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## United Nations System Staff College

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [60/214](#). It demonstrates the progress made by the United Nations System Staff College in the 2021–2022 biennium in response to Economic and Social Council resolution [2021/15](#), in which the Council encouraged the Staff College to continue to develop its learning portfolio through course fees and contracts for services, as well as through voluntary contributions, in support of a more cohesive and coherent United Nations system.

The report provides key highlights of the ways in which the Staff College has continued to adapt its activities in response to the challenging circumstances of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the new normal, to help to drive progress as a key inter-agency institution of knowledge management, learning and training. Triggered by the need for increased digital learning that emerged during the pandemic – and demonstrating the Staff College’s agility and responsiveness to the needs of the United Nations system – the Staff College developed a system of learning management platforms that have enabled it to better fulfil its core mandate as an institution for learning for the United Nations system. By enabling United Nations entities to pool learning resources and better address capacity gaps, the Staff College has contributed to a more cost-efficient United Nations system that is better able to apply new knowledge and learning to its mandates.

In the 2021–2022 period, the Staff College delivered a total of 432 learning activities, a notable increase of 54 per cent over the previous biennium. The courses, services and products reached 67,737 beneficiaries around the globe, compared with 57,000 beneficiaries in the previous biennium, marking an increase of 19 per cent.

The Staff College reported strong financial results for the biennium owing to increased demand for its learning programmes and to the efficiency of its business operations. This reflects a conscious strategy adopted by the Staff College to contain expenditures in the light of the volatile global situation.



The support of Member States is essential for the Staff College to continue to develop and deliver quality learning for United Nations staff and partner entities, as mandated by the United Nations System Staff College Statute. Such support will enable the Staff College to ensure that many more United Nations system personnel and relevant partners possess the knowledge and skills they need to strengthen the impact of the United Nations system.

## I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/214, in which the Assembly reaffirmed the role of the United Nations System Staff College as an institution for system-wide knowledge management, training and continuous learning for the staff of the United Nations system, in particular in the areas of economic and social development, peace and security and internal management. The report provides a description of the progress made during the biennium 2021–2022 in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2021/15, in which the Council encouraged the Staff College to continue to develop its learning portfolio through course fees and contracts for services, as well as through voluntary contributions, in support of a more cohesive and coherent United Nations system.

2. The Staff College is headquartered in Turin, Italy, with its Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Development in Bonn, Germany. The vision of the Staff College is to enable a world in which learning and knowledge advance effective solutions to global challenges. The mission of the organization is to foster learning for a better world through capacity support for United Nations priorities. In order to deliver on that mission, the Staff College’s learning methodologies combine academic research with practical experience gained at the United Nations, a combination that fosters deep critical thinking and creative problem-solving. The Staff College spurs learning participants to collaborate across the United Nations system to break down organizational and functional silos. Participants from civil society, academia and the private sector and other actors learn alongside United Nations personnel – leading to a vibrant setting for crafting new solutions.

3. In the period under review, the Staff College significantly expanded its learning portfolio through self-generated resources, namely, course fees and contracts for services, as well as through voluntary contributions from Germany, Ireland, Italy and Sweden. The Staff College has dramatically changed over the years and continues to do so by transforming itself into a cohesive learning hub for the United Nations system and its partners.

4. The regular Staff College portfolio spans residential courses, blended programmes, e-learning courses, knowledge-sharing platforms and knowledge assets, including case studies, primers and video-based content. In addition, tailor-made learning programmes are developed and delivered to meet the specific requirements of United Nations organizations and partners. Its efforts benefit from the fact that the Staff College is the only United Nations learning provider with an inter-agency mandate. This allows the Staff College to serve the needs and demands of the United Nations system as a whole, rationalizing the learning resources available to United Nations personnel and thus supporting the efficiency agenda of the Secretary-General.

5. The present report contains sections on: the programmatic achievements of the Staff College (section II); how the Staff College has advanced knowledge to support the United Nations system in building forward together (section III); its efforts to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through learning (section IV); its contributions to sustaining peace and fostering security in a complex world (section V); its work aimed at developing the leadership and management skills for the United Nations of the future (section VI); and conclusions and recommendations (section VII).

## II. Overview of programmatic achievements

6. Since its inception – and with regular financial support from Italy, Germany and Sweden – the Staff College has actively worked to meet the needs of the United

Nations system, Member States and partners by providing programmes and services that are relevant, fit for purpose and multidisciplinary. In the 2021–2022 period, the Staff College delivered a total of 432 learning activities, representing an increase of 54 per cent over the previous biennium. Staff College courses, services and products reached 67,737 beneficiaries around the globe, an increase of 19 per cent over the previous biennium.

7. The Staff College has leveraged its expanded reach among a growing number of learners to advance system-wide knowledge on critical issues, including behavioural science, diversity and inclusion and climate action. This was done through online events and webinars, as well as through innovative approaches, such as holding an art exhibition to inspire stakeholders to act as agents of change to address the climate emergency.

8. In a report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled “Policies and platforms in support of learning: towards more coherence, coordination and convergence” (JIU/REP/2020/2), the Unit recommended that the role of the Staff College as a central learning hub of the United Nations system be strengthened. It underlined the important contribution that the Staff College could make to fostering coherence, coordination and convergence in the United Nations system, potentially leading to overall savings at the system-wide level and more efficient spending of Member States’ assessed or voluntary contributions. In response to the recommendation, in the period under review, the Staff College developed an innovative system of e-learning services and platforms to make its know-how and unique expertise available to all staff and organizations of the United Nations system. This includes “Blue line”, an e-learning platform embraced by a continuously growing number of United Nations system organizations as a core instrument for staff development and knowledge-sharing, reaching the equivalent of 52 per cent of the entire current staff population of the United Nations system. In addition, the system of platforms includes such services as the “UNKampus” learning management technology, through which the Staff College underpins the learning and capacity-building functions of a growing number of United Nations system organizations. By enabling United Nations entities to consolidate their efforts and leverage the Staff College’s best-in-class learning systems, the Staff College fulfils its core mandate as the designated institution for learning and staff development in the United Nations system and contributes to a more cost-efficient United Nations system that is better equipped to deal with the pressing global challenges of today.

9. In terms of its business operations, the Staff College performed well in raising self-generated resources through course fees and contracts for learning services. This placed the Staff College in a healthy financial situation, with 73 per cent of the total generated income deriving from self-generated sources and only 27 per cent stemming from donor funding. The result testifies to the Staff College’s ability to provide high-quality programmatic offerings.

10. In order to reach a wide variety of learners from civil society and outside the United Nations, the Staff College offered a diverse range of online courses free of charge, with the support of the Government of Germany. Additional resources from Member States, if forthcoming, would enable the Staff College to expand its array of subsidized courses or to offer them free of charge, which would substantially increase the reach and impact of its learning programmes.

### **III. Advancing knowledge to support the United Nations system in building forward together**

11. Around the world, professionals need to put forward insightful policies, strategic plans and concrete actions to address the widening disparities caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. This imperative is what drove the Staff College during the period under review to develop and adjust learning solutions to build the knowledge and skills required to support United Nations staff and relevant partners as they assist in global and national efforts to build forward better.

12. In the period under review, as the only United Nations organization for learning, training and knowledge management with an inter-agency mandate, the Staff College delivered a robust mix of high-quality learning activities for the staff of the United Nations system and partners. As a result of technological developments in its learning management systems and accumulated experience with online delivery of learning solutions, the Staff College was able to grow its services exponentially and widen its scope for continuing innovation in some areas. Through the use of technology, the Staff College conducted an expanding volume of business operations and offered a diversity of products and services delivered through a wide range of methods. The Staff College also provided more varied and more specific options for learning, including more online self-paced courses, more instructor-led courses and more courses available in different languages.

13. The Staff College expanded its target audience from primarily United Nations staff to include such partners as civil servants and technical experts, civil society representatives and students of academic programmes co-delivered with universities. In 2022, most of the non-United Nations learners attended courses that were offered online, free of charge and on an open-enrolment basis, such as the primer on the Sustainable Development Goals, the primer on youth and peace and security or the course on the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. This trend is welcomed, as it reinforces the Staff College's mandate as a knowledge-sharing organization that promotes United Nations values and knowledge within and outside the system.

14. The Staff College continued to grow and diversify its academic partnerships, representing an important strategic area of the organization. By building on the research and teaching capabilities of an array of academic institutions around the world, the Staff College was able to strengthen the academic rigour of its programmes while at the same time providing United Nations personnel and relevant partners with access to higher-education learning opportunities that support their professional development. For example, the Staff College leveraged its partnership with IE University in Spain to develop a new curriculum on the fundamentals of data analytics in the United Nations context, which enables United Nations professionals to strengthen their ability to access, use, interpret and communicate data. To help United Nations staff members to embrace diversity and inclusion in the workplace, the Staff College partnered with the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy of the National University of Singapore to create and deliver a course on diversity and cultural intelligence for enhanced results. Furthermore, the Staff College has formed partnerships with the University of Oxford, the Hertie School in Berlin, Kings College London, the Polytechnic University of Turin and the University of Cape Town.

#### **IV. Supporting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through learning**

15. Through its capacity-building expertise in the field of sustainable development, the Staff College supports the policy and operational work of the United Nations by advancing knowledge in sustainable development and developing learning tools, platforms for interaction and learning offerings for United Nations staff and counterparts. It also serves as a catalyst and convener, prompting dialogue and knowledge-sharing on issues relevant to the vision and mission of the United Nations. The Staff College helps to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by leveraging the power of learning to bring about a sustainable world.

16. To enhance the understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Staff College collaborated with the Development Coordination Office, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network to develop a certification programme and an e-course on sustainable development for resident coordinators and development practitioners. By the end of 2022, the primer on the Sustainable Development Goals had benefited more than 6,000 learners.

17. In order to promote integrated thinking, collaboration and holistic approaches, the Staff College and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research launched “UN SDG: Learn”, an online platform that offers more than 800 courses and microlearning modules on sustainable development. By the end of 2022, the platform had 210,411 users.

18. To support the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, the Staff College, in collaboration with the Development Coordination Office, designed and developed an online course on the Framework, available free of charge to all United Nations staff and the general public in English, Spanish and French. The course enables reflection on how to clearly articulate the United Nations development system’s collective response to support countries in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. By the end of 2022, the platform had 4,500 learners.

19. In addition to these system-wide initiatives, the Staff College also supports individual organizations in their strategic positioning in United Nations country development programming as they each fulfil their role as stakeholders in the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, the most important instrument for planning and implementing United Nations development activities at the country level. The Staff College provided essential training on United Nations country programming and developed learning packages for several United Nations entities, including the United Nations Children’s Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the World Health Organization country office in Somalia, the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

20. To improve the ability of staff of resident coordinator offices to help Member States to implement the 2030 Agenda, the Staff College launched the “United Nations resident coordinator office learning path”, which offers a rigorous six-month blended programme of interactive online modules and an in-person workshop in Bonn, Germany. To complement the programme, the Staff College and the Development Coordination Office conducted customized immersive programmes and organized peer communities for the team leaders of resident coordinator offices in Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Central Asia. The Staff College also

enhanced the leadership skills and knowledge of United Nations resident coordinators and country teams, supporting the repositioning of the United Nations development system by delivering a number of critical leadership programmes for the country teams.

21. The Staff College also supported national capacity-building efforts in several ways, including by building the capacities of civil servants to deliver sustainable development curricula and to incorporate the 2030 Agenda into their work. Together with the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany and the German Corporation for International Cooperation, the Staff College launched a programme to build the capacity of national actors to implement the 2030 Agenda at the local level.

## **V. Sustaining peace and fostering security in a complex world**

22. The 2030 Agenda includes the recognition that there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. Through its work on peace and security, the Staff College responds to this call by providing inclusive, high-quality learning solutions that strengthen the ability of the United Nations to work across the United Nations pillars to prevent and mitigate conflict, build resilient societies and contribute meaningfully to sustainable peace. By strengthening analytical capacities and skills, the Staff College equips United Nations staff and partners with the ability to approach programming through the lens of sustaining peace.

23. In the period under review, the Staff College refocused its work on peace and security to support responses to the conflict-related challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, with the aim of ensuring more coordinated, coherent and integrated efforts to prevent violence, end conflict and mitigate fragility. The Staff College supported shifts in United Nations practice towards inclusivity by offering visibility and legitimacy to a broader range of peace actors. In partnership with leading think tanks and academia, it fostered knowledge on such thematic issues as youth and peace and security. It worked to improve skills in and knowledge on adapting climate-sensitive approaches to peacebuilding.

24. To respond to the increasing demand to develop the analytical skills needed to conduct coordinated prevention activities across the Secretariat, entities and programmes of the United Nations, the Staff College offered an integrated analysis portfolio that served to train 200 people from across the system. In November 2022, the Staff College delivered its first in-person edition of the course in Tunisia to staff from United Nations entities, peacekeeping missions and special political missions.

25. To develop the much-needed capacity to address the security risks associated with climate change, the Staff College, with the support of the Government of Ireland, has positioned itself as a knowledge broker for inter-agency training on climate-sensitive approaches to peacebuilding, working with the United Nations climate security mechanism and supporting a Member States forum held on the margins of the annual Berlin Climate and Security Conference.

26. To help United Nations personnel working on peace and security to understand and visualize data in order to better integrate storytelling and decision-making, the Staff College launched a boot camp on integrated data analytics for sustaining peace. A total of 150 staff members of the United Nations and civil society organizations have been trained since the inception of the boot camp at the end of 2021.

27. It is also important for peace and security professionals to adopt a conflict-sensitive lens throughout their interventions, in particular when pandemic-related

health measures, such as restrictions on non-essential activities, lockdowns and physical distancing, can aggravate the consequences of armed conflict, extremism and crime. In that regard, in 2022, as part of its conflict sensitivity portfolio, the Staff College supported the secretariat of the Peacebuilding Fund and the United Nations Development Programme to develop a tailored, innovative and interactive self-paced online programme to build the capacity of Sudanese stakeholders to design, develop and implement conflict-sensitive and responsive peacebuilding programmes.

28. At the global level, the Staff College worked with the University of Oxford on “The changing character of conflict platform” and its interactive tool for armed group analysis. The Staff College built on this ongoing academic partnership to enhance the integration of high-quality research findings into the practical daily work of United Nations practitioners. Interactive multi-stakeholder forums were conducted on Myanmar, which served to enhance the understanding of the relationship between the uncertainty experienced by communities and the changes in local orders that are particularly pronounced during moments of transition from armed conflict to peace negotiations, ceasefires or peace agreements. A multi-stakeholder forum on Somalia enabled participants to explore opportunities for innovative solutions to mitigate the negative impact of armed conflict on communities living in the Horn of Africa region.

29. To support the needs of individuals and institutions in implementing gender-responsive programming, the Staff College provided diverse and far-reaching training and capacity-building initiatives under its women and peace and security portfolio. In 2022, the Staff College delivered an in-person training on the integration and mainstreaming of gender equality and the women and peace and security mandate to senior- and middle-level managers of the United Nations Support Office in Somalia in Mogadishu.

30. To support the implementation of Security Council resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#), on youth and peace and security, the Staff College developed a learning portfolio reaching hundreds of professionals in various sectors. Based on the positive response in 2021 to the first edition of the course on realizing the youth and peace and security agenda and the continued need to build the capacity of a growing number of professionals – within the United Nations system and beyond – the Staff College and the Folke Bernadotte Academy of Sweden continued their collaboration to implement the project in 2022, expanding the target audience to include practitioners and representatives of international and regional security organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society working on the youth and peace and security agenda.

31. To support its work on sustaining peace, the Staff College has also carried out solid work on security. Together with the Department of Safety and Security, the Staff College celebrated the fifteenth anniversary of the Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments programme. Developed in 2007 through a partnership between the Staff College and the Department of Safety and Security and in close collaboration with the “Taurinense” Alpine Brigade of the Italian military, the programme has reached over 100,000 personnel from the United Nations, intergovernmental organizations and international non-governmental organizations, empowering them with the skills, behaviour and knowledge required to prevent and respond to safety and security incidents while on duty. In approximately 40 United Nations-designated areas, the programme is considered a security risk mitigating measure for organizations and staff in the United Nations security management system. In 2022, 10,434 personnel were trained through 551 courses delivered worldwide.

32. In order to foster an understanding of the concepts surrounding human security, the Staff College and the United Nations trust fund for human security developed a free self-paced online course entitled “Human security: from principles to practice”.



Hundreds of participants have taken the course, which has been translated into French, Spanish and Arabic, allowing for an even greater reach.

## **VI. Developing the leadership and management skills for the United Nations of the future**

33. In order to support countries in realizing the 2030 Agenda, the United Nations must transform the way it works. The United Nations system leadership framework and management reform are critical elements for enabling this transformation, both of which require United Nations personnel to develop new knowledge and skills. The Staff College advances these objectives by helping to forge a common United Nations leadership and management culture aimed at realizing the 2030 Agenda. The Staff College supports excellence in leadership and management through a robust range of learning solutions and services for leadership development, change management and innovation. It has extensive experience working with United Nations organizations and partners and offers a unique combination of individual learning offerings, customized cohort-based learning solutions, assessment tools and research initiatives. It brings together outstanding faculty, experts and partners to develop confident, capable and collaborative leaders.

34. In the period under review, driven by the calls made by the Secretary-General in his 2021 report entitled “Our Common Agenda” (A/75/982), the Staff College supported the acceleration of the United Nations’ transformation over the next five years through a “quintet of change”, which is focused on building stronger capabilities in data, analytics and communication; innovation and digital transformation; strategic foresight; behavioural science; and performance and results orientation. The Staff College expanded and refined its leadership and management curricula through this lens, while taking into account the lessons learned and challenges resulting from new ways of working in a post-pandemic world and emerging global challenges. Innovation, data analytics and operational excellence are critical to ensuring sustainable and inclusive recovery efforts. People-centred recovery strategies cannot be strengthened without good management and leadership, and managers and staff throughout the United Nations system need professional competencies to successfully contribute to people-centred post-pandemic recovery efforts.

35. To develop these competencies, the Staff College has been at the forefront of creating learning management systems that have transformed the Staff College into a global learning hub that is open to all United Nations personnel for personalized and self-directed learning. These platforms enable United Nations system entities to see the learning needs of their personnel and how the needs are being met through an array of flexible, easy-to-use learning modules.

36. The Staff College’s flagship learning hub is “Blue line”, which was designed by the United Nations for the United Nations, with a strong focus on United Nations leadership, effective management and the development of a common organizational culture and identity in order to deliver as one United Nations. In the two years since its launch, “Blue line” has succeeded in becoming a thriving inter-agency learning platform for several United Nations entities, with over 30,000 active participants. The platform marks a major step towards realizing the ambition outlined in the United Nations system leadership framework by providing a common knowledge base around leadership for United Nations staff.

37. To advance knowledge on innovation, in 2021, the Staff College continued its efforts to mainstream the United Nations innovation toolkit. The Staff College highlighted the role of innovation in the United Nations through a series of events

and other activities, through which it demonstrated how innovative practices can lead to transformation at an organizational, individual and community level. Stakeholders from across the United Nations participated in different initiatives to share insights on how they were using the toolkit to nurture innovation.

38. Coupled with innovation, data analytics is an invaluable tool for the United Nations to innovate further, but only if staff know how to handle the available data. To support staff in this area, the Staff College launched a course on the fundamentals of data analytics in the United Nations context. Across different United Nations entities, staff learned how to effectively access, use, interpret and communicate data.

39. In response to the rising demand for and interest in Staff College offerings on descriptive analytics, data visualization and storytelling, in 2022, the Staff College launched a new line of training opportunities in predictive analytics, fully tailored to the United Nations context and aligned with the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere.<sup>1</sup> Through these initiatives, the Staff College continued to develop a comprehensive set of learning offerings tailored to meet the specific needs of United Nations programme managers and leaders, with a view to strengthening United Nations system capabilities to monitor the performance and increase the impact of United Nations programmes and interventions at the global level. Through a combination of self-paced learning, peer exchanges, personalized executive coaching, individualized assessments and interactions with leading experts, senior United Nations leaders continued to benefit from a unique opportunity to examine their leadership skills and lead the transformational change required of the United Nations.

40. To establish a common understanding of the United Nations business operations strategy, the Staff College continued to deliver the “Business operations strategy 2.0 practitioner online training” course, developed in collaboration with the Development Coordination Office. The course is aimed at assisting operations staff in eliminating duplication, leveraging the common bargaining power of the United Nations and maximizing economies of scale.

41. In 2021, the Staff College offered unique learning programmes that were designed to equip United Nations staff with updated skills in such areas as change management, communication, adaptive leadership and emotional intelligence. Through its recently launched “Workplace mental health and well-being: lead and learn” programme, the Staff College, in collaboration with the United Nations workplace mental health and well-being strategy team, developed learning material on mental health and well-being. The programme helps to train leaders and managers to be supportive and understanding of the needs of their staff and to be able to foster workplaces in which mental and physical health and well-being are enhanced.

42. The Staff College continued to provide critical learning programmes on women’s leadership. Its flagship programme on leadership, women and the United Nations continued to be a useful tool for United Nations women leaders wishing to learn about leadership approaches, the gender and cultural dimensions of leadership and the dynamics of power, influence and negotiation. Furthermore, the “Women’s voices for an equal future” platform helped to underscore the critical role of women’s leadership in preparing for a more equitable recovery.

43. Through the first edition of the “Developing diversity and cultural intelligence skills for results in today’s environment” programme, the Staff College took a step further in contributing to a more diverse and inclusive United Nations. The programme is focused on helping United Nations staff to widen their cultural

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/content/datastrategy/index.shtml>.

sensitivity and awareness in order to foster more harmonious interactions and communication in diverse work environments.

## **VII. Conclusion and recommendations**

**44. The present report demonstrates how the Staff College has delivered on the call from Member States to develop its programme portfolio through course fees and contracts for services in support of a more cohesive United Nations system.**

**45. Demonstrating its agility, ability to innovate and responsiveness to the needs of the United Nations system, and in response to the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit in its 2020 report, the Staff College has developed a learning system that has enabled it to better fulfil its core mandate as an institution for learning. These steps have led to cost efficiencies for the United Nations system by enabling United Nations entities to consolidate their efforts and leverage the best-in-class learning systems of the Staff College.**

**46. The Staff College reported strong financial results for the period under review owing to increased demand for its learning programmes and to the efficiency of its business operations. This reflects a conscious strategy adopted by the Staff College to contain expenditures in the light of the volatile global situation.**

**47. The support of Member States is essential for the Staff College to continue to develop and deliver quality learning for United Nations staff and partner entities, as mandated by the United Nations System Staff College Statute. Such support will enable the Staff College to reach many more beneficiaries, resulting in greater impact for the United Nations system.**

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