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Human resources management

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

### Report of the 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 ways forward in the implementation of human resources management reforms for the period 2023–2026 ([A/77/590](#)). 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 dated 28 December 2022.

2. In addition, the Secretary-General submitted a report on the overview of human resources management reform for the period 2021–2022 in an addendum ([A/77/590/Add.1](#)), and the comments and recommendations of the Advisory Committee are contained in its related report ([A/77/728/Add.1](#)). Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the reports of the Secretary-General on human resources management for the seventy-seventh session were divided into a main report ([A/77/590](#)) and an addendum ([A/77/590/Add.1](#)). The intention behind that approach was to provide more clarity and details as to what had been achieved over the past two years (overview of human resources management reform for the period 2021–2022) and what was planned from 2023 to 2026 (ways forward in the implementation of human resources management reforms for the period 2023–2026). The overview report will continue to be submitted every two years to provide progress on the implementation of the strategic outcomes.

3. The Advisory Committee has also considered the following reports of the Secretary-General on human resources management and related matters, and its observations and recommendations are reflected in separate reports: (a) “Composition of the Secretariat: staff demographics” ([A/77/580](#)); (b) “Composition of the Secretariat: gratis personnel, retired staff, consultants and individual contractors, and United Nations Volunteers” ([A/77/578](#)); and (c) practice of the Secretary-General in disciplinary matters and cases of possible criminal behaviour, 1 January to



31 December 2021 ([A/77/606](#)). In addition, the Committee made comments and recommendations on the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Ethics Office ([A/77/545](#)) and will make observations in its forthcoming report entitled “Twelfth progress report on accountability: strengthening accountability in the United Nations Secretariat” ([A/77/692](#)).

## II. Background

### Consideration of the reports on human resources management at the seventy-third and seventy-fifth sessions

4. The Advisory Committee recalls that, in the context of management reform and at the main part of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General submitted two reports relating to the overview of human resources management, as follows: “Global human resources strategy 2019–2021: building a more effective, transparent and accountable United Nations” ([A/73/372](#)), in which he proposed a new strategy with three components,<sup>1</sup> reflecting his vision for shifting the management paradigm of the Organization; and “Overview of human resources management reform for the period 2017–2018” ([A/73/372/Add.1](#)), in which he also included a number of proposals for the approval of the Assembly. In its related report ([A/73/497](#)), the Committee (a) recommended that the Assembly request the Secretary-General to submit a refined global human resources strategy to the Assembly; and (b) made comments and recommendations on the other proposals of the Secretary-General.

5. The Advisory Committee further recalls that, at the main part of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General submitted his report on the overview of human resources management reform for the period 2019–2020 and an outlook beyond ([A/75/540](#)), in which he had introduced the concept of three longer-term outcomes of the human resources management reforms – agility, diversity and accountability – while indicating that the substance of the human resources management reforms contained in the global human resources strategy 2019–2021 ([A/73/372](#)) remained valid. In its related report ([A/75/765](#)), the Committee (a) noted that the report of the Secretary-General ([A/75/540](#)) appeared to contain new elements that had not been contained in his previous overview report ([A/73/372](#)); and (b) reiterated its recommendations that the Assembly request the Secretary-General to submit a refined global human resources strategy to the Assembly, taking into account the observations and recommendations contained in its previous overview report ([A/73/497](#), paras. 51–82).

6. Furthermore, the Advisory Committee recalls that the consideration of the reports of the Secretary-General and its related reports related to human resources submitted since the seventy-third session were last deferred from the seventy-fifth to the seventy-six session of the General Assembly (decision 75/553 B). Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that notwithstanding the fact that there had not been a decision or resolution provided by the Assembly relating to previous reports on human resources management submitted at the seventy-third and seventy-fifth sessions, the Secretariat continued to bring forward relevant reports and proposals based on the biennial cycle. The Secretariat continued to implement and take action on human resources initiatives, including mobility (see para. 14 below), within

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

existing mandates, cognizant of the role of the Secretary General as Chief Administrative Officer of the Organization. Regarding the new approach to mobility in particular, the Secretariat aimed to present a report in two years, in which it would detail progress made and actions taken in the intervening years (see paras. 45–48 below). **The Advisory Committee recalls Article 101.1 of the Charter of the United Nations, which indicates that the staff shall be appointed by the Secretary-General under regulations established by the General Assembly (see paras. 9, 32, 33 and 49 below).** The Committee has made comments and recommendations in its related report on the overview of human resources management reform for the period 2021–2022 ([A/77/728/Add.1](#), para. 2).

7. Consequently, the report of the Secretary-General on ways forward in the implementation of human resources management reforms for the period 2023–2026 ([A/77/590](#)) is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [71/263](#).

### III. General observations

8. The Advisory Committee has observed that the Organization has engaged in repeated human resources management reforms over the past two decades, as reflected notably in the reports of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform in 1998 ([A/53/414](#)) and on investing in people in 2006 ([A/61/255/Add.1](#) and [A/61/255/Add.1/Corr.1](#))<sup>2</sup> ([A/73/497](#), paras. 57–58). The General Assembly had also noted the variety of human resources management reform initiatives that the Organization had undertaken since the adoption of its resolutions [63/250](#) and [65/247](#) (see resolution [67/255](#), para. 6), including the implementation of new contractual arrangements, the harmonization of conditions of service and the introduction of the young professionals programme (see para. 39 below). In addition, the Assembly had approved a refined managed mobility framework in its resolution [68/265](#) (see para. 46 below).

#### Staff selection

9. In section VII of his report ([A/77/590](#)), the Secretary-General presents his analysis for accelerating progress on geographical distribution through overhauling the Secretariat's staff selection system. He indicates in paragraph 40 of the report that the fundamental recruitment principle in the Secretariat is laid out in Article 101 of the Charter, which stipulates that: "[T]he paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity. Due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible." **The Advisory Committee recalls that in para. 8 of resolution [71/263](#), the General Assembly reiterated that the Secretary-General had to ensure that the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity served as the paramount consideration in the employment of staff, with due regard to the principle of equitable geographical distribution (see also resolution [71/263](#), para. 7).**

10. **The Advisory Committee sees merits in the Secretary-General's vision for accelerating progress on the Secretariat's staff selection system in accordance**

<sup>2</sup> It was stated at the time that the Secretary-General's vision for human resources management reform recognized the need for a paradigm shift to a new culture of empowerment, responsibility, accountability and continuous learning, as well as the importance of strategic change in underlying attitudes and behaviour with regard to human resources management, in order to ensure the successful implementation of the reform measures ([A/61/228](#), para. 11).

with the principles established under Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations. The Committee recognizes that an improved staff selection process will cover many important areas under human resources management, including workforce planning, rejuvenation, a more diverse geographical representation and gender balance in the Secretariat. In terms of workforce planning, the Committee recalls that, at the time of its adoption of resolution [68/252](#) (para. 15), the General Assembly had underlined the need for a comprehensive and robust workforce planning system as a key component of human resources management and had expressed serious concern that the current staffing structure did not reflect an existing effective workforce planning system.

**Human resources management framework and strategy**

11. In his report on ways forward in the implementation of human resources management reforms for the period 2023–2026 ([A/77/590](#)), the Secretary-General indicates that the human resources management framework presented therein is based on the three longer-term outcomes (diversity, agility and accountability), with reform enablers (innovation, digitalization and continuous improvement; systematic use of data and evidence; and staff involvement), and corresponding actions in the form of specific deliverables for the period 2023–2026 (*ibid.*, sect. II). Information on the implementation of the three longer-term outcomes and reform enablers is provided in sections III to VI of the report. The Committee recalls that the concept of the three longer-term outcomes was first introduced in the report of the Secretary-General on the overview of human resources management reform for the period 2019–2020 and an outlook beyond ([A/75/540](#)), which was submitted to the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session (see paras. 5–6 above).

12. The Advisory Committee requested a table containing all the indicated deliverables under the human resources management framework, with current baselines (see table 1 below). It is indicated in the report of the Secretary-General that impact will be measured using a number of monitoring indicators and the baseline for each is to be understood as for 2021, unless expressly stated otherwise ([A/77/590](#), para. 16).

Table 1  
**Impact of the deliverables under the three longer-term outcomes, 2023–2026**

<i>Impact</i>	<i>Baseline</i>
<b>Diversity</b>	
Reduction in the number of unrepresented and underrepresented Member States	Baseline: 21+36
Progress towards achieving gender parity according to definitions and timelines laid out in the system-wide strategy on gender parity, increase in the number of entities that have reached gender parity and reduction in the gap between women and men in the staff engagement survey satisfaction rates on the employee empowerment dimension	Baseline: 42.2 per cent, 21 entities, 8 percentage points, respectively

<i>Impact</i>	<i>Baseline</i>
Dynamic mix of in-person, online, hybrid and customized language training offerings from Headquarters	Baseline: 400
Increase in staff engagement survey favourable responses about leadership's capacity to address racism at the workplace	Baseline: 65 per cent
Increase in staff engagement survey satisfaction rates by staff members with disabilities	Baseline: 13 percentage points lower than all-staff average on the employee empowerment dimension
<b>Agility</b>	
Increased percentage of job openings that include future workforce capabilities needed	Baseline: 3 per cent
Decrease in the recruitment timeline coupled with a gradual move towards a broader timeline definition that would cover the pre-posting and onboarding phases, in addition to posting-to-selection	Posting to selection baseline: 182 days
Learning impact assessments carried out and recommendations implemented for leadership and management development programmes	Baseline: nil
Mobility targets met	By 2030: 70 per cent of participating staff moving from D and E duty stations after two to three years of service; 60 per cent of moves across duty stations; and fewer than 90 days of processing time for mobility assignments
Increase in staff engagement survey satisfaction rates for career opportunities at the Secretariat	Baseline: 49 per cent
<b>Accountability</b>	
100 per cent completion of the annual plan for introduction of human resources policies agreed with the Management Client Board	
Number and proportion of performance management and feedback-related cases referred to the Office of the Ombudsman with a corresponding trend analysis	Baseline 2020: 135 cases, 10.67 per cent of total
Increase in staff perceptions from the staff engagement survey on the capacity of managers to deal with underperformance	Baseline: 69 per cent

<i>Impact</i>	<i>Baseline</i>
Client satisfaction with advisory and operational support	Target: 75 per cent
Usage of the end-to-end Case Management Tracking System	
Increase in staff perceptions from the staff engagement survey on their managers' care for their health and well-being	Baseline: 73 per cent

13. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Secretariat was currently developing clear, quantifiable and timebound targets, which would be ready during 2023. In addition, specific tools were being developed to support entities in meeting the targets in their specific context. On the percentage of job openings that include future workforce capabilities (baseline 3 per cent in 2021), the Committee was informed that, while the available data indicated a significant reduction in job openings published during 2020 going into 2021, the data did not yet allow for a conclusive trend analysis and an assessment of the impact on the types of job openings published during 2021, owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the temporary suspension of recruitment under the regular budget.

14. Concerning potential financial implications arising from the implementation of the human resources management framework, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the intention of the Secretariat was to continue to develop initiatives within existing resources. Since the timeline of the framework covered the period 2023–2026, it was expected by the Secretariat that additional resources would be required to support the implementation of the staff selection 2.0 programme and that related options would be submitted to the General Assembly in due course (see para. 56 below).

15. **The Advisory Committee notes that, in terms of the planning for human resources management, the report of the Secretary-General contains a human resources management framework for the period 2023–2026, rather than a strategy (see para. 4 above). The Committee trusts that information on what changes, apart from the titles of the reports of the Secretary-General, are entailed in such a framework instead of a strategy, will be provided to the Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report. The Committee is of the view that whether the Secretariat should continue to have a human resources management strategy is a policy matter for the Assembly.**

16. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that the implementation of the human resources management framework for the period 2023–2026, subject to the approval of the General Assembly, requires clearly defined and quantifiable targets, benchmarks and timelines, as well as well-designed monitoring and reporting tools, along with financial implications (see para. 14 above). In this regard, the Committee trusts that the next report of the Secretary-General on human resources management will include detailed information for the consideration of the Assembly.**

## Presentation

17. **Notwithstanding a future framework or strategy for human resources management for the Secretariat, the Advisory Committee is of the view that**

there is a need to provide clarity on the contents of such reports.<sup>3</sup> The Committee is also of the view that, taking into account the one-year gap in 2022,<sup>4</sup> a clear time frame for a future framework or strategy should be established to avoid gaps between one to the next (see para. 15 above).

18. In addition, the Advisory Committee recalls that, under the biennial programme budget cycle, the proposed biennial programme budget and the reports of the Secretary-General on human resources management were considered by the General Assembly at its main sessions during alternative years. Since the introduction of an annual programme budget on a trial basis, the Assembly has not considered the majority of the reports on human resources management and has not adopted resolutions to provide directions and guidance to the Secretariat (see para. 6 above). **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to submit his future reports on human resources management, in particular those with a time frame for implementation, at an appropriate time to enable their consideration by the Assembly and the Committee before the start of an implementation period, taking into account the submission of the programme budget according to an annual cycle (see resolution 77/267, para. 3).**

19. The Advisory Committee requested clarification on some of the language used in the report of the Secretary-General on the ways forward in the implementation of human resources management reforms for the period 2023–2026 (A/77/590). For example, it is indicated in the report that the Secretariat will implement a supply and demand tool for non-staff personnel provided by Member States and other donors outside the United Nations common system (ibid., para. 19). Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the reference to a supply and demand tool, in fact, means an automated process to replace the current manual and paper-based process to obtain gratis personnel. **The Advisory Committee trusts that future reports of the Secretary-General on human resources management will include clear explanations on tools and processes presented, and a glossary with definitions and new concepts in an annex.**

#### IV. Overhauling the Secretariat's staff selection system

20. The Secretariat will launch a staff selection 2.0 programme to rectify the shortcomings of the current recruitment process, as it has concluded that such shortcomings are systemic and structural in nature, which makes them challenging to overcome under the current selection system (A/77/590, para. 47). Related information is provided in paragraphs 40 to 49 of the report of the Secretary-General under the following: (a) recruitment as the vehicle for equitable geographical distribution; (b) case for change of the current staff selection system; (c) staff

<sup>3</sup> The titles of the main reports of the Secretary-General, and the addenda, on human resources Managements, submitted to the General Assembly at its seventy-third, seventy-fifth and seventy-seventh sessions are as follows: (a) "Global human resources strategy 2019–2021: building a more effective, transparent and accountable United Nations" (A/73/372) and "Overview of human resources management reform: 2017–2018" (A/73/372/Add.1); (b) "Overview of human resources management reform for the period 2019–2020 and an outlook beyond" (A/75/540); and (c) "Ways forward in the implementation of human resources management reforms for the period 2023–2026" (A/77/590) and "Overview of human resources management reform for the period 2021–2022" (A/77/590/Add.1).

<sup>4</sup> The two most recent reports of the Secretary-General cover the planning periods for 2019–2021 and 2023–2026, namely: "Global human resources strategy 2019–2021: building a more effective, transparent and accountable United Nations" (A/73/372); and "Ways forward in the implementation of human resources management reforms for the period 2023–2026" (A/77/590).

selection principles; and (d) staff selection 2.0 programme outline. It is indicated in the report of the Secretary-General that the staff selection 2.0 programme will cover the three components of recruitment, outreach and the young professionals programme.

## A. Recruitment

### Challenges with the current recruitment process and the case for change

21. In the section underlining the case for change of the current staff selection system (*ibid.*, paras. 42 to 47), various statistical data and analysis are provided for each stage of the current recruitment process (applications, screening, assessment, recommendations and selections) for groups of candidates from unrepresented, underrepresented and overrepresented Member States and those within range, as well as by regional groups. It is indicated therein that there is an established correlation between the number of applications and successful applicants and that, in short, more candidates from countries in overrepresented and within-range categories apply and are more likely to succeed in the final instance (selections) than those from unrepresented and underrepresented categories. As to why this has happened, according to the Secretariat, qualitative analysis based on in-depth focus group discussions and individual interviews pointed to a significant number of confluent factors, covering the entire recruitment process, that are listed in paragraph 46 (a) to (i) of the report of the Secretary-General.

22. Upon request, the Advisory Committee received table 2 below containing information on the number and percentage of applications at each of the recruitment stages by regional group for the period 2016–2020, which was based on the dataset used for the analysis provided in the previous report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat: staff demographics ([A/76/570](#)).

Table 2

### Number and breakdown of applications, by stage of recruitment process and regional group, for job openings posted in the Secretariat in 2016–2020 in the Director, Professional and Field Service categories

<i>Number</i>	<i>African States</i>	<i>Asia-Pacific States</i>	<i>Eastern European States</i>	<i>Latin American and Caribbean States</i>	<i>Western European and other States</i>
Applications	942 626	512 087	195 271	148 953	649 351
Screened-in applications	379 445	251 219	106 532	77 178	384 315
Assessed applications	39 486	21 353	9 995	6 466	37 150
Recommended applications	13 375	7 240	3 844	2 138	12 667
Selections	1 926	1 501	767	622	3 578
<b>Breakdown (percentage)</b>					
Applications	38.5	20.9	8.0	6.1	26.5
Screened-in applications	31.7	21.0	8.9	6.4	32.1
Assessed applications	34.5	18.7	8.7	5.6	32.5
Recommended applications	34.1	18.4	9.8	5.4	32.3
Selections	22.9	17.9	9.1	7.4	42.6

*Note:* Excluding applicants from the State of Palestine or stateless applicants.

23. The Advisory Committee notes from table 2 above that the imbalances appeared to occur overwhelmingly at the selection stage of the recruitment process, as the



regional group with the highest percentages for both the number of applications (38.5 per cent) and recommended applications (34.1) only had a lower percentage of selections (22.9 per cent) compared with another regional group with a lower percentage of applications (26.5 per cent) attaining the highest percentage of selections (42.6 per cent). **The Advisory Committee notes that the correlation between the number of applications and successful applicants does not fully align with the data for the period 2016–2020 under the current recruitment process (see para. 21 above), and trusts that further clarification will be provided to the General Assembly during the consideration of the present report.**

24. The annex to the report of the Secretary-General ([A/77/590](#)) contains information on the recruitment process under the current staff selection system, adverse impact and envisaged remedies with the staff selection 2.0 programme. The Advisory Committee notes that, for the recruitment process, the annex includes the recruitment stages from the creation of job opening to recommendation only, without an analysis of adverse impact and envisaged remedies for the selection stage. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to continue to conduct a more comprehensive analysis of the data to identify the systemic and structural challenges and obstacles of the current recruitment process, including at the selection stage, to address the challenges in the implementation of equitable geographical representation in the Organization while ensuring that appropriate accountability mechanisms are in place for a credible and transparent selection of staff. The Committee trusts that related information will be provided to the Assembly in the next report of the Secretary-General on human resources management.**

25. In terms of dedicated training for staff with delegated authority under human resources management, upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that efforts were under way to create a hiring manager's certification course to make sure that hiring managers had sufficient knowledge to carry out their functions. This course, which would support the professionalization of hiring at the entity level, was expected to be finalized and rolled out to hiring managers during 2023. The Committee has made comments and recommendations in its related report on the overview of human resources management reform for the period 2021–2022 ([A/77/728/Add.1](#), para. 32).

#### **Delegation of authority and accountability of senior managers**

26. Concerning central oversight and control under the delegation of authority framework, the Advisory Committee was informed that, as a result of the management reform, the monitoring of performance indicators had been centralized for all functional areas, including human resources. The Business Transformation and Accountability Division within the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance was responsible for monitoring the exercise under the Secretary-General's bulletin on the delegation of authority in the administration of the Staff Regulations and Rules and the Financial Regulations and Rules ([ST/SGB/2019/2](#)). Key performance indicators related to the human resources management include appointments against geographical and non-geographical positions.

27. The Advisory Committee has noted with concern that, for 2018, only 2 out of 23 departments and offices at and away from Headquarters met the target of appointing at least 50 per cent of staff from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States to posts subject to geographical distribution, as stipulated in the senior managers' compacts with the Secretary-General (see [A/75/765](#), paras. 29 and 30). **The Advisory Committee reiterates its recommendation that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to report compliance thereon in future reports on the accountability system and, furthermore, to ensure that appropriate**

**accountability measures are taken in the future in cases of non-compliance (A/74/696, para. 14).** The Committee will make further comments and recommendations in this regard in its forthcoming report on accountability.

### **Principles and outline of the staff selection 2.0 programme**

28. The staff selection principles described in paragraph 48 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/77/590) cover areas of job responsibilities and attributes, recruitment, assessment methods, and evaluation and monitoring. Under the principle that anyone who wishes is allowed to apply and is accorded equal treatment, it is indicated that a proposal for the removal of the restrictions placed on current staff members from the General Service and related categories applying to posts in the Professional category ("G to P") will be submitted to the General Assembly for its consideration at the seventy-ninth session. The Advisory Committee recalls that a similar proposal was submitted by the Secretary-General to the Assembly at its seventy-third session (A/73/372/Add.1) and its comments and recommendations were contained in the related report (A/73/497). **The Advisory Committee notes that one of the staff selection principles presented in the report of the Secretary-General contains a proposal on "G to P" for the seventy-ninth session that requires the review of the General Assembly (see paras. 32 and 33 below).**

29. The programme outline is presented in paragraph 49 of the report. It is indicated therein that the recruitment component is composed of three workstreams with multiple projects within and across them: comprehensive job analysis and skill identification; assessment methods and tools for now and the future; and ensuring accountability and agility in staff selection. The Advisory Committee also requested additional information and clarification concerning the recruitment component. Some of the key points are summarized below:

(a) **Roles and responsibilities.** According to the Secretariat, hiring managers, who were not recruitment experts, undertook the overwhelming majority of the work in addition to their programmatic and managerial duties. A review of the roles and responsibilities throughout the recruitment process would identify steps that should be performed centrally and additional support that should be provided to hiring managers. The Secretariat would consider how to further professionalize current recruitment roles that could benefit from more centralized and/or standardized services. The Secretariat did not intend to change the current delegation of authority provided to heads of entity;

(b) **Qualifications required in job openings.** Specifically, the current requirements of pre-determined work experience and educational requirements (number of years of experience by category and grade were set and used to screen applications) versus the knowledge, skills and abilities required (see A/77/590, annex). The Secretariat considered that experience and academic credentials should be treated no differently than other recruiting tools and methods. That is, each recruitment process should begin by identifying the knowledge, skills and abilities required for the job opening, with experience and academic credentials only being required in situations in which they could be directly mapped to the specific knowledge, skills and abilities required for the job. For making final selection decisions, the Secretariat preferred an approach that considered the variety of information about applicants obtained through all assessments relevant to the needed knowledge, skills and abilities, and was administrated throughout the recruitment process and combined to form a composite score for each applicant;

(c) **Generic job profiles.** It is indicated in the report that the current profiles are outdated and do not include the required knowledge, skills or abilities linked to responsibilities that are to be redesigned and updated through an inclusive job

analysis. The Committee was informed that a challenge facing the Organization was that current job profiles did not necessarily reflect the capabilities that would be important in the future. The Office of Human Resources was therefore planning to conduct an analysis to review the job profiles and establish a new process to keep them up to date. According to the Secretariat, since updating all job profiles and developing new job profiles was a massive undertaking, resource needs might become a challenge to pursuing that effort within the desired time frame. The effort would also require overhauling the current approach and tools to evaluate applicants, calibrating the tools to reflect valid assessments of new capabilities;

(d) **Assessments.** Currently, in addition to the competency-based interview, hiring managers most often resort to essay-style tests for the assessment of candidates. The Secretariat plans to diversify future assessment methods with job-relevant behavioural assessments (in-tray, analytical or presentation exercises) that can be procured from qualified vendors and/or developed and/or validated internally. The competency-based interview in its current form is phased out and replaced by blended or other structured interview methods.

30. Concerning cost estimates arising from the introduction of the staff selection 2.0 programme, upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, since the new approach to staff selection had yet to be determined as part of the staff selection 2.0 programme and various workstreams were being set up, it was too early to estimate costs for one-time investments, for example for the professionalization of certain recruitment functions or the acquisition of assessment solutions from third-party vendors, as well as the running costs required to support hiring managers throughout the recruitment process. The Committee was further informed that, as the current situation was not sustainable, it was realistic to assume that dedicated staff would need to be added (or current staff trained and reassigned) to lead and support technical matters related to developing, validating and monitoring recruiting processes.

31. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, since the new approach to staff selection had yet to be determined as part of the staff selection 2.0 programme and various workstreams and related projects were being set up, the possibility of outsourcing parts of or the whole recruitment process had not yet been reviewed. For the same reason, an assessment of risks that came with changes to the current staff selection system would be conducted under the programme. As to why the term 2.0 was used to describe a new and improved version of the staff selection system, the Committee was informed that once changes pursued under the staff selection 2.0 programme came to fruition over the coming years, it might be more appropriate to consider moving away from the concept of versioning altogether, in favour of the somewhat more modest concept of “always in beta”, which related to achieving upgrades through continuous and frequent small updates. The concept of “perpetual beta” would communicate that the staff selection system was never as perfect as it could be and that there was always room for improvement (see also para. 8 above).

32. **The Advisory Committee notes that, as the new approach to staff selection is yet to be determined as part of the staff selection 2.0 programme by the Secretariat, the report of the Secretary-General does not contain detailed information as to how such a new approach will be adopted and implemented during the period 2023–2026. The Committee is therefore of the view that more information and clarification on the staff selection 2.0 programme are required for consideration and approval by the General Assembly. Such information and clarification include, the identification of central and individual roles and responsibilities under the recruitment process; the transition from current applicant qualification requirements (work experience and education) to the inclusion, as equal elements, of knowledge, skills and abilities which need to be**

identified for each job opening; the establishment of a proper assessment process with clear and objective criteria to avoid bias and to be fair to all applicants; and the preparation of detailed implementation plans and timelines of the staff selection 2.0 programme.

33. The Advisory Committee therefore recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to provide detailed information on the additional resources required for the implementation of the new approach to staff selection. The Committee trusts that the related information will be provided to the Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report and that an update will be included in the next report of the Secretary-General on human resources management.

## B. Outreach

34. It is stated in the report of the Secretary-General that the recruitment component will be supported by a recalibrated approach to outreach and the young professionals programme (A/77/590, para. 49). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, during past years, the Office of Human Resources started a number of new initiatives that continued to be developed and refined on the basis of lessons learned, data analysis and best practices in the related area. The priority was to target talent from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States with equitable outreach and internal measures by strengthening a multidimensional employer branding, which included customized trainings, communication material, career fairs and events, advertisements through national and regional job boards or multimedia, to name a few. Progress in advancing equitable geographical distribution and recruiting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible was a shared responsibility; therefore, effective collaboration between the Secretariat and the Member States was paramount.

35. The Advisory Committee recognizes the important role of outreach in attracting talent, in particular from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States. Noting the absence of information on a recalibrated approach to outreach in the staff selection 2.0 programme in the report of the Secretary-General, the Committee trusts that the related information will be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report and in the next report of the Secretary-General on human resources management. The Committee has made comments and recommendations on outreach in its related report on the overview of human resources management reform for the period 2021–2022 in an addendum (A/77/728/Add.1).

36. As for collaboration with the United Nations Youth Office established by the General Assembly in its resolution 76/306, upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance continued to support efforts to enhance youth representation in the Organization. It collaborated with the United Nations Youth Office in conducting various outreach activities to promote the work of the United Nations and the Organization as the employer of choice among youth. In terms of talent management, the Department worked with the Office to expand and replicate successful human resource modalities of the United Nations entities for attracting young talent, such as the young professionals programme and the United Nations Volunteer Programme. The approach was to consider diversity in its widest sense through an intersectional lens, by integrating the United Nations Youth Strategy and views on youth in other human resources strategies, such as the Geographical Diversity Strategy, the Gender Parity Strategy, and the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. **The Advisory Committee has encouraged efforts to enhance youth representation at the United**

Nations, including through internships and employment opportunities such as the Junior Professional Officers programme, young professionals programme and United Nations Volunteers, especially for youth from developing countries, as part of an effort to rejuvenate the Organization (see [A/77/605](#), para. 17; see also [A/77/729](#), para. 21, and [A/77/728/Add.1](#), para. 14).

### C. Young professionals programme

37. The report of the Secretary-General indicates that the young professionals programme is one of the three components of the staff selection 2.0 programme (see para. 20 above) and that findings from an analysis of the programme show broader trend similarities as identified in the current staff selection process. It is indicated that the programme has been, to some extent, successful in improving the overall geographical distribution for underrepresented Member States but did not have a significant impact on improving the distribution of unrepresented Member States, partly owing to the small number of geographical posts at the P-2 level. From 2011 to 2019, only 2 out of a yearly average of 19 Member States in the unrepresented category have been successful ([A/77/590](#), paras. 45 and 49).

38. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with information on the applications to the young professionals programme by regional group for the period 2012–2019 (see table 3 below).

Table 3  
Applications to the young professionals programme during the period 2012–2019, by regional group

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	Percentage	
						(7)=(5)/(4)	(8)=(6)/(5)
Regional group	Applications	Applicants convoked	Applicants successful in the written examination	Applicants convoked to the oral examination	Rostered applicants	Applicants successful in written examination and convoked to oral examination	Applicants successful in oral examination and rostered
African States	20 218	5 086	3 588	108	70	3	65
Asia-Pacific States	54 607	9 503	6 110	330	210	5	64
Eastern European States	10 114	4 164	2 897	132	93	5	70
Latin American and Caribbean States	17 376	4 380	2 801	126	80	4	63
Western European and other States	45 326	10 389	7 572	568	389	8	68
<b>Total</b>	<b>147 708</b>	<b>33 529</b>	<b>22 972</b>	<b>1 264</b>	<b>842</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>67</b>

39. The Advisory Committee recalls that the introduction of the young professionals programme in 2011 was approved by the General Assembly in its resolution [65/247](#). The programme built upon and replaced the former national competitive recruitment examination and incorporated the competitive examination for recruitment to the Professional category of staff from other categories (“G to P”) ([A/69/572](#), para. 98). The programme maintained the maximum age limitation of 32 years for eligibility.

40. With respect to the pool of available posts for placement of successful candidates of the young professionals programme, the Advisory Committee recalls that the General Assembly made the following decisions:

(a) In its resolution [65/247](#) (paras. 36–37), the Assembly (i) requested the Secretary-General, as a one-time exceptional measure until 31 December 2012, to make efforts to place in P-3 posts, subject to geographical distribution, successful national competitive recruitment examination candidates who were on the roster as at 31 December 2009; and (ii) approved the use of 15 per cent of the positions at the P-1 and P-2 levels in field operations financed through the regular budget and voluntary contributions, on the understanding that all other such positions, as well as positions at the P-1 and P-2 levels financed through peacekeeping budgets, would be advertised;

(b) In its resolution [67/255](#) (paras. 36–37), the Assembly (i) confirmed that the placement of successful candidates from the young professionals programme should be made at the P-1 or P-2 level, depending on the qualifications of the relevant candidate, the requirements of the related job description and the availability of posts; and (ii) endorsed the arrangement, as set out in paragraph 46 of the report of the Advisory Committee, whereby staff members who were nationals of a country participating in the national competitive recruitment examination or the young professionals programme might apply for participation in the examination or programme as external candidates if they met the eligibility criteria (the “G to N” arrangement), and expressed hope that both the young professionals programme and the “G to N” arrangement would improve geographical representation of underrepresented and unrepresented Member States.

41. In his report entitled “Composition of the Secretariat: staff demographics” ([A/77/580](#), paras. 51, 76 and 77), the Secretary-General reports that 62 Member States were invited to participate in the young professionals programme and that 50 candidates (23 women and 27 men) from the programme roster were placed with various entities during the period from 1 January to 31 December 2021. During the same period, the resignation rate of staff members at the P-2 level was disproportionately higher than their representation in the Secretariat, with 11.3 per cent being members of the young professionals programme (equally from the Asia-Pacific, Eastern European, and Western European and other States groups).

42. In terms of the duration of the roster for successful candidates of the young professionals programme, the Advisory Committee recalls that the General Assembly, in its resolution [71/263](#), endorsed the proposal of the Secretary-General to extend from two to three years the period of time during which successful candidates might remain on the roster for the young professionals programme (see [A/71/323](#), para. 52 (d)).

43. Furthermore, pursuant to the requests of the General Assembly in its resolutions [67/255](#) and [68/252](#), the Secretary-General submitted reports, at the sixty-seventh, sixty-ninth and seventy-first sessions of the Assembly, on the implementation of the young professionals programme, including on the conduct of a comprehensive review of the method and format of the young professionals programme examination, and on the development and implementation of measures to accelerate the placement of successful candidates.

**44. The Advisory Committee recalls that the General Assembly has emphasized the important role of the young professionals programme in improving the geographical representation of unrepresented and underrepresented Member States and in ensuring the continued rejuvenation of the Secretariat (resolutions [71/263](#) and [67/255](#)). While noting that the young professionals programme is designed to improve the representation of unrepresented and underrepresented Member States within the desirable ranges, the Committee recommends that the**

Assembly request the Secretary-General to provide a comprehensive update on the implementation of the programme, in particular the placement rate.

45. Furthermore, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to provide options for the further extension of the time limitation attached to the roster and for a mechanism to ensure a more successful placement of candidates on the roster, in the context of his next report on human resources management (see also [A/77/7](#), chap. I, para. 45). The Committee is also of the view that the increase in the geographical entry positions at the P-2 level would be beneficial to the more effective placement of successful young professionals programme candidates, as well as to the improvement of geographical representation within the desirable ranges and that opportunities stemming from the large number of retirements in the coming years should be leveraged to that effect.

## V. Other matters under human resources management

### Implementation of a new approach to mobility

46. The Advisory Committee recalls that, in its resolution [68/265](#) (para. 3), the General Assembly had approved a refined managed mobility framework and had authorized the Secretary-General to implement the refined mobility framework with a view to commencing mobility for one job network in 2016 and one in 2017, followed by two job networks each year thereafter para. 7). In the same resolution, the Assembly had emphasized that the managed mobility framework should ensure a fair sharing of the burden of service in hardship duty stations (para. 4) and had requested the Secretary-General to ensure that managed mobility should not have a negative effect on mandate implementation under the peace and security, development and human rights pillars of the United Nations (para. 9). In December 2017, the Secretary-General decided to pause the implementation of the mobility framework to conduct a comprehensive review and analysis of its benefits and challenges (see [ST/SGB/2016/2/Rev.1](#)). Subsequently, the Secretary-General submitted his report entitled “New approach to staff mobility: building an agile Organization by providing opportunities for on-the-job learning and skills development” ([A/75/540/Add.1](#)), which was submitted to the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session (see para. 6 above). The comments and recommendations of the Committee were contained in its related report (see [A/75/756](#), paras. 8–10).

47. It is indicated in the report of the Secretary-General that the Secretariat will consolidate its new approach to staff mobility and will implement annual mobility exercises under the established policy and accountability frameworks ([A/77/590](#), para. 22). Upon enquiry as to whether the new consolidated approach was exactly the same as that proposed in the previous report of the Secretary-General ([A/75/540/Add.1](#)), the Advisory Committee was informed that the new approach to staff mobility had been further developed on the basis of the previous report and that it was anticipated that the administrative instruction on mobility would be promulgated in the first quarter of 2023 with accompanying guidelines. Moreover, Inspira had been reconfigured to accommodate the automation of the process. The Committee was further informed that the first mobility exercise would be launched in the fall of 2023, with final reassignment decisions to be made by the heads of entity in the following spring to allow staff members to prepare for relocation throughout the summer of 2024. Concerning cost estimates associated with the new approach on mobility, the Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that a cost forecast analysis had been provided in the previous report of the Secretary-General on mobility ([A/75/540/Add.1](#)) and that it was expected to be absorbed within existing resources.



48. The Advisory Committee recalls that, in its previous report on mobility (A/75/756, para. 10), it had noted the large scale of the approach laid out by the Secretary-General, which encompassed a Secretariat-wide scope, a long-term time frame, spanning almost 40 years, and had forecasted costs that were expected to more than double, from \$36.8 million to \$76.9 million, in the first eight years of implementation. Moreover, the Committee considered that major components of the approach remained undefined or would require further analysis and clarification, particularly as regards their potential impact on external recruitment, accountability and financial implications, as well as related safeguards. The Committee recommended at the time that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to develop further key elements of the proposal, taking into consideration the observations and recommendations of the Committee, and submit a detailed report for the consideration and approval of the Assembly during the main part of its seventy-sixth session.

49. The Advisory Committee notes that the report of the Secretary-General (A/77/590) does not contain information on the new consolidated approach to staff mobility, which has been further developed on the basis of the previous report of the Secretary-General. The Committee further notes that the Secretariat is going to implement the annual mobility exercises during 2023, with the promulgation of an administrative instruction on mobility in the first quarter of 2023 prior to the consideration of the new consolidated approach to mobility by the Assembly. While acknowledging the Secretary-General's authority to move staff laterally across the Organization pursuant to regulation 1.2 (c)<sup>5</sup> of the Staff Regulations of the United Nations, the Committee is of the view that such a large-scale mobility framework across the Secretariat should have been presented to the General Assembly, with details on its implementation and cost implications (see paras. 46–48 above). The Committee considers that this is a policy matter for the consideration of the Assembly (see para. 6 above).

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

50. Recalling Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolution 71/263 (paras. 9 and 17) with regard to the attainment of equitable geographical distribution in the Secretariat, the Advisory Committee reiterates its recommendation that the Assembly request the Secretary-General to develop a comprehensive strategy to improve geographical representation across the board, including concrete actions, benchmarks and timelines that should form part of the overall human resources management framework or strategy (see para. 15 above), and in the context of an improved staff selection programme (see sect. IV above), to be submitted to the Assembly for its consideration (see A/75/765, para. 18; and A/73/497, para. 69).

### **Broader recruitment timeline**

51. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that efforts were currently under way to consider how to track the end-to-end recruitment process with shared data between Umoja and Inspira from the date a post was established or became

<sup>5</sup> Staff regulation 1.2 (c) stipulates that: "Staff members are subject to the authority of the Secretary-General and to assignment by him or her to any of the activities or offices of the United Nations. In exercising this authority, the Secretary-General shall seek to ensure, having regard to the circumstances, that all necessary safety and security arrangements are made for staff carrying out the responsibilities entrusted to them."



vacant to on-boarding; however, no timeline for the completion of this work was currently available. **The Advisory Committee reiterates its recommendation that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to undertake more analysis on each of the stages of the entire recruitment process, from the date of post vacancy or establishment to the date of onboarding, including the duration required for post classification (from the date of a request by a manager to the date of approval by the human resources counterpart), by job network, with emphasis on the impact of each stage on the delays in recruitment, and to provide the data in his next report on human resources management (see [A/75/765](#), para. 31; [A/73/497](#), para. 42; and [A/71/557](#), paras. 28 and 29; and resolution [67/255](#)).**

## Vacant posts and durations of liens against posts

52. With respect to vacant posts, one of the issues noted by the Advisory Committee was how such posts were reported<sup>6</sup>, and instances in which posts that had not been occupied by the staff members appointed to them were not considered vacant due to reasons, including staff members with liens against the posts. The Committee requested information and related regulations and rules regarding the issue of liens on posts, including limits on durations. The Committee was informed of the following: (a) administrative instruction [ST/AI/404](#) entitled “Assignment to and return from mission detail” provided an outline of the practice of granting liens to staff who were temporarily assigned to other functions for a maximum period of two years;<sup>6</sup> and (b) the practice was also reflected in administrative instruction [ST/AI/2010/3/Rev.1](#) on the staff selection system with respect to staff seconded to separately administered United Nations funds and programmes, with the addition of the possibility of obtaining return rights (or, as otherwise called, “a general lien”) to the releasing organization for a period of additional three years after the two years.<sup>7</sup>

53. The Advisory Committee recalls that the Secretariat had initiated a comprehensive review of the Organization’s policy framework, in partnership with the United Nations funds and programmes. During 2017 and 2018, 102 administrative issuances had been simplified, updated or newly developed and promulgated, and 95 issuances had been abolished as they were outdated and no longer necessary (see [A/73/497](#), para. 22). **The Advisory Committee recalls that the General Assembly approved the new contractual arrangements and harmonization of conditions of**

<sup>6</sup> According to the administrative instruction: “for a period of up to two years, in conjunction with a staff member’s mission assignment, releasing departments/offices are responsible for ensuring that the posts of detailed staff members holding permanent or long-term appointments are blocked. These posts are to be filled only through temporary recruitment of replacement staff, if necessary, or through temporary staff redeployment (including a special post allowance, when called for). If it is proposed that the mission detail be extended beyond two years, it will not be possible to grant any extension unless there is a specific written agreement to continue blocking the post in the parent department.”

<sup>7</sup> According to the administrative instruction: “Staff members who are on secondment to a separately administered United Nations fund or programme, specialized agency or organization of the United Nations common system shall be granted a lien against a specific job for up to two years. If the staff member, while on secondment, applies for job openings in the Secretariat they will be considered an internal applicant. After two years, should the staff member wish to remain on secondment, the lien on the specific job shall be surrendered but the staff member retains return rights to the Secretariat up to a maximum of five years. At the end of the five years, a transfer to the receiving organization shall be initiated unless the staff member wishes to return to the Secretariat. To return to the Secretariat, the staff member is eligible to apply for job openings. Staff members who are unsuccessful in their applications to other Secretariat job openings will have the right to return to the Secretariat at their level at the time of release on secondment.”

service in resolution [63/250](#) in 2008. The Committee notes that administrative instruction [ST/AI/404](#) was promulgated with a limited scope focusing on staff on mission prior to the adoption of the resolution, and that administrative instruction [ST/AI/2010/3/Rev.1](#), although issued subsequent to the resolution, stipulates the duration of a lien against a specific job for Secretariat staff on secondment to the United Nations system (see para. 52 above). While supporting staff movements within the Secretariat and across the United Nations system, the Committee is of the view that a review of the related administrative issuances is warranted with a view to clarifying the requirements, scope and durations of liens against posts and vacant post status. The Committee recommends that the Assembly request the Secretary-General to conduct such a review and provide an update in his next report on human resources management.

## Recognition and rewards framework

54. It is indicated in the report of the Secretary-General that the Secretariat will roll out a recognition and rewards framework to help build a culture where staff members feel listened to, appreciated and valued. The framework will also encourage elevated individual and team performance, thus driving high organizational performance, and contribute to an enabling work environment where the Secretariat lives its values ([A/77/590](#), para. 23). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Secretariat was developing a recognition and rewards framework to lay out the organizational approach to, and provide guidance and advice on the development of, recognition and rewards tools, processes and individual initiatives in the Secretariat. It was indicated to the Committee that laying out the stance of the Secretariat on recognition and rewards was necessary not only by conviction but also by mandate: in its resolution [72/255](#), the General Assembly approved the principles and guidelines for performance appraisal and management for the recognition of different levels of performance in entities within the United Nations system as proposed by the International Civil Service Commission. The Committee was informed that the framework was expected to be finalized by the first quarter of 2023 and would be shared publicly once developed.

## VI. Conclusion

55. The General Assembly is invited to take note of the human resources management framework and request the Secretary-General to provide an update on progress of human resources management reform implementation during the seventy-ninth session ([A/77/590](#), para. 50).

56. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, while there were no specific requests for decisions of the General Assembly, the Secretariat was seeking support, between 2023 and 2026, from Member States on all the priorities highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General ([A/77/590](#)). The Secretariat was developing, enhancing and modernizing human resources management within the existing framework. If the work progressed, there might be a request for policy changes, for which approval would be sought from the Assembly. **The comments and recommendations of the Advisory Committee are contained in the present report (see also paras. 15, 32 and 33 above).**