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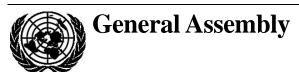
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**Review of the implementation of the recommendations
and decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its
tenth special session**

**Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial
functioning of the United Nations**

Research, training and library services

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1.   The present report is submitted in compliance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2013/45, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly on the ongoing consultations on consolidating the United Nations institutions dedicated to research, training and knowledge services to enhance coherence and synergies.

2.   Among the greatest contributions of the United Nations are the ideas that are generated through dialogue, which become embedded in global norms, standards and policies that then affect so many aspects of our daily lives. The development of these shared ideas is facilitated by the provision of relevant research findings and easy access to information. Once the ideas have been adopted by Member States, the concepts should be disseminated globally and capacity built to translate these ideas into action at the country level. Enhanced coherence and the transformation of the service delivery of seven entities specialized in training/learning, library or research activities would help to stimulate action by Governments and other stakeholders.

3.   The seven entities are the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the Library at the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) and the United Nations System Staff College.

4.   The 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1) called for a more efficient and effective use of financial and human resources. The need

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has been recognized several times for much closer coordination between the training/learning and research functions of the Organization (see General Assembly resolution 56/208, para. 1), and for stronger linkages to policymaking (see A/60/733, para. 139). Similarly, the importance of integrating the United Nations library services has been recognized by the General Assembly in its resolutions 56/64 B and 60/109 B. The transformation of these knowledge-related functions, the enhanced coherence within each function and the enhanced synergies between them meet those needs and would increase the value-for-money of those services.

Proposal for transformation

5.   The Secretariat has consulted the aforementioned organizations and their governing bodies and developed a proposal, presented below, on the basis of their feedback. This proposal would result in enhanced visibility, closer proximity to strategic discussions with the senior management in the United Nations, continued independence for the research institutions, increased resource efficiencies and programming synergies. Care has been taken to ensure the right balance between the need to preserve the mandates given by the Member States and the need to improve coherence and synergy in order to deliver the crucial services more effectively. The Secretariat believes that a combination of phased integration within the training/learning and library services, and enhanced coordination among the research institutions is the best way forward to achieve this balance. Through the deliberations of the committees concerned, Member States will make the decision on the way forward.

II. Overall structure and functions

A. Objective

6.   The proposal aims to organize the three knowledge-related functions in a more coherent and mutually beneficial manner in support of Member States. Creating synergies among the three functions would maximize their impact in providing support for the deliberations of Member States and in building the capacity of Member States and United Nations staff to translate the decisions of Member States into action at the country level and other levels. Through the rationalization of substantive services and shared administrative support over the following years, it should be possible to generate further significant efficiency gains in the knowledge-related area, which could be realized as savings or invested in expanding the substantive impact.

B. Structure and governance

7.   A new entity is being proposed, which would be organized along three knowledge functions and would encompass (a) an integrated training/learning service, (b) an integrated library service and (c) a research coordination network with a small support hub. The proposal maintains the existing governance mechanisms of the research institutions and establishes a new research coordination network with a small support hub to facilitate greater interaction and cooperation

among the entities, the United Nations senior management and other research institutions inside and outside the United Nations. By using a phased integration model for the training/learning and library services, the proposal allows for efficiency gains.

8.   The new entity would be headed by an Assistant Secretary-General, redeploying the current Assistant Secretary-General of UNITAR. The name of the new entity would be formally proposed after Member States decide on the way forward for the transformation. For the purpose of the present report, it would tentatively be called United Nations Knowledge/Learning.

9.   The Assistant Secretary-General would be based in Geneva, where four of the seven entities are based. The transformation would take place gradually over a two-year transition period with the perspective that the proposed rationalization and pooling of support services would open up opportunities for future efficiencies.

10.   There is a significant and growing demand from Member States and international organizations for training and policy-relevant research, often oriented to capacity-building. Therefore, the Assistant Secretary-General would be responsible for facilitating the interaction and cooperation among the training/learning, library and research services.

11.   The training/learning mandates of UNITAR and the United Nations System Staff College would be integrated to create an integrated training/learning service under the unified leadership of the Director of Training, based in Turin, Italy, within the overall structure of United Nations Knowledge/Learning, while, at the same time, the Institute and the College would formally retain their "brands" and presence in Geneva and Turin, respectively. This action aims to preserve the good reputation associated with the existing "brands" of those entities, while benefiting from the expanded capacity provided by the integration process. The Director of Training would report directly to the Assistant Secretary-General of United Nations Knowledge/Learning and would be guided by the Board of the new entity, which would be reconfigured, drawing from the current UNITAR Board, to meet the training needs of delegates, nationals of Member States, United Nations staff and other stakeholders. The current Board of the Staff College would be reconfigured as an advisory board to ensure the quality and effectiveness of the training of United Nations staff. The United Nations Knowledge/Learning Board may also have representatives from the Boards of UNIDIR, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, UNRISD, the United Nations Library Board, and the reconfigured Staff College Board.

12.   An integrated United Nations library service would be established, drawing together the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the Library at the United Nations Office at Geneva in the first phase. The two libraries would have an integrated leadership structure, which would report to the newly created, permanent United Nations Library Board, comprising the senior managers in charge of libraries and representatives of the Secretary-General, including the Assistant Secretary-General of United Nations Knowledge/Learning. The Board would direct the creation of an integrated library service and its functioning afterwards. It would ensure the coherent functioning of the service, while preserving the specific mandates of the Dag Hammarskjöld and Geneva Libraries. The Director of the United Nations library service would have a secondary reporting line to the Assistant Secretary-General of United Nations Knowledge/Learning regarding interaction with the other

parts of the new entity and potential for shared administrative support. The Board would oversee the transition to the integrated United Nations library service.

13. The three independent research institutions would be members of the network, linked to the Assistant Secretary-General through the support hub, but would continue to report directly to the Secretary-General and to their governing bodies. The Assistant Secretary-General would be responsible for the support hub of the research coordination network and for promoting interaction in the network.

14. The Boards of UNIDIR, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and UNRISD would be maintained as independent governing bodies with final authority over their respective mandates, as follows:

    (a) The Board of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research — disarmament;

    (b) The Board of Trustees of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute — crime prevention, criminal justice, security and governance;

    (c) The Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development — social dimensions of development.

15. The Boards of UNIDIR, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and UNRISD would continue to operate as they do now. Their functions and rules would be guaranteed by maintaining each institution's:

    (a) Mandate and "brand" name;

    (b) Current system of advisory/governing boards;

    (c) Process for the appointment the Board members and the Director;

    (d) Capacity to raise and manage funds;

    (e) Fiduciary responsibility and accountability for management of resources;

    (f) Capacity to set priorities and approve the budget, programmes and other activities.

16. UNIDIR, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, UNRISD and the Operational Satellite Applications Programme, (UNOSAT) of UNITAR would all be members of the research coordination network, backed by a support hub. Over time, many other research institutions, inside and outside the United Nations, would also be members of the research coordination network, using institutional partnerships.

17. The existing privileged relationship of the research institutions with Member States through the relevant intergovernmental bodies would be retained, for example, the First Committee of the General Assembly would continue to provide guidance to UNIDIR and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice would continue to provide guidance to the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute.

18. To recapitulate, the new configuration would comprise (a) an integrated training/learning service, including the training/learning mandates of UNITAR and the United Nations System Staff College, guided by the Board of United Nations Knowledge/Learning, which would oversee the training/learning services, the

support hub of the research coordination network, the shared administrative support and the promotion of synergies among the three functional areas, (b) an integrated library service, guided by the United Nations Library Board, and (c) a research coordination network and support hub, whose members would retain their independence and existing boards.

C. Functions

1. Integrated training/learning service

19. An integrated United Nations training/learning service would be established that draws together the institutions currently focused on providing training for Member States (UNITAR) and for United Nations staff (United Nations System Staff College). The sharing of training-related know-how and infrastructure, including e-learning platforms, learning management systems, practitioner networks and instructional design expertise, would enhance the impact of both institutions. Approaches to learning in the twenty-first century are going through radical changes, as technology and social change have revolutionized possibilities in terms of access to beneficiaries and of new learning methodologies. In addition, combining the mandates would enable both institutions to reach out to a wider client base and rationalize their training and learning offerings, thus increasing the impact and the return on investment of this function.

20. The integrated training/learning service would, inter alia:

(a) Scale up capacity to provide training on substantive issues and soft skills at all levels (national, multilateral and global), to cover delegates, United Nations staff, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, using materials developed or compiled by research networks and libraries;

(b) Scale up training to key national actors at the country level relevant to United Nations norms, standards, policies and programmes, to develop the capacity to translate them into action, with a special focus on the beneficiaries from developing nations;

(c) Scale up diplomatic skills training capacity and enhance learning, including by providing orientation and briefings to an increased number of delegates for intergovernmental debates;

(d) Provide orientation for United Nations staff on emerging issues, using information from research and library services, provide training for staff especially in such cross-cutting areas as leadership and management, and provide United Nations national and international staff who work at the country level with access to e-learning;

(e) Strengthen and extend partnerships with other Secretariat departments and agencies to enhance quality assurance processes, evaluate results, share lessons-to-be-learned and promote the collection and use of best practices, to further enhance the training/learning service in the United Nations and alignment with strategic goals;

(f) Continue to deliver on-site training where the beneficiaries are located and identify areas where economies of scale could be realized, while taking advantage of the low-cost facility of the United Nations System Staff College

campus to host senior managers' brain-storming retreats and residential training for United Nations staff.

2. Integrated library service

21. The mission of the United Nations library service is the provision of an effective, impartial and professional service dedicated to delivering information of value to the United Nations. The integrated service would increase value by making possible the modernization of the backroom systems (technical and human) of the two libraries; systematic resource-sharing and the streamlining and elimination of duplication; the development of common services and standards so that clients have an easy and uniform experience of the single United Nations library service; and a common service development strategy that is shaped by direct consultation with Member States and other stakeholders. Work on all these areas has already commenced and major progress is demanded by 2015.

22. The integrated United Nations library service would, inter alia:

(a) Develop a common information management infrastructure, including one global United Nations library digital repository, providing access to the knowledge generated by the Organization, including official documentation, research and studies, and statistics. A new joint integrated library computer system, to replace two obsolete systems in New York and Geneva, is another priority;

(b) Preserve the Organization's heritage of published and public documents in both digital and hard-copy format;

(c) Develop information services in support of decision-making, both for delegates and for the United Nations Secretariat;

(d) Leverage the libraries' collective knowledge capital and information assets, notably around their role as supplier of United Nations metadata, and develop opportunities to automate and streamline this work through the use of new technology, process re-engineering and building up the existing partnerships in this field with the Office of Information and Communications Technology and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management;

(e) Ensure the contributions of the library service to knowledge management throughout the United Nations. The management of knowledge and information are strategic risk areas for the organization and the libraries have a key role to play within the Secretariat;

(f) Develop a single public website for the United Nations library service, targeted at citizens and educational users, while the New York and Geneva libraries maintain more focused and more technical sites for the professional users in their target audiences. The aim is to repurpose selected professional content for wider use, presenting it in a more user-friendly way;

(g) Promote and underpin extended cooperation with the other libraries of the United Nations system;

(h) Develop even greater value from the partnerships with more than 360 United Nations depository libraries worldwide to provide access to United Nations information and promote awareness of United Nations issues.

3. Research coordination network and support hub

23. A research coordination network would be established, with members including the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, UNIDIR, UNRISD and UNITAR/UNOSAT. The initial membership would be expanded over time as additional research institutes join the network. The working of the network would be facilitated by the establishment of a support hub. This coordination model is similar to the United Nations country team coordination mechanism, through which independent United Nations agencies work together, convened by a resident coordinator and supported through a small coordination hub.

24. Other research institutions within and outside the United Nations would be invited to join the network through institutional partnerships. This effort would facilitate the channelling of research findings on an expanded range of topics from around the world to the United Nations system, delegates and staff. The ability to connect to such research institutions would make it possible to expand the range of issues covered by the United Nations.

25. The establishment of such a research coordination network would, inter alia:

(a) Enhance the provision of support for policy-relevant and action-oriented research, combining research and in-country capacity-building training, building on recent initiatives of the research institutions;

(b) Strengthen the relationship between research institutions and other substantive departments of the United Nations;

(c) Provide a platform that would enhance synergies among research institutions' libraries and training institutions when they are addressing different aspects of the same issue;

(d) Enable the four institutions to expand their work in their respective research areas by making them more attractive for funding as part of a more strategically connected entity;

(e) Create the ability to expand the range of issues addressed over time by linking other United Nations and external research capacity to intergovernmental processes, thus facilitating a more systematic involvement of research institutions in internal consultation and decision-making processes within the United Nations system.

III. Case for transformation

26. This initiative would deliver significant long-term benefits for Member States. Apart from the efficiency gains described above, it would make it easier for Member States with limited resources to improve their access to knowledge and consequently build their respective capacities. This action would in turn help level the playing field for them to participate in global debates and shape policies, thus strengthening the United Nations as the most important and inclusive forum for intergovernmental norm-setting. Lessons learned from this exercise could be a useful reference for other exercises.

27. A stronger and more strategic emphasis on managing the vast knowledge created by the United Nations would also bring benefits to the Organization itself by

improving its analytical capacities and contributing to better decision-making. There would also be several specific benefits for the entities themselves, as follows.

A. Promote funding sustainability

28.   The combined budget of all seven entities in 2012 was $84.6 million, of which $66.7 million, or 79 per cent, was voluntary funding and $17.8 million, or 21 per cent, was provided for in the regular budget. The libraries are funded by the regular budget of the United Nations. In keeping with its core Secretariat function, the United Nations library service would continue to be funded by the regular budget for post and non-post resources. Some of the other institutions have a small portion of regular budget support for their activities through cost-sharing arrangements, which would be maintained. They raise their own voluntary funding mainly from donors, or as payment for their training activities. Other institutions, such as the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, rely exclusively on voluntary contributions. Owing to the constraining financial climate, some of the institutions are experiencing financial difficulties. In particular, the lack of predictability of voluntary contributions generates major difficulties, in particular in developing programmes to meet the priorities of the Member States.

29.   The directors would work together as a team with the Assistant Secretary-General to prepare a strategic fundraising document, which they could use to mobilize voluntary funding for their planned activities. The Assistant Secretary-General would also advocate for funding for all parts of the new entity.

30.   While mobilizing funds would continue to be difficult, several donor Governments have indicated that a larger, more strategic entity linking training/learning, library and research services would be more attractive. Funds earmarked for identified activities would be used only for those activities.

B. Build synergies between the three functional areas

31.   There are very important potential synergies among the three knowledge functions. For example, all three provide orientation and briefing to delegates for intergovernmental dialogue. Some examples of synergies exist, but they occur on an ad hoc basis. United Nations Knowledge/Learning would facilitate the identification of potential synergies through shared planning processes and regular interaction of the functional directors, thus connecting the work of research thematic specialists, trainers and information professionals when this enhances impact. Some examples include enhanced action research to develop better ways of addressing problems, linked to training national or regional Professional staff from Member States, and the sharing of these new approaches through libraries.

32.   United Nations Knowledge/Learning would also make it possible for important initiatives, such as the United Nations libraries' digital repository, to be accelerated by directly combining the two largest libraries in a single programme with enhanced strategic-level support. Everyone, from Member States to researchers, would benefit from easier access to reports, parliamentary documents, statistics and studies issued throughout the United Nations.

C. Enhance research capacity through networking and partnerships

33. UNIDIR, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, UNRISD and UNITAR/UNOSAT each work on very different sets of issues. As the range of issues addressed by the United Nations extends beyond these particular ones, the establishment of a small support hub would provide the capacity for the Secretariat to link up to a much wider set of research institutions using institutional partnerships, including the United Nations University, other United Nations research units and external research institutions, thus creating more inclusive interaction between global research and intergovernmental dialogue.

D. Achieve coherence and efficiency gains through shared administrative support

34. Each of the seven entities currently has different arrangements for handling administrative support (human resources, finance/budget, information technology and general administration). Coherence in information technology and other support operating systems would need to be ensured to promote "Delivering as one" by United Nations Knowledge/Learning in knowledge functions.

35. The ratio between substantive and administrative costs varies significantly from one entity to another owing to different support service structures and/or outsourcing arrangements with larger service providers within the Organization. In-depth analyses would be conducted to identify where and why such disparities exist, how the best-value model could be emulated by other institutions, taking into account their specific mandates and needs, how to achieve efficiency gains by pooling support services and the potential role of outsourcing from within the United Nations system if it offers better value.

E. Enhance participation in the policymaking processes

36. The proposed integration and enhanced coordination model would enable the seven entities/institutions to enhance their voice with the Member States and within the United Nations system on issues related to knowledge and learning functions and their respective mandates.

IV. Transition plan and expected cost

37. While the potential benefits are important, the complexity of this proposal and the need to avoid any increase in the regular budget also need to be taken into account. Therefore, the development of the initiative would be gradual to ensure that important functionalities are not lost and that guidance is provided by Member States on a continuing basis. The new arrangements would be established by using the existing posts and physical facilities as much as possible, with no increase to the regular budget. The movement of posts between countries would be avoided to keep costs to a minimum. The objective of the exercise is to increase the value the United Nations obtains from these three functions by enhancing synergies, integrating both the library and training/learning services, and streamlining processes and structures. The focus is on increasing return on investment, in particular the benefits to

Member States. Any change process incurs costs. In this case, there would be need for a one-off investment of $640,000 of voluntary funding to cover the transition process through 2014-2015.

38.   A phased approach is proposed, which makes it possible for the elements of the proposal to progress at different speeds. In the first phase, spanning the period from 2014 to 2015, the integrated training/learning service would be established with no consequence for the regular budget and no additional costs that could not be met by efficiency gains. During this period, the research coordination network would also be established, together with a small support hub, which would be created by redeploying an existing post of Director of Research in UNITAR. Any additional staffing would be handled by secondments or voluntary contributions. For the three independent research entities, there would be no change in location and methods of work. Potential benefits and efficiencies that might result from common administrative support would be identified for consideration and approval by the relevant governing boards.

39.   Meanwhile, the new United Nations Library Board would guide the process to prepare a plan and budget for the establishment of an integrated library service. As many of the elements of such a service have already been envisaged by the libraries working together, work could continue on these elements and accelerate if additional voluntary funding could be found. The libraries would continue to operate on the regular budget beyond 2014-2015. The final decision on the libraries would be made by Member States once the detailed plan and budget are submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session.

40.   For the steps set forth above, there would be no proposed changes to the 2014-2015 regular budget. For any services required to provide support for the transition process beyond the existing resources, voluntary funding would be sought, as needed.

V.   Expected benefits

41.   The synergy among the three functions of United Nations Knowledge/Learning would gradually intensify, leading to greater volume of substantive services, although such an increase is hard to quantify at this stage. The establishment of unified management in the training/learning and library services would facilitate the streamlining and integration of functions, and improved use of technology, which should lead to significant efficiency gains that could be reinvested in higher-value services. Within the training/learning service, there would be considerable scope for efficiencies in terms of training support systems, such as e-learning and learning management platforms, in addition to the rationalization of learning expertise and programme oversight, thus freeing up capacity for increased training services for beneficiaries. Additional savings may be realized through shared administrative support in all of the functional areas.

42.   Given the fragmentation of information and the absence of a mandate from Member States, it is difficult to present precise estimates at this stage. However, on the basis of a preliminary exploration of an integrated training/learning service and shared administrative support, analysis suggests that the expected efficiency gains in the training/learning and research functions alone could range from $1.8 million to

$2.5 million annually,[1] assuming no change in the regular budget for the integrated library service for the purposes of this analysis.[2] These preliminary estimates represent a tentative range of potential savings that may be realized through economies of scale and a better alignment of standard administrative service charges among the entities concerned if common administrative support were to be provided.

VI. Recommendations for action

43. The General Assembly may wish to endorse the proposals set forth in the present report, relating to the phased creation of United Nations Knowledge/ Learning, which would transform the three knowledge-related functions in a more coherent manner; integrate the training functions of UNITAR and the United Nations System Staff College; integrate the United Nations library service by bringing together the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the Library at the United Nations Office at Geneva; and establish a research coordination network connecting UNIDIR, UNRISD, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and UNITAR/UNOSAT, backed by a small support hub. A change management strategy would be implemented during 2014 and 2015 to provide support for all staff during the transition period. The strategy, revised organization chart and proposal for the revised integrated budget would be submitted to the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly for review and approval.

44. Specifically, the General Assembly may wish to consider:

(a) Approving the establishment of the following:

(i) An integrated training/learning service, including the training/learning mandates of UNITAR and the United Nations System Staff College, guided by the new United Nations Knowledge/Learning Board that would oversee the training/learning services, the support hub of the research coordination network, the shared administrative support and the promotion of synergies among the three functional areas;

(ii) An integrated library service, guided by the new United Nations Library Board;

(iii) A research coordination network and support hub, with the members retaining their independence and their existing boards;

(b) Requesting the Secretary-General to submit an implementation plan, including detailed information on the budget arrangements and organizational

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[1] Producing more precise estimates will require more time and further analysis, which is being undertaken concurrently. Therefore, the figures presented here are indicative preliminary estimates subject to adjustments. They represent a range of potential savings by bringing the ratios of substantive to support services by all entities concerned down to the Secretariat's current standard administrative service charge (13 per cent), as well as a more optimistic scenario (11 per cent).

[2] Further analysis on regular budget implications will be made and reflected in the detailed implementation plan to be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session.

structure, for consideration by Member States at the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly to start the transformation process;

(c)   Deciding that the costs of the transition and the new activities necessary to realize the potential synergies should be funded from efficiency gains or voluntary contributions;

(d)   Strongly encouraging those Member States in a position to do so to make voluntary contributions towards the funding of the consolidated entity and to the three independent institutions in the research coordination network.

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