General Assembly

Seventy-third session
Agenda item 136
Programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019

Progress in the implementation of the organizational resilience management system

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

I. Introduction

1.   The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the organizational resilience management system (A/73/666). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses received on 20 February 2019.

2.   In its resolution 70/248 B, the General Assembly, inter alia, endorsed the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Committee (A/70/7/Add.41) and reiterated paragraph 4 of section III of its resolution 68/247 B, in which it had underlined the importance of the full implementation of the organizational resilience management system. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, no later than at the first part of its resumed seventy-third session, a progress report on the implementation of the organizational resilience management system, including information on the steps taken to expand the system to include offices away from Headquarters, regional commissions, field missions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs and the participating specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system.

3.   In this regard, the Advisory Committee recalls that the General Assembly, in its resolution 67/254 A, emphasized the importance of the organizational resilience management system in managing operational risks to the United Nations under an all-hazards approach and determined that crisis management, security management, business continuity, information communication technology disaster recovery, medical emergency response, crisis communication and support to staff, survivors and families were the core elements of the United Nations resilience management system. The Assembly, in its resolution 70/248 B, emphasized the importance of a

holistic approach to emergency management across the United Nations system and welcomed the development of a template for crisis management that included crisis response checklists and procedures adaptable to the local context of all entities and involved the host country for adequate coordination and planning.

4.   The report of the Secretary-General was submitted in response to the most recent resolution. In section III of his report, the Secretary-General describes the progress in the implementation of the organizational resilience management system, including the estimated costs of implementing the system for the entire United Nations Secretariat. The vision for the future of the system is detailed in section IV, while the next steps in strengthening the Organization's resilience are indicated in section V.

II. Progress in the implementation of the organizational resilience management system

5.   In his report, the Secretary-General describes the progress made in implementing the principles of the organizational resilience management system in the United Nations system-wide emergency management framework. The Secretary-General indicates that the current approach links risk-based and impact-oriented emergency preparedness and response disciplines across the continuum of preparedness, prevention, response and recovery (A/73/666, para. 2). The report includes the status of implementation of the organizational resilience management system, the scope of which encompasses United Nations Headquarters in New York, offices away from Headquarters, the regional commissions, peacekeeping operations and special political missions, as well as funds and programmes and specialized agencies[1] (ibid., paras. 15–55).

A. Status of implementation

6.   The Secretary-General indicates that significant progress has been made at United Nations Headquarters in strengthening its resilience across the common categories of policy, governance, maintenance and crisis simulation exercises, risk management and planning (ibid., para. 15). The progress made at offices away from Headquarters and in regional commissions, peacekeeping operations and special political missions is described in paragraphs 16 to 24 of the report.

7.   In paragraphs 31 to 55 of his report, the Secretary-General also provides an account of the progress made in implementing the principles of the policy of the organizational resilience management system as reported by the United Nations funds and programmes and specialized agencies (see para. 5 above). Those organizations and entities reported on their efforts in strengthening their emergency management

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[1] The United Nations funds and programmes include the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Office for Project Services, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Food Programme. The United Nations specialized agencies include the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the International Labour Organization, the International Maritime Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the Universal Postal Union, the World Bank Group, the World Health Organization and the World Intellectual Property Organization.

frameworks and structures, which in most cases included business continuity plans, risk and crisis management and critical activities.

8.   **The Advisory Committee welcomes the efforts made in applying the principles of the organizational resilience management system across the United Nations system and looks forward to an update in the next progress report.**

B.   Key performance indicators

9.   The Secretary-General indicates that governance structures, policy and risk management instruments are in place in relation to the key performance indicators in most United Nations entities and system organizations (ibid., para. 62; see also para. 10 below). The Advisory Committee recalls that, in its previous report, it had been provided with a matrix setting out and describing the indicators (A/70/7/Add.41, annex) and that it had welcomed the development of the key performance indicators as a tool for measuring the progress made in the implementation of the organizational resilience management system (ibid., para. 7). Upon request, the Committee was provided with the implementation status of the key performance indicators in 2015 and 2018 for the Secretariat and the United Nations system organizations. The Committee notes that, between 2015 and 2018, nine additional United Nations system organizations made efforts to establish structures and systems and that overall compliance with the key performance indicators increased in another 14 organizations. Nevertheless, the Committee also notes that a number of entities in the United Nations have only partially completed the activities required under the indicators pertaining to maintenance and review, risk management and planning.[2] Furthermore, the Committee notes that the United Nations entities may have a different approach to business continuity and would need to establish clearer guidelines to ensure coherence and consistency in their implementation.

10.   The Advisory Committee notes from the information provided that the level of compliance by each entity with the agreed key performance indicators at the end of 2015 and at the end of 2018 is measured in terms of a self-assessment exercise based on a three-point classification scale of: (a) fully completed; (b) partially completed; and (c) not completed. The "not applicable" criterion is also available. While acknowledging that self-assessment is one method for evaluating compliance, the Committee notes that, compared with others, such as a third-party evaluation or a combination of methods, it may not necessarily yield a meaningful and comparable assessment of the compliance level across the Secretariat entities, funds, programmes and other system entities. **The Committee further observes, from the information provided, that the three-point scale does not appear to contain clear definitions of each rating and the requirements underpinning each rating, such as percentage compliance, completion criteria, detailed processes or rating-specific evidence in order to guide evaluators in selecting a specific rating on the scale.**

C.   International Organization for Standardization standard on organizational resilience

11.   The Secretary-General indicates that the current policy on the organizational resilience management system provides a professional framework for emergency management and that the standard on organizational resilience of the International Organization for Standardization will be used as a benchmark for reviewing the

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[2] The key performance indicators are classified as follows: (A) policy; (B) governance; (C) maintenance, exercise and review; (D) risk management; and (E) planning.

policy.[3] Following a policy review in 2019 by the working group of the inter-agency community of practice, a revised draft policy plan will be submitted for review and approval to the High-level Committee on Management of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination in the first half of 2019 (A/73/666, para. 14). The Secretary-General further indicates that, after the finalization of the policy review planned for 2019, it is recommended that the community of practice develop guidelines for the application of the collaborative and harmonized approach of the organizational resilience management system (ibid., para. 66). **The Advisory Committee welcomes the intention of the inter-agency community of practice to review the policy. The Committee notes that there is a need to develop guidelines on organizational resilience and further trusts that the Secretary-General will develop clear rating scales for the key performance indicators in order to ensure consistency and coherence in implementation.**

D. Training

12.   The Secretary-General reports on the measures taken to strengthen the inter-agency community of practice (ibid., para. 9), which have resulted in an increased membership of the community of practice currently totalling more than 130 members. He also indicates that an inventory of learning opportunities in the different disciplines of the management system identified 92 courses on offer in the community of practice (ibid., para. 12 and figure I). Upon request, the Advisory Committee was provided with a list of eight types of training areas available to staff, including crisis management decision-making and operations coordination, security support and response, crisis communications, information technology disaster recovery and business continuity. The Committee was also provided with the intended audience of the training courses and the staff levels and functions identified to take the training, where applicable. **The Committee is of the view that training of core staff on matters relating to organizational resilience is important. As such, the Committee recommends that critical training courses such as business continuity be prioritized in training programmes from within existing resources.**

E. Cybersecurity

13.   In terms of information and communications technology (ICT) disaster recovery, the Advisory Committee notes the increased role played by cybersecurity in terms of disaster recovery and resilience (A/73/384, paras. 24–32). The Committee also notes the opinion of the Board of Auditors and the issues raised, including the need for further progress on a number of critical elements and the delays in the completion of the disaster recovery project aimed at ensuring that critical ICT systems can be effectively failed over[4] in the event of an emergency (A/73/160, paras. 58–92). **In this regard, the Committee recalls the importance of information security in the United Nations. The Committee notes the need for improvement in the implementation of information and communications technology disaster recovery in a consistent, holistic and harmonized manner across the Secretariat in order to ensure the required management of cybersecurity by the Organization.** The Committee provides further observations and recommendations in its related report on the status of implementation of the information and communications technology strategy for the United Nations (A/73/759).

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[3] ISO 22316:2017, Security and resilience – Organizational resilience – Principles and attributes.

[4] Switching an application or ICT service system from its primary data centre to a secondary data centre.

F. Emergency preparedness and support

14. The Secretary-General indicates that, during the 2016–2018 period, the inter-agency community of practice also shared best practices for the implementation and use of emergency notification systems that addressed issues relating to the implementation, testing and use of the notification systems in real emergencies (A/73/666, para. 11). The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that a number of United Nations system organizations were using the same emergency notification system under a system contract established by the Secretariat offering good services and conditions. The Committee notes that it has not received comparative information on the nature of the notification system in place for the Secretariat, funds and programmes. **The Committee notes the lack of information provided relating to its request for detailed information and trusts that robust and efficient emergency notification systems are in place to guarantee appropriate and rapid crisis notification. The Committee recommends that the General Assembly request that the Secretary-General provide an update regarding the notification systems in place in his next report on the organizational resilience management system.**

15. The report of the Secretary-General indicates the leadership role of the Emergency Preparedness and Support Team of the Office of Human Resources Management in mapping a joint learning programme (ibid., para. 63). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, on 1 January 2019, the operational and strategic functions of the Emergency Preparedness and Support Team were redistributed in line with the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations: ensuring a better future for all" (A/72/492) and its addendum entitled "Shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations: implementing a new management architecture for improved effectiveness and strengthened accountability" (A/72/492/Add.2). The functions were redistributed to: (a) the Critical Incident Response Service, in the Office of Human Resources, Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance; and (b) the Client Support and Special Situations Section, in the Division for Special Activities, Department of Operational Support. The Committee was further informed that the two dedicated services would continue to work in close collaboration towards ensuring the Organization's rapid, comprehensive and coordinated response to critical incidents, as well as the provision of continuous support to its personnel before, during and after a crisis. The Committee was also informed that, as part of the management reform, the distinct focus of the two areas was expected to enhance both operational and strategic responses to issues and particular situations, as well as closer collaboration across departmental lines.

16. In terms of the functions of both entities, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Critical Incident Response Service was responsible for developing policies, procedures and capacities for the global Secretariat to provide a flexible, rapid and comprehensive response to critical incidents, ensuring that the Organization responds in a prompt and responsive manner, including in matters related to duty of care and staff welfare. The Service also leads the Organization's efforts to build capacity closest to where critical incidents might arise, so that appropriate and timely action may be taken to mitigate the effects of critical incidents and respond to complex and critical cases and/or matters of significant risk, as well as contributing directly to incident management. With regard to the Client Support and Special Situations Section, the Committee was informed that the Section provided dedicated capacity to support mission start-up, surges and transitions, including crisis response and humanitarian activities. The Section is responsible for the implementation of policies and procedures and, as the focal point for emergency situations, activates the call

centre and family focal point networks. The Section also integrates the operational activities of the former Emergency Preparedness and Support Team, including the delivery of support to personnel and eligible family members affected by critical incidents and of preparedness activities and training to empower personnel and enhance the resilience of the Organization.

17.   **The Advisory Committee is of the view that strategic and operational roles and responsibilities pertaining to emergency response requirements should be clarified further, considering that response to crises had previously been unified under one department in the Secretariat. The Committee recommends that the General Assembly request that the Secretary-General clarify further the structure, roles and responsibilities between both departments in order to ensure a full and effective response to arising critical situations.**

G.   Governance structure at United Nations Headquarters

18.   In his report, the Secretary-General indicates that two bodies make up the Headquarters governance structure, namely the Senior Emergency Policy Team and the Crisis Operations Group (A/73/666, para. 15 (b)). He also indicates the efforts to strengthen further the approach to organizational resilience (ibid., para. 66; see also para. 11 above). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with information pertaining to the composition of the Senior Emergency Policy Team (see annex) and notes that roles and responsibilities in terms of planning and coordination efforts are unclear. The Committee was also informed, upon request, that, since January 2019, the functions of the Business Continuity Management Unit have been adapted to the new structures. The Sustainability and Resilience Management Unit in the Business Transformation and Accountability Division in the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance has been empowered to focus on the provision of policy guidance and the development of enabling tools to the Secretariat and will continue to coordinate the inter-agency community of practice and promote the implementation of the organizational resilience management system within the United Nations Secretariat and in participating specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/248 B. The Committee was further informed, upon enquiry, that discussions on the inclusion of the resident coordinator system within the scope of the organizational resilience management system were still ongoing. **The Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will continue his efforts to strengthen the coordination and planning functions of the Senior Emergency Policy Team and the Crisis Operations Group in the light of the redistribution of responsibilities regarding the management of emergency and crisis situations between the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and the Department of Operational Support (see paras. 14–17 above) and the incorporation of the resident coordinator system within the Secretariat. The Committee recommends that an organigram and detailed information relating to the redistribution of responsibilities with regard to organizational resilience be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the report of the Secretary-General.**

H.   Special political missions

19.   With regard to special political missions, the Secretary-General indicates that the implementation of the system across all political missions is uneven (A/73/666, para. 20 (e)). The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the challenge for special political missions, in particular those with a smaller footprint and scattered

presence, lies in identifying personnel that can perform the functions required under the organizational resilience management system in addition to their regular functions. **The Committee recommends that the Secretary-General take the necessary steps to identify and train staff who can implement the system for the security of staff and continuity of the missions' mandates in times of crisis.**

I. Costs of the organizational resilience management system initiative

20. The report of the Secretary-General provides the estimated costs of implementing the organizational resilience management system for the United Nations Secretariat in terms of estimated staff time, travel costs, consultancy costs and other costs (ibid., paras. 25–29 and figure II). The Secretary-General indicates that a total of $135,000 in operational costs from 2016 to 2018 was used mainly for consultancies, in the amount of $47,000, and staff travel, in the amount of $77,000 (ibid., para. 29). **Recalling its previous recommendation (A/70/7/Add.41, para. 16), the Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretary-General provide an update regarding the estimated costs of implementing the organizational resilience management system in his next report.**

J. Insurance coverage

21. The Secretary-General indicates in his report that efforts continue to be made to secure sufficient insurance coverage at a reasonable cost for all United Nations locations and risk exposures, taking into consideration ongoing risk mitigation efforts developed and implemented under the framework of the organizational resilience management system (A/73/666, para. 30). In terms of the insurance policies and brokerage services solicited by the Organization, the Advisory Committee was provided with information, upon enquiry, relating to the commercial insurance policies, brokerage services and organizations covered by the respective policies. The information provided indicated that various United Nations funds, programmes and system entities were covered by a number of policies and that, since January 2018, competitive procurement processes had been implemented for brokerage services. The Committee recalls that, in his previous report on the implementation of the organizational resilience management system, the Secretary-General had indicated that, in response to General Assembly resolution 68/247 B, the Secretariat renewed its global property insurance policy at the highest level of coverage at a more competitive premium and that the policy included worldwide coverage for property risks (A/70/7/Add.41, para. 19; see also para. 26 below). **The Committee welcomes the improvements made to date regarding insurance coverage, competitive procurement of brokerage services and the consolidation of insurance coverage and initiatives with the funds, programmes and other United Nations system entities. The Committee recommends that the General Assembly request that the Secretary-General continue efforts to identify cost efficiencies, such as through consolidating global insurance initiatives and competitive procurement. In this regard, the Committee looks forward to updates in the next progress report of the Secretary-General.**

K. Future vision

22. The Secretary-General reports that, in terms of his future vision for the organizational resilience management system, proper risk management is paramount to ensuring the Organization's continued capability to deliver on its mandate, and that

his vision is to strengthen the resilience of its personnel and improve the integration of the key disciplines of the system (A/73/666, paras. 58 and 61). The Secretary-General also indicates that best practices suggest that establishing a clear vision and maintaining plans, competence, guidance and coordination within and across sectors, as well as ensuring the participation of relevant stakeholders, are essential to strengthening organizational resilience. The resilience of an organization depends on the resilience of its personnel, as well as on the collaboration between the various disciplines relevant to the organization's management. The Secretary-General indicates that such collaboration offers the opportunity to harmonize and integrate risk assessments and risk treatment measures and helps to avoid overlaps and gaps between the disciplines. Strengthening organizational resilience requires that risks – and opportunities – be managed not within individual, disconnected silos but in an integrated and harmonized way (ibid., para. 57).

23. The Secretary-General further indicates that the suggested vision for the organizational resilience management system consists of strengthening the resilience of its personnel and improving the integration of key disciplines of the system. The Secretary-General also proposes that the Organization look beyond the current key areas and review whether the integration of additional components, such as enterprise risk management and environmental sustainability management, could provide the Organization with gains in effectiveness and efficiencies (ibid., para. 61). The Advisory Committee notes the need for integration and coordination not simply within the Organization but across the United Nations system. **The Committee trusts that the best practices and experiences in risk management and organizational resilience management will be consolidated and applied by the United Nations Secretariat. The Committee reiterates its recommendation that efforts continue to be made to coordinate and integrate the organizational resilience management system with the overall risk management framework of the Organization (see also para. 11 above). The Committee recommends that the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, continue efforts to harmonize policies and strengthen coordination of the organizational resilience management system across the system.**

L. Next steps

24. In section V of his report, the Secretary-General considers the next steps in strengthening the Organization's resilience. He indicates that, for many of the entities, the development and implementation of a robust maintenance and exercise programme and the harmonization of different planning instruments remain a challenge. In order to address that issue, experience-sharing within the inter-agency community of practice will focus on integrated planning and exercises to strengthen the application of the organizational resilience management system (ibid., para. 62). The Secretary-General also indicates that a joint learning programme will be developed to strengthen the application of the organizational resilience management system, benefiting from existing resources and making the most relevant learning opportunities available to all United Nations entities represented in the community of practice (ibid., para. 63). **The Advisory Committee acknowledges the efforts by the Secretary-General to develop a joint learning programme and utilize existing learning programmes. The Committee nevertheless reiterates the need for staff to be trained in resilience and business continuity while also meeting the other mandatory training required by the Organization (see para. 12 above). The Committee also acknowledges the efforts regarding the policy development and recommends that future policy guidelines integrate maintenance and practice exercises through information, briefings and use of regular practice drills.**

25.   The Secretary-General also notes in his report that current key performance indicators exclusively measure the existence of structures, policies and plans, and that such indicators will be further developed to include measurements of the Organization's capabilities in emergency management and to assess the value added by the coordinated and integrated approach of the organizational resilience management system (A/73/666, para. 65). **The Advisory Committee looks forward to receiving an update regarding the further development of the key performance indicators and rating scales in the Secretary-General's next report.**

III.   Action to be taken by the General Assembly

26.   **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly take note of the report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the organizational resilience management system, taking into account its comments and recommendations in the present report.**

Annex

Senior Emergency Policy Team

Member	Position	Functional title
Executive Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations	Chair	Chef de Cabinet
	Focal point	Special Assistant
Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance	Alternate Chair	Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance
	Alternate	Director, Office of the Under-Secretary General
Department for General Assembly and Conference Management	Member	Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management
	Alternate	Assistant Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management
Office of Legal Affairs/Office of the Legal Counsel	Member	Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel
	Alternate	Assistant Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, Office of the Legal Counsel
Department of Global Communications	Member	Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications
	Alternate	Director, News and Media Division
Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs	Member	Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
	Alternate	Assistant Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
Department of Safety and Security	Member	Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security
	Alternate	Assistant Secretary-General for Safety and Security
Department of Operational Support/Office of Supply Chain Management	Member	Assistant Secretary-General for Supply Chain Management
	Alternate	Director, Department of Operational Support, Office of Supply Chain Management, Procurement Division
Department of Operational Support/Division of Administration, New York	Member	Director, Division of Administration, New York
	Alternate	Chief, Facilities and Commercial Activities Service
Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance/ Office of Programme Planning, Finance and Budget	Member	Controller
	Alternate	Deputy Controller
Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance/ Office of Human Resources	Member	Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources
	Alternate	Director, Administrative Law Division

Member	Position	Functional title
Office of Information and Communications Technology	Member	Assistant Secretary-General/Chief Information Technology Officer
	Alternate	Chief, Cybersecurity Section, Office of Information and Communications Technology
Department of Operational Support	Member	Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support
	Alternate	Assistant Secretary-General for Operational Support
Department of Peace Operations	Member	Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations
	Alternate	Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	Member	Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator
	Alternate	Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator
	Second alternate	Executive Officer
United Nations Development Programme	Member	Administrator
	Alternate	Associate Administrator
	Second alternate	Assistant Administrator and Director, Bureau for Management Services
United Nations Children's Fund	Member	Executive Director
	Alternate	Deputy Executive Director
United Nations Population Fund	Member	Executive Director
	Alternate	Deputy Executive Director
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)	Member	Executive Director
	Alternate	Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Director
	Second alternate	Director of Management
Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance/ Business Transformation and Accountability Division/ Enterprise Risk Management Section	Secretary	Chief
	Alternate	Programme Officer

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