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Human resources management

Ways forward in the implementation of human resources management reforms for the period 2023–2026

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [71/263](#), in which the Assembly reaffirmed its commitment to and emphasized the fundamental importance of human resources management reform as a contribution to the enhancement of the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations and of the international civil service. The Secretary-General outlines ways forward in the implementation of human resources management reforms for the period 2023–2026. A separate report ([A/77/590/Add.1](#)) provides an overview of human resources management reform for the period 2021–2022.

Against this backdrop, human resources reform efforts are directed to building a results-focused, client needs-responsive and integrated human resources system that enables the United Nations Secretariat and its entities to anticipate and adapt to change of their operational environments. The human resources management framework, which is presented in the report, is focused on long-term human resources management reform outcomes, primarily to ensure achievement of specific and measurable impact, but also to account for human resources system interdependencies that the fulfilment of the different General Assembly mandates entails. These outcomes are: diversity, agility and accountability. The Secretary-General proposes ways forward in fulfilment of Assembly resolutions, by outcome area and in the form of specific deliverables for the period 2023–2026. He also outlines a sample of monitoring indicators aimed at measuring progress towards the long-term outcomes, which he will use to report on progress in subsequent overview reports on human resources management reforms.

Lastly, he spotlights the diversity outcome, with a notable emphasis on equitable geographical distribution pursuant to various mandates reaffirmed by the Assembly, most recently in resolution [71/263](#). This includes a recount on challenges faced based on evidence from a set of recruitment reviews and analyses through a diversity lens



undertaken since 2020. On this basis, he pinpoints a number of shortcomings of the current, 12-year-old, staff selection system that have hampered faster progress towards the equitable geographical distribution goal. Overcoming them would require an overhaul, the plans for which have been laid out in the report: the “staff selection 2.0” programme. The end result of the programme will be to ensure that the Secretariat delivers a new, effective, fair, efficient and agile recruitment process that fulfils the principles laid out in article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations.

The General Assembly is invited to take note of the human resources management framework and request the Secretary-General to provide an overview on the implementation of human resources management reform during its seventy-ninth session.

I. Introduction

1. Since the Charter of the United Nations came into force in 1945, human resources management in the United Nations Secretariat has been aimed at improving the ability of the Organization to respond to legislative mandates in the various areas of its work. Over the years, these mandates have proliferated and evolved. General Assembly resolution [72/266](#) A and B, endorsing the Secretary-General's new management paradigm, triggered a wide-ranging response. The ensuing devolution of human resources management decision-making to implementing entities – management in entities with a delegated authority – injected a new momentum into the reform efforts and ultimately better reflected entities' operational environments.

2. The longer-term objectives of the Organization, as well as the eight priority areas identified by the General Assembly that cover the bulk of the substantive activities of the Organization, were reflected in the plan outline for the proposed programme budget for 2023. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, outlined the most comprehensive system for tracking progress towards the fulfilment of the global pledge to eradicate poverty and secure justice, dignity and equal opportunities for all peoples living on a healthy planet. As such, the 2030 Agenda has contributed to the external drivers influencing the overall direction of human resources management reforms in the years to come. In addition, the Secretary-General's vision for a "United Nations 2.0" with a set (quintet) of new capabilities that promote agility, integration and cohesion across the United Nations system will also play a crucial role.

3. Against this background, the present report, prepared pursuant to General Assembly mandates, including resolution [71/263](#), sets out the organizational human resources management framework and corresponding actions in the form of specific deliverables. The framework, which is outlined in section II, is articulated in the form of three longer-term outcomes, from the perspective of what the system would look like once all reform efforts bear fruit. These are: diversity; agility and accountability. Sections III, IV and V of the report, respectively, outline the overall intent with regard to implementation of human resources reform and Assembly resolutions for each of the three outcomes and propose ways forward with specific, tangible deliverables in the form of an implementation plan for the period 2023–2026. Section VI presents the reform enablers, including the strategies that the Secretariat deploys to speed up reform outcomes. Section VII provides a brief assessment of the challenges and the resulting slow pace of reforms towards equitable geographical distribution under the diversity outcome, sets out the case for change of the current staff selection system and outlines the intentions for overhauling the system to drive faster progress towards the equitable geographical distribution goal. In section VIII the Assembly is invited to take note of the report.

II. Human resources management framework

4. The human resources management framework presented herein enables the United Nations Secretariat and its entities to fulfil and systematically track the implementation of human resources management reform in an efficient and accountable manner. It also provides the basis for building a results-focused, client needs-responsive and integrated human resources management system capable of anticipating and adapting to change of the operational environments of the Secretariat and entities. The framework is based on:

- Three longer-term outcomes: what the end result would be and what the human resources system would look like when reforms are accomplished

- Reform enablers: the implementation strategies devised to accelerate the pace of reforms
5. The three long-term outcomes are:
- **Diversity.** A diverse organization sustains a workplace where the organizational workforce reflects the diversity of the peoples it serves and where differences in background, perspectives and abilities are valued. It encompasses reforms aimed at achieving diversity from a variety of perspectives¹ and ensuring treatment of the entire workforce with dignity and respect, enabling them to be their whole selves, while contributing to strengthening the performance of the Organization.
 - **Agility.** An agile organization is characterized by proactive and efficient planning, hiring, deployment and learning for multi-skilled, mobile and adaptable talent. This outcome 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 to the organizational priorities and introduce enabling support mechanisms to help staff achieve career satisfaction.
 - **Accountability.** An accountable organization is characterized by an efficient human resources services provision reliant on a simplified and enabling policy framework. It is one where team, individual and organizational performance align and human resources risks are transparently and effectively managed. This outcome encompasses reforms that streamline and simplify human resources policies to facilitate timely, efficient and high-quality advisory support to entities, sustains a high-performance management culture, consolidates a holistic approach to conduct and integrity and ensures effective discharge of duty of care responsibilities with regard to health and well-being for all personnel.
6. The delivery of results under the framework is reinforced by enablers, including the quintet of change² articulated in *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) through a human resources management lens. They are the Secretariat's implementation strategies to accelerate the pace of reforms and enhance the capability of the human resources services to deliver results. The enablers also link with other United Nations system-wide or Secretariat organizational priorities. The enablers may change over time as mandates and other external drivers evolve. Currently, these enablers are grouped under the following headings:
- Innovation, digitalization and continuous improvement
 - Systematic use of data and evidence
 - Staff involvement
7. The outcomes and enablers are not siloed but mutually reinforcing. For example: the backbone of an agile organization is a fit-for-purpose staff selection system built to identify, attract and acquire talent in an effective, fair, efficient, and agile manner, which paves the way for achieving equitable geographical distribution and gender parity. Implementing 360° feedback for staff at all levels is a key element of instituting a high-performance management culture and is closely connected with

¹ "Including equitable geographical distribution and gender balance, as well as cultural, generational and multilingual perspectives and the perspectives of persons with disabilities", according to the definition contained in the report of the International Civil Service Commission for the year 2018 (A/73/30), endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 73/273.

² Strategic foresight; data, analysis and communications; innovation and digital transformation; performance and result orientation; and behavioural science.

building the capacity, including through structured leadership and management training, of leaders and managers to inspire trust. The central element of an enabling career support provision – 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 learning and skill development. The outcomes and deliverables of the human resources reform efforts should therefore be seen holistically, permitting continuous adjustment to align the human resources management system with the legislative mandates and evolving organizational demands.

III. Diversity outcome

A workplace where the organizational workforce reflects the diversity of the peoples that it serves

A. Overall intent

8. Spanning an array of diversity characteristics in accordance with General Assembly resolution 73/273, reflecting equitable geographical distribution and gender balance, as well as cultural, generational and multilingual perspectives and the perspectives of persons with disabilities and achieving broad diversity and full inclusion of the United Nations Secretariat’s workforce is an organizational imperative. This is achieved not only by mandate but also by conviction deriving from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Inclusion, as in leveraging the benefits of this multidimensional diversity by accepting differences, making workforce members feel valued and allowing them to internalize and manifest these differences as they contribute to the organizational culture and performance is what enables the Secretariat to thrive. By embracing these values, the Organization sustains a workplace where differences in background, perspectives and abilities are valued and mobilized to deliver strengthened organizational performance and greater impact for the peoples of the world that the Secretariat serves. This outcome encompasses deliverables related to: equitable geographical distribution, gender parity and rejuvenation, reaffirmed most recently in resolution 71/263, multilingualism (resolution 73/346), anti-racism (resolution 76/271) and disability inclusion (resolution 74/144).

B. Ways forward for the period 2023–2026

*Implementation plan*³

9. The Secretariat will overhaul its current staff selection system, through a dedicated programme, “staff selection 2.0”, the end result of which will be a system that is effective, fair, efficient and agile and that will fulfil the letter and spirit of article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations in recruiting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible. The new staff selection system will be supported by

³ The implementation plan outlined for each outcome is results-oriented and thus comprehensive but not exhaustive. Full details of all activities related to the implementation of each mandate are available in dedicated strategies, such as the Geographical Diversity Strategy (currently undergoing an update), the system-wide strategy on gender parity (available at https://www.un.org/gender/sites/www.un.org.gender/files/gender_parity_strategy_october_2017.pdf) or the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (available at <https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/>) and/or the human resources operational planning documents of the Office of Human Resources of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and the Office of Support Operations of the Department of Operational Support.

proactive outreach and the Young Professionals Programme. Section VII of this report contains further details.

10. The Secretariat will continue to work towards increasing the availability of qualified female candidates for future vacancies in entities that are not on track to achieve the gender parity goal, including through the use of innovative mechanisms such as pipelines and talent pools. Specifically, the senior women talent pipeline initiative will continue to provide direct, individualized and tailored support to qualified female candidates applying to senior civilian posts in peace operations, assuming that funding continues to be available. In parallel, the Secretariat will continue to work towards true equity and the full inclusion of women and men to reap the gains in efficiency and productivity proven to come from a gender-balanced workforce.

11. The Secretariat will continue to support the organizational rejuvenation efforts and will sustain the momentum in the meaningful and effective engagement with youth within the Organization to increase their feeling of belonging while simultaneously leveraging the benefits of a multigenerational workforce.

12. The Secretariat will fully embed the United Nations Language Framework into all corresponding human resources management processes and will continue to align with the framework under which languages in the Secretariat are assessed, learned and taught. Specifically, the language learning provision will continue to reflect staff members' evolving demand for language learning opportunities in support of the organizational multilingualism goal.

13. The Secretariat will fully implement the mechanisms envisaged in the strategic action plan on addressing racism and promoting dignity for all in the United Nations Secretariat⁴ and put in motion a process for its continual review and fine-tuning to ensure tangible progress towards being a proactively antiracist organization.

14. The Secretariat will consolidate a system to monitor its workforce that enables it to devise evidence-informed measures that mainstream the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all areas of work of the Organization

15. With the aim of leaving no one behind, the Secretariat will develop an integrated framework that accounts for the Secretariat's workforce diversity characteristics simultaneously and holistically, as opposed to distinctively or sequentially. The framework will subsequently inform a number of ongoing and planned talent management deliverables.

Measuring impact

16. Impact will be measured using a number of monitoring indicators, a sample⁵ thereof being:

- Reduction in the number of unrepresented and underrepresented Member States (baseline:⁶ 21+36)

⁴ The report of the Secretary-General on addressing racism and promoting dignity for all in the United Nations Secretariat (A/76/771) provides details about the strategic action plan, which was subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 76/271.

⁵ The monitoring indicators featured are a representative sample only: the detailed human resources management monitoring framework is currently under development through a two-tiered approach: at the entity and Secretariat level. Given entities' very different mandates, operational requirements and human resources capabilities, the targets attached to each monitoring indicator will also be differentiated. For this reason, the present report features the indicator baselines, and does not yet indicate target ranges. These will be reported to the General Assembly soon after the human resources monitoring framework is finalized.

⁶ The baseline under each indicator presented is to be understood as for 2021, unless expressly stated otherwise.

- Progress towards achieving gender parity according to definitions and timelines laid out in the system-wide strategy on gender parity, increase in the number of entities which have reached gender parity and reduction in the gap between women and men in the staff engagement survey satisfaction rates on the employee empowerment dimension (baseline: 42.2 per cent, 21 entities, 8 percentage points, respectively)
- Dynamic mix of in-person, online, hybrid and customized language training offering from Headquarters (baseline: 400)
- Increase in staff engagement survey favourable responses about leadership’s capacity to address racism at the workplace (baseline: 65 per cent)
- Increase in staff engagement survey satisfaction rates by staff members with disabilities (baseline: 13 percentage points lower than all-staff average on the employee empowerment dimension)

IV. Agility outcome

Proactive and efficient planning, hiring, deployment and learning for multi-skilled, mobile and adaptable talent

A. Overall intent

17. The agility outcome encompasses deliverables that enable the Organization to adapt, evolve, regenerate and deliver impact for the peoples of the world in rapidly changing, ambiguous and often unstable environments. An agile organization from the perspective of human resources management deploys key talent management processes to plan for, acquire and develop skills from outside and from within the Organization that permit it to flourish not only by effectively responding to mandates and rapidly evolving operational environments, but also by turning challenges into opportunities. Specifically, the agility outcome encompasses deliverables related to: workforce planning pursuant to General Assembly resolution [63/250](#), as reaffirmed in resolution [71/263](#), talent acquisition pursuant to successive General Assembly mandates, most recently in resolution [71/263](#), learning and development pursuant to resolution [61/244](#), as reaffirmed in resolution [71/263](#) and mobility and other support for staff members with regard to career satisfaction pursuant to resolution [68/265](#), as reaffirmed in resolution [71/263](#).

B. Ways forward for the period 2023–2026

Implementation plan

18. The Secretariat will advance with talent management actions in order to continue to build the needed workforce capabilities identified by strategic workforce planning, prioritizing data, digital, innovation, strategic foresight and behavioural science capabilities,⁷ and continue to develop and roll out operational support packages to assist workforce planning in entities. Through the iterative strategic workforce planning process, future workforce demand will be periodically assessed with a view to evolving mandates and priorities, skill and capability needs, demographics, technology and cultural transformations.

⁷ The “quintet of change” described in the report of the Secretary-General on Our Common Agenda ([A/75/982](#)), endorsed in resolution [76/6](#).

19. The Secretariat will implement a supply and demand tool for non-staff personnel provided by Member States and other donors outside the United Nations common system and will continue to deliver advisory services and entity-specific support in the use of non-staff capacities to help client entities deliver their mandates in a flexible and efficient manner.

20. The Secretariat will put a process in place for the continuous alignment of its leadership and management skill development programmes based on a participatory approach to determining organizational needs and in accordance with the organizational learning and development strategy. Specifically, the Secretariat will put together a learning impact evaluation framework that will be deployed as required to systematically collect evidence and continuously adjust leadership and management learning and development provision.

21. The Secretariat will continue to link induction and onboarding processes in the Secretariat, taking advantage of global and local approaches and enhancing the use of technology to create a people-centred, enabling, seamless, efficient, transparent and equitable experience for all stakeholders involved in the process.

22. The Secretariat will consolidate its new approach to staff mobility and will implement annual mobility exercises under the established policy and accountability frameworks.

23. The Secretariat will roll out a recognition and rewards framework to help build a culture where staff members feel listened to, appreciated and valued. The framework will also encourage elevated individual and team performance, thus driving high organizational performance, and contribute to an enabling work environment where the Secretariat lives its values.

Measuring impact

24. Impact will be measured using a number of monitoring indicators, a sample thereof being:

- Increased percentage of job openings that include future workforce capabilities needed (baseline: 3 per cent)
- Decrease in the recruitment timeline coupled with a gradual move towards a broader timeline definition that would cover the pre-posting and onboarding phases, in addition to posting-to-selection (posting to selection baseline: 182 days)
- Learning impact assessments carried out and recommendations implemented for leadership and management development programmes (baseline: nil)
- Mobility targets met (by 2030: 70 per cent of participating staff moving from D and E duty stations after two to three years of service; 60 per cent of moves across duty stations; and less than 90 days' processing time for mobility assignments)
- Increase in staff engagement survey satisfaction rates for career opportunities at the Secretariat (baseline: 49 per cent)

V. Accountability outcome

Efficient human resources services supported by an enabling policy framework; conducive to performance and human resources risk management; and meaningful discharge of duty of care responsibilities

A. Overall intent

25. From a human resources management perspective, as the mandates of the Secretariat have evolved, so have demands for greater, fairer and ongoing accountability. In line with human resources management reform and the relevant General Assembly mandates, reaffirmed most recently in resolution 71/263, the Secretariat works to deliver a simplified and enabling human resources policy framework and processes that sustain efficient human resources services provision, thus supporting entities in delivering their operational mandates. In parallel, this is also expanded to facilitate improved efficiency and simplified business practices within the United Nations system coordinated by the High-Level Committee on Management of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the International Civil Service Commission. In addition, accountability mechanisms also look beyond traditional input/output measures: they link individual, team and organizational performance for mandate accomplishment pursuant to various performance management reform mandates reaffirmed in resolution 71/263. Accountability, from a human resources management perspective, is further focused on improved delivery of results by effectively managing human resources risks related to conduct and integrity in accordance with the established mandates.⁸ Lastly, accountability covers the diligent discharge of the Secretariat's duty of care responsibilities with regard to health and well-being of all personnel pursuant to organizational mandates, reaffirmed most recently in resolution 76/246 B.

B. Ways forward for the period 2023–2026

Implementation plan

26. The Secretariat will continue to issue strategic and transformative human resources management policies in a timely manner, upholding streamlining and simplification to boost operational efficiency and incorporating a process economics consideration, the cost of policy implementation. This will follow a client-responsive, evidence-based and participative approach to determining year-on-year priorities in collaboration with the Management Client Board.

27. The Secretariat will continue to ensure effective provision of human resources operational support and advisory services to client entities in their exercise of the delegation of authority and supported by the appropriate service delivery management tools.

28. Under the High-Level Committee on Management of the Chief Executives Board, the Secretariat will continue to contribute to improved efficiency and simplified business practices within the United Nations system, notably in relation to the “future of the United Nations system workforce”.⁹ In addition, and under the guidance and coordination of the International Civil Service Commission, the

⁸ The regulatory basis for conduct and integrity matters can be consulted at <https://policy.un.org/unite-web-topic/misconduct>.

⁹ Further details are available from the Chief Executives Board's website at <https://unsceb.org/topics/future-work>.

Secretariat will continue to ensure that the United Nations system offers conditions of service conducive to sustaining a strong One United Nations employer brand.

29. The Secretariat will consolidate a forward-looking performance management model that sustains a high-performance culture integrating 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. A key feature of the system, a multi-rater 360° feedback, would roll out on a staggered basis to all staff and link with other human resources processes.

30. The Secretariat will continue to expand its end-to-end Case Management Tracking System and build capacities of focal points throughout the Secretariat on conduct and integrity matters.

31. The Secretariat will continue to engage with and support the work of the Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate. The Secretariat will also continue to support all efforts to tackle sexual harassment, including by active participation in the Chief Executives Board Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment. This includes, inter alia, leading workstreams and contributing to the development of products and frameworks, all with a view to building a common, system-wide approach to a victim-centred response.

32. The Secretariat will continue to strengthen partnerships with United Nations entities, Member States and regional institutions, for enhanced support and engagement to strengthen capabilities to manage risk of misconduct and to implement responsive prevention, enforcement and victim support initiatives, developing user-friendly tools and sharing good practices.

33. Under the Action for Peacekeeping+ initiative,¹⁰ by 2026 the Secretariat will intensify efforts to collectively engage with Member States to reinforce accountability of peacekeepers for conduct and integrity in peacekeeping operations.

34. The Secretariat will implement, on a rolling basis, a mental health action plan focused on creating a healthy workplace, reducing stigma and ensuring that staff with mental health conditions or at risk are supported, consistent with the policy and guidelines of the World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization regarding mental health in the workplace. The Secretariat will also continue to seek and implement advances in occupational health and well-being to ensure that all personnel can flourish.

Measuring impact

35. Impact will be measured using a number of monitoring indicators, a sample thereof being:

- 100 per cent completion of the annual plan for introduction of human resources policies agreed with the Management Client Board
- Number and proportion of performance management and feedback-related cases referred to the Office of the Ombudsman with a corresponding trend analysis (baseline 2020: 135 cases, 10.67 per cent of total)
- Increase in staff perceptions from the staff engagement survey on the capacity of managers to deal with underperformance (baseline: 69 per cent)
- Client satisfaction with advisory and operational support (target: 75 per cent)

¹⁰ Details are available at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/action-peacekeeping>.

- Usage of the end-to-end Case Management Tracking System
- Increase in staff perceptions from the staff engagement survey on their managers' care for their health and well-being (baseline: 73 per cent)

VI. Reform enablers

A. Overall intent

36. The reform enablers are the implementation strategies deployed to accelerate and enhance capabilities to deliver human resources management results. They are the interpretation of the quintet of change from *Our Common Agenda*, through the specific human resources management lens. The enablers are currently grouped under the following headings: innovation, digitalization and continuous improvement; systematic use of data and evidence; and staff involvement.

B. Ways forward for the period 2023–2026

37. The Secretariat will continue to advance the innovation, digitalization and continuous improvement enabler, inter alia by developing and managing human resources support infrastructures and processes, including to enable the proper management of human resources documents and records, and ensuring interoperability for linkages across technology systems. Under this enabler, the Secretariat will also complete an overhaul of its learning management system to enhance the learning experience and foster collaboration, knowledge-sharing and co-creation.

38. Enhanced tools will continue to drive the Secretariat's support for Member States' data and evidence-based decision-making on human resources management, including through a new Member States portal. Punctual trend and analytical insights on various human resources management mandates will continue to be made available periodically in reports and other dedicated publications, thus facilitating evidence-based decision-making.

39. Lastly, staff involvement will continue to deepen by means of town hall for all staff and other smaller group formats, as well as the staff engagement survey conducted every two years, in addition to the statutory staff-management mechanisms in place to continue to leverage behavioural science throughout the human resources management system.

VII. Accelerating progress on geographical distribution through overhauling the Secretariat's staff selection system

A. Recruitment as the vehicle for equitable geographical distribution

40. Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations lays out the fundamental recruitment principle in the Secretariat, stipulating that "the paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity. Due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible". According to resolution [42/220 A](#), the system of desirable ranges is the mechanism whereby the General Assembly operationalizes this principle, which establishes the basis for monitoring and reporting on progress towards the goal of equitable geographical distribution.

41. As reported in [A/77/590/Add.1](#), there has been some progress towards equitable geographical distribution in recent years, albeit at a slow pace. Addressing imbalances is greatly aided by understanding the exact challenges and determining the obstacles in recruiting a diverse workforce under the current staff selection system. To contribute to this understanding and mandated by the General Assembly, most recently in resolution [71/263](#), a number of analytical endeavours have taken place in recent years, which factor in relevant demographic variables to reflect the way in which different human resources management mandates intertwine. Pertinent highlights of these analyses are provided below.

B. Case for change of the current staff selection system

42. There is an established correlation between the number of applications and successful applicants, which underscores the importance of conducting recruitment trend analysis at each stage of the recruitment process. While the Secretariat continues to attract a good number of applications for each job opening (on average: 301 in 2017, 360 in 2018, 309 in 2019 and 188¹¹ in 2020), there have been significant challenges with regard to the diversity of applicants. For example, there has been consistency in the proportion of applications for all posts in the Professional and above categories for departments/offices, regional economic commissions and tribunals from unrepresented Member States, which account for 0.3 per cent of the total applicants. Applications from underrepresented Member States have been declining since 2017, to 16.8 per cent of total applications in 2020; however, this decline is, at least partly, attributable to the decrease in the number of underrepresented Member States. At the same time, when candidates from underrepresented Member States do apply, data indicate that they are more successful in the recruitment process, given that their selection rates are consistently in positive territory (for example, in 2020, the selection rate for candidates from underrepresented Member States was 19.7 per cent, or 2.9 percentage points above the application rate for such candidates). For unrepresented Member States, the correlation is not as pronounced: the selection rate for candidates from unrepresented Member States was 0.4 per cent, only 0.1 of a percentage point above the application rate for such candidates).

43. The step that follows application is screening: this process is carried out on the organizational application tracking system, Inspira, and consists of an automated process screening for basic eligibility criteria, combined with a manual review of applications for suitability against the evaluation criteria of the job opening. The first step, eligibility screening, shows that the proportion of screened-in applications was similar for underrepresented, within-range and overrepresented Member States, at a rate of approximately 60 per cent. For applicants from unrepresented Member States, however, the proportion of screened-in applications was lower, at 53.1 per cent. Looking only at the proportion of screened-in applications from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States, those from Eastern European States had the largest proportion of screened-in applications (64.7 per cent), closely followed by applications from Latin American and Caribbean States (62.1 per cent) and from Asia-Pacific States (61.4 per cent). Applications from the African States group were screened in at

¹¹ The significant drop in the average number of applications per post in 2020 is attributable to several factors, including the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. This is consistent with global recruitment trends as reported by, inter alia, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in a policy brief, “An assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on job and skills demand using online job vacancy data”, of 9 April 2021 (available at <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/an-assessment-of-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-job-and-skills-demand-using-online-job-vacancy-data-20ff09e/>).

a lower rate: 48 per cent. Applications screened out were predominantly rejected for two reasons: language (21.9 per cent and 23.7 per cent, respectively, of the applications from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States) and experience (18.3 per cent and 25.6 per cent respectively, of the applications from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States), where only one reason, as opposed to “multiple reasons”, has been recorded. Next, the hiring manager manually screens candidate applications against the detailed evaluation criteria in the job opening to create a shortlist for further assessment. The analysis of this stage revealed that the chance of being shortlisted as a percentage of the initial candidate pool was 2.5 per cent for Africa (lowest), while it was 5.2 per cent for Latin America and the Caribbean (highest).

44. The next stage of the process is assessment, during which hiring managers evaluate candidates most commonly through a written assessment (or similar) and/or a competency-based interview, to determine which candidates will be recommended for potential selection. Candidates from Western Europe and other States were more likely to be recommended for hire at this stage (1.4 times compared with Latin America and the Caribbean; 1.8 times compared with Eastern Europe; 2.0 compared with Asia-Pacific; and 2.9 compared with Africa). When looking at reasons why candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States did not achieve “Recommended” status, “Failed assessment”, which may refer to failing one of multiple assessments (written test or competency-based interview), appeared to be the main reason. The failed assessment rate was highest for candidates from unrepresented Member States, at 74 per cent, while it was 67.6 per cent for candidates from underrepresented Member States. When looking at the subset of applications from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States only, failed assessment rates were the highest among the Eastern European group (77.2 per cent), while the lowest among Western European and other States (64.2 per cent). The highest rate for “Unsuccessful interview” was recorded for candidates from Asia-Pacific (17.7 per cent), whereas the lowest was for candidates from Eastern Europe (10.6 per cent). With regard to Secretariat ratings for the most frequently assessed competencies, there were mostly small differences across regional groups for the subset of applications from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States, with the exception of the competencies “Planning and organizing”, “Leadership” and “Judgment and decision-making”, for which candidates from African States had a lower pass rate.

45. Findings from an analysis of the Young Professionals Programme show broader trend similarities. The programme has been, to some extent, successful in improving the overall geographical distribution for underrepresented Member States but did not have a significant impact on improving the distribution of unrepresented Member States, partly owing to the small number of geographical posts at the P-2 level. From 2011 to 2019, only 2 out of a yearly average of 19 Member States in the unrepresented category have been successful. Only 3 per cent of applicants from the African States group succeed in the written test and are convoked to the next stage. An applicant from the Western European and other States group is twice as successful, followed by the Asia-Pacific States group (5 per cent).

46. In short, all quantitative analyses conducted suggest that more candidates from countries in overrepresented and within-range categories apply and are more likely to succeed in the final instance than those from unrepresented and underrepresented categories, and this has been reflected in the pace towards the equitable geographical distribution goal under the diversity outcome. As to why this has happened, qualitative analysis based on in-depth focus group discussions and individual

interviews¹² pointed to a significant number of confluent factors, covering the entire recruitment process, that have contributed to curtailing efforts for faster progress. These have included:

- (a) Lack of recent and inclusive job analysis to reflect in up-to-date job descriptions that represent the full range of work carried out by – and the requirements needed from – a diverse array of staff;
- (b) Unnecessary items in the job application process that have made it cumbersome;
- (c) Language skills requirements, applicant self-assessment and evaluation lacking in consistency;
- (d) Excessive reliance on years of work experience and educational level as a predictor of future performance on the job;
- (e) Burden on hiring managers to determine, develop and conduct screening and evaluation of applications without support;
- (f) Inadvertent but adverse impact of the competency-based interviewing method to the attainment of the equitable geographical distribution goal;
- (g) Multiple hurdles throughout the recruitment process focused on reducing the volume of applications instead of sieving through applications from qualified candidates;
- (h) Lack of real-time monitoring capability to obtain data and monitor differences in the treatment of demographic subgroups (adverse impact) at each stage of the recruitment process;
- (i) Room for improvement in the degree of involvement of each recruitment stakeholder at each stage of the recruitment process.

47. In the light of the above evidence, the Secretariat has concluded that the shortcomings of the current recruitment process are systemic and structural in nature, which makes them challenging to overcome under the current selection system. Rectifying these shortcomings would require concerted efforts. Consequently, the Secretariat will launch a staff selection 2.0 programme, which will address the required people, policy, process and technology changes. A broad overview of the programme is laid out below.

C. Staff selection principles

48. Under the overarching principle of article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations, selection in the Secretariat should (continue to) be made on the basis of merit with a fair and open competition. This, in the context of the staff selection 2.0 programme, can be operationalized through the following staff selection principles:

- Job responsibilities and attributes captured in generic job profiles (and announced in vacancy announcements) are systematically identified and verified through an inclusive job analysis that takes into consideration diverse perspectives on how work is experienced.

¹² These covered a tiered sample of 52 stakeholders – recruiters, hiring managers, subject matter experts, assessment panel and Central Review Board members and applicants – representing 38 nationalities, 21 duty stations and 26 entities.

- Job responsibilities and attributes accurately reflect the requirements of the job in different contexts and ensure that contributions and rewards correspond to roles, not incumbents.
- Recruitment opportunities are advertised for an appropriate period publicly and accompanied by proactive outreach to ensure impact on and progress towards diversity-related mandates. Applicants are given reasonable access to information about the role and its requirements, and about the recruitment process.
- Anyone who wishes is allowed to apply and is accorded equal treatment. A particular reference must be made here to the detrimental impact on the equitable geographical distribution goal of the restrictions placed on current staff members from the General Service and related categories applying to posts in the Professional category, a proposal for the removal of which will be submitted to the General Assembly for its consideration at the seventy-ninth session.
- Assessment methods are specific in that they are chosen according to and measure only the attributes required for the job. By extension, their content and difficulty levels are proportionate to the job responsibilities. Various assessment methods with the required validity and cultural sensitivity are available and the responsibility to determine, develop, deliver and evaluate assessments is assigned appropriately, with the requisite accountability.
- Every stage, tool, and method is evaluated for fairness, and decisions are continuously monitored for potential bias and accuracy at every stage of the recruitment process, permitting evidence-informed adjustments if and as required.

D. Staff selection 2.0 programme outline

49. Staff selection 2.0 will be based on the principles articulated above and will cover the three components of recruitment, outreach and the Young Professionals Programme. The recruitment component is composed of three workstreams with multiple projects within and across them: (a) Comprehensive job analysis and skill identification; (b) Assessment methods and tools for now and the future; and (c) Ensuring accountability and agility in staff selection. Subject to availability to cover each individual resource requirement, the programme is aimed to be completed by 2026. The end result of staff selection 2.0 is to ensure a system that is effective, fair, efficient and agile and enables the Organization to have a diverse and inclusive workforce that delivers on its evolving mandates. The new, streamlined system will fulfil the letter and spirit of article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations, in recruiting staff on as a wide geographical basis as possible. The recruitment component will be supported by a recalibrated approach to outreach and the Young Professionals Programme. The three components of recruitment, outreach and the Young Professionals Programme will benefit the diversity outcome, in particular geographical distribution; however, they will also help advance the agility and accountability outcomes. A summary of the current recruitment process, the way in which its deficiencies have affected geographical distribution and how specifically these will be rectified with the staff selection 2.0 programme is presented in the annex.

VIII. Actions to be taken by the General Assembly

50. The General Assembly is invited to take note of the human resources management framework and request the Secretary-General to provide an update on progress of human resources management reform implementation during the seventy-ninth session.

Annex

Recruitment process under the current staff selection system, adverse impact and envisaged remedies with staff selection 2.0

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Current status</i>	<i>Adverse impact</i>	<i>Future status</i>
Creation of job opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdated generic job profiles are used at the initial stage of the recruitment process by providing the basis to determine responsibilities, requirements and competencies for jobs to be advertised. • Responsibilities are mostly pre-set with little flexibility for update without a time-intensive new classification process. • Requirements such as education and work experience are pre-determined: number of years of experience by category and grade are set and used to screen applications. • Language requirements are established by the hiring manager using two levels of proficiency (“fluent” or “knowledge of”) without further explanations. Additional desirable languages can be included. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generic job profiles, in addition to being outdated, are not grounded in inclusive job analyses. They do not take into account that individuals from different cultural backgrounds experience and carry out work differently. Generic job profiles do not include the required knowledge, skills or abilities clearly linked to responsibilities, which should be the basis for determining how applicants demonstrate that they could successfully perform the job. This results in potentially qualified applicants, including from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States, being discouraged from applying because of the way that jobs in the Secretariat are described. • Rigid work experience and educational requirements are assumed to be an accurate predictor of the ability of candidates to successfully carry out a job. This assumes that all jobs at the same level require the same number of years of experience in specific roles and the same education level, often, an advanced university degree, which is not always the case. Such requirements may in fact not be accurate predictors of job performance and unnecessarily screen out (or discourage) applicants from diverse backgrounds who could successfully perform the job based on their actual knowledge, skills or abilities. • Competencies as articulated in the old competency framework, which is being phased out, are included in generic job profiles. They may not be interpreted in the same way by different cultures. In addition, competencies may inadvertently favour in-groups: candidates with previous experience in or exposure to the Secretariat, the United Nations system, other international organizations, or national civil services which deploy competencies in job profiles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generic job profiles are redesigned and updated through an inclusive job analysis to ensure that they provide an up-to-date and inclusive basis for creating job descriptions that represent the full range of work carried out by a diverse array of staff. Culturally sensitive language is used to describe responsibilities and attract a diverse applicant pool. • When building job openings, job responsibilities are linked to the knowledge, skills and abilities required to carry them out. This would enable the hiring manager to identify requirements and assessment methods that measure what is required for the job without bias. • Language requirements are standardized and proficiency levels aligned with the United Nations Language Framework.

Stage	Current status	Adverse impact	Future status
Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants create online candidate profiles in the organizational electronic applicant tracking system, Inspira, which may require more than two hours to complete. • Applicants provide information on recruitment-relevant questions such as education, employment history, language proficiency and references, but also on other questions that have no bearing on the recruitment process, that, however, are relevant to employment in the Secretariat. These include: marital status, dependants, steps towards changing present nationality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of a standardized approach to determining language requirements may lead to unnecessary barriers or to exclusion, affecting non-native speakers in particular. • The completion of the online application may be burdensome for some individuals, which could lead to their either not completing their application or not applying. • Some questions asked at the application stage that are relevant for employment in the Secretariat, although not at the recruitment stage, may require candidates to reveal characteristics in a way that may in some cultures be considered inappropriate, highly sensitive or legally questionable, which may discourage them from applying. • Applicants subjectively judging and indicating their level of language proficiency may lead to unnecessary exclusion. Subjectivity in determining one's language competence may be particularly detrimental to non-native speakers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online applications are streamlined and request only recruitment-relevant information. • Collection of information, other than that strictly necessary for recruitment purposes, is moved elsewhere in the process and/or information is provided to applicants on how demographic data is used. • Applicants specify how their skills are relevant to their candidacy, thus removing the excessive weight of number of years of experience and/or level of education, consequently reducing the possibility of exclusion of potentially qualified applicants. • Applicants are given guidance on language skills and requirements assessment based on objective proficiency standards.
Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspira screens applications automatically for the required years of work experience, educational level and language requirements and any eliminatory questions. • The hiring manager evaluates all applicants that pass automatic screening and determines a shortlist based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The shortlisting process is lengthy, since the hiring manager has core programmatic responsibilities in addition to recruitment. This, coupled with the high number of applications for many jobs, may discourage all qualified candidates, including those with sought-after diversity characteristics. • Automatic screening out of applications solely on the basis of number of years of experience or education level leads to exclusion of qualified applicants who possess and are able to demonstrate relevant knowledge and skills by other means. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Years of experience and educational level are used for screening only in situations where they are directly mapped to knowledge, skills or abilities needed. • Screening of job experience information from applicants is enhanced to expand beyond number of years and specific roles to allow applicants with diverse experiences to demonstrate the relevance of their

Stage	Current status	Adverse impact	Future status
Assessment	<p>on a detailed review of relevant work experience. “Desirable” characteristics, most often experience, may also enter into the equation when building a shortlist.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment methods (tests or examinations) for the job are discretionary upon the hiring manager without further guidance, except a reference to the use of a competency-based interview. In addition to such interviews, hiring managers most often resort to essay-style tests for candidate assessment. • Interview questions are behavioural and based on the set of competencies listed in the job opening. Interviews are conducted by a panel, the members of which are required to undergo competency-based interviewing training at least once during their United Nations career. • A descriptive rating scale is used to assess each competency: Unsatisfactory, Partially Satisfactory, Satisfactory or Outstanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of “desirable”, as well as the subjective assessment of what constitutes relevant experience varies between hiring managers and may potentially allow bias to creep in. Experience may at times be inferred from job titles, the use and interpretation of which is deeply cultural. • The choice of assessment methods and rating scales deployed is discretionary. This subjectivity may lead to unintended deficiencies in precision, fairness and rigour during assessment, given that hiring managers are not recruitment experts and perform this role in addition to their programmatic duties. A diverse set of assessment methods and tools is not readily available to the majority of hiring managers, effectively reducing their options to an essay-style tests and/or competency-based interview. • In competency-based interviews the line of questions is restricted exclusively to competencies, not allowing interview panels to obtain applicant information pertaining to relevant knowledge, skills and abilities outside of the current competency framework, which is being phased out. The emphasis on achievements in the competency-based interviewing puts candidates from collectivist cultures – predominant in some regional groups such as Africa and Asia – at a disadvantage. In addition, there are resources on competency-based interview preparation, including previous experience, that some candidates undergoing the process have whereas others do not, which may put the latter on an unequal footing or may skew the assessment validity. • Essay-style tests are “cognitively loaded” – requiring both reasoning and writing ability – at a level that may not be commensurate with what is required for the job. On the other hand, competency-based interviews also 	<p>skills to the job. Screening is “objectivized” to remove discretionary items that are open to interpretation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles, responsibilities and tools for screening are modernized to ensure efficient, fair and accurate assessment. • Assessment methods are diversified with job-relevant behavioural assessments (in-tray, analytical or presentation exercises) that can be procured from qualified vendors and/or developed and/or validated internally. The competency-based interview in its current form is phased out and replaced by blended or other structured interview methods. • Hiring managers determine in advance how assessment methods are numerically scored and how scorings are combined. • Hiring managers are supported by their human resources business partners throughout the recruitment process to ensure the professionalization of assessments, as well as consistency across job families, entities and duty stations.

Stage	Current status	Adverse impact	Future status
Recommendation	<p>At least “Satisfactory” is required for each competency, which enables applicants to receive “Recommended” status.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Candidates who pass all tests (as well as the competency-based interview) receive “Recommended” status, whereas applicants who fail any element of the Assessment phase receive “Not recommended” status. 	<p>have cognitive load implications – on the side of both the interviewers and the interviewees – which may lead to deficiencies in precision, fairness and rigour and may unintentionally leave out qualified, geographically diverse candidates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The different types of assessments are not standardized across jobs. Varied approaches to scoring are used. Pass/fail assessments on any single competency unnecessarily decrease the pool of qualified candidates who might perform well on the job. This system may not give a fair chance to otherwise exceptional candidates, who may test as weak on a particular, broadly defined competency, which in turn may or may not be of direct or daily relevance to the job or may or may not have been assessed holistically. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Candidates’ scores from all assessments create an overall composite score, which increases objectivity and provides for a more holistic view of candidates’ capabilities. The required scoring levels are determined to ensure that applications meet the expected level of proficiency and performance.