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Human resources management

Overview of human resources management reform for the period 2021–2022

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 the overview of human resources management reform for the period 2021–2022 ([A/77/590/Add.1](#)). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses received on 28 December 2022.

2. The report of the Secretary-General, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [71/263](#), provides an assessment of the progress on human resources management reforms undertaken during the reporting period 2021–2022 and an account of the progress on the implementation of the reforms against the outcomes to date. The proposed actions are detailed in a separate report of the Secretary-General on ways forward in the implementation of human resources management reforms for the period 2023–2026 ([A/77/590](#)). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with a list of the reports of the Secretary-General presented to the Assembly since the sixty-fifth session and the action taken by the Assembly, as well as a list of reports on human resources-related matters in which no action had been taken by the Assembly since the seventy-third session. Upon enquiry, the Committee was also provided with a list of 234 Secretary-General bulletins, administrative instructions and information circulars issued from 2018 to 2022. **The Advisory Committee trusts that updated information and clarification on the policies and initiatives introduced since the seventy-third session, including their estimated financial implications, where applicable, will be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report (see para. 33 below).**



II. Overview of human resources management reform for the period 2021–2022

3. The Secretary-General, in his report, provides a summary of progress made in the implementation of the three long-term outcomes that the Secretariat aims to achieve in the fulfilment of the human resources management reform report, with a focus on 2021–2022. In section II of the report, the Secretary-General discusses the diversity outcome, including equitable geographical distribution, gender parity, rejuvenation, multilingualism, addressing bias and racism in the workplace, disability inclusion and outreach. Section III provides information on the progress on the agility outcome in relation to proactive and efficient planning, hiring, deployment, learning for multiskilled, mobile and adaptable talent, including workforce planning, talent acquisition, learning and development and career support, and a new approach to staff mobility. Section IV provides information on progress on the efficient human resources services supported by an enabling policy framework, conducive performance and human resources risk management, as well as the meaningful discharge of the duty of care responsibilities, including human resources policy and advisory services, agile performance management, conduct and integrity, and health and well-being. Lastly, section V provides information on the progress on reform enablers, including innovation, digitalization and continuous improvement, systematic use of data and evidence, business continuity and staff involvement ([A/77/590/Add.1](#), summary, and paras. 1–2).

III. Diversity outcome

Equitable geographical distribution

4. The Secretary-General explains in the report that the number of Member States within the desirable range increased modestly, from 103 to 106, between 2017 and 2021, peaking at 109 in 2020. During the same period, the number of underrepresented Member States decreased more significantly, from 44 to 36, with the lowest number, 34, reached in 2019. The number of unrepresented Member States increased slightly, from 19 to 21, while the number of overrepresented Member States also grew, from 27 to 30. In response to the slow pace of progress that has been noted in General Assembly resolutions, most recently resolution [71/263](#), the Secretary-General developed and launched the Geographical Diversity Strategy in 2020, which is being refined and updated. The Strategy sets out a road map through the following three activity streams: (a) guidance: internal direction, messaging, monitoring, awareness-raising and targeting entities' top management and operations, coupled with a strengthened accountability mechanism; (b) outreach: employing a targeted approach to promoting vacancies through existing and new tools and platforms aimed at strengthening application pipelines; and (c) partnerships: leveraging partnerships and networks and building on the knowledge, experience and resources of Member States, other United Nations entities and international organizations to support the attainment of geographical distribution goals (*ibid.*, paras. 3–5).

5. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, notwithstanding its continuing efforts to attain equitable geographical distribution, the Secretariat has been met with challenges. One such challenge is attributed primarily to the supply of applicants from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States and another is related to the staff selection system. The Committee was also informed that the Secretariat had undertaken a detailed analysis to gain a better understanding of the factors that were affecting the Organization's objectives towards equitable geographical distribution. The main finding of the analysis is contained in the report of the Secretary-

General on the composition of the Secretariat as at 31 December 2020 ([A/76/570](#)). Some of those factors were reviewed in the previous reports of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (e.g., [A/75/591](#)) and are informing the planned initiative to overhaul the Secretariat's staff selection system (staff selection 2.0). According to the Secretary-General, on the basis of the evidence, the Secretariat has concluded that the shortcomings of the current recruitment process are systemic and structural in nature and require rectification through changes in policy, processes and technology. Consequently, the Secretariat will embark on the staff selection 2.0 project to address such deficiencies, as described in 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](#)). Upon enquiry, the Committee was also informed that the lessons learned from the past two years in the implementation of the Geographical Diversity Strategy had demonstrated that targeted and sustained efforts were essential for outreach activities. An emphasis on partnerships to achieve the desired goals was also needed. While consultations to update the Strategy were under way, the objective of the Strategy would continue to be consistent with the Secretary-General's commitment to achieving greater geographical distribution in geographical posts and to recruiting staff from as wide a geographical basis as possible, aligned with Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations.

6. **The Advisory Committee recalls the statement in Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations that due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible. The Committee further recalls that the General Assembly, in its resolution 71/263 (paras. 9 and 17), called for the attainment of equitable geographical distribution in the Secretariat (see para. 9 below and [A/75/765](#), para. 18).** The Advisory Committee makes further comments in its report on the report of the Secretary-General on ways forward in the implementation of human resources management reforms for the period 2023–2026 ([A/77/728](#)).

Gender parity

7. The Secretary-General indicates in the report that, in 2021, the distribution of women in the Professional and higher and in the Field Service categories reached 42.2 per cent, which is 1.3 percentage points higher than in 2020 and 7.2 percentage points higher than in the 2016 baseline year. Significant challenges, however, persist with regard to reaching parity in peacekeeping operations, special political missions and other political presences owing to the low proportion of applications from women (20.3 per cent in 2020, compared to the 18.6 per cent achieved in 2017). The Secretariat has continued its efforts toward the gender parity objective, including through the use of innovative mechanisms such as pipelines and talent pools. Specifically, through the senior women talent pipeline initiative, 58 appointments have been made, from the P-5 to the Under-Secretary-General level, since 2014, with some 70 per cent made to peacekeeping operations, special political missions and other political presences ([A/77/590/Add.1](#), paras. 6–7). **The Advisory Committee acknowledges the results of the efforts of the Secretary-General to improve the overall ratio of female to total staff in the Organization and trusts that the Secretary-General will continue to attract and retain more female staff to work in field operations, including in the Professional and higher category.**

8. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, since the launch of the system-wide strategy on gender parity in 2017, the Organization has been taking steps to achieve its target of a 50/50 gender balance at all levels across the Organization by 2030. During the first phase of the implementation of the strategy, target setting was applied to the international staff population at the P-1 level and above, on fixed-term, continuous or permanent/indefinite appointments. The second

phase of the strategy focuses on expanding it to encompass General Service staff and National Professional Officers. As part of those steps, an administrative instruction on temporary special measures for the achievement of gender parity was issued in 2020 (ST/AI/2020/5). Pursuant to that administrative instruction, parity was considered to be within the 47 to 53 per cent margin. The measures apply to selections and appointments at each grade level at which gender parity has not been reached within each entity. According to the Secretary-General, the measures will continue to be applied for each level, entity by entity across the Organization, and where the margin has not been reached. Where an entity has been assessed as having reached sustainable parity at all levels, the special measures will be suspended for that entity. Upon enquiry, the Committee was provided with a staff breakdown by gender in the common system, based on the most recent information provided in the United Nations system-wide dashboard on gender parity (see table 1).

Table 1
Staff breakdown, by gender, in the United Nations common system

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Women staff (percentage)</i>
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)	76
International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization	67
International Court of Justice	65
United Nations System Staff College	61
United Nations Volunteers	60
United Nations University	59
World Trade Organization	59
Pan American Health Organization	59
International Trade Centre	58
International Fund for Agricultural Development	57
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	56
United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund	56
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	55
International Civil Service Commission	55
World Intellectual Property Organization	54
International Telecommunication Union	54
International Civil Aviation Organization	54
International Labour Organization	54
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS	53
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	52
United Nations Office for Project Services	51
United Nations Population Fund	51
World Meteorological Organization	50
World Health Organization	50
United Nations Development Programme	50
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees	49
United Nations Children's Fund	49
United Nations Institute for Training and Research	49
The International Organization for Migration	47
Universal Postal Union	46

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Women staff (percentage)</i>
United Nations Capital Development Fund	45
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	43
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	42
United Nations Secretariat	42
International Atomic Energy Agency	40
World Food Programme	39
International Maritime Organization	35
United Nations International Computing Centre	32

9. Table 1 shows that, overall, some 66 per cent of the common system entities achieved the 50/50 target. Approximately 47 per cent of the entities exceed the 47 to 53 per cent margin identified by the Secretariat, 29 per cent are between the 47 to 53 per cent margin and 24 per cent are below the margin. **The Advisory Committee recalls the 50/50 gender balance target set by the General Assembly, including in its resolution 71/263, and notes that the Secretary-General plans to suspend the temporary special measures in entities in which the 47 to 53 per cent margin has been reached. The Committee trusts that further clarifications and information on the application of the temporary special measures and the optimal gender balance target will be provided to the Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report.** The Advisory Committee makes further comments in its report on the composition of the Secretariat: staff demographics ([A/77/729](#)).

Rejuvenation

10. According to the Secretary-General, the Young Professionals Programme has undergone improvements, including the conduct of the examinations through an online platform since 2018, which has increased the accessibility of candidates. It is indicated that the Secretariat undertook a review of the programme in 2021, which concluded that, while the Young Professionals Programme was aligned with the initial vision and its objectives, opportunities for improvement and possible updates existed. Further efforts to advance the rejuvenation objective included revision of the staff selection policy to facilitate rejuvenation and advocacy for and provision of support to entities regarding the establishment of entry-level positions, including by developing a guidance document that includes an explanation of the usage of such modalities ([A/77/590/Add.1](#), paras. 8–9).

11. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [65/247](#), the Young Professionals Programme was designed to improve equitable geographical distribution, and therefore only nationals of Member States that were unrepresented, underrepresented or at risk of becoming so were eligible to participate in the Programme. The Committee was also informed that all candidates who passed the Young Professionals Programme examination, including staff members who had passed as G to P candidates, were placed on the roster for recruitment for geographical posts. While awaiting placement against a Young Professionals Programme post, rostered candidates, including G to P, could apply and be considered for recruitment for non-geographical posts, including temporary posts (see [ST/AI/2012/2/Rev.1](#)). There was a ceiling, however, on the number of G to P staff who could be recruited for geographical posts of up to 10 per cent of the positions available under the Young Professionals Programme in a given year. Upon enquiry, the Committee was further informed that, in addition, the annual number of placements of successful candidates under the Young Professionals Programme had remained between 25 and 50 over the past three years, which was

relatively low, owing mainly to the fact that fewer than half of the positions at the P-2 level were geographical positions. The Committee was also informed that, of 1,399 posts at the P-2 level with an active staff member placed against as at 30 September 2022, 416 were geographical positions.

12. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was also informed that the resignation of serving young professional staff members was not centrally tracked. Accordingly, no data were available on the retention rate. There were also no instances on record in which candidates had resigned from the Young Professionals Programme roster. However, candidates who declined an offer were removed from the roster, and such cases were tracked. Successful candidates who had not been selected within three years from the date of placement on the roster would also be removed from the roster at the end of the three-year period.

13. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Secretariat had revised the administrative instructions on the staff selection system ([ST/AI/2010/3/Rev.1](#)) in July 2022, to support efforts to accelerate youth inclusion, employment, and career development and satisfaction by eliminating the eligibility criteria limiting applications by staff to the same level or one level above their current grade. To ensure that entities considered opportunities for rejuvenation, the Secretariat included guidance in the annual budget guidelines highlighting the need for prioritized workforce capabilities, encouraging entities to consider junior-level posts and review the reclassification of existing posts, and outlining opportunities for such reclassification due to current vacancies or forecasted vacancies due to retirements. The Secretariat intended to further address those impediments in the context of staff selection 2.0.

14. **The Advisory Committee reiterates that the staffing profile of the Secretariat shows a high number and proportion of senior posts at the level of D-1 and above and that reductions in the junior Professional-level grades could have a negative impact on efforts to rejuvenate the workforce of the Secretariat (see also [A/77/7](#), para. 45, [A/76/7](#) and Corr.1, para. 52, and [A/75/7](#) and Corr.1, para. 49). While noting the rejuvenation efforts, mainly the elimination of the eligibility criteria limiting applications by staff to the same level or one level above their current grade, the Committee is of the view that such efforts should be undertaken in a fair and transparent manner, without adversely affecting geographical distribution and gender balance within the Organization, and trusts that more detailed information on the related advantages and disadvantages will be presented to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report and included in the next overview report. The Committee makes further comments in its report on the composition of the Secretariat: staff demographics ([A/77/729](#)) and the report of the Secretary-General on ways forward in the implementation of human resources management reforms for the period 2023–2026 ([A/77/728](#)).**

Multilingualism

15. In his report, the Secretary-General indicates that, in 2017, a language learning harmonization exercise had begun, which culminated in 2021 with the articulation of the United Nations Language Framework, which established consistency and coherence across the six official languages. In 2021, another process was begun to align the scope, content and grading of the language proficiency examination. Language training was also quickly reconfigured to accommodate online facilitation and delivery, as evidenced by a near tripling of the online offerings in all the official languages between 2019 and 2020, from 130 to 351. Overall language offerings decreased slightly, from 481 courses in 2019 to 378 as at August 2022 ([A/77/590/Add.1](#), paras. 10–11). **The Advisory Committee recalls that the General**

Assembly, in its resolutions [77/262](#), [75/252](#), [73/346](#) and [71/263](#), emphasized the paramount importance of the equality of the six official languages of the United Nations and the importance of multilingualism in the activities of the United Nations and reaffirmed the need to respect the equality of the two working languages of the Secretariat. The Committee reiterates its recommendation that the Assembly request the Secretary-General to take additional measures to improve multilingualism and the equal and adequate treatment of all six official languages and to provide an update in the next programme budget submission (see also [A/77/7](#), para. 57).

Addressing bias and racism in the workplace

16. The Secretary-General recalls in his report the establishment of the Task Force on Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for All in the United Nations in September 2020 and the launch of the strategic action plan early in 2022. Given that the plan required additional resources, the Secretariat prepared a corresponding resource proposal that was submitted to the General Assembly in the context of the report of the Secretary-General on addressing racism and promoting dignity for all in the United Nations Secretariat ([A/76/771](#)), which resulted in the Assembly mandating the establishment of a dedicated team to oversee the implementation of the plan ([A/77/590/Add.1](#), para. 12). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that addressing and reporting on issues of discrimination, including racism and racial discrimination, was handled within the ambit of prohibited conduct, as provided for in the Secretary-General's bulletin on addressing discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority ([ST/SGB/2019/8](#)). No specific posts and positions in the Secretariat are tasked/mandated to deal with racism and racial discrimination directly or specifically. However, there are functions within the Secretariat that deal with and report on matters concerning prohibited conduct and accountability, including racism, as prescribed in the aforementioned Secretary-General's bulletin and as part of the overall mandates and responsibilities of the relevant offices, including the Executive Offices of each department and office, the Administrative Law Division of the Office of Human Resources, the Investigations Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Ethics Office and the Business Transformation and Accountability Division. **The Advisory Committee, while noting the long-standing efforts by the United Nations to combat racism and racial discrimination, recalls its recommendation that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to refine the strategic action plan, based on wider data sources and further analysis, including in the recruitment process, in cooperation with United Nations system entities, for the consideration of the Assembly (see also [A/76/7/Add.39](#), paras. 3, 7 and 8).**

Disability inclusion

17. The report of the Secretary-General refers to the system-wide United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, which was launched in 2019. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution [74/144](#), the Secretary-General submits progress reports on the implementation of the Strategy, the baseline of which suggests that there is a 46 per cent gap between the desired and actual states of disability inclusion for the United Nations system overall, which is even wider in the Secretariat, where the gap is 51 per cent. In 2019 and 2021, the Secretariat concluded its second and third Staff Engagement Survey, respectively, which included a self-identification question on disability. In 2019, 0.3 per cent of respondents had self-identified as having a disability, while in 2021 0.29 per cent did. The survey results also indicated a significant gap in the satisfaction rates of persons with disabilities, compared with the average for the Secretariat. To address this, several activities were undertaken, including a system-wide employee resource group for persons with disabilities that

was launched in 2021, to serve, among others, as a forum to systematically consult personnel with disabilities in decisions that affected them. As a result of such engagement, guidelines on reasonable accommodation were developed and will be launched imminently. Also in 2021, a new online multilingual course entitled “Disability inclusion: building an inclusive and accessible United Nations”, open to all staff, was offered ([A/77/590/Add.1](#), para. 13). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that other initiatives had taken place in support of the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities, including: (a) leveraging partnerships with organizations that promoted disability inclusion to disseminate vacancies, raise awareness and ensure that standards were in place so that all segments of the workforce were fairly and equitably treated; and (b) rolling out a voluntary disability self-identification question in Inspira in August 2022, which allowed the Organization, for the first time, to collect data on applicants with disabilities. This data will not be used for hiring decisions but rather to measure the extent of the Organization’s ability to be an employer of choice for persons with disabilities. **The Advisory Committee notes the measures taken by the Secretary-General to promote disability inclusion in the United Nations system and trusts that more efforts will be undertaken to promote workforce diversity for persons with disabilities, including concrete measures to facilitate the recruitment process and improve accessibility, as requested by the General Assembly in various of its resolutions, including resolution [73/273](#).**

Outreach

18. The Secretary-General explains that the Secretariat’s outreach resources are insufficient not only to undertake direct outreach to potentially qualified candidates, but also to ensure outreach effort coordination among Secretariat entities. In that regard, the outreach activities, which have been continuing within the existing resource constraints, included: (a) the provision of support to entities and the strengthening of accountability mechanisms through entity action plans with practical and specific outreach recommendations, reviewed annually; (b) engagement with permanent missions of unrepresented and underrepresented Member States; (c) the distribution of vacancies to more than 350 women’s and disability organizations and professional associations relevant to specific job openings; (d) the organization of regional and global career events; and (e) the launch of a talent pool initiative with the United Nations system at the end of 2020 that would progressively enable entities to conduct direct outreach. The recruitment functionality of the system went live in June 2021, and in August 2022 the system had more than 103,000 subscribers of 193 nationalities, a nearly twofold increase in the eight months of that year (*ibid.*, para. 14).

19. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the global talent pool initiative was a subscription-based outreach tool. Individuals could subscribe using a simple digital form requesting minimum demographic details and areas of expertise. Individuals must subscribe themselves, and subscriptions were valid for 24 months. While the subscription was not a full application for specific job openings, recruiters could search and segment the subscribers’ data according to their needs, human resources imperatives and workforce objectives, to identify lists of potential applicants. As of December 2022, the pool included more than 131,000 subscribers from all Member States. Of the total number of subscribers, 47.7 per cent were women, 50.9 per cent were between the ages of 18 and 35 and 80.9 per cent were external. When asked if they were persons with disabilities, 1.7 per cent of the subscribers confirmed such status, while 1.2 per cent preferred not to say. With regard to partnerships, the Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the Office of Human Resources had initiated various partnerships on talent outreach across the Secretariat. The Office recently signed two partnership agreements, with the Development Coordination Office for the resident coordinator system and the Department of Global

Communications, to engage systematically with the United Nations information centres globally, in particular in unrepresented and underrepresented Member States. **The Advisory Committee notes the outreach efforts and challenges, including that they are conducted within existing resources. The Committee looks forward to receiving updates on those efforts, including the talent pool initiative, in the next overview report.** The Committee makes further comments in its report on the composition of the Secretariat: staff demographics ([A/77/729](#)).

IV. Agility outcome

Workforce planning

20. The Secretary-General indicates that, in 2020, the Secretariat began to lay the foundation for applying strategic foresight to human resources management by conducting its first future workforce capabilities demand analysis. Operational workforce planning provides advice and guidance at the entity level on staffing reviews, nationalization, organizational design and other related topics while simultaneously returning to the strategic workforce analysis process. Throughout the period, dedicated support to nine client entities (including peacekeeping missions, regional commissions, special political missions, offices of special envoys and divisions/services within departments) was provided to assist in and advise on entity-specific staffing reviews and workforce planning exercises. In addition, a number of guidance documents and tools have been developed since 2020, including a workforce planning guide, an online operational workforce planning training course, a staffing review toolkit, an organizational design inventory and the nationalization guidelines. In addition, a workforce planning and organizational design community of practice was established as a platform for sharing knowledge and good practices across entities. To facilitate and enhance compliance, in addition to ongoing support, a comprehensive overview of non-staff modalities was published in 2020 and a review of the use of these modalities was undertaken across the Secretariat (*ibid.*, paras. 15–18).

21. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that operational workforce planning was conducted at the entity level and was supported by the Department of Operational Support in an advisory capacity, upon request. The review of post resources and structures took place in the context of budget preparations, as well as during deliberations on budget proposals with the relevant committees. According to the Secretary-General, feedback from the engagements with specific entities was provided by operational workforce planning to be incorporated into the strategic workforce planning process to help to identify and address challenges that entities might encounter in building needed capabilities and complement insights provided by the strategic workforce planning working group. Global human resources trends were factored into the workforce analysis conducted in the context of strategic workforce planning, including the identification of needed workforce capabilities and the analysis of external and internal factors that had an impact on the way in which the United Nations workforce delivered mandates and were not part of the operational approach. The analysis of global workforce trends included the review of in-demand skills, jobs of tomorrow, hiring trends and emerging occupations, among others, using global resources, such as research from the World Economic Forum, the World Bank and the International Labour Organization.

22. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that a demand analysis, which was conducted in 2020, had analysed strategic plans, strategy papers and programme planning and budgeting documents, as well as a variety of external sources, such as the World Economic Forum, the World Bank and other research institutions, to identify the strategic direction and internal factors, as well as factors

that were likely to have an impact on the United Nations work over the next 10 years. As a second step, the strategic workforce planning working group assessed the impact that those factors were likely to have on delivering mandates and the corresponding workforce capabilities needed. On the basis of this, a set of future workforce capabilities in demand with a 2030 horizon was identified, including those highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General on Our Common Agenda (A/75/982). The full list of needed workforce capabilities included data analytics and management, digital transformation/innovation, science, strategic foresight, partnerships, climate change, resource mobilization, strategic communications, a human rights-based approach and crisis response. **The Advisory Committee notes the set of future workforce capabilities in demand with a 2030 horizon, as identified by the Secretariat, and trusts that further information will be provided to the General Assembly during the consideration of the present report and that updates will be included in the next overview report.**

23. While noting the delegated authority to heads of entities, the Advisory Committee reiterates that it sees merit in enhancing workforce planning management at the Headquarters level to better identify opportunities for streamlining the functions, especially in situations of relative stability and absence of substantial changes in the operational environment. The Committee also reiterates that proposals for posts should be supported by systematic workload analysis on the basis of workload standards and indicators, and the appropriate identification of workstreams, while ensuring that all structural changes and proposed reclassifications and reassignments of functions reflect the consistent application of policies and standards governing organizational structures and job classification in accordance with relevant International Civil Service Commission standards of common classification of occupational groups (see also A/77/7, para. 44).

24. With regard to the overview of the non-staff modalities, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the Department of Operational Support had published a comprehensive overview of all non-staff capacities available to Secretariat entities in 2020. The overview provided definitions, examples of use, restrictions, and important policy and process information. The overview was updated regularly, with the most recent update in November 2022. Since 2020, the Department has published 12 dedicated process guides, and 3 additional ones are under way. In addition, the Department conducted a study on the use of non-staff personnel, which made 32 recommendations for improvements in the areas of policy, process, people (communication and capacity-building) and systems. According to the Secretary-General, the use of non-staff modalities has proved effective in bridging fluctuating or unpredictable workload demands or functional and/or skills needs. Most uses of non-staff personnel require that such personnel have expertise or skills normally not found in the Organization, such as type II gratis personnel, consultants and experts on non-reimbursable loans, which, in rare cases, such as for individual contractors, may perform only functions similar to those assigned to staff for a temporary period. Any function that requires representation or financial, administrative or supervisory authority cannot be performed by non-staff personnel, and the accountability of non-staff personnel is spelled out concretely in the relevant conditions of service or the underlying agreements.

25. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was also informed that the Secretariat had accepted the recommendation of the Board of Auditors that the Administration ensure that contracted personnel were performing assignments only when there was no expertise in the Organization and that core functions were performed by regular staff members (A/77/5 (Vol. I), para. 295). The Board also stressed the need to monitor the duration of the appointments and to address non-compliance

(ibid., para. 313). According to the Secretary-General, since 2020, the Organization has continued to address the perceived weaknesses in the management of consultants and individual contractors identified in the 2020 study on non-staff capacities. One of the key weaknesses is the lack of process guidance in important areas such as the calculation of maximum employment times and the employment of former staff and retirees as consultants and individual contractors. This led to the launch of the process guide on the employment of former staff and retirees as consultants and individual contractors in September 2020, and the process guide on the calculation of maximum employment times for consultants and individual contractors in May 2021.

26. The Advisory Committee notes the study on non-staff personnel and reiterates that core functions should be performed by regular staff members and that contracted personnel contribute where there is no expertise in the Organization. The Committee trusts that the means to systematically collect and report on the core functions performed by non-staff personnel, in particular consultants and individual contractors, will be established and that the data, along with the analysis of the information, will be included in the next overview report and the related report on the composition of the Secretariat. The Advisory Committee makes further comments in its reports on the composition of the Secretariat: gratis personnel, retired staff, consultants and individual contractors, and United Nations Volunteers ([A/77/727](#)) and the programme budget for 2024.

Talent acquisition

27. The Secretary-General explains the challenges facing talent acquisition, notwithstanding the significant numbers of applications for positions across the Organization, in particular in areas intertwined with the diversity outcome, specifically geographical distribution, as well as with regard to the recruitment timelines. The Secretary-General also explains efforts to introduce incremental improvements into the recruitment process to make it more efficient. The improvements have been made predominantly under the recruitment innovation project since 2019. Significant work was carried out that resulted in the definition of a set of capabilities for the workforce to support mandate delivery in evolving operating environments. This led to a steady decrease in the average recruitment timeline in the Secretariat, from 159 days in 2017 to 134 in 2019, before it increased again to 158 and 182 days in 2020 and 2021, respectively, under the dual strain of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the financial situation. The Secretary-General states that the new candidate application process launched in September 2021 helped to reduce the average number of applications received. A recent recruitment analysis affirmed that bottlenecks in the recruitment process were systemic owing overwhelmingly to the fact that a great majority of recruitment decision points were in the hands of hiring managers who had multiple other responsibilities along with that of recruitment, an issue that will be addressed under staff selection 2.0. Lastly, The Secretariat embarked on a restructuring of the roster management system to standardize operational aspects of roster building, association and management. It entails, among others, providing detailed roster-related guidance to users, reassessing roster validity and time limitation, and addressing diversity-related aspects of rosters. The restructuring is scheduled for completion by the end of 2023 ([A/77/590/Add.1](#), paras. 19–21).

28. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Secretariat had concluded that the shortcomings of the current recruitment process were systemic and structural in nature, which made them challenging to overcome within the current selection system. Some contributing factors included the lack of recent and inclusive job analysis to reflect in up-to-date job descriptions; the language skills requirements, as well as applicant self-assessment and evaluation, which were lacking consistency; the burden on hiring managers to determine, develop and conduct the screening and

evaluation of applications; the inadvertent but adverse impact of the competency-based interviewing method to the attainment of the goal of equitable geographical distribution; and the lack of real-time monitoring capability to obtain data and monitor differences in the treatment of demographic subgroups at each stage.

29. With regard to the costs of maintaining the rosters, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the Organization forecasted the amount of funding required for the rostering process through generic job openings. Rosters have both currently serving staff and candidates external to the United Nations. Candidates on the roster who are never selected or employed by the United Nations do not incur any continued costs to the Organization because there are no costs associated with maintaining candidates on the rosters. Given that candidates rostered as a result of such global exercises are subsequently available for selection by all missions, the costs of the exercise continue to be apportioned among peacekeeping and special political missions on a pro-rata basis through a cost-sharing model, and each mission submits its share of funding in its proposed budget document. For 2022/23, a total amount of \$1,064,697 has been apportioned to peace operations to meet the costs of expert panel assessments.

30. **The Committee notes the efforts of the Secretary-General to identify the systemic shortcomings of the recruitment process and recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to provide detailed information on these challenges, as well as a breakdown of the funding of the different aspects of the process, including from field missions, in the next overview report.** The Advisory Committee makes further comments in its reports on the report of the Secretary-General on ways forward in the implementation of human resources management reforms for the period 2023–2026 ([A/77/728](#)) and the next overview of the financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Learning and development

31. The Secretary-General launched a learning strategy covering the period 2021–2025, which laid out the principles of learning and development provision, both at the Secretariat level centrally and at the entity level. The Secretary-General reports that, in 2019 and 2020, the Secretariat completed a revision of and launched three new management and leadership development programmes aimed at providing differentiated and tailored training to managers from across entities, with more than 1,300 staff benefiting to date. The United Nations System Executive Management Programme, launched in 2019, has been broadened to target all second reporting officers, effective 2021. Early in 2022, in partnership with the United Nations System Staff College, a dedicated programme targeting staff at the D-1 and D-2 levels was organized for 71 participants. The Senior Leadership Induction Programme, launched in 2019, which has benefited 48 participants to date, continued to help new Assistant Secretaries-General and Under-Secretaries-General to understand the culture of the United Nations and its operational nuances. In addition, continued progress has been made towards galvanizing the dedicated learning capability of the resident coordinator system, including through a mentoring and coaching programme. Since 2019, more than 30 new, revamped and redesigned courses have been made available in an online training catalogue and resulted in the certification of more than 280 senior leaders to date from across entities. Lastly, a separate programme tailored to the managerial learning needs of middle-level managers was launched in 2022. An 11-module e-certification programme has been rolled out for human resources staff and a redesigned 4-module e-course has been made a prerequisite for staff assuming procurement responsibilities ([A/77/590/Add.1](#), paras. 23–25).

32. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Secretariat was also conducting a leadership development road map study to address the issues of

duplication/overlapping and incoherence that might exist among existing Secretariat leadership development initiatives, based on the United Nations system leadership framework. The road map allows leaders and managers at all levels to learn continuously while on the job. It will be composed of high-quality standard leadership and management development initiatives (e.g., training programmes, communities of practice and coaching) that have more of an impact and contribute to further strengthening a leadership culture in the Secretariat. **The Advisory Committee notes the learning and development initiatives and looks forward to further updates on the leadership development road map study in the next overview report. The Advisory Committee expects that an assessment of the results of the learning and development initiatives will also be provided in the next overview report.**

Career support and a new approach to staff mobility

33. As stated in the report of the Secretary-General, mandates, including in General Assembly resolution [71/263](#), enabled the development and launch of a career satisfaction support framework in 2021. Central to the framework is a new approach to mobility, which, in accordance with mandates, notably Assembly resolution [68/265](#), covers encumbered posts only, affirms ownership by entities in full alignment with the delegation of authority framework, brings the duration of mobility assignments in line with the standard duration, as determined under the hardship classification of duty stations, and builds and promotes a holistic way of helping staff to achieve career satisfaction. The first mobility exercise under the new approach is expected to be launched in 2023, and regular updates will be provided to the Assembly as required (*ibid.*, para. 26). The Advisory Committee makes comments and recommendations on mobility, as a policy matter, in its report on the report of the Secretary-General on ways forward in the implementation of human resources management reforms for the period 2023–2026 ([A/77/728](#)).

V. Accountability outcome

Human resources policy and advisory services

34. In his report, the Secretary-General provides a summary of the policy revision prioritization exercise undertaken with the Management Client Board, with a focus on substantive simplification and ongoing consultations with partners throughout the policy revision and development process. It is stated that the approach balances the need to simplify policies with the need to prioritize the policies with the most strategic value. It is also centred on the concept of process economics to ensure that policy provisions are robust and foster efficiencies and better ways of working. This work has been validated by the Board of Auditors, as well as internally in a recent satisfaction survey on the work of the working group of the Management Client Board ([A/77/590/Add.1](#), paras. 27–28). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that what was interpreted as validation by the Board of Auditors referred to the entire approach, rather than a single element of it, such as process economics. The validation itself is contained in the report of the Board of Auditors ([A/76/5 \(Vol. I\)](#), para. 400), in which the Board recommended that the Administration ensure that the Management Client Board continued to prioritize the development of policies in the Organization and review the progression of such work regularly, with the aim of expediting their promulgation.

Agile performance management

35. The Secretary-General explains that, while the goals of the ongoing mandated reforms of the Secretariat's performance management system have been continuing

for some time, a key shift in implementation, known as agile performance management, has occurred to place emphasis on building a high-performance culture by moving away from utilizing the process as a system of often tick-box individual appraisals towards a business process that is aimed at improving organizational performance and programme delivery by optimizing individual performance. The Secretariat proceeded with an agile performance management pilot, conducted from 2019 to 2020, and provided an evaluation of the impact and included lessons learned before an Organization-wide roll-out, with a phased implementation beginning with the 2021–2022 performance cycle. One of the main pillars of agile performance management is multi-rater/360-degree feedback. Following the piloting of multi-rater/360-degree feedback for Assistant Secretaries-General and Under-Secretaries-General in 2019, the People Management Index tool was implemented with the 2021–2022 performance cycle for staff at the D level. The tool was rolled out during the 2022–2023 cycle to all staff with managerial responsibilities and four or more first and/or second reports, as appropriate. Further roll-out is planned for all other staff with managerial responsibilities and results will be reported in due course ([A/77/590/Add.1](#), paras. 29–31).

36. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the previous performance model had process-related steps that provided less flexibility in supporting how teams work and collaborate. The previous system had a paper-based feel to it, in which a structured fill-in-the-box workplan was embedded into the performance tool. The process and the standardized tool provided limited opportunities for amending workplans to keep pace and alignment with changing priorities. That model also maintained a midpoint review element to document progress or modifications independent from the workplan itself, which was deemed less efficient. It also maintained a less streamlined assessment of the Organization's core values and competencies, resulting in less evidence-based input. Through the new performance management approach, the Organization aims to shift from a process-compliant culture to accountability for results. The goal is to have a more effective system that meets the needs of staff, fosters ongoing feedback and development and promotes dynamic and empowered teams. The new performance management approach streamlined the process, allowing managers and staff members to simply upload a workplan in Inspira following their discussion about it, instead of filling a cumbersome online form in Inspira, and replacing the rigid midpoint review process with ongoing conversations/feedback, thus simplifying the end-of-cycle review process.

37. The Advisory Committee was also informed, upon enquiry, that, owing to their unique roles as heads of entities, the resident coordinators were determined to be outside the scope of the applicable performance management system for staff up to the D-2 level. The unique roles required a modified approach that reflected their role as an independent head of entity. In that context, the development of a performance management policy for resident coordinators was under way.

38. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was further informed that the purpose of implementing the multi-rater/360-degree feedback methodology was to establish accountability for people management and build a feedback culture in the Organization that was a key element of instituting a high-performance management culture and was connected closely with building capacity, including through structured leadership and management training, of leaders and managers in order to inspire trust. Meaningful results from the first application of the methodology in the 2021–2022 performance cycle, which was introduced to staff at the Director level with four or more staff members reporting to them, would be carefully considered, along with the results of the 2022–2023 cycle, for learning and development purposes and informing leadership. **The Committee notes the ongoing roll-out of the agile performance**

management pilot, shifting from a process-compliant culture to accountability for results, and trusts that updated information on the results achieved will be provided in the next overview report. The Committee makes further comments and recommendations in its report on the twelfth progress report on accountability: strengthening accountability in the United Nations Secretariat ([A/77/743](#)).

Conduct and integrity

39. The Secretary-General indicates that, on average, during the period 2017–2021, the Secretariat annually received 154 cases of misconduct, of which 130 were completed through an accountability process under the relevant legal framework, which might result in the imposition of disciplinary measures. Except for 2020, there was a marked increase in the number of disciplinary measures imposed. In particular, the number of disciplinary measures of dismissal and separation from service had increased significantly, except in 2020. Similarly, since 2017, an increasing number of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving United Nations staff members, which had increased since 2020, had been referred to the Office of Human Resources for disciplinary measures. According to the report of the Secretary-General, since 2017 a number of tools have been launched and strengthened to facilitate monitoring and reporting of unsatisfactory conduct, as well as to enhance risk management and transparency across the global Secretariat. The tools include the establishment of ALD Connect, which supports conduct and discipline focal points in all Secretariat entities, as well as conduct and discipline teams in peacekeeping missions. Misconduct Risk Management Tools were also launched in 2019 to provide a consistent methodology and practical approach to managing risk and misconduct. Other tools include the Case Management Tracking System, which has been rolled out across the Secretariat to enable consistent and confidential case management, and the victim assistance tracking system, which allows peace operations to track the support and assistance provided to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. With regard to efforts to address sexual harassment, the Secretary-General mentions that work has been undertaken to develop a results framework for organizations to measure the impact of efforts. New reporting and support tools are thus under development in the area of sexual harassment implicating civilian personnel. ClearCheck, a screening database designed to vet personnel for integrity during recruitment, was rolled out with expanded features, including sexual harassment. The database has been made available to all 31 United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) member organizations, of which 29 have accepted the invitation to participate and 27 have been actively using it ([A/77/590/Add.1](#), paras. 32–35).

40. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with additional information on the various tools, including ALD Connect, which was created in 2019, as the United Nations knowledge network platform on matters relating to conduct and discipline, including sexual exploitation and abuse, to support the role of more than 200 conduct and discipline focal points and conduct and discipline teams from 90 Secretariat entities and field missions. The Case Management Tracking System is an application that the global conduct and discipline function uses to capture the full lifespan of the case management process. The system contains three main modules: the complaint module; the disciplinary module; and the appeals module. These modules capture the end-to-end case management process, beginning with the receipt of a complaint, the recording of information on allegations and associated persons, the assessment of the complaint, a possible investigation process, and administrative or disciplinary actions and any subsequent appeals. There are two other key tools, the first being the sexual exploitation and abuse risk management toolkit, which was launched in 2018 to enable field missions to proactively address sexual exploitation and abuse by anticipating future threats and establishing systems to engage proactively with Member States and help victims. The second is the Misconduct

Planning and Risk Management toolkit, which was launched in 2019 and is aimed at the global Secretariat to address and prevent all forms of misconduct in the workplace. With regard to ClearCheck, according to the Secretary-General the tool is made available to a broader scope of United Nations entities that are part of the United Nations system. Currently, 33 United Nations entities have committed their participation to ClearCheck, including 29 CEB member organizations and 4 non-CEB member organizations. Of the 33 entities, 30 are conducting screening through ClearCheck and 20 have entered subjects in the database. A total of 2 of the 31 CEB member organizations to which invitations were extended, namely, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have not yet committed themselves to participating in ClearCheck. The Committee makes comments in its report on the practice of the Secretary-General in disciplinary matters and cases of possible criminal behaviour, 1 January to 31 December 2021 ([A/77/730](#)).

Health and well-being

41. The Secretary-General explains the efforts undertaken in the area of mental and physical health, including the launch of the United Nations System Mental Health and Well-being Strategy in 2018 and the development of an implementation guide for United Nations organizations; the launching of the Staff Counsellor's Office train-the-trainers resilience programme in 2017; the implementation of clinical pathways; and standardizing credentialing, with guidance and oversight provided to all medical personnel deployed to field duty stations ([A/77/590/Add.1](#), paras. 36–38). **The Advisory Committee acknowledges the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General to support staff in terms of work-life balance and health and well-being, including mental health, and looks forward to receiving further details on the implementation of those efforts in the next overview report.**

VI. Reform enablers

42. The Secretary-General enumerates in his report the tools applied to support the human resources reforms, such as: (a) innovation, digitalization and continuous improvement, including two self-service platforms (enhancement of the Policy Portal in 2021 and the launch of the Knowledge Gateway in 2020); (b) the systematic use of data and evidence, such as the launch of the new Secretariat workforce portal for Member States in 2022; (c) business continuity, including exceptional measures and policy guidance developed to provide staff with the information necessary to carry out their functions during COVID-19; (d) staff involvement, including through the Staff Engagement Survey, launched in 2017; and (e) the introduction of a new values and behaviours framework, which was endorsed by senior leadership in mid-2021. The new values and behaviours framework builds on the strengths of the competencies that were previously included in the phased-out 20-year-old competency framework and transforms them to better reflect the goals of the Organization in the coming decade (*ibid.*, paras. 39–45).

43. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Staff Engagement Survey measured staff engagement in 13 dimensions: anti-racism; career satisfaction; clarity of direction; continuous improvement; employee empowerment; ethics and integrity; manager relationship; performance management; pride/engagement; promoting good conduct; recognition and reward; resources and support; and teamwork and collaboration. The response rates for the 2019 and 2021 surveys reached 53 and 50 per cent, respectively. The Committee was also informed that the new values and behaviours framework had not yet been integrated into the recruitment process, given that it would be overhauled through the staff selection 2.0 programme. In terms of performance management, the new framework would be reflected in the

workplan goals starting with the 2023–2024 performance cycle. Managers and staff members would discuss which behaviours would be incorporated into the workplan goals at the outset of the performance cycle and would have continuous conversations and feedback about them during the cycle.

VII. Other matters

Implementation of previous recommendations

44. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with a list of the Committee's recommendations on human resources issues during the past five years and the action taken by the Secretariat to comply with those recommendations. The Committee was also provided with a list of the number and status of recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit during the period 2017–2021 (see table 2) and of recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services during the period 2018–2022 (see table 3). The Committee makes further comments in its report on the twelfth progress report on accountability: strengthening accountability in the United Nations Secretariat ([A/77/743](#)).

Table 2

Status of implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit, 2017–2021

<i>Status</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Accepted	64	85
Implemented	45	60
In progress	19	25
Other	11	15
Not accepted	5	7
Not relevant	5	7
Under consideration	1	1
Total	75	100

Table 3

Status of implementation of the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, 2018–2022

<i>Status</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Closed/implemented	683	93
In progress	40	5
Proposed implemented	2	0.27
Closed without implementation	6	0.82
Declined	1	0.14
Total	732	100

VIII. Actions to be taken by the General Assembly

45. It is stated in paragraph 46 of the report of the Secretary-General that the General Assembly is invited to take note of the report. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the report built upon and provided updates on issues addressed in other reports. The purpose of the report was to provide the Assembly with a summary of the work undertaken to date and to report on the most recent developments. **The comments and recommendations of the Advisory Committee are contained in the present report.** The Committee makes further comments and recommendations, including on the financial implications in its report on the report of the Secretary-General on ways forward in the implementation of human resources management reforms for the period 2023–2026 ([A/77/728](#)).
