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## Seventy-fifth session

Agenda item 146

### Human resources management

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

### Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

#### I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the overview of human resources management reform for the period 2019–2020 and an outlook beyond ([A/75/540](#)). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met online with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses received on 10 February 2021.

2. The Advisory Committee has also considered the following reports of the Secretary-General on human resources management and related matters, and its observations and recommendations will be reflected in separate reports: (a) new approach to staff mobility: building an agile Organization by providing opportunities for on-the-job learning and skills development ([A/75/540/Add.1](#)); (b) composition of the Secretariat: staff demographics ([A/75/591](#)); (c) composition of the Secretariat: gratis personnel, retired staff and consultants and individual contractors ([A/75/591/Add.1](#)); (d) seconded active-duty military and police personnel ([A/75/646](#)); and (e) practice of the Secretary-General in disciplinary matters and cases of possible criminal behaviour, 1 January to 31 December 2019 ([A/75/648](#)). In addition, in its report of 15 October 2020 ([A/75/515](#)), the Committee made comments and recommendations on the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Ethics Office ([A/75/82](#)).

#### II. Background

3. The Advisory Committee recalls that, at the main part of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General submitted two reports relating to the overview of human resources management as follows: (a) global human resources strategy 2019–2021: building a more effective, transparent and accountable



United Nations (A/73/372), in which he proposed a new strategy with three components,<sup>1</sup> reflecting his vision for shifting the management paradigm of the Organization; and (b) overview of human resources management reform for the period 2017–2018 (A/73/372/Add.1), which also included a number of proposals for the approval of the Assembly (ibid., para. 150).

4. In its related report (A/73/497), the Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to submit a refined global human resources strategy to the Assembly (see paras. 51–65 and 82; see also para. 10 below). The comments and recommendations of the Committee on the other proposals of the Secretary-General were contained in paragraphs 21 to 50 of its report.

5. The Advisory Committee recalls that the reports of the Secretary-General and the related reports of the Committee on human resources management are before the General Assembly, subsequent to the decision of the Assembly to defer the consideration thereof until the first part of its resumed seventy-fifth session (decision 74/540 B, sect. B).

### III. Overview of human resources management reform for the period 2019–2020 and an outlook beyond (A/75/540)

6. In his report (A/75/540), the Secretary-General discusses matters concerning external and internal drivers for change (section II), strategy and three longer-term outcomes: agility, diversity and accountability (section III), and the progress of human resources management reforms towards the three outcomes<sup>2</sup> (section IV).

7. The Advisory Committee notes that the biennial report of the Secretary-General on the overview of human resources management (A/75/540) contains information on progress made in a number of areas of human resources management and on several initiatives and pilots undertaken since his previous report (A/73/372) submitted to the General Assembly at the seventy-third session (see para. 13 below). Such initiatives and pilots include the new staff mobility proposal, the release of an organizational design inventory for workforce planning, online information-sharing on conduct and discipline, the launch of a training programme entitled “United to Respect” and the piloting of in-depth support visits to client entities.

#### A. General observations

##### Linkage with the proposed human resources strategy 2019–2021

8. It is indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/75/540) that it provides an update to the General Assembly on the implementation of the global human resources management strategy 2019–2021 (A/73/372) in the period 2019–2020, and that the substance of the human resources management reforms contained in that strategy remains valid (A/75/540, summary and para. 17). **The Advisory Committee notes that the General Assembly deferred consideration, until the first part of its**

<sup>1</sup> The three components of the proposed strategy included: (a) an enabling policy environment for strategic people management; (b) proactive talent acquisition and management; and (c) a transformed organizational culture. The implementation plan for the strategy was contained in annex I to the report of the Secretary-General.

<sup>2</sup> The three outcomes, as presented in paragraphs 23 to 72 of the report, contain the following elements: (a) the agility outcome: workforce planning, talent acquisition, learning and skills development, and career enhancement; (b) the diversity outcome: geographical diversity, gender parity and other inclusion initiatives; and (c) the accountability outcome: human resources policies and services, performance management, conduct and discipline, and health and well-being.

resumed seventy-fifth session, of the report of the Secretary-General on the global human resources strategy 2019–2021 (A/73/372) (see paras. 3–5 above).

9. The Advisory Committee further notes that the report of the Secretary-General (A/75/540) appears to contain new elements that were not contained in his previous overview report (A/73/372), such as the concept of geographical diversity with a new strategy, and the concept of a diverse workforce of the Organization as defined in the report (see paras. 3 and 6 above and 22–24 below). The Committee trusts that information and clarification on the new policies and initiatives introduced since the seventy-third session (see also para. 17 below) will be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report.

10. With respect to a human resources management strategy beyond 2021, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the three outcomes of the reform efforts contained in the overview report of the Secretary-General are longer-term in nature and that the extension and calibration of the strategy beyond 2021 would be reported on in the context of the overview report of the Secretary-General. The Advisory Committee reiterates its recommendation that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to submit a refined global human resources strategy to the Assembly, taking into account its observations and recommendations contained in its previous overview report (A/73/497, paras. 51–82). In particular, given that the successive human resources management reforms have not adequately addressed long-standing challenges (see para. 11 below), the Committee reiterates that the implementation plan for such a strategy should be prioritized to tackle the most persistent issues, and include measurable, deliverable and specific targets and timelines (ibid., para. 63).

11. The Advisory Committee further reiterates that, subject to the approval by the General Assembly, a refined strategy should reflect a comprehensive impact assessment and lessons learned of all the human resources reform initiatives undertaken over the past decade and should address issues which have consistently proved challenging over time, many of which have been discussed repeatedly by the Committee, including, but not limited to, deficiencies in staff selection processes, including roster management, rejuvenation through external recruitment, equal treatment of external and internal candidates, the quantity of temporary appointments (including the use of special post allowance) and impediments to achieving equitable geographical distribution and gender balance targets, the need to improve performance appraisal and management, as well as an appropriate accountability framework for the management of human resources (see also A/73/497, para. 61).

#### **Format, content and presentation**

12. Concerning the format and presentation of the report of the Secretary-General (A/75/540), the Advisory Committee notes that the use of pictures and diagrams does not provide clear and sufficient information in the presentation of the human resources policies, initiatives and strategies (see also A/74/7, paras. 37 and 39). In its view, it would be more useful to present more analytical information in the form of narratives, with comparative data to show trends, and to provide more detailed explanations of the various concepts, initiatives and their interconnections, as well as implementation plans, targets and timelines, which seem to be insufficient or lacking in the report.

**Decision required of the General Assembly and financial implications**

13. Upon enquiry as to the implications of the Secretary-General's request that the General Assembly take note of his report (A/75/540, para. 76), the Advisory Committee was informed that the principles outlined in the report of the Secretary-General are within the confines of the management reform that the Assembly approved in 2018; hence, no action, other than taking note, is requested of the Assembly. Upon further enquiry, the Committee was informed that the intention of the report is to keep the Member States apprised of the progress of the Secretary-General's human resources initiatives. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that the content of the report of the Secretary-General should be subject to the consideration and approval of the proposed global human resources strategy by the General Assembly (see A/73/497, paras. 51–65 and 82). The Committee recommends that the Assembly request the Secretary-General to align the future implementation of his proposals with the resolutions and decisions of the Assembly, as appropriate.**

14. Furthermore, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that no additional financial implications are anticipated for the implementation of the reform initiatives outlined in the overview report of the Secretary-General (A/75/540). The Committee recalls that it was informed, during its consideration of the proposed human resources management strategy 2019–2021, that the proposed strategy itself did not entail costs; however, the implementation of some of the time-bound strategic actions would require the submission of specific proposals, along with associated costs, for approval by the General Assembly (see A/73/497, paras. 64 and 65). The Committee was informed, at that time, that the proposals contained in the strategy that would require the approval of the Assembly at a later stage would include: (a) accelerated recruitment processes; (b) the design of a new mobility system; and (c) the development and implementation of a new performance management system (see paras. 35 and 36 below). **The Advisory Committee reiterates its recommendation that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to provide more detailed financial information on the potential resource requirements associated with the implementation of any strategic actions in his refined proposal on a global human resources strategy (see para. 9 above).**

**B. Human resources management policy matters**

15. As indicated in paragraphs 4 and 5 above, the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in its previous overview report (A/73/497) and other reports relating to human resources management are before the General Assembly. In addition, its comments and recommendations on the most recent reports of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (staff and consultants) and disciplinary matters will be included in its related reports (see para. 2 above). In the section below, the Committee highlights a few policy matters concerning human resources management.

**Gender balance**

16. **While the Advisory Committee acknowledges the efforts made by the Secretary-General to improve the overall ratio of female to total staff in the Organization, in particular his appointments of female staff at senior levels, it also notes that the ratio of female staff in field operations remains relatively low. The Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will undertake further efforts to attract and retain more female staff to work in field operations (A/73/497,**

**para. 76).** The Committee makes further observations and recommendations thereon in its report on the composition of the Secretariat: staff demographics.

17. An administrative instruction on temporary special measures for the achievement of gender parity ([ST/AI/2020/5](#)) was promulgated in August 2020 by the Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance. The scope of the temporary special measures applies to selections and appointments at each level at which gender parity has not been reached within the entity (considered to be within the 47 to 53 per cent margin for each level within the entity). Noting that the administrative instruction is not referenced in the overview report of the Secretary-General, the Advisory Committee was informed upon enquiry that since the overview report is a strategic report, the intention was not to address individual policies in the report. The Committee notes that, while the scope of the administrative instruction aims to achieve gender parity as stated in section 2, the relevant provisions contained in sections 3 to 5, including provision 3.5, only prescribe for situations when women are underrepresented and a woman candidate should therefore be selected by an entity. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that additional and temporary measures relating to gender parity promoted by the Secretariat should create a fair and transparent recruitment process for both women and men, with a view to achieving gender balance as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations (see also para. 9 above). The Committee trusts that further clarifications will be provided to the General Assembly during the consideration of the present report.**

#### **Equitable geographical representation and the need for a strategy**

18. **The Advisory Committee recalls the statement in Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations that due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible. The Committee further recalls that the General Assembly, in its resolution [71/263](#) (paras. 9 and 17), called for the attainment of equitable geographical distribution in the Secretariat. The Committee reiterates its recommendation that the Assembly request the Secretary-General to develop a comprehensive strategy to improve geographical representation, including concrete actions, benchmarks and timelines that should form part of the overall refined human resources strategy to be submitted to the General Assembly for its consideration (see also [A/73/497](#), para. 69; and paras. 10 and 11 above). In addition, the Committee is of the view that such a comprehensive strategy should include measures to ensure the observance of the principle of equitable geographical representation enshrined in the Charter in the implementation of the gender parity strategy (see also para. 17 above).** The Committee also makes comments and recommendations in its related report on the report of the Secretary-General on composition of the Secretariat: staff demographics ([A/75/591](#)).

#### **Regional and geographical diversity**

19. In the overview report of the Secretary-General ([A/75/540](#), para. 41), it is indicated that 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. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with a copy of the strategy, which was issued in January 2020 by the Office of Human Resources of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance. It is indicated therein that the strategy aims to address the element of “greater geographical diversity”, one of the cornerstones of the diverse workforce envisaged by the Secretary-General. The Committee was also provided, upon request, with a copy of

the diversity toolkit for reassignment and recruitment, which was introduced in January 2020 by the Office of Human Resources. It is indicated in the diversity toolkit that the goals within the scope of the toolkit include equitable geographical distribution, greater regional group diversity, proper representation of troop- and police-contributing countries and gender parity.

20. The Advisory Committee recalls that the Secretary-General presented the concept of greater “regional diversity” of the workforce of the Organization and included an indicator of regional diversity in the senior managers’ compact (see [A/73/497](#), para. 66; see also paras. 29 and 30 below). The related observations and recommendations of the Committee are contained in its previous report on the overview of human resources management (*ibid.*, paras. 67–70).

**21. The Advisory Committee reiterates that, while it considers that the Secretary-General may present additional measures to improve human resources management as the Chief Administrative Officer of the Organization, any such measures should not divert focus from the content of Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter and the relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly. Moreover, the Committee is not convinced that the concept of regional diversity, as presented, clearly reflects complementarity with the aim of equitable geographical representation (see also [A/73/497](#), para. 68).**

#### **Workforce diversity**

22. The Advisory Committee recalls that the General Assembly, in its resolution [73/273](#), approved the inclusion of the workforce diversity component in an updated human resources management framework by the International Civil Service Commission.<sup>3</sup> The Committee notes that the workforce diversity component, as set out in annex V to the report of the Commission and approved by the Assembly, states that:

Staff composition throughout the organizations of the United Nations common system should reflect a workforce that is diverse from a variety of perspectives (including equitable geographical distribution and gender balance, as well as cultural, generational and multilingual perspectives and the perspectives of persons with disabilities), and this diversity should be embraced in decision-making to strengthen the performance of the organizations.

23. The diversity outcome defined for the organizational workforce (comprising geographical diversity, gender parity and other inclusion initiatives) is one of the three longer-term outcomes of the human resources management reforms presented in the overview report of the Secretary-General (see [A/75/540](#), paras. 17–20 and figure VI). It is stated therein that diversity in the United Nations Secretariat has historically been seen through the dual lenses of geographical representation and gender parity. However, according to the report, 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 (*ibid.*, para. 50).

**24. The Advisory Committee notes that in defining the diversity outcome for a diverse workforce of the Organization, the overview report of the Secretary-General does not make any reference to the workforce diversity component**

<sup>3</sup> The International Civil Service Commission decided to approve the inclusion of the workforce diversity component in the human resources management framework, as set out in annex V to its report for the year 2018 ([A/73/30](#)).

approved by the General Assembly in resolution [73/273](#). The Committee further notes that the scope of the diversity outcome is not fully in line with what is approved in the workforce diversity component by the Assembly and trusts that a clarification will be provided to the Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report (see paras. 22 and 23 above).

#### *Disability strategy*

25. The Secretary-General launched the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy for the United Nations system in 2019, with a specific indicator on the employment of persons with disabilities.<sup>4</sup> Information on progress made is provided in his report on disability inclusion in the United Nations system ([A/75/314](#)). It is reported that the results of the 2019 United Nations Staff Engagement Survey, the first in which the Secretariat had measured the engagement levels of its staff with disabilities, showed that 561 of the 18,742 respondents self-identified as having a disability, and were slightly less satisfied than other staff were. It is indicated that a new online learning course and a series of webinars are being developed and rolled out ([A/75/540](#), paras. 50 and 51). **The Advisory Committee notes the measures taken by the Secretary-General to promote disability inclusion in the United Nations system. The Committee trusts that more efforts will be undertaken to promote workforce diversity for persons with disabilities, including concrete measures to facilitate the recruitment process (see para. 22 above) and to improve accessibility as requested by the General Assembly in various resolutions, including resolution [73/273](#).**

#### *Multilingualism*

26. As stated in the workforce diversity component approved by the General Assembly in resolution [73/273](#), a workforce that is diverse from a variety of perspectives includes multilingual perspectives (see para. 22 above). The Advisory Committee notes that the multilingual perspectives, as part of the workforce diversity, are not specifically reflected in the three longer-term outcomes in the overview report of the Secretary-General. **The Advisory Committee recalls that, in its resolutions [75/252](#), [73/346](#) and [71/263](#), the General Assembly emphasized the paramount importance of the equality of the six official languages of the United Nations and the importance of multilingualism in the activities of the United Nations, and reaffirmed the need to respect the equality of the two working languages of the Secretariat.**

#### **Accountability**

27. The Advisory Committee recalls that the Secretary-General, as part of his ongoing management reform, has decided to delegate directly to heads of entities across the Secretariat the full administrative authority needed for the effective stewardship of their financial, human and material resources so as to ensure more effective delivery of mandates and strengthened accountability (see [A/72/492](#), para. 73; [A/73/497](#), para. 71).

28. **With respect to performance, the Advisory Committee is of the view that in the establishing of workplans by managers and staff, it is essential to align them with approved programme activities arising from established mandates, while also monitoring the performance and accountability of individuals and entities against the implementation of mandated activities.**

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<sup>4</sup> For the Secretariat, the policy is set out in [ST/SGB/2014/3](#) on employment and accessibility for staff members with disabilities in the United Nations Secretariat.

*Senior managers' compact*

29. In paragraph 22 of the Geographical Diversity Strategy for the United Nations Secretariat (see para. 19 above), it is stated that the senior managers' compact is the Secretary-General's accountability framework through which he establishes key performance indicators for senior managers for each year and holds them accountable. It is further stated that this includes two indicators for geographical balance, which are: (a) 50 per cent geographical appointments from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States; and (b) progress is made, from one year to the next, towards achieving greater regional diversification (see paras. 19–21 above). It is also indicated in paragraph 23 of the strategy that the Management Performance Board, chaired by the Chef de Cabinet, has been reactivated and met in November 2019 to review the performance of senior managers for 2018 against the indicators in their compacts and to advise the Secretary-General in these matters.

30. The Advisory Committee has noted with concern that senior managers of Secretariat departments and offices did not meet the target of appointing at least 50 per cent of staff from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States to posts subject to geographical distribution, as stipulated in their compacts. For 2018, only 2 out of 23 departments and offices at and away from Headquarters met the target (see [A/74/696](#), para. 12). The Committee further notes that no information was provided as to how the many other senior managers were held accountable for failing to achieve the target specified in their compact with the Secretary-General. **The Advisory Committee therefore trusts that performance information on achieving the target of 50 per cent geographical appointments from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States, by department and office for 2018, 2019 and 2020, will be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report. Furthermore, the Committee recommends that the Assembly request the Secretary-General to provide annual performance information by each entity, with comparative data in this area, in the context of his future annual reports on the composition of the Secretariat.** The Committee makes comments and recommendations in its related report on the report of the Secretary-General on the tenth progress report on accountability: strengthening accountability in the United Nations Secretariat ([A/75/686](#)).

**Other recruitment-related matters***Recruitment timelines*

31. The Advisory Committee discussed matters related to recruitment timelines in its previous overview report (see [A/73/497](#), paras. 36–43). The Committee noted at the time that, in addition to the job posting period for applicants, other factors affecting the overall recruitment timelines included job classification exercises and the managers' review and evaluation stage of the recruitment process. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the average duration of the recruitment process reflected in figure VIII of the overview report of the Secretary-General ([A/75/540](#)) was measured from the date of posting of the job opening to the date of selection of a candidate. The Committee requested, but did not receive, a satisfactory response concerning the lack of information as to the average number of days between the date of establishment of a post and the date of onboarding of a selected candidate, which should have a direct bearing on the vacancy rates proposed for new posts. **The Advisory Committee reiterates its recommendation that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to undertake more analysis on each of the stages of the entire recruitment process from the date of post vacancy or establishment to the date of onboarding, including the duration required for post classification (from the date of a request by a manager to the date of approval by the human**

resources counterpart), by job network, with emphasis on the impact of each stage on the delays in recruitment, and to provide the data in his next overview report (see also [A/73/497](#), para. 42).

#### *Rosters*

32. The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the scope of the data reflected in figure VIII of the overview report of the Secretary-General ([A/75/540](#)) included both position-specific job openings and recruitment from rosters. Upon request for detailed information on rosters and related selections, the Committee was only informed that the roster memberships are distributed over nine job networks and 47 job families, with some 31,000 roster members (individuals) associated with the global rosters pertaining to international posts. It was indicated that the rosters are coordinated through the Department of Operational Support, in close cooperation with relevant offices during the entire process through Inspira. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to provide detailed information on roster management, related policies and guidelines, including criteria for applications and selections, membership durations and the review process, if any, and the duration of the roster recruitment process in the next overview report.**

#### **Performance appraisal and management**

##### *Performance appraisal*

33. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee received information on performance appraisal ratings for the three cycles from 2017–2018 to 2019–2020 (see table below). The Committee notes from the table that: (a) the overall ratings for the past three cycles appeared to be on the higher end, with percentages of staff who did not meet expectations at 0.1 per cent or lower, though the number was on a trend of increase (11 for 2017–2018, 22 for 2018–2019, 24 for 2019–2020); and (b) under the category “exceeds expectations”, the highest percentage of ratings was for senior staff at the D-1 and D-2 levels (accounting for 57 per cent, 53 per cent and 61 per cent, respectively), while the lowest percentage was for staff in the General Service and related categories (26 per cent, 27 per cent and 29 per cent, respectively).

#### **Performance ratings by cycle and staff category**

Cycle	Staff grade and level	Exceeds expectations		Meets expectations		Partially meets expectations		Does not meet expectations	
		Number of staff	Percentage	Number of staff	Percentage	Number of staff	Percentage	Number of staff	Percentage
2019–2020	General Service and related categories	4 434	29	10 584	70	56	0.4	14	0.1
	Field Service	1 547	49	1 609	51	5	0.2	–	0.0
	P-1 to P-3, National Professional Officer, levels A–C	2 458	41	3 548	59	31	0.5	7	0.1
	P-4 and P-5, National Professional Officer, level D	2 422	49	2 498	51	11	0.2	3	0.1
	D-1 and D-2	316	61	202	39	1	0.2	–	0.0
2018–2019	General Service and related categories	4 482	27	11 769	72	69	0.4	14	0.1
	Field Service	1 612	49	1 695	51	4	0.1	–	0.0
	P-1 to P-3, National Professional Officer, levels A–C	2 257	39	3 490	60	34	0.6	4	0.1

Cycle	Staff grade and level	Number of staff		Percentage		Number of staff		Percentage	
2017–2018	P-4 and P-5, National Professional Officer, level D	2 148	46	2 467	53	19	0.4	4	0.1
	D-1 and D-2	260	53	227	47	1	0.2	–	0.0
	General Service and related categories	4 603	26	13 102	74	93	0.5	7	0.0
	Field Service	1 693	47	1 918	53	5	0.1	–	0.0
	P-1 to P-3, National Professional Officer, levels A–C	2 282	37	3 806	62	28	0.5	1	0.0
	P-4 and P-5, National Professional Officer, level D	2 312	45	2 805	55	13	0.3	3	0.1
	D-1 and D-2	342	57	250	42	4	0.7	–	0.0

34. **The Advisory Committee recalls that the General Assembly, in its resolution 71/263, noted that the current ratings distribution is not an accurate reflection of performance in the Organization. Noting that over 99 per cent of staff were rated under the two categories of “exceeds expectations” or “meets expectations”, the Committee recommends that the Assembly request the Secretary-General to evaluate the performance rating system to ensure the application of credible and comparable information by entity as the basis for staff performance evaluation ratings (see also A/71/557, paras. 59 and 60).**

#### *Performance management system*

35. The Advisory Committee recalls that, in the first addendum to his previous overview report (A/73/372/Add.1, para. 107), the Secretary-General indicated that his vision for management reform included a robust and transparent system to plan and assess staff performance, in a two-phased approach to a new performance management system,<sup>5</sup> with the first phase commencing in 2017 and concluding in 2019 (see also A/71/557, para. 58). The Committee notes that in the overview report for 2019–2020, the Secretary-General (A/75/540) does not provide information on the two-phased approach to a new performance management system; instead, it is indicated therein that after completing a feasibility analysis, design and process to ensure organizational readiness in 2018, the Secretariat proceeded with the implementation phase of the performance management system improvements, on a pilot basis. The pilot, which rolled out during 2019 and 2020, included seven entities in field and non-field operations that employ approximately 6,000 staff (ibid., para. 61).

36. **The Advisory Committee trusts that more information and clarification will be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report, including on linkages and differences with respect to the previously reported two-phased performance management system, and the current pilot implementation phase of the performance management system improvements (see para. 35 above). In addition, the Committee trusts that financial implications, if any, relating to the development and implementation of**

<sup>5</sup> It was indicated that the two-phased approach was initially outlined in his report (A/71/323). First, the credibility and reliability of performance evaluations will be strengthened. Second, staff performance will become a criterion for career progression in the Organization. Progress made in the first phase of this approach, the implementation of which commenced in 2017 and which will conclude in 2019, was focused on three key elements: (a) improving the performance management skills of managers; (b) providing increased human resources expertise and support; and (c) increasing the objectivity, transparency and consistency of the performance management system (A/73/372/Add.1, para. 107).

**a new performance management system will be provided to the Assembly (see para. 14 (c) above).**

*360-degree feedback*

37. It is indicated in the report of the Secretary-General that the performance management system will count on the extensive use of a 360-degree feedback approach that was piloted for senior leaders, and that a roll-out exercise to a larger senior management group in field and non-field operations was under way ([A/75/540](#), paras. 62 and 63). **The Advisory Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will provide information on progress in the implementation of the 360-degree evaluation exercises in the Secretariat in his next overview report.**

*A new competency framework*

38. It is indicated in the overview report of the Secretary-General that a process was launched to revise the existing, almost 20-year-old competency framework of the United Nations Secretariat ([A/75/540](#), para. 24). The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the process to develop a new framework was launched in May 2020, with data collection (from June to September 2020), data analysis (October and November 2020) and consultations. A draft model would be presented for endorsement by senior management in the first quarter of 2021 and the new framework would be launched during the first half of 2021. The Committee was also informed that the Secretariat intended to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the demand for future skills and the related gaps, taking into account all relevant drivers, including automation and augmentation of work, as well as the exploration of artificial intelligence in the analysis of application data. Concerning the potential impact of the new framework and technology on staff, the Committee was informed that the Secretariat would develop learning paths and the learning activities necessary to support staff, and that the use of technology could have implications, such as reskilling, upskilling and redeployment of staff. **The Advisory Committee notes the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General to develop a new competency framework for the Secretariat and looks forward to the issuance of the new framework in 2021.**

**Nationalization**

39. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, in February 2020, the Department of Operational Support reissued two guidelines previously issued by the Department of Field Support in November 2018 and July 2016, respectively: (a) workforce planning guidelines on nationalization in peace operations; and (b) guidelines for the selection of locally recruited staff members in United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions (as the staff selection system established under [ST/AI/2010/3](#) does not cover national staff in those operations). It is indicated in the overview report of the Secretary-General that the guidelines on nationalization are currently under review, with issuance forthcoming, to support entities not only in scaling and optimizing resources, but also in building organizational capabilities for a more networked cooperation with local stakeholders for the entire Secretariat ([A/75/540](#), para. 27). **The Advisory Committee welcomes the current review of the guidelines on nationalization in peace operations and trusts that an update will be provided in the context of the next peacekeeping and programme budgets.**

## C. Other matters

### **Impact of the pandemic on human resources policies and lessons learned**

40. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has affected the implementation of human resources policy, with the rapid and increased use of two types of remote working arrangements as a way to reduce the spread of the disease and the impact of the pandemic on travel: (a) alternate working arrangements (mandatory), implemented since March 2020 at the request of the Organization in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure business continuity during a public health crisis; and (b) flexible working arrangements (voluntary), to support work-life balance while maintaining the effective and efficient delivery of the work of the Organization. The Committee was informed that so far, the experience of remote work on a large scale has shown that it can work well and be beneficial for both personnel and the Organization, under specific circumstances and for certain functions. The Committee was also provided with information on additional support provided to staff during the COVID-19 pandemic, including increased counselling and training and learning in mental health, resilience and psychological first aid. **The Advisory Committee acknowledges that a number of efforts and measures have been undertaken by the Secretary-General during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure business continuity and to support staff in terms of work-life balance, health and well-being, including mental health.**

41. With respect to lessons learned, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the Secretariat is in the process of evaluating the lessons learned from the current experience and will incorporate them as appropriate in due course in the revision of the current policy on flexible working arrangements ([ST/SGB/2019/3](#) and [ST/IC/2019/15](#)). One potential change under consideration could be an expansion of the applicability of the telecommuting arrangements at the duty station beyond the current limit of three days per week. As part of the revisions to Secretary-General's bulletin [ST/SGB/2019/3](#), further developing the provisions applicable to alternate working arrangements, currently contained in section 1.3 of the bulletin, are envisaged in order to clarify the distinction between the voluntary and mandatory working arrangements. Furthermore, the task force on the future of the United Nations system workforce led by the High-level Committee on Management of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination is currently reviewing the impact of the pandemic, especially in the area of remote working, with a view to developing a model policy for flexible working arrangements at the common system level. **The Advisory Committee looks forward to an update on the lessons learned and challenges during the pandemic for the planning of future work of the Secretariat in the next overview report.**

## IV. Conclusion

42. The General Assembly is invited to take note of the report of the Secretary-General ([A/75/540](#), para. 78). **The comments and recommendations of the Advisory Committee are contained in the present report (see also para. 13 above).**