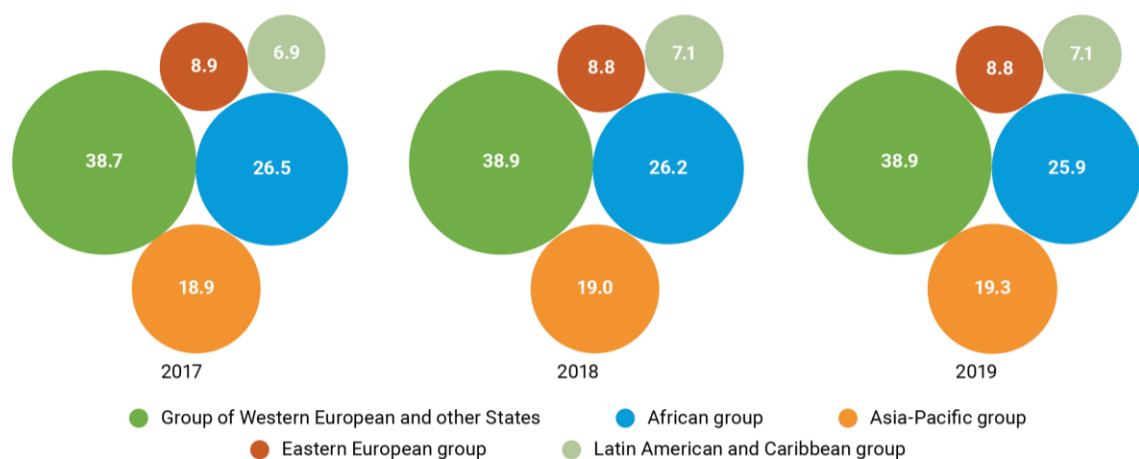
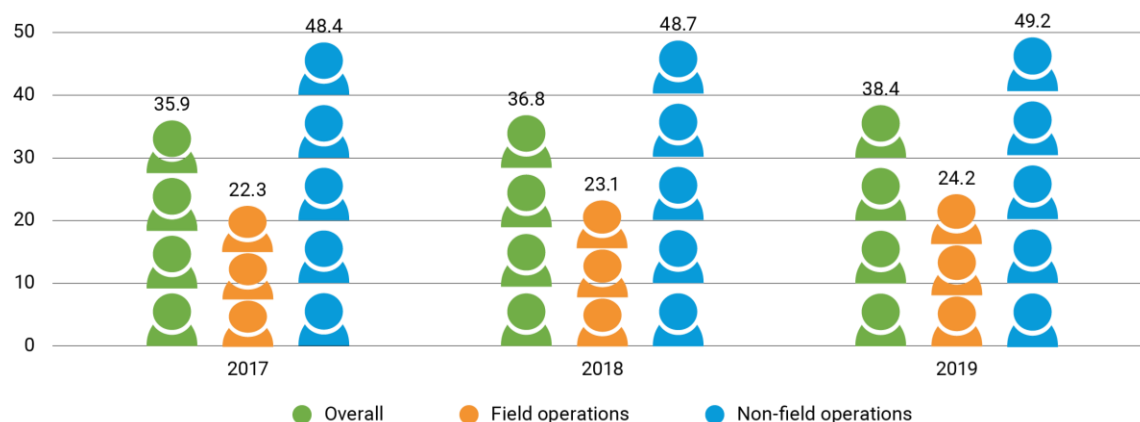


Figure V
Female staff in the United Nations Secretariat by type of entity (field operations, non-field operations and overall) as at 31 December for 2017 to 2019
 (Percentage)



16. Addressing diversity imbalances is helped by understanding the root causes and the systemic changes necessary to rectify them. Whilst recruitment decisions are devolved, it is the responsibility of the central human resources functions to implement innovative, effective and transparent tools to avoid bias and demonstrate the benefits of geographical, regional, gender and other diversity in the Secretariat, and thus facilitate inclusive human resources management decisions.

III. Strategy and longer-term outcomes

17. The substance of the human resources management reforms contained in the global human resources strategy 2019–2021 ([A/73/372](#)) remains valid. In communicating the strategy to internal and external stakeholders, there has been an increased focus on explaining how the human resources system would look when reforms are implemented. From that perspective, the three longer-term outcomes of the reforms are defined in figure VI below.

Figure VI

Outcomes of the human resources reforms**Outcome 2 – Diversity**

A diverse workplace where the Organizational workforce reflects the gender, geographical, regional and other diversity of the peoples it serves

Outcome 1 – Agility

Proactive and efficient planning, hiring, deployment and learning for a multiskilled, mobile and adaptable talent

**Outcome 3 – Accountability**

Efficient human resources services reliant on a policy framework enabling client entities to fulfill their mandates, where team, individual and organizational performance are aligned and human resources risks are effectively managed

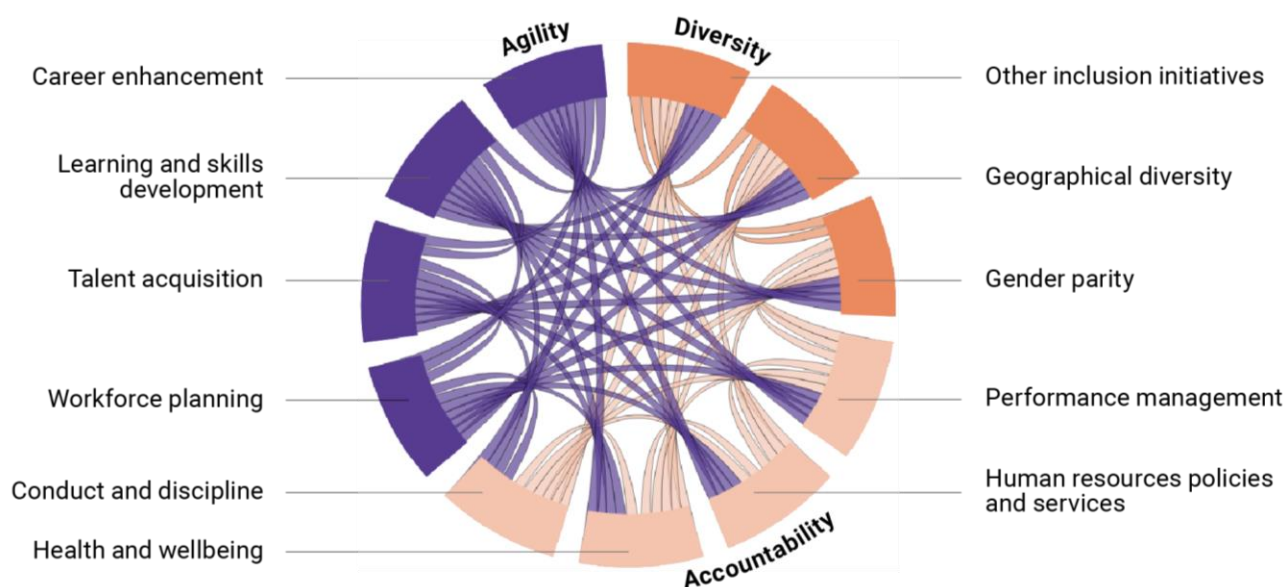
18. **Outcome 1.** An agile organization is characterized by proactive and efficient planning, hiring, deployment and learning for a multi-skilled, mobile and adaptable talent pool. This outcome thus encompasses reforms that reposition workforce planning into a forward-looking and proactive function, drive innovative and efficient talent acquisition, align learning and development provision closely with organizational priorities and introduce enabling career enhancement mechanisms.

19. **Outcome 2.** A diverse organization sustains a workplace in which the workforce reflects the gender, geographical and regional diversity of the peoples that it serves and in which differences in background, perspectives and abilities are valued. It encompasses reforms that are aimed at enhancing geographical diversity, including regional diversity, gender parity and the inclusion of persons with different characteristics.

20. **Outcome 3.** An accountable organization provides efficient human resources services supported by an enabling policy framework to fulfil clients' mandates, where team, individual and organizational performance are aligned, and human resources risks are transparently and effectively managed. It encompasses reforms that streamline human resources policies to facilitate timely, efficient and high-quality advisory support and service provision tailored to meet clients' operational needs and enabling the compliant exercise of delegated authorities, sustains a high-performance management culture, consolidates holistic conduct and discipline management and ensures health and well-being for all personnel.

21. The human resources reform result areas within each longer-term outcome are illustrated in figure VII below.

Figure VII
Result areas under the human resources reform outcomes



22. The three outcomes and result areas are not siloed: they are interdependent and mutually reinforcing within an integrated and coherent system. The backbone of an agile organization is a client needs-centred talent acquisition system built to identify, attract and acquire talent in a fast, efficient, fair and professional manner, which paves the way for achieving the ambitious geographical diversity and gender parity objectives set. Implementing a 360-degree assessment for staff at all levels is a key element of instituting a high-performance management culture and is closely connected with building the capacity, including through structured learning and skill development activities, of leaders and managers to inspire trust. An essential element of a functioning career enhancement framework – staff mobility – is built upon the understanding that every United Nations staff member is intrinsically motivated to achieve professional excellence, which is in turn the core motivation that drives staff learning and skill development. Therefore, the outcomes and result areas of the human resources reform efforts should be seen holistically, thus permitting continuous adjustment to align human resources management with the increasing demands of the clients that it serves.

IV. Progress of human resources management reforms

A. Progress of reforms towards the agility outcome

Workforce planning

Strategy

23. Effective workforce planning enables the Organization to proactively prepare for events that affect its workforce. Such planning requires detailed knowledge of the close linkages between changing mandates and priorities, skill and competency trends, demographics, technology and cultural transformations. A holistic approach to workforce planning – a strategic workforce planning framework – is being put in place on the basis of a strategic, cross-organizational and long-term vision of operationalizing workforce planning at the entity level through hands-on advisory

services, support and guidance, with corresponding linkages to the budgetary process. An updated, forward-looking competency framework complements these efforts, as do robust human resources data, business intelligence and analytics capabilities.

Progress towards attainment of the result

24. Dictated by the future of work, as outlined in section II, and as part of an organizational culture shift focused on results, innovation and risk management, a process was launched to revise the existing, almost 20-year-old competency framework of the United Nations Secretariat. Aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the United Nations system leadership framework (CEB/2017/1, annex), the new competencies are forward-looking and based on behaviours, core skill sets and professional mindsets and emphasize critical future requirements such as data-driven and system thinking approaches to generating solutions, innovation, collaboration and continuous learning. The launch of the new competency framework is planned for the beginning of 2021, after which the entire talent management system will be calibrated accordingly.

25. The competency framework was informed by an exercise to forecast the skills that will be needed by the Organization in the future in order to assess the availability of such skills in the existing workforce and in the global labour market. The exercise yielded a list of 11 skills that are relevant across operating contexts, including coordination and cognitive flexibility. Data skills were among the skills identified, and, in support of the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere, 24 generic job profiles and a job family for new data specialist functions were designed.

26. During 2019–2020, two key human resources reports were produced, entitled “Composition of the Secretariat: staff demographics” (forthcoming) and “Composition of the Secretariat: gratis personnel, retired staff and consultants and individual contractors” (forthcoming). Expanding from its established set of tables and graphs showing demographic and structural data and analyses and trends with respect to global staff and non-staff, the report on the composition of the Secretariat in 2019 includes additional insights, trends and references to underlying factors, including from a gender, geographical and regional diversity perspective. Detailed staffing data has also continued to be delivered through the online Member States’ portal on a monthly basis. More than 180 users from different delegations have regularly benefited from this online access. To further improve the scope and timeliness of the information, the feasibility of automating the production of the report on the composition of the Secretariat and delivering it through an enhanced Member States’ portal has been examined, and broad parameters for implementation are being considered.

27. To provide updated, practical guidance in support of clients’ mandates, a new workforce planning guide was produced, translating strategic into operational workforce planning. To provide a process methodology for entities to conduct staffing reviews, a staffing review toolkit was made available. The nationalization guidelines are currently under review and will be issued imminently to support entities not only in scaling and optimizing resources, but also in building organizational capabilities for greater networked cooperation with local stakeholders for the entire Secretariat, an imperative outlined in section II. Finally, an organizational design inventory to help managers to decide how an organization should be structured and function to achieve its goals has also been published.

Talent acquisition

Strategy

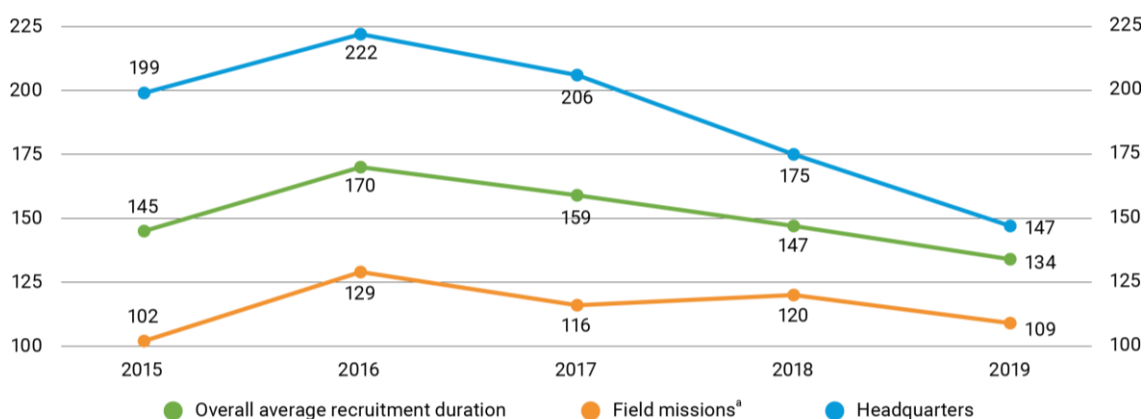
28. Client needs-responsive talent acquisition is built upon a framework that enables the Organization to identify, attract and acquire talent in a fast, efficient, fair and professional manner. Improvements in systems, methods and processes are under way, many of them leveraging advanced technologies. These innovations will ultimately help entities to meet their skill needs more quickly and achieve their diversity goals.

Progress towards attainment of the result

29. A recruitment innovation project was launched in 2019, aimed at achieving the 120-day recruitment timeline target. The project identified recruitment process bottlenecks, organized rounds of discussions with hiring managers and recruiters, and led to the introduction of improved recruitment tools for pre-screening, screening and interview reporting, and real-time recruitment monitoring. This process of collaborative recruitment innovation development has gone hand in hand with the provision of capacity-building to hiring managers and recruiters by means of online communities of practice, regional training hubs, updates of guides and manuals and individual advisory support. These and other efforts, notably a reduction of the posting period for position-specific job openings to 30 days in accordance with previous requests made to the General Assembly (see [A/73/372/Add.1](#) and [A/71/323](#)), would lead to a further reduction in the recruitment timeline beyond 2020, building on the favourable trend experienced in the last five years, as illustrated in figure VIII below.

Figure VIII

Average duration of the recruitment process (FS-4 to FS-7 and P-3 to D-1 levels, under [ST/AI/2010/3](#), as amended)



Source: Inspira.

Note: Includes job openings at the FS-4 to FS-7 and P-3 to D-1 levels subject to the staff selection system outlined in [ST/AI/2010/3](#), as amended, excluding generic job openings used to create rosters for the field. It does not include temporary job openings advertised in accordance with [ST/AI/2010/4/Rev.1](#) or job openings advertised under the staff selection and managed mobility system outlined in [ST/AI/2016/1](#), as amended.

^a Field missions include special political missions and peacekeeping missions.

30. At the same time, the Organization is continuing to professionalize testing and assessments across the United Nations. While the United Nations online examinations and tests system has been used for certain exams since 2016, significant efforts are under way to further enhance its capabilities, including its integration with the organizational recruitment platform, Inspira, to allow for a seamless experience for

candidates, hiring managers and recruiters. Candidate assessment method options are also being expanded by using video-based assessments and online remote proctoring services and creating a pool of test questions focused on United Nations core competencies and reasoning skills.

31. A critical aid in expediting recruitment is the function of building, maintaining and managing rosters through generic job openings. This is especially valid for field operations, where the majority of the recruitment needs are filled through rosters. A new methodology analyses and determines options for roster schedules based on data and specific criteria established and linked to the Organization's priorities. The generic job opening process has also benefited from the new recruitment tools and technologies described above. With the outbreak of COVID-19, a location-independent mechanism to conduct roster assessments is now in place, which brings about cost and environmental efficiencies by eliminating the need for travel. However, there is an impact on timelines given the challenges of managing recruitment panels over different time zones.

32. Concurrently, efforts have continued to improve onboarding. A new onboarding and staff movements process guide was launched in 2020, which reflects the standardization of the current onboarding process and the consolidation of best practices across the Secretariat. New onboarding tools are being developed with a dual focus on process effectiveness and stakeholder experience. In this regard, a new candidate onboarding portal was also launched, together with an enhanced offer management dashboard for increased visibility, transparency and easier self-management of onboarding by entities and candidates.

Learning and skill development

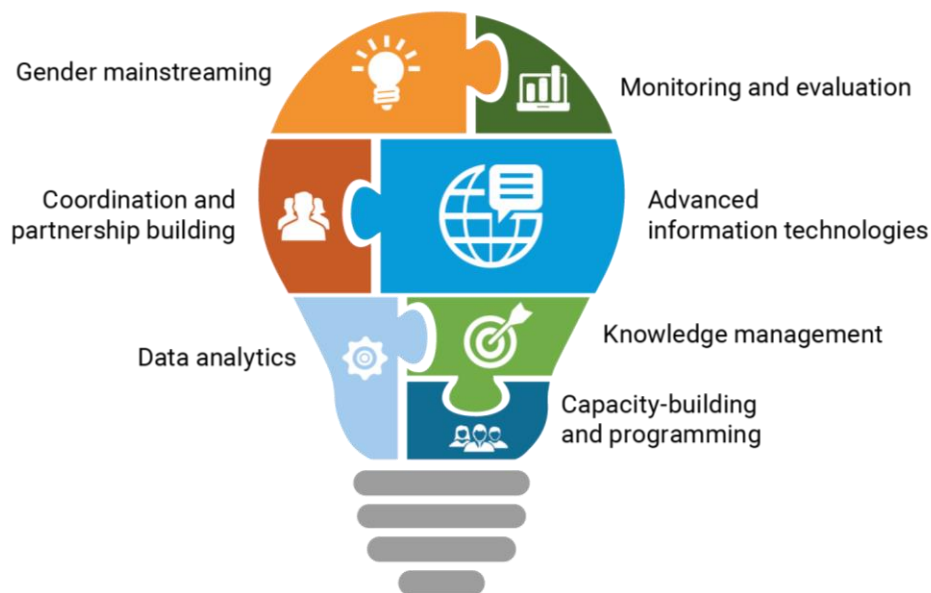
Strategy

33. Under the delegation of authority model, it is critical that the Organization has a clear road map to equip managers, staff and teams with the knowledge, skills and other attributes needed to discharge their responsibilities effectively. A learning and development strategy, currently under development, will anchor the Secretariat's learning and development opportunities in the 2030 Agenda, the United Nations system leadership framework and the programmatic priorities of entities, thus supporting individual, team and organizational achievements with impactful solutions tailored to learners' needs.

Progress towards attainment of the result

34. In 2020, a Secretariat-wide learning needs assessment was completed to align cross-cutting learning priorities with the organizational strategy. A learning needs analysis report was produced for the United Nations Secretariat and entity-specific reports were also made available. Seven cross-cutting high-priority areas were identified to build Organizational capability, as illustrated in figure IX below.

Figure IX
High-priority areas for building organizational capacity



35. Another significant development was the complete overhaul of the leadership and management development programmes to align them with the delegation of authority framework and the United Nations system leadership framework. In 2019, the former Management Development Programme was replaced by the United Nations System Executive Management Programme targeting second reporting officers. In 2020, the Secretariat launched three new leadership programmes: (a) E-Management Certificate for first reporting officers on enhancing people, planning, implementation and resource management skills; (b) Leadership Skills for Emerging Talents, focused on leadership and influence for aspiring leaders (P-2 staff, to be expanded to P-3 staff imminently); and (c) Blue Line, an online platform that offers a range of digital learning resources. The new leadership and development programmes are projected to provide training for over 1,300 managers from across entities by the end of 2020. Finally, a Senior Leadership Induction Programme was launched to help new Assistant Secretaries-General and Under-Secretaries-General to understand the United Nations culture and its operational nuances, featuring an induction, executive coaching, mentoring and team-building components over a one-year period, that leaders can flexibly avail themselves of, as needed.

36. Simultaneously, the increased commitment to staff development resulted in the establishment of a dedicated capacity development and operational training capability in the Secretariat. It addresses the specific learning needs of operational staff related to resources, people and supply chain management under the delegation of authority framework. Training has been provided to 200 leaders and managers to date from across entities through a governance and stewardship executive training programme. Each skill development priority – resources, people and supply chain – for operational staff at large is governed by a dedicated framework to addresses both skill development and certification. Finance, human resources and supply chain management training programmes are being rolled out and over 650 staff have enrolled to date.

37. Finally, a thorough revision of the United Nations Secretariat's online mandatory training programme for all staff was finalized in 2020 and a complete overhaul is under way by means of reducing the number of mandatory training courses

and upgrading the content of the remaining courses to comply with technical, design and accessibility standards. The work on all but two courses has been completed, and the remaining work is scheduled for completion in early 2021.

Career enhancement

Strategy

38. A new career enhancement framework, currently under development, will articulate the principles, processes, tools and resources that the Organization will put in motion to help staff to achieve career fulfilment. The framework is reliant on the fundamental notion that achieving job impact and professional excellence are the primary motivators of staff in the United Nations Secretariat. Thus, the framework is anchored in the close linkages between learning and skill development, and career fulfilment. Its core principles will be: shared involvement of staff and the Organization in the path toward career fulfilment, distinct division of labour of central and local teams in delivering career enhancement opportunities, and the remit of the Organization to communicate clear skill development expectations to all staff, notably via a new approach to staff mobility.

Progress towards attainment of the result

39. The new approach to staff mobility has now been finalized and is presented in a separate report of the Secretary-General on mobility (forthcoming). Anchored in the delegation of authority framework and organizational skill needs, it is also aimed at supporting individual career enhancement through the learning opportunities that postings in different contexts provide. It features a number of elements, including entities conducting mobility exercises, making mobility decisions and creating talent pools on the basis of similarities in mandates and profiles, the availability of locations and numbers of staff across entities, as well as the establishment of mobility targets to monitor entities' performance.

40. In the meantime, the Secretariat has continued to offer career enhancement opportunities that serve global staff. These have included career coaching sessions, online programmes and a new Organization-wide mentoring programme, which was launched in August 2020. All levels of staff across three job networks were invited to join this new programme and an open approach was followed to pairing them across networks, entities and staff categories (such as General Service staff being paired with Professional staff). More than 650 mentees and mentors, who will be paired through an online platform, have enrolled in the programme to date. A plan to roll out the programme to other job networks is being developed.

B. Progress of reforms towards the diversity outcome

Geographical diversity

Strategy

41. As outlined in section II, the complexity of the global United Nations presence and mandates must be matched by a diverse, geographically balanced, gender-balanced, international and multitalented workforce that serves as a role model for the communities that it serves. For this reason, the Secretary-General has pledged to increase geographical diversity, with the term encompassing both equitable geographical distribution and greater regional group diversity, by adopting a Geographical Diversity Strategy for the United Nations Secretariat that drives the efforts to that effect.

Progress towards attainment of the result

42. Under the delegation of authority framework, responsibility for attaining the diversity objectives of geographical recruitment³ lies with heads of entities. For this reason, the accountability framework for geographical recruitment has undergone continuous strengthening. Senior managers' compacts include a key performance indicator on geographical diversity, with targets for appointments from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States and achieving greater regional group diversity.

43. As outlined in section II, there has been some progress in recent years in achieving greater geographical diversity. The number of Member States within range showed a modest increase, from 103 in 2017 to 108 in 2019. The number of underrepresented Member States decreased significantly, from 44 to 34 in the same period. At the same time, the number of unrepresented countries increased from 19 in 2017 to 22 in 2019. Several regional groups were consistently underrepresented in the workforce in the same period. Addressing imbalances is helped by understanding the root causes and bottlenecks in attracting a geographically diverse workforce. To aid this understanding, a large-scale trend analysis covering both gender and geographical diversity⁴ focused on the various aspects of the application pipeline from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States and regional groups. The analysis reinforced an understanding of the challenges in the supply of applications and underscored the opportunities presented by applicant data analysis for entities to launch prompt outreach activities, a task that would be less challenging had barriers currently in place for staff in the General Service and Field Service categories to applying for Professional posts been removed, in accordance with previous requests made to the General Assembly (see [A/73/372/Add.1](#) and [A/71/323](#)).

44. This and other analyses were used to inform the Geographical Diversity Strategy, launched in early 2020, which contains a focused approach to achieving geographical diversity objectives. Backed by extensive quantitative analysis, the Strategy sets out a road map through three streams as illustrated in figure X below.

Figure X

Three streams of the Geographical Diversity Strategy



³ Geographical recruitments encompass positions in the Professional and higher categories financed from the programme budget, excluding the following types of positions: language, mission, jointly financed activities, general temporary assistance and temporary assistance for meetings.

⁴ See the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat: staff demographics.

45. Some of the major accomplishments to date within each stream are set out in table 1.

Table 1

Major accomplishments of the three streams of the Geographical Diversity Strategy

<i>Guidance</i>	<i>Outreach</i>	<i>Partnerships</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular accountability dialogues with entities held based on entity-specific geographical diversity challenges and rigorous data analysis. • Regional diversity dashboard launched to monitor targets by entity. • Applicant pipeline analysis tool prototyped for timely launch of targeted direct outreach activities. • Geographical diversity toolkit with eight checklists and practical tips to assist reassignment and recruitment decisions made available to entities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 profiles of unrepresented and underrepresented Member States and 23 profiles of troop- and police-contributing countries created. • Forthcoming development of mailing lists for targeted distribution of vacancies. • Talent outreach survey completed of currently serving staff from unrepresented and underrepresented countries to build a database of country-specific outreach tools and channels. • Invitation to National Professional Officers from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States to apply for international job openings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership with regional coordinators and United Nations information centres in unrepresented and underrepresented Member States for outreach, both offline and online. New approach implemented successfully with outreach missions in two countries. • Leveraging the networks of the African Union, the Caribbean Community, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries for vacancy dissemination.

46. Finally, the young professionals programme, an important vehicle in fulfilling the Secretariat's geographical diversity objectives, has also undergone improvements. Examinations have been conducted via an online platform since 2018, which has allowed nationals from 43 Member States to sit for the exam, who otherwise would not have because of a lack of an exam centre in their home country. Steps are continuously taken to ensure bias elimination in tests. Renewed efforts made to attract a diverse pool of candidates saw candidates from 54 of the 56 unrepresented and underrepresented Member States participating in the 2019 exercise of the young professionals programme, and 56 per cent of those on the young professionals programme roster as at 31 December 2019 were women. A "chatbot" or "virtual assistant" to answer potential applicants' questions, a revamped web page on the United Nations Careers Portal and a toolkit of materials (including videos) in English and French for Member States to conduct their own information sessions have also been introduced.

Gender parity*Strategy*

47. Gender parity remains a top priority for the Secretary-General following the launch of the system-wide strategy on gender parity in 2017. The ultimate target of the strategy is to achieve equal representation of women and men across the Organization at all levels by 2028, and it includes measures to improve female talent attraction, development and retention.

Progress towards attainment of the result

48. Notable achievements include having practically reached full gender parity in 2019 among staff in non-field operations (at 49.2 per cent of female staff) and among all full-time senior leaders, with 90 women and 90 men at the level of Assistant Secretary-General or Under-Secretary-General in the United Nations Secretariat. However, challenges remain, particularly regarding the recruitment of women in field operations and for traditionally male-dominated job networks, such as security, which continue to be analysed and addressed.

49. Table 2 contains a summary of progress made in the removal of barriers towards the advancement of women in the United Nations Secretariat since 2019 in the three main, interrelated and mutually reinforcing areas: (a) policy and accountability framework; (b) recruitment and retention; and (c) enabling environment.

Table 2

Major accomplishments of the three main areas of reform intervention for gender parity

<i>Framework</i>	<i>Recruitment</i>	<i>Environment</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender parity forms part of both the Senior Manager's Compact and the delegation of authority key performance indicator. • Policy on flexible working arrangements and on breastfeeding were both updated in 2019. Ongoing review of further policies to align with the Gender Parity Strategy is prioritized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary special measures introduced with ST/AI/2020/5 to facilitate gender-balanced recruitment in entities lagging behind in terms of gender parity. • Unconscious bias element included in the new competency-based interview training for panellists. • Several gender-specific broad-based outreach campaigns held yielding between 200 per cent and 400 per cent increase in qualified female applications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-inclusive language guidelines adopted to guide all communications – formal and informal – from United Nations Secretariat staff. • Enabling environment guidelines for the United Nations system, developed by United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), was launched and is being implemented.

Other inclusion initiatives

Strategy

50. As indicated in section II, diversity in the United Nations Secretariat has historically been seen through the dual lenses of geographical representation and gender parity. However, social justice movements and major demographic shifts in recent years have expanded the understanding of diversity in organizational settings to include identities, backgrounds and characteristics such as (dis)ability, race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic background, age, gender identity and sexual orientation, which the Secretariat aspires to understand, reflect and fully include among its workforce and across the human resources system. In 2019, the Secretary-General launched the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy with the ultimate goal of achieving equality of outcomes for people with disabilities and fostering an inclusive culture within the United Nations system. The Strategy has a specific indicator on employment of persons with disabilities. The Secretary-General has reiterated that the United Nations should aim to be an employer of choice for persons with disabilities. The employment indicator not only aims to ensure that employment policies and strategies include provisions to attract, recruit and retain persons with

disabilities, it is ultimately also aimed at having more persons with disabilities working in the United Nations.

Progress towards attainment of the result

51. In his report on disability inclusion in the United Nations system ([A/75/314](#)), the Secretary-General indicated that while 66 per cent of entities have adopted employment policies or strategies in relation to employees with disabilities, a number have not conducted satisfaction surveys or, when they did, employees with disabilities reported lower satisfaction levels than those of the general staff body. For example, at the Secretariat level, the 2019 United Nations Staff Engagement Survey included a self-identification question on disability. The results indicated that staff who identified as having a disability were slightly less satisfied than other staff. In that Survey, the first in which the Secretariat had measured the engagement levels of its staff with disabilities, 561 of the 18,742 respondents self-identified as having a disability. A new online learning course and a series of webinars are being developed and rolled out on disability and neurodiversity. Partnerships with organizations that represent individuals with diverse backgrounds and identities are being leveraged to disseminate vacancies, raise awareness and ensure that standards are in place so that all segments of the workforce are fairly and equitably treated.

C. Progress of reforms towards the accountability outcome

Human resources policies and services

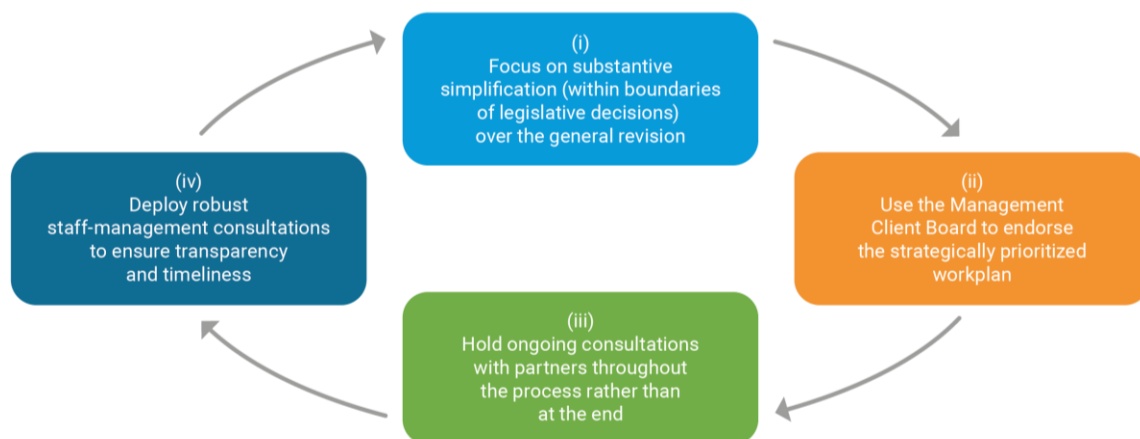
Strategy

52. Human resources policy development and services delivery are the backbone of an accountable organization from a human resources management perspective and are simultaneously the key enabler of achieving the reform results that lead to agility. Since the implementation of the delegation of authority framework, the provision of simplified, flexible human resources guidance and client-centred, efficient services have been prioritized to enable entities to deliver their mandates in a streamlined manner. This has required the prioritization of the policies that achieve the most transformational impact, as well as the introduction of a tiered services provision model, which clarifies the roles and responsibilities of human resources functions centrally and on the ground, for advisory support on the full spectrum of human resources management to ensure maximum alignment with client entities' needs and to avoid duplication.

Progress towards attainment of the result

53. Since launching the human resources policy streamlining project in 2017, over half of the administrative issuances have been newly issued, revised, updated or abolished, and the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations have been comprehensively revised, pending the approval of the General Assembly. In 2020, a new approach was introduced to proactively determine, together with the Management Client Board, the strategic policy revision priorities on the basis of pursuing the most transformational and impactful results first, taking into consideration the cost of policy implementation. The main elements of this strategic approach are illustrated in figure XI below.

Figure XI
Approach to determining the strategic human resources policy revision priorities



54. A simplified policy framework enables the effective provision of support and guidance to entities, both centrally and on the ground. In early 2019, a framework for clients was launched that ensures that entities receive optimum operational support within a tiered service offering. Within the overall framework, advisory services were provided in more than 5,000 instances to over 100 clients, and more than 30 capacity-building sessions were held to support human resources partners and managers. In-depth support visits to client entities were piloted, but have been temporarily suspended owing to COVID-19; support provision has instead continued seamlessly on a remote basis. Regular quantitative and qualitative analysis of incoming requests and client needs is carried out to identify systemic issues, trends and areas in which additional guidance is needed, with feedback looping into the development of further tools and guidance, and the policy revision process.

55. The first phase of a new policy knowledge management platform, Knowledge Gateway, was launched in 2020. This self-service platform aims to ensure consistency in the implementation of human resources processes and procedures by practitioners. The platform contains detailed, user-friendly and readily available case studies and decision trees that are updated on an ongoing basis. The approach to keep the platform up to date is entirely client-driven and entities are periodically consulted to identify cases that are representative of the interests of platform users. Since its launch, in just a few months, it has been accessed by more than 4,000 users, thus enabling clients to prevent, resolve and mitigate risks in human resources decision-making. Enhanced features are being launched later in 2020 in the second phase of the project.

56. As highlighted in section II, the Organization is increasing reliant on a dynamic mix of workforce modalities and types to bridge capacity and scale gaps effectively. This has required, among other services, the provision of strengthened support to client entities in the use of non-staff capacities. An overview catalogue of all non-staff modalities was published, as was detailed guidance for client entities on their use and processes in the context of the delegation of authority. Advisory services and entity-specific support have been provided in more than 500 instances to 49 client entities to date. Based on a robust analysis of the use of non-staff modalities, recommendations that loop into the policy revision process and lead to more simplified processes are being regularly developed.

57. COVID-19 triggered an unparalleled situation that has required issuing global guidance and advice to human resources practitioners from the Secretariat, as well as the coordination at the United Nations common system level for a harmonized policy

approach in such far-ranging areas as entitlements, alternative and flexible working arrangements and work-life balance. Meanwhile, to ensure business continuity, comprehensive interim implementing guidelines were issued to entities, enabling compliance within the current policy framework.

58. A holistic review of all human resources processes and documents was launched in 2020 aimed at eliminating or significantly reducing paper-based work through the streamlining and simplification of processes and their integration into the existing enterprise resource planning systems. Once finalized, this exercise will serve the dual purpose of achieving cost efficiency and business continuity.

59. Finally, the High-level Committee on Management has continued to lead the efforts to enhance harmonization and improve efficiency in the United Nations system. A flagship initiative, the United Nations Global Centre for Human Resources Services (also known as “OneHR”), has continued to consolidate, offering sizeable benefits in terms of speed, cost and enhanced harmonization. Established in 2017 to provide United Nations system organizations with job classification and/or reference verification services, OneHR currently counts on a caseload of 2,000 reference verification and 1,600 classification cases for a client base of 20 United Nations system organizations. This, coupled with plans for future scale-up, has led OneHR to rethink its business model to augment scalability and sustainability, currently under development jointly with the United Nations Development Programme.

Performance management

Strategy

60. Building a high-performance culture is a key human resources reforms result area. This is best supported by a performance management system that integrates four key dimensions: (a) work planning that supports organizational and individual goal alignment and management; (b) frequent interactions and dialogues; (c) forward-thinking and supportive feedback; and (d) collaboration and self-driven teams. Once fully in place, the system will effectively steer the performance management process away from compliance, refocusing it onto a continuous, honest and transparent feedback for accountability and improvement, counting on the extensive use of 360-degree feedback.

Progress towards attainment of the result

61. Organizations with advanced performance management systems in place have cautioned about the need to make improvements based on a succession of pilots, to continuously incorporate lessons learned and to ensure that organizational requirements are closely reflected in the system. After completing a feasibility analysis, design and process to ensure organizational readiness in 2018, the United Nations Secretariat proceeded with the implementation phase of the performance management system improvements, on a pilot basis. The pilot rolled out during the period 2019–2020 included a large sample of staff, representing seven entities in field and non-field operations that employ approximately 6,000 staff. The purpose of the pilot was to evaluate the impact of the improvements and draw lessons learned for Organization-wide implementation. Overall, the pilot demonstrated promising trends across all four performance management dimensions.

62. Participants reported improved perceptions about feedback, seeing constructive feedback as an opportunity to develop skills. Many felt more confident giving feedback to their supervisors and have welcomed the opportunity to discuss career aspirations with their managers. The multi-rater, 360-degree approach enabled staff to request, give and receive feedback across their team, including managers, direct reports and peers. Similarly, staff experienced increased visibility of departmental

goals and how those linked to their team's goals and their own work, with over half of the pilot participants reporting that they understood how their individual goals contributed to organizational, departmental or office goals.

63. The 360-degree feedback approach was also piloted for senior organizational leaders, initially for Assistant Secretaries-General and Under-Secretaries-General. The pilot, which entailed participants receiving feedback from peers and direct and indirect reports, was well-received, and a roll-out exercise to a larger senior management group in field and non-field operations is under way. The expansion of 360-degree feedback will be reinforced with strengthened capacity-building for senior organizational leaders, the planning for which is under way, building upon existing learning and development infrastructure, including the Senior Leadership Induction Programme.

64. Since January 2019, human resources practitioners at the entity level have been provided with dedicated advice and support in resolving performance management issues in over 700 instances. A review of performance management-related requests for advisory and operational support has highlighted the need for additional capacity-building to empower human resources partners at the entity level to advise on complex performance matters, which is currently being addressed.

65. Many of the gaps in the current performance management system are connected to how managers and staff interact within the structure and some norms that have resulted. This is particularly the case with regard to dealing with underperformance, as indicated by managers during multiple advisory services interactions and confirmed in the 2019 staff survey, in which the related question received the second lowest score in the overall performance management chapter (61 per cent favourable perception among staff). As a result, the ongoing performance management improvements roll-out has a substantial culture change element, alongside substantive improvements.

Conduct and discipline

Strategy

66. Following the management reform, conduct and discipline management underwent a reorganization by means of consolidating all related matters within the Administrative Law Division of the Office of Human Resources in the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance. This was done to ensure an integrated, end-to-end approach and effective, global oversight throughout the conduct and discipline cycle across the Secretariat. The approach is sustained on three pillars – prevention, enforcement and remedial action – and ensures the identification and resolution of conduct and discipline issues proactively and transparently.

Progress towards attainment of the result

67. The leadership and managerial accountability framework was strengthened through proposed amendments to the compacts of heads of entities and special representatives, and the development of a mandatory managerial competency on accountability for conduct of United Nations personnel for staff with supervisory responsibilities, to be launched in the next performance management cycle.

68. A number of critical tools were developed and launched. The Misconduct Tracking System was rolled out to track and record matters of misconduct, while development began on expanding the system to an end-to-end global case management system to track conduct issues across all Secretariat entities. The Victim Assistance Tracking System was rolled out, and 30 conduct and discipline personnel were trained on its use, enabling more effective follow-up on assistance to victims of

sexual exploitation and abuse. A secure database to support the work of the standing review committee on Security Council resolution [2272 \(2016\)](#) was launched to serve as a repository of confidential information and allow for more efficient analysis of matters pertaining to sexual exploitation and abuse. To strengthen the conduct of peacekeeping personnel, an adaptable misconduct planning and risk management toolkit for peace operations and other entities was launched to guide practitioners in better managing risks of misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse. These tools were accompanied by awareness-raising to support Member States in their national efforts to manage misconduct risks.

69. Clear Check, a screening database designed to vet personnel for integrity during recruitment, was rolled out with expanded features, including with regard to addressing sexual harassment, thus strengthening accountability across the United Nations system. It now contains information about 280 subjects and is used by 24 United Nations system organizations, in addition to the Secretariat. An online information-sharing platform, ALD Connect, was launched to strengthen the capacity of the existing network of conduct and discipline practitioners in 30 peacekeeping operations and newly designated focal points in 52 other entities. Capacity-building activities were organized to raise general awareness about misconduct and to highlight specific aspects of the updated policy ([ST/SGB/2019/8](#)) on discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority. Finally, a large collaborative effort across the Secretariat culminated in the launch of United to Respect, a training programme designed to strengthen the implementation of the policy. A toolkit was made available and dialogues simultaneously piloted with staff from Headquarters and one mission. The programme is currently being rolled out.

Health and well-being

Strategy

70. Maintaining a healthy workforce, both mentally and physically, can have an impact on such areas as health-care costs, absenteeism, employee productivity, recruitment and retention, culture and staff morale. For this reason, the United Nations Secretariat deploys a coordinated and comprehensive set of strategies to address the health needs of United Nations personnel, including awareness-raising, capacity-building of health-care and non-health-care professionals, ensuring that health-care standards are adhered to and creating a supporting environment in which safety is ensured and health can flourish.

Progress towards attainment of the result

71. In the area of mental health, following the launch of the United Nations System Mental Health and Well-being Strategy in 2018, standards for psychosocial services are being developed and integrated into the work of all health-care workers and support staff. An online platform providing information and advice has been launched for all United Nations personnel and a wider audience, including representatives of Member States. The focus of services provision in 2020 has been on continuity by providing psychosocial support on issues arising as a result of COVID-19, such as the changed working arrangements, increased risk of uncertainty and risk of domestic abuse. The train-the-trainers programme on resilience that began in 2017 with the training of 36 mental health professionals has yielded to date 3,000 end-user participants. Capitalizing on past success, online delivery of the programme has been expanded and different time zones and a French-language version have been added, resulting in the potential to reach an additional 4,000 staff globally.

72. With regard to physical health, the reduction of morbidity and mortality in peacekeeping missions continues to be addressed via health-care improvements. As

part of the standardization of medical care, clinical pathways were developed and are currently implemented in United Nations health facilities worldwide. Clinical audits are conducted, supplemented by newly developed patient surveys and hospital performance assessment and evaluation reports, to ensure compliance with standards. Real-time monitoring in all United Nations health facilities enhanced with virtual walk-throughs and assessments for some have been piloted to provide immediate feedback to treatment providers. This innovative methodology has been critical from a business continuity perspective in the exceptional circumstances presented by COVID-19. The provision of training courses for responders continued to be expanded and adapted for online delivery, as necessary, with a new Field Medical Assistant course successfully piloted to help to close the treatment gap between the point of injury and arrival at a medical care facility or evacuation.

V. Conclusions and the way forward

73. As is evident, the human resources management reforms that were introduced in 2019 and 2020 have focused on aligning discrete initiatives into three integrated, coherent and interdependent outcomes – agility, diversity and accountability – with corresponding result areas that lead to impact.

74. Looking ahead, in pursuit of the agility outcome, holistic actions will continue to be taken to enable the Organization's human resources management system to anticipate and respond to the challenges of the programmatic context. The finalization of the strategic workforce planning framework with a robust governance structure will ensure better alignment of the programmatic strategy and budgetary resource planning with the workforce planning process. A component of the framework is a system that will identify the supply of and demand for emerging skills required from the future United Nations workforce. To expedite talent acquisition, a greater focus will be placed on leveraging advanced technologies in the development of assisted recruitment tools, optimization of rosters and streamlining of onboarding. Recruitment methods will continue to improve and be examined, including for potential unconscious bias. The deepening of the alignment of learning and development with career enhancement, including through staff mobility, will continue. Similarly, learning and development and career enhancement will be further aligned with organizational needs based on holistic and coherent approaches that drive results and maximize impact. System-wide career enhancement initiatives fostering inter-agency mobility will gain pace, notably through advancing mutual roster recognition.

75. With regard to the diversity outcome, enhancing diversity will sharpen the focus of reforms by: (a) strengthening the monitoring of applications trends to measure impact and tailor tools, channels, content and outreach programmes on the basis of the business intelligence gathered; (b) leveraging technology for outreach to assist entities in meeting their geographical and regional diversity and gender parity objectives; and (c) adopting a holistic approach to diversity and inclusion based on a comprehensive understanding of different identities, abilities and backgrounds. The forthcoming examination of all global outreach activities, aligning them with the strategies on geographical diversity, gender parity and disability inclusion, will provide the basis for calibrating all outreach activities, with an eye on achieving the greatest impact first.

76. Achieving the accountability outcome will rely on the strategic revision of human resources policy, with a focus on attaining the maximum transformational and most cost-efficient impact first, and on the delivery of client-centred and efficient human resources services to entities, both centrally and by practitioners on the

ground. The work of the task force on the future of the United Nations system workforce of the High-level Committee on Management within each of the three workstreams – new contract modality, new ways of working and leveraging technology – will accelerate progress towards truly delivering as one United Nations. Ongoing improvements in performance management will continue to be phased in in field and non-field operations, to steer a high-performance culture in an environment of strengthened accountability for all. Simultaneously, efforts will continue to build trust and capacities of practitioners by providing training and guidance on processes and backed up by enhanced performance management data provision to entities. In the area of conduct and discipline management, the full deployment of the end-to-end global case management system and related dashboards will be prioritized alongside the strategic framework for collective response to critical incidents. Member States and regional institutions will continue to benefit from support in misconduct risk management via enhanced tools and the sharing of good practices. Mental and physical health priorities will continue to be addressed through a combination of innovative, and where possible virtual, methods and approaches to ensure health for all.

77. Lastly, two significant developments are expected in the near future:

(a) Strengthening the results-based management framework for human resources outcomes and results by examining the specific objectives in each area with specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound indicators attached to them to measure success in concrete, tangible terms. Implementation will be evaluated against the objectives set, and lessons learned incorporated to improve the planning and delivery of future reform initiatives;

(b) Intensifying communication with key internal stakeholders to increase the visibility of human resources reforms, exchange best practices, feed into the planning process and improve results and impact.

VI. Action to be taken by the General Assembly

78. The General Assembly is invited to take note of the present report.
