



**United Nations**

**Review of staff exchange and similar  
inter-agency mobility measures in  
United Nations system organizations**

**Report of the Joint Inspection Unit**

**Prepared by Jeremiah Kramer**

Please recycle 





# **Review of staff exchange and similar inter-agency mobility measures in United Nations system organizations**

**Report of the Joint Inspection Unit**

**Prepared by Jeremiah Kramer**





*Executive summary***Review of staff exchange and similar inter-agency mobility measures in United Nations system organizations**

The concept of inter-agency mobility has been prominent within the United Nations system almost since its inception, as evidenced by the conditions set out in the Inter-Organization Agreement concerning the Transfer, Secondment or Loan of Staff among the Organizations Applying the United Nations Common System of Salaries and Allowances of 1949, agreed by the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions, a subsidiary body of the Administrative Committee on Coordination of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). From the outset, the relationship agreements between the United Nations and the specialized agencies undertook, with a view to the desirability of the eventual development of a single unified international civil service, to develop common personnel standards, methods and arrangements, which would facilitate the interchange of personnel in order to obtain the maximum benefit from their services.<sup>1</sup> It was stated in a note by the CEB secretariat on measures to improve system-wide mobility that, in order to realize these objectives, the early work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination had paved the way for the development of the three pillars of the common system: common salary scales, a pension fund and arrangements for the transfer of staff between organizations.

Dating back to 1949, the Inter-Organization Agreement<sup>2</sup> (hereafter the 2012 Agreement) covers staff movements of any duration (transfer, secondment and loans) between organizations in the United Nations system, and the rights and liabilities of the two organizations concerned by the movement. It was revised in 1963, 2003, 2005 and 2012.

Work on successive iterations of the 2012 Agreement has been supplemented by periodic examinations of inter-agency mobility by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU).<sup>3</sup> The main story lines that emerged from these reviews were consistent: inter-agency mobility was limited; it was staff-driven, with little evident organizational interest; barriers were well known by the organizations, but generally not acted upon.

JIU undertook this review in light of a current policy context requiring more integrated United Nations system approaches to mandate delivery and of greater importance to working in partnerships. It sets out to assess how well current policies and arrangements function and to consider if they respond adequately to current and future needs.

**Main findings and conclusions**

The principal conclusion of this review was that, for most organizations and for the United Nations system as a whole, current inter-agency mobility policies and arrangements are not an adequate response to the current and future needs of organizations or to the aspirations of staff members. Arguably, they have not responded to past needs either, since such policies

<sup>1</sup> ICSC/1/Rev.2, annex, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> The following organizations are parties to this Agreement: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; United Nations Environment Programme; United Nations Children's Fund; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Population Fund; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees; World Food Programme; United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; United Nations Human Settlements Programme; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights; United Nations Office for Project Services; United Nations University; United Nations System Staff College; Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; International Atomic Energy Agency; International Civil Aviation Organization; International Fund for Agricultural Development; International Labour Organization; International Maritime Organization; International Telecommunication Union; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; United Nations Industrial Development Organization; Universal Postal Union; World Tourism Organization; World Health Organization; World Intellectual Property Organization; and World Meteorological Organization.

<sup>3</sup> CEB/2010/HLCM/HR/35 and JIU/REP/2010/8.

and arrangements have failed (a) to reinforce a system-wide approach, (b) to be shaped by organizational needs as well as the needs of staff members, and (c) to be deployed as part of larger human resources strategies in support of organizational effectiveness and career development. They have provided administrative tools to enable transactions to be carried out, although the functioning of the current regime shows room for improvement. What has been and continues to be missing is a set of organizational policies and strategies that frames the use of the inter-agency mobility in the corporate interest of the United Nations organizations system, as well as the interest of staff.

At the root of this failure are a number of issues: (a) limited organizational commitment to inter-agency mobility; (b) the disconnection of mobility from the strategic preoccupations of most organizations; (c) the siloed, fragmented and protective, as well as inward and often duplicative, nature of staff selection and assessment in the United Nations system; (d) the analogous fragmentation of business operations that undermine efficiency, agility and functioning as One United Nations; and (e) the absence of a system culture. This report endeavours to suggest ways of addressing at least some of the shortcomings in the application of the current framework for inter-agency mobility as set out in the 2012 Agreement, and also to indicate opportunities for the strategic positioning of inter-agency mobility in the future. Going forward, an important consideration will be how inter-agency mobility can support organizations in relation to strategic objectives, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the ongoing transformation of the workforce, including the impact of technological change on the future of work. In this framework, pension arrangements in United Nations system and in particular those managed through the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund are a piece of the mobility puzzle.

### **Inter-agency mobility is not integrated into human resources management strategies**

Information collected from organizations shows that inter-agency mobility is rarely integrated into human resources strategies related to talent acquisition and management, workforce planning and career development. Inter-agency mobility is not necessarily specifically excluded; organizations are at different stages of developing and applying these tools, even for their internal talent pools. The review, however, identified an evolution towards more proactive organizational endeavours as organizations strengthen the strategic character of the human resources management function and put in place human resources management strategies to attract, nurture and retain the type of staff they need. Measures being taken by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to enhance external mobility and link it to broader human resources strategies may be of wider interest.

Organizations confirm that inter-agency mobility continues in the majority of cases to result from the initiative of individual staff members who apply for posts through the relevant processes. It is thus typically very difficult to integrate inter-agency mobility into organizational policies for workforce planning, talent management and career support. The fuller representation of the organizational interest, as called for by JIU and ICSC, has not developed.

### **Inter-agency mobility is a fragment of a larger human resources management puzzle**

Inter-agency mobility is but a small fragment of a larger human resources management puzzle. To focus on it as a free-standing issue is the wrong approach as it confines discussion to administrative frameworks applicable to a minor subset of staffing and leaves unanswered how it connects to human resources policies and strategies that improve organizational or United Nations system performance. This helps to explain why to date there is scant evidence of priority being attached to inter-agency mobility despite decades of discussion. ICSC emphasized that inter-agency mobility should be viewed from the perspective of the interests of the organizations concerned, working together with the staff.<sup>4</sup> The High-Level Committee on Management emphasized that a substantive consideration needed to be linked to the

<sup>4</sup> A/65/30, para. 26.

business needs of the organizations.<sup>5</sup> It is therefore necessary to clarify what, in fact, the organizational interest is.

### **Inter-agency mobility remains modest and is not actively encouraged or shown to be valued by most organizations**

Staff value inter-agency mobility opportunities and organizations are eager to access inter-agency experience. However, the actual incidence of such mobility remains limited. Information gathered for the review indicated about 1,300 inter-agency moves in 2018. That figure represents about 1.3 per cent of the overall staff population (which includes staff who are not eligible) and is almost double the rate of participation from five years ago. However, the 2018 figure may be inflated because it includes significant numbers of transfers that reflect changes in the employer of record rather than the substantive employer. These figures relate to moves carried out under the provisions of the 2012 Agreement. Cases where former United Nations system staff are re-hired by other United Nations system organizations are not captured by these data.

Staff representatives at headquarters and in field locations indicate that their members have limited visibility of inter-agency opportunities, what the processes are and how the different features — as they are applied by organizations — impact staff. It is necessary to simplify the application process and to disseminate information to staff or make known how staff can access such information for themselves.

Long-known barriers, such as the recognition of continuing and permanent contracts and of promotion on secondment, have not been addressed. Most organizations neither encourage inter-agency mobility nor apply measures to show that they value the experience and knowledge gained, such as by allowing promotions to be retained upon return from secondment.

At the United Nations system level, work on inter-agency mobility has had an administrative focus: to provide for an instrument that sets out the administrative “rules of the game”. Neither the initial Inter-Organization Agreement nor its subsequent revisions encourage inter-agency mobility. They set out administrative arrangements that specify how certain transactions can be carried out. The inter-agency interest voiced nearly 40 years ago<sup>6</sup> in adopting measures to encourage inter-agency mobility has not been carried forward.

The CEB mechanisms have not delivered on intended inter-agency mobility actions. Few of the various undertakings made by organizations, primarily through the CEB mechanisms, have been carried forward. For example, (a) none of the barriers identified in reviews carried out in 2003 and 2010 were resolved; (b) the stated need in the context of “Delivering as One” to make inter-agency mobility a reality remained hortatory; (c) measures suggested by inter-agency working groups on inter-agency mobility in 2013 and 2014 were not acted upon; (d) the intention to confer internal candidate status on United Nations system staff, which was part of the High-Level Committee on Management strategic plan for 2013–2016, was not realized; and (e) the intention to pilot inter-agency mobility in the human resources functional area was not pursued. This history can reasonably throw into question the actual priority given to inter-agency mobility. It also signals the limits of these mechanisms in their current form in driving major change, as distinct from merely generating insightful analysis and proposals. An earlier JIU report drew attention to the phenomenon of efforts of the Committee to harmonize business practices coinciding with an accelerated trajectory toward the development of separate administrative support frameworks and operations by organizations, not least in the human resources arena.<sup>7</sup>

### **Opportunistic application of the 2012 Agreement and other inconsistencies or gaps undermine the regime**

The inconsistent application of the 2012 Agreement, driven largely by the desire to avoid assuming responsibility for accrued financial liabilities, threatens to erode the functioning of the regime and to put staff at a disadvantage. Of particular concern is the practice of making

<sup>5</sup> CEB/2002/HLCM/14, para. 6.

<sup>6</sup> ACC/1981/7, paras. 98–100.

<sup>7</sup> JIU/REP/2010/8.

case-by-case judgments on whether to apply the 2012 Agreement, choosing which of the earned benefits and entitlements to recognize and, in some instances, asking staff to resign and start fresh rather than to accept a transfer. The management of financial liabilities requires attention but introducing it as a de facto criterion in staff selection undermines the purpose of the 2012 Agreement, while accomplishing little in terms of liability management. Other strategies are more relevant to addressing ways to share the cost of accrued liabilities. It should also be noted that differences in health insurance regimes add complexity to inter-agency mobility decisions, begging the question of why there is not a common approach to this critical, social security pillar of the common system.

Eligibility for mobility under the 2012 Agreement is variably defined and in ways that unnecessarily constrain the universe of eligibility and that can disadvantage some categories of staff, as has been the case of General Service staff employed by the United Nations Secretariat.

There is a need to revisit how secondments are used — at present, mostly as a safety net on the journey to transfer — and to recalibrate the distribution of risks between the staff member and the sending organization.

Furthermore, it is necessary to fill the gap in the 2012 Agreement on how to act on reported misconduct that occurred in one organization but surfaced after the staff member has moved to another.

### **Neither data collection nor the gender dimension have received sufficient attention**

Data on inter-agency mobility are still not being collected or published. This gap impedes the creation of evidence-based policies and measures. There is no indication that action has been taken with regard to the 2010 JIU recommendation to develop standards for data collection, monitoring and reporting, even though CEB had indicated that organizations supported the concept.<sup>8</sup>

The attention devoted to the gender dimensions of inter-agency mobility has significantly diminished. Without the collection and analysis of data – including on the locations where eligible women work and the functions they carry out, as well as on the impact of the changes to conditions of service specified by ICSC – the gender aspects of inter-agency mobility are not known.

### **Staff exchanges with non-United Nations actors remain rare**

Organizations are witnessing a growing need and opportunity to benefit from staff exchanges with financial institutions, foundations and the private sector, but such exchanges remain uncommon, slow to process and difficult to realize. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), for example, sees mutual benefits in exchanges with financial institutions that link financing support to UNDP programme objectives. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) recognizes the added value of accessing highly specialized personnel to respond to new issues, such as artificial intelligence. Similarly, the United Nations Secretariat identified capacity demand in cybersecurity and artificial intelligence. A handful of organizations have applied experience with staff exchanges with the private sector. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) sees this area as relevant to enabling partnerships in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Staff exchanges in a health cluster that draws together organizations of the United Nations system non-United Nations actors may also be of interest. Such mutually beneficial exchanges should be encouraged and the experiences documented for wider learning.

### **A United Nations system approach is not evident**

An approach focusing on the concept of One United Nations is not evident in the staffing arena. With rare exceptions, organizational silos prevail. Current staffing arrangements do not reinforce a cross-organizational and cross-sectoral system thinking. A key barrier is that organizations want to carry out separate selection and assessment processes, based on

<sup>8</sup> A/66/355/Add.1, para. 7.

competency frameworks, job descriptions and eligibility criteria that may be similar but different enough to be distinct. Shared talent pools that provide a basis for selection are rare, even though organizations carry out recruitment and selection processes for similar functions, and sometimes compete for the same talent. Even initiatives aimed at more common selection of nationally recruited staff are difficult to move forward, as seen in Nairobi. Measures are required to reduce barriers stemming from an insistence on organizational distinctiveness that are reflected in separate recruitment and assessment processes, without prejudicing the right of organizations to make the final selection. The recruitment of young talent, which all organizations seek, is one example of a shared interest that can be pursued in common.

### **Barriers to inter-agency movement undermine current strategic objectives and processes**

At a strategic level, the easier flow of people within the United Nations system and beyond intersects with three key processes pre-occupying many organizations and the United Nations system as whole: i) how to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the commitment to work for shared results, to reposition the development system and to work in deeper partnership with non-United Nations actors; ii) common business operations for efficiency - organizations need to consider if they are serious about applying common business operations in the human resources field to reverse some of the fragmentation and duplication now seen; and iii) perhaps most immediately germane, workforce transformation and the evolving response to the changing world of work. Organizations and the United Nations system as a whole are seized with how to position themselves as employers of choice in a changing demographic and technological landscape. This makes it necessary to enhance staff well-being and engagement while also responding to the need for more project-based or time-limited service. All of these concerns could result in more frequent flows in and out of the United Nations system.<sup>9</sup> This context reinforces why organizations should prioritize the reduction of barriers to inter-agency mobility.

Innovation and technological change are contributing to changes in the types of jobs needed (as automation and robotics take on tasks not requiring complex cognitive skills), the duration of some types of jobs and how and where people work. While it is not clear at what pace all these trends will impact United Nations system organizations, they form part of the context in which United Nations organizations are adapting their human resources management policies and strategies. Growth in the size of the affiliate workforce, which is about 35 per cent of the total, illustrates the challenges that organizations must confront in responding appropriately to a range of personnel needs, including the need for staffing mechanisms geared to finite service. The opportunities presented by technology to foster the modernization of working methods and streamline business processes need to be factored into the mix. This combination of challenges and opportunities renders the work that the High-Level Committee on Management has initiated on a global workforce and the future of work timely, if appropriately forward-looking. One positive step in this regard is the invitation made by the Committee to Young UN: Agents for Change to contribute to this reflection.

### **Demand for exchanges among like-minded organizations abound**

Clusters of willing organizations can and should develop mutually beneficial exchanges based on common thematic interest or geographic opportunity. Organizations can identify a range of mutually beneficial opportunities through such exchanges, including:

- (a) Among UNICEF, the World Food Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (aimed at supply or emergency specialists);

<sup>9</sup> CEB/2017/3, para. 78.

(b) Between the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) (aimed at gender specialists);

(c) Between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) (on food and nutrition).

In addition, ITU has developed arrangements with field-based organizations to enable its staff to gain relevant experience.

In some duty stations, such as The Hague, there is a discernible desire for exchanges within the duty station as a vehicle to helping smaller organizations sustain morale and support staff development. Duty stations that house a range of organizations – for example, Geneva – can be venues for low-cost staff exchanges as relocation costs would not be a factor. It only requires two organizations; not everyone has to be involved in everything. Such measures could be pursued by earmarking certain posts for such exchanges, in order to allow for planning, and by using instruments not covered by the 2012 Agreement, such as development assignments.

### **Opportunities to strengthen a system culture are available**

Significant vectors driving a more cross-organizational approach are taking shape. The development system reform, and in particular the reform of the resident coordinator system and its housing in the United Nations Secretariat, compel organizational interest in at least that facet of inter-agency mobility. At the country level, resident coordinators emphasize the need to respond to the cross-organizational nature of the Sustainable Development Goals. The new United Nations system leadership framework emphasizes a cross-pillar, system-wide approach and the use of multi-stakeholder partnerships. Whether it can lay the foundation for renewed consideration of a common cadre of managerial talent should be considered. The mounting commitment of some organizations to strengthen career support for staff should impel facilitation of cross-organizational career paths.

Among other things, the practices of international organizations outside the United Nations system, briefly summarized in annex III, illustrate the linking of inter-agency moves with corporate needs that align social security arrangements with the non-career character of some organizations.

### **Recommendations**

- 1. The Secretary-General should instruct the Director of the CEB secretariat to take measures by the end of 2021 to develop standards for the systematic collection, monitoring and consistent reporting of staff mobility relevant data, including inter-agency mobility, in order to give concrete shape to the support for this concept already expressed by CEB in its response to an earlier JIU recommendation on the topic.<sup>10</sup>**
- 2. Executive heads should, by the end of 2021, review all administrative issuances to clarify how inter-agency mobility is treated in each of those contexts.**
- 3. Executive heads of organizations party to the 2012 Agreement should not apply the practice of asking incoming staff to resign instead of agreeing to transfers in view of its corrosive effect on the integrity of the inter-agency mobility regime and the immaterial impact of these transfers on the management of long-term employment-related liabilities, and decide by the end of 2021 to accept benefits and entitlements on the basis stipulated in the Agreement.**
- 4. Executive heads should, by the end of 2021, revise the 2012 Agreement to specify procedures for the handling of allegations of misconduct by staff who have moved to another organization under the terms of the Agreement.**
- 5. The Executive Director of UN-Women, in consultation as required with members of CEB, and with the assistance of the CEB secretariat for data collection, should by the end of 2021 assess if there are factors that impact on the participation of women in**

<sup>10</sup> A/66/355/Add.1, para. 7.

inter-agency mobility and that should therefore be taken into account in the formulation of policies or other measures related to it.

6. The Secretary-General, in coordination with other executive heads in the framework of the High-Level Committee on Management, as he considers appropriate, should, by the end of June 2022, articulate the business case for inter-agency mobility by setting out what it should accomplish for the organizations as well as how it contributes to human resources management objectives and to the delivery of programmatic results.

7. The Secretary-General, working with other executive heads, should assess the impact of the United Nations system leadership framework on the development of a common management culture supportive of a One United Nations mindset and report to the Economic and Social Council at its 2022 session in the context of his report on the work of CEB.

8. Executive heads should enable all United Nations system staff members to compete for vacant posts on a basis equal to that established for their own staff, while considering downsizing contexts, the abolition of posts and positions, and the administration of rotational placements.

9. The Secretary-General and other executive heads who are members of CEB should, by the end of 2021, define how the mutual recognition of rules and procedures will be applied to overcome regulatory and procedural barriers to inter-agency mobility, and report on measures taken to the Economic and Social Council at its 2022 session in the context of the annual report of the the annual report of the Secretary-General on the work of CEB.

10. The General Assembly should request ICSC to examine periodically the status of inter-agency mobility and the degree of its integration into the human resources management policies of organizations, in order to make recommendations to organizations accordingly and to report its findings to the General Assembly in the context of its consideration of the United Nations common system.



## Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Executive summary .....	iii
I. Introduction .....	1
A. Objectives of inter-agency mobility.....	3
B. Objectives and scope of the review .....	5
C. Methodology.....	5
D. Limitations and challenges .....	6
II. Inter-agency mobility snapshot .....	7
A. Data on inter-agency mobility continues not to be collected or published .....	7
B. Awareness of opportunities for inter-agency moves is not sufficient.....	7
C. Inter-agency mobility is not integrated into human resource management strategies .....	8
D. Inter-agency mobility is valued by staff, but remains modest .....	9
E. Inter-agency mobility is not actively encouraged or shown to be valued by most organizations	11
F. Alignment of internal mobility with inter-agency mobility requires attention .....	13
III. Challenges in current functioning .....	15
A. Management of financial liabilities demonstrates an inconsistent and opportunistic application of the 2012 Agreement .....	15
B. Eligibility of staff under the 2012 Agreement may be too restrictive.....	18
C. Procedures to address misconduct are absent .....	20
D. Personal status determination while on mobility assignment needs to be clarified .....	20
E. Recognition of permanent, indeterminate and continuing contracts remains a challenge .....	21
F. Attention paid to the gender dimensions of inter-agency mobility has significantly diminished	21
G. Differences in health insurance impact inter-agency mobility.....	22
IV. Future perspectives.....	24
A. Define the organizational interest .....	24
B. Frame inter-agency mobility in relation to strategic objectives .....	25
C. Consider the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund to be a relevant piece of the mobility puzzle.....	29
D. Develop mutually beneficial exchanges among like-minded organizations .....	30
E. Build on the scarce exchange opportunities with non-United Nations actors .....	31
F. Consider the practices of other international organizations .....	33
V. System culture .....	35
A. Reinforce the United Nations system leadership framework.....	35
B. Confer internal candidate status on United Nations system staff .....	36
C. Address regulatory and procedural barriers to inter-agency mobility.....	36
D. Consider the impact of the resident coordinator reform on inter-agency mobility .....	37
VI. Concluding remarks .....	39

Annexes

I.	Status of implementation of the recommendations contained in the review “Inter-agency staff mobility and work/life balance in the organizations of the United Nations system” (JIU/REP/2010/8) .....	40
IIa.	Evolution of staff movements (transfers, loans and secondments) during the period 2016-2018....	42
IIb.	Evolution of staff movements between sending and receiving organizations during the period 2013-2018 .....	44
III.	Practices of other international organizations .....	46
IV.	Overview of actions to be taken by participating organizations on the recommendations of JIU....	48

## Abbreviations

CEB	United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICSC	International Civil Service Commission
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMO	International Maritime Organization
ITC	International Trade Centre
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization
UPU	Universal Postal Union
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization



## I. Introduction

1. The concept of inter-agency mobility has been prominent within the United Nations system almost since its inception, as evidenced by the conditions set out in the Inter-Organization Agreement concerning the Transfer, Secondment or Loan of Staff among the Organizations Applying the United Nations Common System of Salaries and Allowances of 1949, agreed by the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions, a subsidiary body of the Administrative Committee on Coordination of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). From the outset, the agreements by which the specialized agencies defined their relationship with the United Nations<sup>11</sup> asserted that, with a view to the desirability of the eventual development of a single unified international civil service, the agencies agreed to develop common personnel standards, methods and arrangements, which would facilitate the interchange of personnel in order to obtain the maximum benefit from their services.<sup>12</sup> It was stated in a note by the CEB secretariat on measures to improve system-wide mobility that, in order to realize the objectives for cooperation set out in the relationship agreements, the early work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination had paved the way for the development of the three pillars of the common system: common salary scales, a pension fund and arrangements for the transfer of staff between organizations.

2. Considerable time and energy has been devoted to the issue of inter-agency mobility, and in particular to the administrative framework, dating back to 1949, with the development of the first version of the Inter-Organization Agreement concerning Transfer, Secondment or Loan of Staff among the Organizations Applying the United Nations Common System of Salaries and Allowance (hereafter the 2012 Agreement).<sup>13</sup> It governs staff movements of any duration (transfer, secondment and loans, as defined in the 2012 Agreement<sup>14</sup>) between organizations in the United Nations system, and the rights

<sup>11</sup> Dates organizations signed relationship agreements with the United Nations: International Labour Organization: 14 December 1946; Food and Agriculture Organization: 14 December 1946; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization: 14 December 1946; International Civil Aviation Organization: 13 May 1947; International Bank for Reconstruction and Development: 15 November 1947; International Monetary Fund: 15 November 1947; Universal Postal Union: 1 July 1948; World Health Organization: 10 July 1948; International Telecommunication Union: 1 January 1949; World Meteorological Organization: 20 December 1951; International Finance Corporation: 20 February 1957; International Maritime Organization: 13 January 1959; World Intellectual Property Organization: 17 December 1974; International Fund for Agricultural Development: 6 April 1978; United Nations Industrial Development Organization: 1 January 1986; World Tourism Organization: 23 December 2003; International Atomic Energy Agency; and International Organization for Migration: 25 July 2016.

<sup>12</sup> ICSC/1/Rev.2, annex p. 22.

<sup>13</sup> As at 19 July 2019, the following organizations are parties to this Agreement: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; United Nations Children's Fund; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Environment Programme; United Nations Human Settlements Programme; United Nations Office for Project Services; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; United Nations Population Fund; United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; United Nations System Staff College; United Nations University; World Food Programme; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; International Atomic Energy Agency; International Civil Aviation Organization; International Criminal Court; International Fund for Agricultural Development; International Labour Organization; International Maritime Organization; International Organization for Migration; International Telecommunication Union; Special Tribunal for Lebanon; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; United Nations Industrial Development Organization; Universal Postal Union; World Health Organization; World Intellectual Property Organization; World Meteorological Organization; and World Tourism Organization.

<sup>14</sup> According to the 2012 Agreement: (a) "Transfer" is the movement of a staff member from one organization to another under conditions which give the staff member no right to return to the releasing organization. Employment by an organization of a former staff member of another organization, after a break in service not exceeding 12 months, may, with the agreement of the parties concerned, be treated as if it were a transfer. (b) "Secondment" is the movement of a staff member

and liabilities of the two organizations concerned by the movement. The Agreement was revised in 1963<sup>15</sup> and 2003,<sup>16</sup> and then replaced by the Inter-Agency Mobility Accord in 2005, which sought to introduce more flexibility and the concept of inter-organization exchange to replace secondment and loans.<sup>17</sup> The approach reflected in the Accord was eventually abandoned, and the system reverted, in 2012, to a revised version of the 2003 Agreement.

3. A total of 18 organizations signed the 2012 Agreement. Since the adherence of the United Nations also encompasses its funds and programmes and other United Nations entities, 27 of the 28 organizations party to the Statute of the Joint Inspection Unit are also party to this Agreement – the International Trade Centre (ITC) is not. In line with its distinct status and organizational arrangements, the International Court of Justice is also not party to the Agreement.

4. The 2012 Agreement sets out the rights and liabilities of the two organizations involved and the rights of the staff member being transferred, seconded or loaned, and is applied with the agreement of all three. By itself, it does not create new enforceable rights or obligations beyond what is already provided for in the rules of the organizations or what the parties have agreed to apply in individual cases. Neither the extent to which the organizations are to apply the Agreement nor the way in which they do it are predetermined.

5. The High-Level Committee on Management of the Committee of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), and its Human Resources Network, have led the development of tools and administrative instruments to enable inter-agency mobility. At the request of the General Assembly, the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) has carried out a series of reviews of inter-agency mobility over time, on both a human resources framework for mobility and a comprehensive assessment of issues and practices related to inter-agency mobility.<sup>18</sup> Successive human resources management frameworks promulgated by ICSC in 2000, 2010 and 2017 also emphasized inter-agency mobility, asserting the broad principle that such mobility is an underlying premise of the international civil service to promote shared principles and values reinforcing the international character of the common system to broaden the capability of organizations.<sup>19</sup> The attention of the General Assembly has primarily focused on proposals concerning mobility arrangements within the United Nations Secretariat, but it has been supportive of inter-agency mobility, showing particular interest in its implications for career development.<sup>20</sup>

6. Why the interest in inter-agency mobility? In slightly different ways, statements on the subject emphasize three purposes: improved functioning as a United Nations system, with shared values and common culture, in response to global challenges;

---

from one organization to another for a fixed period, normally not exceeding two years, during which the staff member will normally be paid by and, except as otherwise provided hereafter, be subject to the staff regulations and rules of the receiving organization, but will retain his or her rights of employment in the releasing organization. The period of secondment may be extended for a further fixed period by agreement among all the parties concerned. (c) "Loan" is the movement of a staff member from one organization to another for a limited period, normally not exceeding one year, during which the staff member will be subject to the administrative supervision of the receiving organization but will continue to be subject to the staff regulations and rules of the releasing organization.

<sup>15</sup> 1963 Agreement Concerning the Transfer, Secondment or Loan of Staff between Organizations in the United Nations Common System of Conditions of Service, agreed by the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions.

<sup>16</sup> 2003 Inter-Organization Agreement Concerning Transfer, Secondment or Loan of Staff among the Organizations applying the United Nations Common System of Salaries and Allowances, agreed by CEB.

<sup>17</sup> The Inter-Agency Mobility Accord was issued by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the High-Level Committee on Management in November 2005 and introduced the term "inter-organization exchange" as a common expression of the need for flexible arrangements.

<sup>18</sup> CEB/2010/HLCM/HR/35 and JIU/REP/2010/8.

<sup>19</sup> A/71/30, annex II.

<sup>20</sup> General Assembly resolution 61/244, sect. IV, para. 14.

increased efficiency in talent acquisition, development and management; and the provision of opportunities for staff to pursue professional development, while accommodating personal considerations.

## A. Objectives of inter-agency mobility

“Critical for **strengthening the cohesiveness and effectiveness** of the United Nations system’s response to global challenges...builds **unity of purpose, a common culture and shared values**.... **personal and professional growth and career development**.”<sup>21</sup> (CEB, 2003)

“**Fosters the One UN concept**, spreads understanding, learning and contacts... better allocation and deployment of personnel... can recruit people who already know about the United Nations system. For staff...the best **route to self-development**...and opportunities for promotion, and it can fit better with family circumstances.”<sup>22</sup> (ICSC, 2010)

“**Support staff motivation and enhance system response to global challenges**... contribute... to a better “Delivering as One”, thus enhancing system-wide efficiency.”<sup>23</sup> (JIU, 2010)

7. Although the importance of inter-agency mobility has often been expressed, organizations have not seen it as a value in its own right. The High-level Committee on Management has emphasized, for example, that a substantive consideration of mobility must recognize the policies of the organizations, first and foremost, and must be linked to the business needs of the organizations, as mobility was not an end in itself.<sup>24</sup>

8. Reviews on the status of inter-agency mobility were carried out by CEB mechanisms, in 2003 and 2010; by ICSC, in 2003 and 2010; and by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), in 2010.<sup>25</sup> The High-Level Committee on Management and ICSC, in both 2003 and 2010, pointed to a lack of progress and concluded that, despite the support for the idea of inter-agency mobility within the United Nations common system, there had basically been very little progress. ICSC pointed to the disconnect between statements of overall support and actual actions taken by organizations.<sup>26</sup> Flagging issues that have not been resolved to this day, the CEB secretariat proposed providing internal candidate status for vacant posts, recognizing promotion while on secondment or loan, placing a premium on United Nations experience in vacancy announcements and taking measures to ensure that new staff members be made aware that they were part of an international civil service, and not permanently tied to a specific organization.<sup>27</sup> Stimulated by concerns for the limited extent of inter-agency mobility, at its level CEB undertook to: foster a One United Nations culture; encourage movement of individual staff members between organizations; value experience gained in United Nations system organizations; provide internal candidate status with due regard for the placement, rotation and internal mobility policies of the organizations; create an administrative framework that supported mobility; and address work/life issues that impeded mobility.<sup>28</sup> Most of these measures did not take shape.

9. ICSC completed reviews on mobility in 2003, on a human resources framework for mobility, and 2010, on a comprehensive assessment of issues and practices related to inter-agency mobility. The work of ICSC drew attention to the lack of a mobility culture in the United Nations system and the absence of a system-wide approach, and advocated for exchanges with external institutions to help keep staff fresh. In particularly insightful comments in its 2010 review, ICSC pointed to the disconnect between a desire to support

<sup>21</sup> CEB/2003/5.

<sup>22</sup> ICSC/71/R.2.

<sup>23</sup> JIU/REP/2010/8, para. 17.

<sup>24</sup> CEB/2002/HLCM/14, para. 6.

<sup>25</sup> CEB/2010/HLCM/HR/35 and JIU/REP/2010/8.

<sup>26</sup> A/65/30, para. 26.

<sup>27</sup> CEB/2003/3, para. 18.

<sup>28</sup> CEB/2003/5, para. 16.

a One United Nations approach and the impulse of organizations to develop and carry out their own unique approaches to human resources management on the grounds of mandate specificities. The review pointed to the opportunity that a shared service approach could bring in facilitating common thinking, common terms and conditions, enabling mobility and reducing costs.

10. For its part, JIU found meagre evidence of inter-agency mobility in its 2010 review.<sup>29</sup> It drew attention to gaps in the availability of data, to the lack of a common system culture of mobility supported by common rules and regulations and to the merit of a focus on functional areas of work that are common across organizations. It also observed that, rather than being managed by the organizations themselves, inter-agency mobility is administered by the organizations in response to staff initiatives.

11. At that time, JIU made eight recommendations directly related to inter-agency mobility. The first recommendation – that organizations should agree on a single legal instrument – was accomplished with the adoption of the 2012 Agreement. While the context and circumstances have evolved, those recommendations still have merit. References to specific elements are made in the relevant parts of this report. Annex I contains the status of the recommendations made in that review.

12. Gender aspects of inter-agency mobility received attention in the past. The Administrative Committee on Coordination in 1995 made a statement to encourage the inter-agency mobility of women and support for spousal employment within and outside the United Nations system and suggested the status of “internal candidate” for women applicants. It initiated a participating agency mobility system to support the employment of spouses, increase the opportunities for the advancement of women and foster inter-agency mobility,<sup>30</sup> while the 2005 Accord included a gender dimension in the same vein. The 2012 Agreement does not address gender or spousal employment, and the dual-career programmes were phased out by 2013. Spousal employment and dual-career issues are not uniquely related to women.

13. Since the 2012 Agreement, attention has intermittently been devoted to inter-agency mobility by inter-agency bodies, although outcomes are not clear. The High-Level Committee on Management worked on an approach for common recruitment of local staff at the country level in support of “Delivering as One”. Working groups on inter-agency mobility were tasked with finding solutions for incentives for resident coordinator candidates, in 2013, and to overcome operational problems in the inter-organizational mobility regime, in 2014. This latter issue resulted in 40 recommendations; however, no action was taken. The High-Level Committee on Management strategic plan for 2013–2016 undertook to deliver on internal candidate status for all United Nations system staff.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, the focus of organizations interested in mobility was to develop or improve internal schemes, mostly aimed at geographic mobility.<sup>32</sup>

14. The most recent review by ICSC of the compensation package for the General Assembly also addressed mobility incentives. Organizations expressed the view that the exclusion of “H” duty stations from the mobility incentive, which was what was adopted, would harm inter-agency mobility.<sup>33</sup> Organizations could usefully work with ICSC to see if that had in fact occurred.

15. In the context of United Nations system support for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the High-Level Committee on Management reported that it would design and put in place the building blocks necessary to achieve the goal of establishing a global United Nations system workforce, including mechanisms to support system-wide mobility and the cross-fertilization of skills and to amalgamate specializations, expertise and training opportunities across the entire system.<sup>34</sup> Beyond

<sup>29</sup> JIU/REP/2010/8.

<sup>30</sup> ACC/2001/HLCM/7, paras. 42–44.

<sup>31</sup> CEB/2015/HLCM/2, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> ILO, the United Nations, UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNOPS and WFP.

<sup>33</sup> A/70/30, para. 425. Staff representatives had expressed a similar view.

<sup>34</sup> CEB/2017/3, p. 3.

mobility within the United Nations system, the 2030 Agenda will need increased permeability inside and outside the system.<sup>35</sup>

16. Against the backdrop of a policy context in which the United Nations system is emphasizing more integrated approaches to mandate delivery and to working in partnerships, JIU seeks in the present review to examine how well current inter-agency mobility policies and arrangements function and respond to present requirements. The main audiences are the legislative bodies of JIU participating organizations and the executive heads, including through inter-agency mechanisms such as CEB. It is expected that ICSC, staff associations and federations, and human resources practitioners would also have interest.

## **B. Objectives and scope of the review**

17. The objectives of the review are to:
- (a) Assess how organizations see the need for inter-agency mobility within and outside the United Nations system, taking into account the requirements needed to support the 2030 Agenda, and to consider where such mobility can provide opportunities to improve effectiveness in carrying out mandates.
  - (b) Assess whether inter-agency and system-wide mobility policies and mechanisms respond to contemporary needs and objectives of the organizations.
  - (c) Examine the functioning and implementation of inter-agency staff exchange programmes and mobility arrangements at the system-wide level with a view to drawing lessons learned and identifying good practices.
  - (d) Consider the relevance of the practices of other international organizations to United Nations organizations.
18. The review is system-wide in scope, which highlights the great variation in mandates, funding, staffing and business models to be found in the United Nations system. It specifically addresses inter-agency mobility. It does not seek to review internal mobility schemes.

## **C. Methodology**

19. The present review was conducted from February to August 2019. Following JIU internal standards and working procedures,<sup>36</sup> the Inspector used a blend of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods from different sources of information for consistency, validity and reliability. Those sources included an extensive desk review of relevant documentation, such as reports of the CEB Human Resources Network, ICSC reports, historical agreements, guidance and technical notes; human resources strategies, administrative issuances, policies and guidance of participating organizations; and staff rules and regulations. In addition, a qualitative and quantitative analysis of questionnaire responses and interview notes were also utilized.

20. A total of 27 out of the 28 JIU participating organizations responded to the corporate questionnaire requesting qualitative and quantitative information and supporting documentation. Another questionnaire was addressed to the CEB secretariat. An online questionnaire was sent to 25 staff associations and 3 federations. It was completed by a total of 19 respondents (68 per cent response rate). The survey sought to gather staff association and federation perception of the functioning of inter-agency mobility and of the dialogue with management on the matter. Their perceptions were triangulated with other views expressed on inter-agency mobility and collected from other data sources.

<sup>35</sup> CEB/2016/HLCM/5, p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> A/51/34, annex I, and A/68/34, annex VII.

21. Approximately 145 interviews were conducted with officials of participating organizations, both at headquarters and in the field (Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania). The team also met with officials of CEB, ICSC and the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund. Interviews covered all 28 JIU participating organizations.

22. Four focus groups were held in Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania with United Nations country teams and human resources management teams to gathered feedback on the following six key review areas:

- (a) Importance of inter-agency mobility for field-based organizations;
- (b) Need or desire to access or exchange staff with non-United Nations actors;
- (c) Support and value granted to inter-agency mobility;
- (d) Organizational interest versus staff interest;
- (e) Feasibility of common rosters, talent pools, common job descriptions and wider exchanges in common functional areas;
- (f) Needs and opportunities for nationally recruited staff.

23. To identify other practices relevant to the United Nations and gain insights into potential lessons to be learned, interviews were also undertaken with other international organizations: Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization; Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization; Global Fund; International Criminal Court; International Court of Justice; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); International Monetary Fund; Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; and World Bank.

24. On 3 July 2019, the Inspector presented preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations at the 39<sup>th</sup> session of the CEB Human Resources Network in The Hague with the purpose of getting feedback from directors of human resources offices across the United Nations system against three clusters: (a) the current inter-agency mobility snapshot; (b) the operational issues linked with inter-agency mobility; and (c) the strategic considerations for the future.

25. The full range of information and views received have been dealt with in accordance with the usual respect for confidentiality shown by JIU. The report primarily reflects aggregated responses and where quotations are given for illustrative purposes, the sources are intentionally never cited.

#### **D. Limitations and challenges**

26. Quantitative data on inter-agency mobility are not centrally collected. This made it challenging for JIU to have a clear picture of staff movements within the system as a whole. As data availability and comparability across the United Nations system represents a limitation, JIU asked participating organizations in their corporate questionnaire's responses to provide specific data on inter-agency movements (loan, secondment and transfer) for the period 2013–2018 (see annex II). Several organizations were not in a position to provide any data on the three types of movements: International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat); United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS); and World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Some other organizations could only partially report on those movements: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

27. The Inspector is grateful for the unstinting cooperation of the Secretary of the CEB Human Resources Network and for the responsiveness of the ICSC secretariat to many information requests.

## II. Inter-agency mobility snapshot

### A. Data on inter-agency mobility continues not to be collected or published

28. While inter-agency mobility has been debated and emphasized over a long period of time, there are surprisingly few data collected and published about it, such as how much inter-agency mobility there is, the available instruments, the functional areas, issues relating to gender and the duration of assignments that are not transfers. The absence of a data set makes it impossible to assess trends, identify bottlenecks, interpret implications of gender patterns and of divergent results among similar organizations, and contribute to the interpretation of the overall adequacy of current arrangements.

29. In 2004, the High-Level Committee on Management recognized the need for such data when it requested its secretariat to conduct a survey of organizations to establish a baseline. The Committee then requested its secretariat to carry out a follow-up survey in 2007 to update the baseline.<sup>37</sup> Seeking baseline data shows an understanding that facts are needed. As the intended follow-up survey was not undertaken, there was no use for the baseline information collected and no comparison possible for future developments.

30. In 2010, JIU recommended that the High-Level Committee on Management develop system-wide standards for the systematic collection, monitoring and consistent reporting of mobility data, including with regard to inter-agency mobility.<sup>38</sup> The CEB response appeared to agree with this, stressing the need for simple standards and for a single central data repository for collection and analysis.<sup>39</sup> To date, action has not been taken. The human resources data published on the CEB website contain no inter-agency mobility information. In interviews, the Inspector was repeatedly urged to bear in mind the need for data-driven policies and to recall the adage: what gets measured gets done. This is in line with the importance attached more generally by the Secretary-General for good data to inform reform processes, as in his call for the collection and analysis of comprehensive and disaggregated data to inform evidence-based, context-specific and inclusive policy choices.<sup>40</sup>

31. The following recommendation is intended to enhance transparency and accountability in the management of inter-agency mobility.

#### **Recommendation 1**

**The Secretary-General should instruct the Director of the CEB secretariat to take measures by the end of 2021 to develop standards for the systematic collection, monitoring and consistent reporting of staff mobility relevant data, including inter-agency mobility, in order to give concrete shape to the support already expressed for this concept by CEB in its response to an earlier JIU recommendation on the topic.<sup>41</sup>**

32. The above recommendation is without prejudice of any request for inter-agency mobility data from the legislative bodies of the organizations of the United Nations system.

### B. Awareness of opportunities for inter-agency moves is not sufficient

33. Although the 2012 Agreement is the administrative framework for inter-agency mobility, its visibility among staff is limited. Staff do not know much about either the opportunities or the procedures. Staff representatives also indicate their members know

<sup>37</sup> CEB/2004/6, paras. 29 and 33.

<sup>38</sup> JIU/REP/2010/8, p. vi.

<sup>39</sup> A/66/355/Add.1, para. 7.

<sup>40</sup> A/72/684-E/2018/7, para. 23, and annex I, para. 20 (c).

<sup>41</sup> A/66/355/Add.1, para. 7.

little about how the system works, including how inter-agency moves affect eligibility for improved contract types and promotion, and how they affect benefits and entitlements. Staff representatives in the field perceived this acutely and advocated for more proactive dissemination of the 2012 Agreement to staff, along with a standardized and simplified communication from human resources offices about the modalities, rights and benefits (such as eligibility for internal processes linked to promotion and geographic mobility) that are offered to mobile staff. In their view, this would open up opportunities and help staff to understand and protect their rights.

34. The following recommendation is intended to enhance transparency and accountability as well as to enhance control and compliance.

#### **Recommendation 2**

**Executive heads should, by the end of 2021, review all administrative issuances to clarify how inter-agency mobility is treated in each of those contexts.**

35. In addition, most interviewees stressed how laborious application processes are; as a result, they repeatedly called for both the dissemination of openings and a common platform for applications in the United Nations system. Executive heads, working through CEB mechanisms as needed, are encouraged to develop or identify a platform to make known vacancies that can be filled through inter-agency mobility. They are also urged to consider the consolidation of recruitment platforms and, at the least, to facilitate the application process by applying a single portal for applications, utilizing a common personal history form that could then route applications to the relevant organizations. Recognition of the usefulness of such an approach was reflected in the past efforts of some Geneva-based entities to share applications with one another, namely the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Joint United Nations Programmes on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

### **C. Inter-agency mobility is not integrated into human resource management strategies**

36. Information collected from organizations indicates that inter-agency mobility is rarely integrated into human resources strategies related to talent management, workforce planning and career development. Regarding talent acquisition and management, although organizations indicate their preference for United Nations system candidates, no organization is actively implementing a strategy for talent management aimed at attracting United Nations system candidates from outside their organization. Only three organizations factor inter-agency mobility into workforce planning. Some organizations use inter-agency mobility for succession planning, while others consider it in terms of anticipating the return of staff after loans or secondments. Inter-agency mobility is also rarely used as part of career development strategies. Out of 28 participating organizations, only 8 (of which 4 are part of the United Nations Secretariat) indicated their human resources strategy included reference to career development through inter-agency mobility. In that connection, ITU points out that the contribution of inter-agency mobility to career development would be strengthened by enabling secondments, swaps or other such moves as part of a career path in the United Nations system, which would strengthen the appeal of such mobility as a vehicle for career development (see para. 147 below for more on this issue).

37. Organizations confirm that inter-agency mobility remains overwhelmingly staff-driven. The mechanisms laid out in the 2012 Agreement kick into gear at the last stage of recruitment, when a staff member is selected in an open competitive process. This makes it hard for organizations to use inter-agency mobility for organizational needs or in support of professional development. The need for organizations to recruit the best talent, which is intended to be reflected in external announcements of all vacancies, is well

understood. But as the Secretary-General has pointed in his review of the United Nations Secretariat's internal mobility policy, the inability to use vacant posts for mobility purposes is a constraint.<sup>42</sup> This applies across organizations as well as within them. **For inter-agency mobility to be effectively deployed in support of career development and workforce planning, legislative bodies and executive heads will need to consider adapting features of selection processes so as to enable the planned use of vacant posts for measures such as targeted talent management initiatives and staff exchanges.** The premise is that selection is made in accordance with the fundamental principles governing staffing in the United Nations laid out in article 101.3 of the Charter of the United Nations or its counterpart in other organizations.

38. To be clear, inter-agency mobility is not necessarily being specifically excluded. Organizations are at different stages of developing, and these tools are even being applied with regard to their internal talent pools. As current efforts to strengthen the strategic character of the human resources management function proceed and organizations work to put in place human resource management strategies that provide what the Secretary-General calls an enabling policy environment for people management<sup>43</sup> to help nurture and retain the type of staff needed, these features are being increasingly addressed. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is in the process of developing its workforce planning (i.e. identifying current and future workforce gaps and putting in place succession plans) by enhancing its data collection in relation to the nature of jobs and skills needed. IFAD is linking mobility, including inter-agency and external mobility, to career development and talent management, which would also be linked to performance management and succession planning.

39. IFAD has launched a pilot programme of staff exchange with international financial institutions and non-United Nations system organizations. Staff can apply for assignment with another organization for 3 to 6 months by identifying the desired organization and explaining how the knowledge they acquire would help IFAD. IFAD would cover payroll and travel costs. This pilot is partly aimed at building the IFAD network of organizations for future exchange.

40. While each organization may have its own requirements, they should all integrate inter-agency mobility into their human resources management strategies and make clear the nature of that integration. For the United Nations Secretariat, for example, the Secretary-General sets out an ambitious agenda including strategic workforce planning, improved training, enhanced opportunities for nationally recruited staff, and enhanced performance management and support for career development.<sup>44</sup> Nothing is said about how inter-agency mobility would be considered. The only reference to inter-agency mobility contains a statement that existing reciprocal agreements will be enhanced to facilitate system-wide inter-agency mobility.<sup>45</sup> **Executive heads should ensure that inter-agency mobility integrated into broader human resource management is specifically set out in the relevant policies, strategies and procedures. They should also work to ensure sufficient coordination among organizations to enable talent exchanges to be carried out on a timely basis.**

#### D. Inter-agency mobility is valued by staff, but remains modest

41. Organizations value the 2012 Agreement as a vehicle for defining the conditions under which secondments, transfers and loans are to be carried out. Organizations believe it meets most of the basic requirements, but there are gaps and anomalies that should be addressed.

42. Staff members value inter-agency mobility opportunities. This was decisively shown through an ICSC survey of organizations and staff, a finding reinforced in every

<sup>42</sup> A/73/372/Add.2, para. 62.

<sup>43</sup> A/73/372, p. 1.

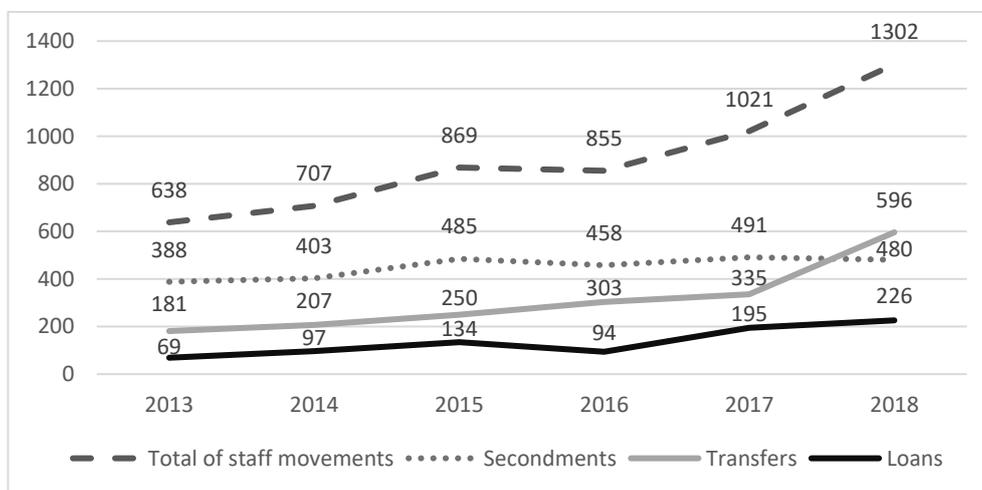
<sup>44</sup> Ibid., para. 16.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

interaction the Inspector had with staff representatives. The views frequently encountered echoed what the ICSC secretariat had reported in 2010, including that there was a widespread commonality of views among managers, staff members and staff representatives, including those among them who had experienced inter-agency mobility. The secretariat also found it noteworthy that, almost without exception, every person interviewed who had experienced inter-agency mobility and every manager who had worked with persons who had had such an experience had considered it immensely valuable.

43. As data on inter-agency mobility are not centrally collected, JIU participating organizations were requested to provide information on loans, secondments and transfers that occurred during the period 2013–2018. The data are indicative and should not be assumed to be precise. They illustrate the approximate scale of inter-agency mobility. The information received shows progressive increases in the number of moves during the period in question (see figure).

**Evolution of annual staff movements, including transfers, loans and secondments, in the period 2013–2018**



44. With an aggregate staff population of about 100,000,<sup>46</sup> such mobility increased from about 0.7 per cent to about 1.3 per cent of the staff population during the period 2013–2018. However, the spike in 2017 and 2018 reflects changes in the nominal employer of staff who had been working under UNDP contracts for other organizations, so the substantive volume is lower than it appears. This contrasts with the data available to the JIU review in 2010, which found that the number of staff having moved between organizations, within the whole United Nations system, was below 300.<sup>47</sup> Annex II displays information of organization. Organizations working under United Nations staff regulations and rules account for about 70 per cent of total staff in 2017; and about 80 per cent of the reported inter-agency mobility. This illustrates the scope for the Secretary-General to solve problems and shape conduct. The data also show how marginal inter-agency mobility carried out under the terms of the Inter-Organization Agreement has been in the overall human resources landscape of most specialized agencies.

45. The efficiency of the inter-agency mobility process could be improved. Some organizations, both in the field and at headquarters, believe more attention needs to be focused on the efficiency of transactional processes by applying common administrative processes, templates and systems. For example, some organizations suggested moving away from email exchanges to a cloud-based platform solution, using common templates for sharing administrative details, and improving the alignment of the sub-elements of

<sup>46</sup> CEB/2018/HLCM/HR/10, p. 1. The staff population of the entire United Nations system for 2017 was 105,594.

<sup>47</sup> JIU/REP/2010/8, p. iv.

financial liabilities<sup>48</sup> and of Enterprise Resource Planning systems.<sup>49</sup> **The CEB Human Resources Network should designate a technical task team to optimize the documentation requirements and business processes related to the transactional administration of inter-agency mobility.**

## E. Inter-agency mobility is not actively encouraged or shown to be valued by most organizations

46. Most organizations appear to be eager to access staff with United Nations experience. Although there is some variation in how important organizations consider inter-organizational mobility to be, 26 out of the 27 JIU participating organizations that responded to the questionnaire stated that they value inter-agency mobility or see it as a corporate interest, as a means of sharing talent, knowledge and expertise with others. A highly technical specialized agency such as ITU, for whom specialized counterparts are generally not found in the United Nations system, also see it as an important vehicle for new insight in some functional areas. The concept of mobility, both internal and external, will be integrated into its strategic plan for the period 2020–2023. Some organizations emphasize the value of resulting networks of relationship that arise. However, in most cases, organizations do not pro-actively encourage such experience – even if they welcome it – or apply practical measures to value the learning and experience gained. Inter-agency mobility needs to be supported by messaging within organizations, in particular from senior management with explicit support from executive heads, in order to signal that organizations encourage and attach value to inter-agency mobility and that it is not disloyal, and by measures that encourage managers to enable staff to go. Modelling the behaviour within the organization reinforces the message.

### Right of return when on secondment

47. As to the right of return, the practice is varied. Some organizations do not provide staff going on secondment with a firm assurance of the right to return, leaving the staff member to carry the risk. Other organizations, including the United Nations Secretariat, put liens on the specific posts for two years. The current ITU practice is to offers a lien on a post for one year. If the secondment is extended for another year, the right to return hinges on the availability of a post at the grade level. Others provide no assurance at all. The CEB Human Resources Network clearly understands why reducing the risk for staff is important. For example, it agreed in 2013 that, as part of measures to incentivize applications for resident coordinator positions, the right of return should be guaranteed and, to the extent possible, the retention of grade as well.<sup>50</sup> Table 1 depicts the right of return policies in JIU participating organizations.

Table 1  
**Right of return on secondment**

<i>Organizations</i>	<i>Assured return rights to the post</i>	<i>Assured return rights to the organization</i>	<i>No assured return rights to post but with varying conditions of preferential consideration</i>	<i>No assured return rights to post and need to apply as external candidate</i>
FAO	√	√		
IAEA	√	√		

<sup>48</sup> Some organizations have costs that need to be reconciled with the administration of inter-agency mobility, such as post-occupancy costs (expenses that each post has for centrally managed services) and reimbursement to UNDP (what any agency pays to UNDP for shared services).

<sup>49</sup> An Enterprise Resource Planning system comprises an integrated suite of information technology applications in support of activities such as finance and budget management, human resources management, supply chain management, central support services and other core functions. Enterprise Resource Planning systems allow for the streamlining of operations in an organization through process re-engineering, sharing of common data and implementation of best practices and standards.

<sup>50</sup> CEB/2012/HLCM/HR/28, para. 19.

Organizations	Assured return rights to the post	Assured return rights to the organization	No assured return rights to post but with varying conditions of preferential consideration	No assured return rights to post and need to apply as external candidate
ICAO	√	√		
ILO	√	√		
IMO	√	√		
ITC	√	√		
ITU	√	√		
UNAIDS		√		
UNCTAD	√	√		
UNDP		√ <sup>a</sup>	√	
UNEP	√	√		
UNESCO	√	√		
UNFPA	√ <sup>b</sup>	√		
UN-Habitat	√	√		
UNHCR		√		
UNICEF		√	√	
UNIDO		√		
UNODC	√	√		
UNOPS				√
UN Secretariat	√	√		
UN-Women			√	
UNWTO				√
UPU		√		
WFP		√		
WHO <sup>c</sup>		√	√	
WIPO	√	√		
WMO	√	√		
TOTAL	16	24	4	2

*Note:* Some organizations apply more than one right of return measure. For entities affiliated with the United Nations Secretariat, the right of return to the organization is up to five years.

<sup>a</sup> The practice of UNDP with regard to return rights for General Service staff has changed. All staff on secondment or loan modalities, unless otherwise specified, have a general lien to the organization and are considered internal candidates until separated from UNDP.

<sup>b</sup> As a standard practice, UNFPA does not agree to put a lien on a post; however, it may do so in exceptional cases.

<sup>c</sup> In general, WHO does not grant secondment; however, when it does, the right of return to the organization is assured.

48. Managing the right to return presents challenges. WHO, for example, advised that it does not send staff on secondment for that reason. Not to use the instrument is an organizational choice. When secondments are used in the context of properly articulated secondment arrangements in which there is an expectation of return, **the distribution of risk between the sending organization and the staff member should be recalibrated by ensuring a right of return to a function at the grade of at least the same level as the staff member had occupied.**

49. The issues of right to return and retention of a higher grade achieved on secondment have been on the agenda for at least 15 years, and virtually no headway has

been made. These are aspects of challenges to the functioning of secondments that need to be addressed.

### Use of secondment

50. Information collected during the review indicates that secondment is sought by staff as a “safety net” en route to a transfer, in order to enable a way back should things not work out. The concept of secondment as a time-limited assignment that allows the staff member to learn something and bring it back to the sending organization is generally not applicable. **Organizations should articulate the purpose of secondments in order to guide the use of secondments in their application of the 2012 Agreement; an instrument delinked from an understanding of its purpose is incomplete. Providing a safety net for staff members who do not intend to return is not the right purpose.** The organizational interest in protracted secondments is not clear. The working group on inter-agency mobility was on the right track in 2014, when it proposed a rigorous maximum duration of secondments at four years, comprising an initial period of two years with a possible extension of an additional two years.<sup>51</sup>

### Promotion on secondment

51. The vast majority of organizations (24 out of 27) do not recognize a promotion gained on secondment. The absence of a clear organizational interest in most secondments may help to account for uncertainty on the right to return and the non-recognition of promotions. Reports by the ICSC and CEB mechanisms have repeatedly drawn attention to the disincentive effect of this situation as it fosters a view that organizations do not value or reward efforts to gain enhanced capacity and skill through inter-agency experience. UNHCR, which like most organizations operates on a rank-in-post basis, has undertaken to recognize higher grades earned on secondments to demonstrate its support for inter-agency mobility.<sup>52</sup>

52. UNHCR is an anomaly – a good one, in this case – in recognizing promotion gained on inter-agency exchange. Other organizations express a range of reasons for not recognizing promotion, but the most common is that the rank-in-post system means the staff member comes back to the old post at the old grade, particularly when the staff member holds a lien on a specific post.

53. **The CEB secretariat, in cooperation with UNHCR, should share information on how UNHCR applies this policy with all parties to the 2012 Agreement. Other executive heads should also articulate how they intend to recognize the enhanced knowledge and skills of a staff member acquired during secondment or loan. The CEB secretariat should solicit this information from executive heads to enable the sharing of practices. It is also recalled that the report of the CEB Human Resources Network working group on inter-agency mobility had recommended that organizations make their best efforts to identify suitable posts at the acquired higher grade.**<sup>53</sup>

## F. Alignment of internal mobility with inter-agency mobility requires attention

54. This review does not examine internal mobility or rotational schemes, which are an ongoing pre-occupation, especially for organizations with field presences. Different ways of incentivizing or requiring such mobility are being applied or considered. JIU recommended in 2010 that organizations review internal mobility policies to ensure they were coherent with inter-agency initiatives. In the intervening period, many new developments related to internal mobility have transpired. With regard to encouraging geographic mobility, especially to hardship locations, careful attention needs to be paid

<sup>51</sup> CEB/2014/HLCM/HR/5, recommendation 12.

<sup>52</sup> UNHCR/AI/2017/7/Rev.1, para. 13.

<sup>53</sup> CEB/2014/HLCM/HR/5, recommendation 19.

to how inter-agency assignments are taken into account, and the implications of such assignments for gender dimensions should be assessed. Some organizations, such as the International Organization for Migration, are offering credits to mobile staff that could be applied to other considerations, such as eligibility for other assignments or promotion. Applying such measures to inter-agency moves could also be relevant. **Executive heads are strongly urged to ensure that internal mobility policies specifically address how inter-agency assignments are taken into account.**

### III. Challenges in current functioning

55. The 2012 Agreement sets out the rights of staff members and the rights and liabilities of the two organizations concerned. Many organizations – but not all – voice concerns about non-reciprocal treatment of staff. A key principle expressed in paragraph 12 of the Agreement is that service in the releasing organizations will be counted for all purposes by the receiving organizations – reflecting the aspiration that staff not be disadvantaged beyond whatever differences already exist in the conditions of service of the two organizations. This is not always applied. For example, the United Nations Secretariat does not count all such service for the purposes of eligibility for continuing contracts.

#### A. Management of financial liabilities demonstrates an inconsistent and opportunistic application of the 2012 Agreement

56. Driven in large measure by an effort to limit new financial liabilities, ad hoc practices by certain organizations threaten to erode the functioning of the 2012 Agreement and to disadvantage staff.

##### Annual leave

57. The 2012 Agreement stipulates that the staff member carries with him or her any accrued annual leave credit, except if the receiving organization internally applies a lower threshold. However, some organizations are unwilling to accept, for example, a transfer of more than 30 days of accrued leave, even if their internal rules provide for 60 days. The reason is to limit liability in case a cash out is required.

58. **Executive heads should recognize that an organization by organization approach to this issue undermines the functioning of the regime by creating differential treatment not compatible with the terms of the 2012 Agreement. Parties to the Agreement should either apply it as written or establish a different threshold common to all.** The voluntary nature of the Agreement should not be licence to cherry pick among its provisions.

##### Non-recognition of eligibility for after-service health insurance

59. Organizations apply different approaches in recognizing the number of years of past contributions to a different organization's health insurance scheme when determining eligibility for their own. At least one organization did not recognize any such past participation, but is now considering a cap, irrespective of the period of actual contribution.

60. The Inspector is cognizant of the pressures to contain financial liabilities but considers that neither requiring prospective staff to forego benefits accrued through past contributions nor the emergence of à la carte practices by individual agreements conforms to the purposes of the 2012 Agreement.<sup>54</sup> Such practices undermine the attractiveness of mobility, and introduce ad hoc and differential treatment of staff among organizations party to the Agreement.

##### Funding of liabilities

61. Financial liabilities attached to staff are affecting how the 2012 Agreement is applied. Some organizations see the burden of them being required to assume these

<sup>54</sup> Paragraph 19 (d) of the 2012 Agreement states that periods during which a staff member has participated in any health or group life insurance arrangements of one organization will be taken into account in determining his or her eligibility for post-retirement participation in any schemes in which the staff member was participating at the time of his or her retirement. Paragraph 12 further stipulates that in the case of a transferred or seconded staff member, service in the releasing organization will be counted for all purposes.

liabilities as a big obstacle to the use of the 2012 Agreement for transfers. Those organizations suggest measures to mitigate this burden, such as transferring the related funding with the staff member. Some organizations apply opportunistic approaches to off-load or resist liabilities, such as seeking to send staff on transfer but refusing to accept transfers from others; and asking the incoming staff member to resign from the sending organization, rather than accept a transfer. This can be detrimental to the interests of the staff member concerned.

62. This pre-occupation is not uniformly shared. The majority of participating organizations believe that complex mechanisms should be avoided and that the existing provisions are adequate, since the burdens balance out over time.

63. The 2012 Agreement does not provide for transfers to compensate for accrued liabilities. It mitigates the risk to organizations who receive transfers in one respect: by providing for pro-rata sharing of costs for terminal payments, such as repatriation grants, if the transferee separates within two years. Such terminal payments are the largest component of staff-related long-term liabilities borne by organizations, apart from after-service health insurance.

64. Organizations have indeed been seized of the liabilities dimension of inter-agency mobility. After-service health insurance has been the principal focus because it accounts for the majority (85 to 90 per cent) of employment-related liabilities.

65. The Secretary-General reported to the General Assembly that an inter-agency working group on after-service health insurance had examined the question of transferring funding in the context of inter-agency mobility. The working group held the view that, as the volume of net transfers was immaterial in relation to the total workforce, organizations should accept the transfer of certain accrued health insurance benefits and entitlements, as well as of the after-service health insurance liability, without the administratively onerous transfer of funding.<sup>55</sup>

66. To illustrate the scale of the employment-related financial liability issue for a cross-section of organizations, table 2 displays the profile of after-service health insurance in overall liabilities, based on the audited financial statements of the organizations. The table also shows the marginal role of transfers in the size of the workforces that generate these liabilities, based on data provided by CEB for the work of the inter-agency working group on after-service health insurance, casting doubt on the practicality of introducing liabilities as a de facto criterion in individual staff decisions, as it penalizes staff and undermines the very purpose of the 2012 Agreement, while accomplishing little in terms of liability management. At the same time, the precise scale of liabilities related to inter-agency mobility may not be known because in addition to formal transfers under the 2012 Agreement, there is a flow in and out of organizations of staff who had been taken on as new hires, but who, owing to previous United Nations system service, may have accrued entitlement to after-service health insurance coverage.

---

<sup>55</sup> A/73/662, para. 51.

Table 2  
Employee-related financial liabilities (for the financial year ended 31 December 2017)

Organization	United Nations	UNDP	UNHCR	UNICEF	WFP	ICAO
Employee liabilities (current and non-current, in thousands of United States dollars)	5 170 187	1 616 790	818 364	1 638 022	878 100	111 297
After-service health insurance component (current and non-current, in thousands of dollars)	4 589 268	1 316 407	633 273	1 390 497	766 000	91 764
Total number of transfers (received)	93	95	34	82	25	9
Total number of transfers (released)	137	83	35	57	27	1
Transfer balance	-44	+12	-1	+25	-2	+8
<b>Total number of staff</b>	<b>35 295</b>	<b>7 177</b>	<b>9 740</b>	<b>12 806</b>	<b>6 091</b>	<b>795</b>

Sources: Source material for the employee liabilities and after-service health insurance components are as follows: United Nations (A/73/5 (Vol. I), p. 231 (note 19)); UNDP (note 22 in A/73/5/Add.1); UNICEF (note 18 in A/73/5/Add.3); UNHCR (table 3.8.1 in A/73/5/Add.6); WFP (note 2.12 in EB.A/2018/6-A/1); ICAO (note 2.10 in Doc 10089: *Financial Statements and Reports of the External Auditor for the financial year ended 31 December 2016*). Source material for the number of transfers (received and released) and the total number of staff: CEB statistics.

Note: For WFP, the after-service health insurance is accounted for under the category “post-employment benefits”, which includes after-service medical plans, a separation payments scheme and a compensation plan reserve fund. The latest available financial statements and reports of the external auditor for ICAO are for the financial year ended 31 December 2016. Amounts were expressed in Canadian dollars and converted to United States dollars, as per the United Nations operational rates of exchange for December 2016.

67. From a system point of view, this important issue will require more analysis and consideration. While the inter-agency working group on after-service health insurance found it impracticable and unnecessary to carve out specific treatment for the inter-agency mobility aspect of after-service health insurance, other approaches can be considered. **For example, organizations should consider establishing or drawing on a central mechanism to collect after-service health insurance contributions and disburse premiums for all staff, not only those involved in inter-agency moves.** The fact that not all organizations finance the liability should not impede the liability from being registered. The model of the Pension Plan could be relevant, while recognizing that after-service health insurance forecasting may be less precise. Such an approach would also be an important step in the direction of common business operations.

68. Such a mechanism could conceivably capture other employment liabilities such as the repatriation grant. However, a more immediately practicable approach to reducing the risk of organizations taking on large liabilities for what might prove to be short tenure was among the 40 recommendations made by a working group on inter-agency mobility in 2014.<sup>56</sup> It suggested that the window for pro-rata sharing of terminal payment costs (which include repatriation) be widened from within two years of separation to within five years. Just as for all the other recommendations made in the report, nothing came of this idea, but it remains available to be resurrected.

69. The variations in practice illustrated above explain why some organizations would prefer a more binding agreement. The CEB Human Resources Network appeared to recognize the possible merit of a binding agreement while negotiating the 2012

<sup>56</sup> CEB/2014/HLCM/HR/5.

Agreement, when it noted that work was ongoing to make the Agreement more binding, but that it was proving difficult.<sup>57</sup> In view of the value attached by many organizations to the voluntary nature of the 2012 Agreement, emphasis is instead placed, at this stage, on greater commitment to consistent implementation, and in particular, to the need not to fuse the critical issue of long-term liability management with individual staffing decisions.

70. The following recommendation is intended to strengthen coherence and harmonization of the benefits and entitlements of the inter-agency mobility regime, as well as to enhance the effectiveness of the regime.

### **Recommendation 3**

**Executive heads of organizations party to the 2012 Agreement should not apply the practice of asking incoming staff to resign instead of agreeing to transfers in view of its corrosive effect on the integrity of the inter-agency mobility regime and the immaterial impact of these transfers on the management of long-term employment-related liabilities, and decide by the end of 2021 to accept benefits and entitlements on the basis stipulated in the Agreement.**

## **B. Eligibility of staff under the 2012 Agreement may be too restrictive**

71. Inconsistencies and ambiguities arise as to which staff are eligible for the provisions of the 2012 Agreement. The criteria applied by some organizations significantly curtail the population eligible.

72. There are two main eligibility criteria: appointment type, and duration of prior service in the organization. A third factor, discussed below, is category of staff. Each organization limits eligibility to holders of fixed-term appointments or those of unlimited duration, although some organizations indicate scope for case-by-case judgment when receiving staff. One organization has indicated it limits transfers to holders of permanent contracts. All organizations exclude temporary appointments, consultants, interns and volunteers.

73. Some organizations, such as UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, require a minimum of four or five years under a fixed-term contract for various eligibility purposes. Many other organizations have not articulated a minimum duration of service, but this is not to say that no prior service requirement is needed; rather, it has not been spelled out. ILO, for example, indicates that it makes a case-by-case judgment.

74. The annual human resources statistics made available by CEB indicate that 50 per cent of international Professional staff, who historically have been the principal focus of inter-agency mobility, have served for under five years. The threshold of four or five years can have the effect of significantly curtailing the eligible population.

75. For secondment, a prior service threshold of two or three years may be understandable because it would be reasonable for the organization to acquire sufficient knowledge of the staff member to determine if the effort that goes into a secondment is worth it. The burden is significant because resulting vacancies are often difficult to fill on a time-limited basis.

76. With transfer, the matter is different. A protracted service threshold may be contrary to the organization's interest. Since the application of the 2012 Agreement kicks into gear after a staff member is selected, a person who wants to take the post can simply resign. This would involve extra costs for the organizations concerned, because it would involve payment of the applicable separation and repatriation provisions as well as travel to the new organization. Applying the 2012 Agreement helps to avoid this kind of "double dipping".

<sup>57</sup> CEB/2011/HLCM/HR/23, para. 18.

77. **Executive heads of organizations participating in the 2012 Agreement are urged to adopt common eligibility criteria on the basis of standards that provide for the widest eligibility of personnel. Those criteria should be explicitly stated to clarify the landscape for applicants and reduce the scope for decisions by organizations that are perceived to be capricious. Absent a common definition, the executive heads of UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP and UNOPS should review their prior service thresholds for eligibility for loan, transfer or secondment.**

78. An increasingly important feature of the workforce of the United Nations system are affiliated personnel: people who are not on staff contracts, such as contractors and consultants. Approximately 35 per cent of the workforce is affiliated personnel, based on information provided by the secretariat of the CEB Human Resources Network. However, data on the numbers are not systematically collected on a system-wide basis.

79. Some organizations have suggested there is a need to consider the affiliated workforce in a broader consideration of inter-agency mobility. The growth of the affiliate workforce does indeed point to the need to consider the appropriate way to meet needs for time-limited, project-type service not connected to an expectation of ongoing service in a manner that also provides adequate social protection. Indeed, this is why work on this matter is under way.

80. Despite the need to address the affiliated workforce social protection, the 2012 Agreement is not the right mechanism to do so. As long as the affiliated workforce population are not under staff contracts, it is difficult to see the relevance of the 2012 Agreement to them because a principal purpose of the Agreement is to regulate the disposition of entitlements and benefits connected to staff service, and those are not applicable to the affiliated personnel.

81. Another issue concerning eligibility relates to the categories of staff who are eligible. No organization indicates an intention to exclude any particular category of staff. Nevertheless, practices by some organizations, and in particular the United Nations Secretariat, has had the effect of placing nationally recruited staff at a disadvantage.

82. There are three aspects to this. First, the United Nations Secretariat had decided not to apply the 2012 Agreement to General Service staff at all. During interviews, the United Nations Secretariat advised that this was no longer the case.

83. A second aspect is that the United Nations Secretariat has previously been unwilling to apply the 2012 Agreement to General Service staff selected for international posts by other organizations. The United Nations Secretariat would ask such staff to resign rather than enable them to be transferred, for reasons connected to internal limitations on the eligibility of General Service staff for international Professional posts. The United Nations Secretariat had, somehow, concluded that since General Service staff were constrained from Professional posts internally, it should not facilitate promotion in other organizations that were prepared to recognize their qualifications.

84. Further, the United Nations Secretariat has not been willing to apply the transfer provisions of the 2012 Agreement to General Service staff who secure posts in other organizations at other duty stations. The reason for this is that General Service staff are generally only eligible for local recruitment.

85. This view is ill-founded. Applying the transfer provisions of the 2012 Agreement does not convert a General Service appointment to an international Professional one. It does not require the sending organization to “travel” the staff member. If the receiving organization and the staff member concerned are able to sort out those arrangements, it is not evident why those elements would be relevant to the sending organization.

86. Although the United Nations Secretariat has advised that it no longer intends to apply those constraints, interviews revealed an inconsistent understanding among Headquarters officials as well as in other departments, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, as to the provisions that apply to General Service staff. **The Secretary-General and other executive heads who have not yet done so should by the end of 2020 publish an administrative issuance that makes clear that all categories of staff on fixed-term and appointments of unlimited duration are eligible**

**to benefit from the provisions of the 2012 Agreement and that it would apply to nationally recruited staff who are appointed to international positions in other organizations, and to nationally recruited staff who are appointed to posts by other organizations, irrespective of the duty station of the new function.**

### **C. Procedures to address misconduct are absent**

87. Questionnaire responses, interviews and subsequent supplementary information revealed a gap in how the 2012 Agreement addressed misconduct and related administrative issues. These aspects should be addressed to strengthen the framework of accountability. There is a need for clarity on the procedures that apply in cases where a staff member has engaged in conduct that could amount to misconduct, and which has not already been addressed. Issues to be specified include the obligation of staff members to cooperate with any investigation or other process carried out by the organization in which the misconduct is alleged to have taken place that such conduct may be addressed as misconduct in the receiving organizations and that, if an investigation report containing adverse findings is transmitted to the other organization, it may take disciplinary action.

88. The 2012 Agreement does not refer to the solicitation from the sending organization of information about ongoing investigations and/or disciplinary processes. In cases where a staff member is transferring to another organization that is part of CEB, United Nations rules nevertheless allow the appropriate senior official, upon request of the receiving organization, to provide information about such ongoing processes.<sup>58</sup> They also allow the United Nations, upon learning that a former staff member who had been subject to an investigation or discipline has rejoined an organization that is a member of CEB, to refer the matter, together with all supporting documentation, to the staff member's new employer for any action permitted under that organization's legal framework.<sup>59</sup> **All organizations should solicit and provide such information as part of their due diligence.**

89. The following recommendation is intended to enhance transparency and the accountability of, as well as coordination and cooperation among, the executive heads in their treatment of misconduct.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**Executive heads should, by the end of 2021, revise the 2012 Agreement to specify procedures for the handling of allegations of misconduct by staff who have moved to another organization under the terms of the Agreement.**

### **D. Personal status determination while on mobility assignment needs to be clarified**

90. The personal status of staff members for the purposes of United Nations entitlements is often determined by reference to the law of the competent authority under which the personal status has been established. **Organizations may wish to make clear how personal status will be determined under the 2012 Agreement and confirm that receiving organizations will accept the verifications already carried out by the sending organization.**

<sup>58</sup> ST/AI/2017/1, sect. 10.2.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., sect. 10.3.

## E. Recognition of permanent, indeterminate and continuing contracts remains a challenge

91. A long-standing issue is the challenge that arises in cases where organizations do not recognize the contract type of a transferee, such as contracts that provide for greater security of tenure. **Although some organizations are not issuing new permanent contracts, organizations that have issued them in the past, such as UNDP and others working under the United Nations staff regulations and rules, should have no practical impediment to recognizing them.**

92. For continuing contracts, the situation is more complex, as some organizations do not use them or have not reached a final decision on whether to apply them. This could limit the interest in inter-agency mobility, for example, for young professionals recruited under the United Nations young professional programme, who receive continuing appointments.

93. It is beyond the scope of this review to suggest that organizations introduce new contractual instruments for inter-agency mobility purposes if they do not reflect an organizational need. **Still, as a practical measure, the Inspector strongly encourages executive heads to apply their existing contractual instruments in ways that offer the security of tenure most analogous to what the staff member enjoyed in the sending organization. This could entail providing five-year fixed-term contracts, rather than the more typical initial one of shorter duration.**

## F. Attention paid to the gender dimensions of inter-agency mobility has significantly diminished

94. It is interesting to observe that attention paid to the gender dimension of inter-agency mobility was significant over a long period to time. In 1986, for example, the Administrative Committee on Coordination (the predecessor to CEB) was actively seeking recommendations on the participation of women in inter-agency mobility.<sup>60</sup> Over the years, initiatives such as a participating agency mobility system, a dual career programme and spousal employment initiatives were carried out.

95. Spousal employment and family support concerns have long been cited as key barriers to mobility and talent retention across the United Nations system. The most robust institutional response to these concerns was the 2004 creation of the Dual Career and Staff Mobility Programme, originally managed by WFP and later by the CEB Human Resources Network. Despite some progress at individual duty stations, engagement at the system level was difficult to sustain, and the programme was formally ended in 2013. UNDP offered to host and fund the programme, but ultimately its functions were to be absorbed into the mainstream work of the CEB Human Resources Network.<sup>61</sup>

96. UNICEF raised the issue again in 2018 and proposed measures such as an internal job market for United Nations staff and spouses. United Nations Volunteers indicated that they have infrastructural capacity that is well-suited for such a job market, and organizations expressed strong support for their offer to support the endeavour.<sup>62</sup>

97. The broader conditions of the workplace are also relevant to be considered. UNICEF, UN-Women, UNDP and UNFPA issued a joint statement in May 2019 that emphasized the importance of gender-responsive, family-friendly policies as irrefutably linked to the ability to attract, motivate and retain employees. They pointed out that some large private-sector companies report lower attrition rates among female employees when effective family-friendly policies are in place. The joint statement finally indicated that family-friendly policies have remained an active and ongoing concern of many formal

<sup>60</sup> ACC/1986/3, para. 57.

<sup>61</sup> CEB/2013/HLCM/HR/20, para. 14.

<sup>62</sup> CEB/2018/HLCM/HR/9, paras. 23–28.

and informal groups within the United Nations system.<sup>63</sup> Whether the participation of women in inter-agency mobility is affected by the degree of harmonization, or lack thereof, among United Nations system organizations should be explored.

98. Currently, many organizations are not convinced that gender-related dimensions are sufficiently addressed in inter-agency mobility. However, interviewees are unable to identify which particular gender dimension would need addressing to enable inter-agency mobility. Other organizations believe there is no gender angle.

99. The Inspector finds this latter view hard to credit. For example, an eligibility threshold of five years of tenure in a Professional post would disqualify more than half of female Professional staff. Changes to the ICSC compensation and allowance arrangements, such as no longer providing for mobility incentives at “H” duty stations, is relevant for women since more than half of women in Professional posts serve at those locations. Changes in other allowances also need to be understood in terms of how they affect the incentive framework for women to move across organizations.

100. The following recommendation is intended to enhance effectiveness through consideration of the gender dimensions of inter-agency mobility.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**The Executive Director of UN-Women, in consultation as required with members of CEB, and with the assistance of the CEB secretariat for data collection, should by the end of 2021 assess if there are factors that impact on the participation of women in inter-agency mobility and that should therefore be taken into account in the formulation of policies or other measures related to it.**

101. The need to support dual-career couples and to enable spousal employment has not abated. In fact, the majority of organizations do believe measures enabling spousal employment are either required or would be useful to facilitate inter-agency mobility. **The Secretary-General and his counterparts in CEB should develop proposals and measures to respond to the needs of dual-career households and for spousal employment, drawing on lessons from past initiatives, including acting on the proposals brought forward by UNICEF and United Nations Volunteers.**

### **G. Differences in health insurance impact inter-agency mobility**

102. Differences in health insurance coverage as a factor affecting mobility decisions was drawn to the Inspector’s attention. These differences affect, for example, scope of coverage for children, secondary dependents, therapies covered, overall financial ceilings and eligibility for after-service health insurance. This is particularly relevant for transfers, because for secondments the 2012 Agreement allows the staff member to remain covered by the sending organization’s plan. That this is a long-standing concern is shown in the expectation of the High-Level Committee on Management in 2003 that it would receive proposals on health insurance provisions with a view to eliminating or at least reducing their impact on inter-agency mobility.<sup>64</sup>

103. Responses to a 2018 questionnaire on the portability of health coverage benefits administered by the inter-agency working group on after-service health insurance under the auspices of the Finance and Budget Network provide granular detail. Those responses show that criteria for active staff and dependents to be eligible for after-service health insurance are not harmonized across the system, varying widely in terms of the required years of participation. The different insurance plans also vary with regard to the types of dependents eligible, while some specify age criteria. The questionnaire responses confirm

<sup>63</sup> UNICEF et al. “Joint statement: 1 UN for family leave and childcare”. Available at [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org). Accessed on 20 November 2019.

<sup>64</sup> CEB/2003/HLCM/20, para. 6.

that the eligibility of secondary dependents and the requirements for continuity of service also vary. Some organizations allow the required number of years to be accumulated over interrupted periods, while others do not. In order to achieve after-service health insurance eligibility, some organizations, including the United Nations Secretariat, allow staff members to “purchase” the missing years (up to a prescribed maximum number of years). However, most organizations do not allow such a possibility. Finally, when a staff member reaches retirement with having achieved entitlement to a full pension, the number of required years of service that serve as the contribution assessment base for after-service health insurance also varies (20, 25 and 30 years) across the United Nations system.

104. The working group reported to the General Assembly that in order to facilitate inter-agency mobility, it had initially sought to identify areas of possible harmonization. It was not able to complete this work and recommended that the United Nations system organizations give consideration to all insurance-related harmonization opportunities in support of inter-agency mobility. Moreover, the working group considered that there was a need for a comprehensive exploration of harmonization opportunities in support of inter-agency mobility.

**105. The Secretary-General and other executive heads, drawing on CEB mechanisms as required, are encouraged to examine the feasibility of reducing barriers to inter-agency mobility while strengthening the common system, through (i) the development of a harmonized health insurance plan that is common to all organizations and (ii) a common mechanism for the provision and administration of health insurance, and to make proposals to their legislative bodies, if required, consequent to consultation with staff representatives.**

## IV. Future perspectives

106. Inter-agency mobility policies and arrangements are not an adequate response to the current and future needs of organizations or to the aspirations of staff. Arguably, they have not responded to past needs either, by failing on three counts: to reinforce a United Nations system approach; to be shaped by organizational needs as well as those of staff members; and to be deployed as part of larger human resources strategies as called for by the General Assembly and urged by ICSC.<sup>65</sup> Inter-agency mobility is but a small fragment of a larger human resources management puzzle. To focus on it as a free-standing issue is the wrong approach as it confines discussion to administrative frameworks applicable to a minor subset of staffing issues and leaves unanswered how it connects to human resources policies and strategies that improve organizational or United Nations system performance. This helps to explain why, to date, there is scant evidence of priority being attached to inter-agency mobility, despite decades of discussion.

### A. Define the organizational interest

107. While officials in organizations express the value that inter-agency mobility generates as noted above (see para. 46), corporate and system actions tell a different story. None of the barriers identified by the CEB Human Resources Network in 2003 and 2010 have been resolved; the stated need in the context of delivering as one to make inter-agency mobility a reality<sup>66</sup> remains hortatory; the measures suggested by inter-agency working groups on inter-agency mobility in 2013 and 2014 have not been acted upon; the intention to confer internal candidate status on United Nations system staff, which was part of the High-Level Committee on Management strategic plan for 2013–2016, has not been realized; the intention to pilot inter-agency mobility in the human resources functional area has not been pursued. Coupled with the lack of measures taken by most organizations to encourage or show they value inter-agency mobility, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that as a practical matter, inter-organizational mobility is not by itself a major interest of most organizations, or of the broader system.

108. JIU, the High-Level Committee on Management and ICSC have all said there was a need to bring to bear the organizational interest.<sup>67</sup> But what is it? The mismatch between the rhetoric and the reality points to a need for a more-focused effort by organizations to define their interest in inter-agency mobility. Given that inter-agency mobility continues to be staff-driven and is generally not factored into human resources strategies, it is necessary to clarify what the business need is and how to pursue it, so that inter-agency mobility can be pursued, as suggested by ICSC, by organizations and staff together, rather than by being driven by individual staff initiatives.<sup>68</sup> It is time for the organizations to articulate the opportunity inter-agency mobility represents for them, how it connects to talent and performance management and how it should be valued and enabled.

109. The following recommendation is intended to enhance effectiveness of the organizations of the United Nations system in using inter-agency mobility as a means to achieve organizational goals.

#### **Recommendation 6**

**The Secretary-General, in coordination with other executive heads in the framework of the High-Level Committee on Management, as he considers appropriate, should, by the end of June 2022, articulate the business case for inter-agency mobility by setting out what it should accomplish for the organizations as well as how it contributes to human resources management objectives and to the delivery of programmatic results. Such a**

<sup>65</sup> A/65/30, para. 22, and General Assembly resolution 61/244, sect. IV, paras. 2 and 14.

<sup>66</sup> CEB/2007/HR/8, p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> CEB/2002/HLCM/14, para. 6.

<sup>68</sup> A/65/30, para. 26.

business case could usefully examine success stories, such as the impact on career trajectories.

## **B. Frame inter-agency mobility in relation to strategic objectives**

110. To be more relevant, inter-agency mobility needs to be connected to what is important to organizations. At the present time, the easier flow of people within the United Nations system and beyond does indeed intersect with three key processes pre-occupying many organizations and the United Nations system as whole: (a) how to deliver on the 2030 Agenda, including the commitment to work for shared results, to reposition the development system, and to work in deeper partnership with non-United Nations actors; (b) common business operations for efficiency – organizations need to consider if they are serious about applying common business operations in the human resources to reverse some of the fragmentation and duplication that exists; (c) perhaps most immediately germane, workforce transformation and the evolving response to the changing world of work. Organizations and the system as a whole are seized with how to position themselves as employers of choice in a changing demographic and technological landscape, with the need to enhance staff well-being and engagement and to respond to the changing mix in their need for long-term and more project-based or time-limited service, all of which could include more frequent flows in and out of the United Nations system.<sup>69</sup>

111. This context reinforces why it is important to reduce barriers to inter-agency mobility; it is an appropriate moment to overcome barriers with a view to increasing the agility of cooperation among organizations and to strengthening a system culture.

### **Consider the requirements of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development**

112. Commitments made by United Nations system organization in support of the 2030 Agenda are centred around the question of how the United Nations system can act together and increase the agility of its cooperation with others. This is clear from the principles adopted by CEB that include the view that the whole of the United Nations system is greater than the sum of its parts in delivering on shared goals; a commitment to global and integrated service delivery; and development of the global United Nations system workforce, with a One United Nations mindset and supported by transformative leadership.<sup>70</sup> It is hard to envisage meaningful progress without both tackling at least some of the barriers to agile cooperation and applying meaningful measures to reinforce the long elusive One United Nations mindset – that is, to shape the culture.

113. This is a large canvas, with many elements beyond the scope of what this report can address. It draws attention to how the siloed, fragmented and often protectionist and inward nature of staff selection and assessment in the United Nations system has a profound impact on the ability to access, share and move talent within the system. This is an illustration of broader fragmentation within the United Nations in the management of business needs. At the same time, there is keen interest at the programme delivery level for teams that can address the cross-organizational nature of the Sustainable Development Goals. In view of the relevance of cultural change and the welcome emergence of vectors to strengthen One United Nations thinking, chapter V is devoted to a system culture.

### **Open the portholes**

114. Organizations prize their high degree of autonomy in human resources management. They carry out separate selection and assessment processes. For similar functions, they may define requirements a bit differently from each other, they may

<sup>69</sup> CEB/2017/3, para. 78.

<sup>70</sup> CEB, “CEB common principles to guide the UN system’s support to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, 27 April 2016. Available at [unsceb.org](http://unsceb.org). Accessed on 20 November 2019.

classify posts differently, assess differently, so that candidates emerging from one organization's selection process are, with very limited exception, not considered by others. Interviews with human resource directors reveal a varying degree of confidence in the rigour of the classification and selection processes of others. Common talent pools that provide a basis for selection by more than one organization are not common, even for similar functions and when organizations compete in the same candidate pool. This makes it harder to have a cross-organizational view for acquiring talent. The absence of such common pools further compounds the barrier to using inter-agency mobility as part of talent management and career development that results from case-by-case competitive selection processes, making it hard to plan a move with any confidence.

115. Tackling these selection and assessment silos is challenging indeed. This is demonstrated by how difficult it is to make headway even in terms of locally recruited staff at the country level. In the context of Delivering as One, a high-level mission of the High-Level Committee on Management and the United Nations Development Group recommended that organizations harmonize recruitment requirements for General Service staff and national officers; harmonize the ways in which they solicit and assess applications; treat all local staff as internal to all organizations so as to cooperate rather than compete; generate candidates to serve the whole United Nations country team; and save money and time by reducing or doing away with individual selection processes.<sup>71</sup> Four years later, a project setting out how to do this, drawing on two pilots, was completed.<sup>72</sup> Intended to be scaled up, the evidence that this has happened is not clear.

116. At the Nairobi duty station, it was discouraging to learn of the travails of a well-meaning effort to develop more common approaches to local staffing and to provide professional development through brief inter-agency mobility opportunities for local staff. Differences in how organizations frame job profiles, competency frameworks, education and work experience, and language requirements were documented, and on the whole, they were similar, but different. Owing to a lack of appetite by organizations, or those representing their organizations, to bridge the differences so as to work toward common recruitment, the level of ambition was scaled back to encompass sharing of rosters for surge needs, and cross-organizational training – i.e. the opportunity for local staff to have development assignments for a number of months in other organizations at the duty station. Even this modest measure attracted support from only a few organizations. This is a small and specific case, which illustrates how hard it is to break down territorial barriers even when the stakes are low. The Business Innovations Group is intended to drive common business operations. Sadly, most of the organizations that participate in it – UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA – were not engaged in the Nairobi initiative at the time of the review visit. **Their executive heads should consider if they are sending the right message.**

117. A related issue is that similar functions and jobs are not consistently defined, either within or across organizations. Most organizations have common functional needs: for example, audit, human resources management, and budget and finance. Organizations also have specialized needs, especially in specialized agencies. For areas of common needs, a standardized definition of qualification standards and selection criteria would help to reduce barriers to movement. A recently completed evaluation by WHO of its geographical mobility policy emphasized the impediment to effective mobility resulting from the absence of standardized job titles, job descriptions and job families.<sup>73</sup> Standardized job descriptions would also enable swifter movement of specialized staff members whose posts have terms limits due to the inherent nature of their work (e.g. comptroller or auditor). **To enable a firmer and more common institutional basis for inter-agency mobility and provide a cross-organizational view of what functions and jobs are alike, organizations should consider facilitating the harmonization of**

<sup>71</sup> CEB/2010/HLCM-UNDG/1, paras. 56–58.

<sup>72</sup> CEB/2014/HLCM/HR/4.

<sup>73</sup> WHO, "Summative evaluation of the implementation of the WHO geographical mobility policy during its voluntary phase – Vol. 1: report", p. iv, January 2019. Available at who.int. Accessed on 20 November 2019.

**standard job titles, job descriptions and job families. A dedicated task group could be designated to work on this.**

118. Given the past huge bureaucratic investment with uncertain payoff that went into harmonization – not even joint recruitment – at the local level, a targeted approach may be a useful step to overcoming barriers imposed by separate recruitment and selection processes. Organizations sharing common needs could organize shared talent pools, based on common assessment in priority areas. During interviews, two areas were suggested as being suitable for a common pool: investigators and women leaders. Those two areas were mentioned as examples of areas in which organizations compete for similar talent. Such an effort would allow organizations to draw on examples of common assessment that already exist, such as the resident coordinator selection process and the electoral roster, the latter of which is managed by the United Nations Secretariat on behalf of all entities providing electoral assistance.

119. Some organizations apply processes internally for leadership functions. UNFPA, for example, in 2013 developed a leadership pool for filling international rotational roles, such as representative, deputy representative and operations manager. Careful screening is followed by assessment centre review. Cooperation with other organizations with similar needs to organize and co-finance such pools could offer opportunities for faster and less expensive staffing. The recent evaluation of the WHO mobility policy suggested the merit of exploring such an arrangement – in the case of WHO, together with UNICEF, UNAIDS or UNHCR. **In view of the interest and opportunity identified by at least some organizations, executive heads are urged to carry out pilots, supported by the relevant CEB mechanisms as appropriate, for implementation by interested organizations, of common recruitment and assessment in at least one area of common interest, such as for international operations managers.**

120. A system-wide approach to recruiting young professionals is another powerful opportunity to access talent more efficiently and strengthen system culture and functioning. Variants of the suggestion made long ago by ICSC for the development of a young professional scheme in support of common system mobility<sup>74</sup> were suggested by senior human resources management officials. All organizations seek to attract young professionals through a variety of means. Smaller organizations also advise that they are disadvantaged in attracting such talent by not being able to offer a range of opportunities to follow the initial assignment. Establishing a common pool that can be managed to provide for inter-agency experiences as part of a development phase could accomplish multiple purposes, while strengthening the United Nations brand — as distinct from agency profiles — as an employer. Such an approach need not be incompatible with organizations making specific appointments in line with legislative requirements, such as for geographic representation.

121. **While there is no current prospect of having a single employer for young professionals in the United Nations system, the Inspector urges the Secretary-General in cooperation with other organizations that are members of CEB to consider the development of a young professional programme that would administer the recruitment and assessment process on a system-wide basis and could plan for rotation among organizations as part of professional development over a specified period of time. This would contribute to a One United Nations approach by reducing recruitment silos and fostering staff exchange.**

#### **Consider the link between workforce transformation and inter-agency mobility**

122. Many United Nations system organizations representing a significant majority of the overall staff population are working to reposition the human resource function as a strategic business partner; to enhance staff well-being and engagement; to attract and nurture dynamic, mobile and agile workforces focused on results rather than process. Some organizations also work to adapt to the projectization of funding that has changed the types and duration of employment some organizations can offer.

<sup>74</sup> A/58/30, para. 107.

123. More broadly, innovation and technological progress are changing labour markets in significant ways. The recent report of the Global Commission on the Future of Work emphasized that technological advances such as artificial intelligence, automation and robotics will create new jobs, but that those who lose their jobs in that transition might be least equipped to seize the new job opportunities. It further noted that the skills of today would not match the jobs of tomorrow and newly acquired skill might become obsolete quickly.<sup>75</sup> The World Bank reported that the days of staying in one job or one company for decades were waning.<sup>76</sup>

124. It is not only the duration of some kinds of work that is changing. As automation and robotics are applied to tasks not requiring complex cognitive skills, the types of skills required, and how and where people work, are also changing. The World Bank states that technology enables the gig economy in which organizations contract with independent workers for short-term engagements.<sup>77</sup> Online platforms make it easier to work from anywhere.

125. While organizations may be less able to offer a lifetime job, there is an opportunity, as expressed by one senior human resources director, to help staff prepare for a lifetime of different jobs. For this, career paths cannot be limited to one organization in a single functional area; cross-organizational career paths connecting to common corporate interests are needed. A recent ICSC secretariat paper on career development noted that, given that opportunities for promotion were limited, especially in smaller organizations with fewer senior posts, a variety of horizontal measures to enrich staff learning and development could be considered. It considered that opportunities for cross-organizational career paths, namely for job-shadowing among common system organizations, would require attention as organizations enhanced their efforts to support transitions throughout the employee life cycle. **For such an approach to work, organizations – presumably through the CEB Human Resources Network – will need to ensure that inter-agency mobility mechanisms enable this kind of cooperation and that new measures, such as inter-organizational or system-wide exchange programmes, are developed. ICSC is urged, acting under article 14 of its Statute, to continue to amplify on how cross-organizational cooperation can supplement the career development efforts of organizations.**

126. It is beyond the scope of the report to engage with the trends on the future of work drawn out in the reports of the ILO Global Commission of the Future of Work, the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.<sup>78</sup> The pace at which these trends are affecting the United Nations system are not clear. However, this forms part of the context in which many organizations and the United Nations system as a whole are seized with the need to position themselves as employers in a changing demographic and technological landscape.<sup>79</sup> This dynamic needs to be considered by United Nations organizations if they are to be fit to thrive in a rapidly changing environment demanding agility and results.

127. The High-Level Committee on Management appears to recognize the need in having initiated its own reflection on the implications of the report of the ILO Commission. **The organizations carrying out this work and the CEB secretariat supporting them should resist a lowest common denominator approach that could result from a desire for a single way to reflect the needs of all CEB organizations.**

<sup>75</sup> ILO, *Work for a Brighter Future – Global Commission on the Future of Work* (Geneva, 2019), p. 18.

<sup>76</sup> World Bank, *World Development Report 2019: The Changing Nature of Work* (Washington, D.C., 2019), p. vii.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>78</sup> See World Bank, *World Development Report 2019*; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, “OECD employment outlook 2019: the future of work – highlights”. Available at [oecd.org](http://oecd.org); and Christina Behrendt and Quynh Anh Nguyen, “Innovative approaches for ensuring universal social protection for the future of work”, ILO Future of Work Research Paper Series, No. 1 (Geneva, ILO, 2018).

<sup>79</sup> CEB/2019/HLCM/16, p. 3-4.

Inter-agency mobility has a role to play in addressing time-limited service, enabling more frequent career transitions, and other features of the changing world of work.

128. Among the issues that need to be addressed are the expectations of young professionals. How does a system that typically rewards long tenure attract young people for whom, according to interviews and surveys,<sup>80</sup> flexible working arrangements and mobility with adequate social protection are important, and for whom long tenure is less available and of lesser interest? Will the United Nations system provide for the contractual tools, social protection and working arrangements responsive to those interests? As already noted, technology is changing the geography of work; this can contribute to greater flexibility and cost-efficient inter-agency mobility.

129. Happily, these are questions that this report does not endeavour to answer. A very positive development is the dialogue that has been initiated between CEB mechanisms and the Young UN: Agents for Change, a network initiated in 2016 that draws together more than 1,500 young professionals working across the United Nations system in more than 100 countries. Perspectives they bring forward offer interesting insights on factors that motivate those working for the United Nations, opportunities for modernization of working practices, and possibilities presented by use of technology to overcome inter-organizational barriers, including to facilitate inter-agency mobility. For example, the absence of a skill inventory within and among organizations makes workforce planning more difficult. The suggestion by Young UN: Agents for Change that an internal United Nations system similar to LinkedIn be studied as a way of strengthening the market for talent illustrates a possible non-bureaucratic contribution to workforce planning and management.

### **C. Consider the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund to be a relevant piece of the mobility puzzle**

130. As the United Nations system organizations work to enable greater permeability of staff within and beyond the United Nations system and seek to enable transition in and out of the United Nations system, attention needs to be paid to where the Pension Fund fits into the mix. Interviewees repeatedly referred to the Pension Fund as “golden handcuffs” because it is built around long-term tenure. It is hard to put into place the institutional arrangements that enable exchanges with non-United Nations actors and provide for time-limited tenure without also factoring in the social security pieces of those institutional arrangements, of which the Pension Fund is the crown jewel.

131. This is not a new issue. In 2003, the CEB secretariat advised the High-Level Committee on Management that pension fund provisions could be an inhibitor for mobility beyond the common system with national Governments, other international organizations and the private sector. In 2018, the Human Resources Network referred to the need to initiate a more comprehensive discussion about how pension provisions could foster mobility in and out of the United Nations system and thus be used as a strategic human resources tool.<sup>81</sup>

132. A few examples can illustrate issues that have an impact on mobility with organizations that do not participate in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund. Currently, the ability of members of the Pension Fund to defer their participation while working with other organizations, and later reactivate it, is limited to a period of three years. A longer period, or no cap whatsoever, could strengthen the appeal of such experiences.

133. Another issue is whether the Pension Fund rules make sufficient disposition to enable people who have had a career outside the United Nations to transfer their service. The universe of transfer agreements is limited. Those who do transfer with their own funds face a risk in that, if they leave, they recuperate only one third of the contribution.

<sup>80</sup> Young UN: Agents for Change, “Young UN temperature check: UN Reforms”, April 2019.

<sup>81</sup> CEB/2018/HLCM/HR/4, para. 110.

It would be desirable to consider how staff bringing funds in could take it back if they leave.

134. An issue that arises in the context of service of time-limited duration is that the employer's contribution is not factored into what departing staff can receive before five years of service. Some organizations interviewed for this review, such as the Global Fund and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, seek to incentivize staff to leave after a period of years and provide access to both the staff member's and the organization's contributions. It is mentioned as an illustration of an approach to providing social protection in a way aligned to the business needs of the organization.

135. The United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund secretariat mentioned that it is not engaged in analysis of workforce planning requirements and its implications for facilitating the flow of people in and out of United Nations organizations. It considers the change of policy requirements a matter for the human resources departments of the organizations, with the Pension Fund providing one of many alternatives available for encouraging certain behaviours of staff members. It states that any changes in the characteristics of the active population participating in the Pension Fund, as well as any actions taken to change its regulations in order to improve benefits in any manner could have significant effect on the solvency of the Fund, including increased funding requirements, which would come from the organizations and staff members. In that connection, the Fund believes it to be imperative that the Pension Board and its advisors, in particular its Consulting Actuary and its Committee of Actuaries, be included in any discussions related to mobility policies that would affect the Pension Fund and the benefits paid by it, and be asked to provide advice and guidance before any such modification is recommended for implementation, as well as any other actions that might be taken that could alter the characteristics of the active population of the Fund.

136. It is well beyond the scope of this report to review the Pension Fund provisions in depth. **However, executive heads of JIU participating organizations that participate in United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, and the CEB mechanisms addressing human resources management issues, are urged to consider, in close consultation with the Pension Fund secretariat, how pension arrangements can affect mobility in and out of the United Nations system and make appropriate proposals via the group of executive heads to the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board.**

#### **D. Develop mutually beneficial exchanges among like-minded organizations**

137. Organizations have expressed interest in staff exchanges with specific counterparts on themes of common interest or around specific Sustainable Development Goals. Action by subsets or clusters of organizations with similar interests offers a viable opportunity to develop mutually beneficial staff exchanges. It should also be noted that with new ways of working and modern technology, it is possible to conceive forms of cooperation on projects of shared interest that do not require moving to another organization.

138. Among the examples mentioned to the review team, UN-Habitat noted that exchanges with UNICEF and UNODC would benefit its work related to Sustainable Development Goal 11, on safer and inclusive cities. Peace operations staff based in Nairobi said they would benefit from accessing UNICEF supply-chain expertise and UNEP environmental expertise, among others, as these are relatively new functions for United Nations peace operations. Other specific cross-thematic content includes child nutrition (UNICEF and WFP), supply and emergency specialists (WFP and UNHCR), gender expertise (UNFPA and UN-Women). FAO in Nairobi mentioned animal health as another area of collaboration in relation to global information systems and sociology. Even when the organizations have few, if any, substantive convergence, exchanges may be of mutual interest. ITU, for example, advises there are arrangements in place with UNHCR to enable its staff to gain relevant experience.

139. Further, in the context of the development system reform, organizations express interest in exchanges that help their staff build coordination, integrated policy and data analysis skills. To improve the readiness of its staff to serve as resident coordinators, UNHCR is interested in exchanges with UNDP to strengthen the development profile of staff. On the other side of the equation, UNDP could place staff in UNHCR to improve their humanitarian operations knowledge. Each organization might set aside positions for the purpose to allow for planned exchange.

140. In addition to opportunities based on shared thematic interests, some organizations, such as the World Trade Organization, emphasized the opportunity in large duty stations, such as Geneva, for exchanges at low financial cost. In some duty stations, such as The Hague, there is a discernible hunger for exchanges within the duty station as a vehicle for smaller organizations to sustain morale and support staff development. Such measures could be pursued by earmarking certain posts for such exchanges to allow for planning, and by using instruments not covered by the 2012 Agreement, such as development assignments.

141. As the principal legal organ of the United Nations, with a regulatory framework modelled on, but distinct from that applied by the United Nations Secretariat, the International Court of Justice is not party to the 2012 Agreement. It is a small organization, with about 116 staff. A representative of the Registrar advised that the Court was exploring ways of drawing on United Nations practices in the interest of efficient operations. While not a party to the Agreement, the Court tries to apply its terms when relevant circumstances arise. Its experience is that some organizations are prepared to apply the Agreement to exchanges with the Court, but others are not. **Given that the Registrar of the International Court of Justice has shown an interest in being able to apply the terms of the 2012 Agreement, and noting that other entities based in The Hague, such as the International Criminal Court and the Special Tribunal for Lebanon have recently become party to the Agreement, the Inspector encourages the Court to also consider becoming party to the Agreement.** This would provide a firmer and consistent basis for the administration of inter-agency mobility, including among the growing number of organizations based in The Hague that are party to it.

142. There is no obvious reason for organizations to be timid in acting on such opportunities. It only takes two; not everyone has to be involved in everything. Organizations should also bear in mind that such cooperation is not confined to the tools set out in the 2012 Agreement. Human resources managers often mentioned that development assignments are often used within organizations. They can also be used across organizational lines. **Executive heads are encouraged to pilot staff exchanges with counterparts in areas of common interest or at specific duty stations, deploying as necessary the relevant tools not defined in the 2012 Agreement.**

## **E. Build on the scarce exchange opportunities with non-United Nations actors**

143. For this review, organizations were canvassed on whether they have staff exchange arrangements with non-United Nations system organizations and on whether partnerships, including beyond the United Nations system, require or benefit from a flow of personnel to or from the partners. Most organizations have developed an array of arrangements to access expertise from external sources. WHO, for example, works in partnership with institutions such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, whose cooperation can also include the provision of personnel. WIPO fellowship programmes allow a flow of personnel to and from partners in national and regional intellectual property offices.

144. The CEB and ICSC mechanisms have in the past seen value in external mobility, including as a means to remaining connected to fresh thinking. More recently, such pathways attract interest in the context of talent-retention strategies, by helping to mitigate concerns about personal stagnation and lack of viable career paths in the United

Nations system.<sup>82</sup> Organizations referred to their need to expose staff to different working environments and to different ways of approaching global issues, while staff coming from other organizations could gain a better understanding of the organization's work in order to better cooperate in the future. For example, UNIDO views the Fourth Industrial Revolution<sup>83</sup> as an opportunity for multi-stakeholder industrial cooperation. As part of the Partner-Experts Programme of UNIDO, as well as its Programme for Country Partnership, it is piloting staff exchanges with external partners (governments and academic institutions). In doing so, UNIDO aims to either secure or enhance the expertise relevant to play its part on issues such as artificial intelligence, automation and renewable energy. Those programmes envisage UNIDO staff to work temporarily in partner organizations.

145. Although the review team came across no structured staff-exchange arrangements with the Bretton Woods institutions, some organizations are showing growing interest in exchanges with international and regional financial institutions. WMO is in the process of developing an agreement with the World Bank to support its climate change objectives. UNDP is pursuing mutually beneficial staff exchanges with European financial institutions, such as the current work with the European Investment Bank to provide a conflict prevention and recovery expert in exchange for an expert on blended finance. UNDP is trying to reach an agreement with the World Bank on a bilateral partnership framework to shift from ad hoc arrangements to a mutually agreed one that could include staff exchanges for talent development and sharing knowledge and good practices. Arrangements such as those envisaged with the European Investment Bank and the World Bank should be of wider interest in the United Nations system, where organizations with normative or programmatic capability wish to foster deeper cooperation with financing actors.

146. IFAD is taking initiatives both to strengthen exchange possibilities with international financial institutions and with other non-United Nations system organizations. In relation to the former, it will provide special leave without pay with an assured right of return for a year for staff selected for appointment by international financial institutions. It is also piloting a staff exchange programme in the organizational interest whereby staff members could propose working with non-United Nations organizations for periods of 3 to 6 months. IFAD would continue to pay salary and related costs. Lessons learned from such innovative measures should be shared among other United Nations system organizations.

147. When it comes to private-sector partnerships for staff exchanges, a handful of organizations have applied experience. To support the Generation Unlimited initiative for education, skills development and employment of young people, the Generation Unlimited Global Team, currently hosted by UNICEF, is accessing expertise from Unilever and the International Chamber of Commerce, and discussions are under way with ING Bank about a staff secondment (in addition to already confirmed secondments from the Department for International Development, UNESCO, the African Union Commission and SOS Children's Villages). More broadly and in line with its Strategic Plan – which emphasizes the role of partnerships to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – UNICEF advises that it seeks to engage highly specialized individuals from all sectors, including the private sector, as experts on mission to UNICEF. This would help UNICEF to realize skills transfer, access the expertise it lacks and deepen mutual understanding and support career development. As the 2012 Agreement does not address these modalities, UNICEF legal specialists are working to formulate the necessary arrangements to send and to receive personnel to and from private

<sup>82</sup> Young UN: Agents for Change. "Young UN temperature check: UN reforms". Available at [young-un.org](http://young-un.org). Accessed on 20 November 2019.

<sup>83</sup> UNIDO defines the "Fourth Industrial Revolution" as "characterized by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres". The technologies today include artificial intelligence, robotics, the Internet of Things, autonomous vehicles, 3-D printing, nanotechnology, biotechnology, materials science, energy storage and quantum computing. See UNIDO, "Industry 4.0: Opportunities and challenges of the new Industrial Revolution for developing countries and economies in transition", 2016.

sector and other external organizations. ITC drew on another non-United Nations actor (DHL) for a secondment to work on logistics in Africa. As part of UNDP efforts to increase private sector engagement aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals, UNDP sees benefits in the exchange of expertise whereby UNDP would learn how the private sector operates and draw on their financial literacy, and they would in return benefit from learning about development and the Goals.

148. Nevertheless, such exchanges with non-United Nations actors remain rare, slow to process and difficult to realize. Some organizations faced challenges in terms of privileges and immunities. Attention needs to be paid to due diligence, conflicts of interest and transparent processes.<sup>84</sup>

149. There is merit in enabling staff exchanges with financial institutions, foundations and the private sector in support of programmatic partnerships and staff development, on the basis of risk-informed measures. **The Administrator of UNDP, the Executive Director of UNICEF, the Executive Director of UNFPA and other executive heads are urged to document the experiences gained and to share it with the CEB secretariat, which should also gather information on analogous experiences in other organizations to build the basis for drawing lessons and recommending good practices.**

150. Health sector organizations based in Geneva drew attention to the opportunity for staff exchanges within a global health cluster, including United Nations system organizations. The Global Fund saw this as relevant in the areas of supply chains, public health and epidemiology, monitoring and evaluation, multilingual health-product management specialists and French-speaking experts. The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization would be open to more structured secondment programmes with the United Nations in the health sector, in particular for vaccination campaigns. As non-career organizations, the Global Alliance and the Global Fund indicated their interest in facilitating the outward movement of their staff. **The executive heads of WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, and UNAIDS should explore the feasibility of a developing staff-exchange arrangements with international organizations from outside the United Nations system, such as the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization and the Global Fund.**

## F. Consider the practices of other international organizations

151. The Inspector met with international organizations outside the United Nations system, and certain features of their practices may be of interest (see annex III for further information). The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization and the Global Fund are not career organizations: GAVI's average tenure is 4.7 years. Both apply social security measures supportive of transition, including arrangements that enable departing staff members to access the organization's contribution as well as their own. A small portion of the Global Fund's staffing comes from secondment and loan arrangements under which it receives temporary staff personnel, including from non-governmental organizations, foundations and the private sector. Service is for one year but can be extended exceptionally. United Nations organizations interested in staff exchanges with the private sector might be interested in how both the Alliance and the Fund function in this respect in view of, respectively, their character as public-private partnerships and experience with accessing private sector expertise (e.g. the Global Fund was able to access expertise from Unilever for its work on supply chain issues, in cooperation with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation).

152. Both the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank operate schemes that enable staff to leave and work elsewhere for a time, as well as other vehicles for professional development. The Fund maintains 60 slots for leave without pay in the interests of the Fund. While they do not contribute to the pension scheme during their absence, staff can buy back the pension contribution when they return, and the Fund

<sup>84</sup> See JIU/REP/2017/8.

would contribute its share. The Fund also engages in swaps with other international financial institutions and enables individual study programmes. The World Bank operates an “external service without pay” scheme that allows staff to work for another entity from 6 months to 4 years, allowing them to buy health insurance through the World Bank and to contribute the staff member’s part of the pension scheme. It also operates a donor-funded staffing programme whereby the World Bank advertises areas of work in need of support through specific terms of reference and donors bid against them. The selected expert’s salary is then charged against a national trust fund. There are about 300 such contracts per year.

## V. System culture

153. Over a long period of time, inter-agency mechanisms and JIU have expressed the need for cultural change to break down barriers to the movement of people. Although dated, the observations made for an ICSC review of inter-agency mobility were echoed in interviews conducted for the current review. It was noted that there was little evidence of a United Nations culture in place at present. Many people in the system, including many of those in managerial positions, saw themselves as working for their current organization and did not see themselves as part of the common system, except in some very distant manner. The assumption was that people worked within, and should be loyal to their own part of the system: their own agency, fund or programme. There was an almost subconscious belief that someone wanting to move between agencies was being in some way disloyal.

154. While a system-wide approach in the staffing arena is not evident, opportunities to strengthen a system culture are available.

### A. Reinforce the United Nations system leadership framework

155. Certain vectors for a more unified, system-wide thinking are taking shape and should be built upon. The United Nations system leadership framework adopted by CEB sets out characteristics and behaviours of United Nations leaders that involve, among other things, discarding old silos, applying One United Nations thinking and modelling behaviour. Recognizing the influence of leaders on organizational culture, the framework is premised on strengthening the United Nations management culture at all levels as a prerequisite for other meaningful change.<sup>85</sup> The Inspector recalls an earlier, and in key respects, even more ambitious initiative by CEB to develop a Senior Management Service as a basis for a common pool of leaders<sup>86</sup> that had not materialized. The new leadership framework is to be adapted and applied by organizations. Insofar as it is intended to shape common values and behaviours, it would influence system culture. The recent initiation of a United Nations Learning Advisory Council to provide system-wide thought leadership and interdisciplinary expertise on knowledge and learning related to the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>87</sup> is a welcome step in the same direction. The measures that CEB envisaged for operationalizing the framework included promoting the concept of staff mobility, both vertical and horizontal, inside the organizations and across United Nations agencies, and launching an inter-agency initiative to develop United Nations leaders aligned with the framework.<sup>88</sup> These approaches can contribute to overcoming real or perceived barriers to inter-agency movement.

156. The following recommendation is intended to strengthen coherence and harmonization of a system-wide culture through a shared leadership framework.

#### **Recommendation 7**

**The Secretary-General, working with other executive heads, should assess the impact of the United Nations system leadership framework on the development of a common management culture supportive of a One United Nations mindset and report to the Economic and Social Council at its 2022 session in the context of his report on the work of CEB.** They should also consider the possibility of using this framework to strengthen a common management culture in United Nations organizations through the inter-agency mobility of a pool of managers, as had been envisaged through a Senior Management Service that CEB had planned to implement in 2004.

<sup>85</sup> CEB/2017/1, paras. 20–21, 29 and 31.

<sup>86</sup> CEB/2004/3, para. 36 and annex IV.

<sup>87</sup> A/74/73-E/2019/14, para. 58.

<sup>88</sup> CEB/2017/1, para. 27.

## B. Confer internal candidate status on United Nations system staff

157. Conferring internal candidate status on United Nations system staff would make a practical statement about all belonging to the same system: a set of barriers removed. In its 2003 statement on inter-agency mobility, CEB undertook to give staff members of all United Nations common system organizations equal access and consideration for employment opportunities on a competitive basis with due regard for organization placement, rotation, and internal mobility policies.<sup>89</sup> To date, this has not happened, which is shown by the inclusion of internal candidate status as one of the intended deliverables of the High-Level Committee on Management strategic plan for 2013–2016.

158. The relevance of internal candidate status for how selection processes work varies significantly among organizations; it is not a panacea for inter-agency mobility. It is a signal of belonging to a single system, and a signal that the organizations themselves have undertaken to send. Too facile an approach will not be implemented. For example, when posts are abolished, organizations and the staff associations will insist that particular consideration be given to affected staff. Organizations that operate rotational schemes so that the burden of hardship locations is shared will need the space to plan such rotations. With such considerations in mind, a reformulated version of the 2010 JIU recommendation is presented.

159. The following recommendation is intended to strengthen coherence and harmonization, as well as to enhance coordination and cooperation, among United Nations system organizations.

### Recommendation 8

**Executive heads should enable all United Nations system staff members to compete for vacant posts on a basis equal to that established for their own staff, while considering downsizing contexts, the abolition of posts and positions, and the administration of rotational placements.**

160. In its comments on the previous JIU recommendation on internal candidate status, CEB noted that an inter-agency project was under way to open vacancies for General Service positions in the field to other common system organizations.<sup>90</sup> According to the report of the High-Level Committee on Management on the results of its strategic plan for 2013–2016, that project resulted in a newly established recruitment framework for General Service staff and national officers that allowed for seamless recruitment and mobility of all staff as internal candidates among all organizations of the United Nations country team, sweeping away one of the biggest obstacles to integration and working together at the country level.<sup>91</sup> If this is in fact the case, concrete action to ensure it is put into effect should be taken. If they do not implement recommendation 8 above, **executive heads should at the very least reflect in their staff rules or other appropriate administrative issuances, that General Service staff and national officers of all United Nations system organizations will be considered as internal candidates.**

## C. Address regulatory and procedural barriers to inter-agency mobility

161. Another practical issue that helps frame both the cultural and operational environment is the harmonization of human resources regulations and rules. Since this is an old issue that has had limited traction over the years, the number organizations that saw it as necessary for an effective inter-agency mobility system was surprising. JIU had

<sup>89</sup> CEB/2003/5, p. 8.

<sup>90</sup> A/66/355/Add.1, para. 10.

<sup>91</sup> CEB/2016/HLCM/3, p. 21.

in 2010 recommended the formulation of a plan for one set of common staff regulations and rules applicable to the whole common system.<sup>92</sup>

162. With regard to this recommendation, CEB commented that the differences were less in the regulations and rules than in the administrative issuances, procedures and guidelines that shaped the implementation of those regulations and rules.<sup>93</sup> In view of the limited progress made in past efforts to harmonize staff regulations and rules and the more recent emergence of an emphasis on mutual recognition of rules and procedures, an approach focused on overcoming barriers is proposed. ITU submissions for this review also drew attention to the need to harmonize procedural frameworks, such as for the administration of entitlements and onboarding, as well as regulatory frameworks.

163. It should also be recalled that in 2010, ICSC decided to request its secretariat to compile all barriers to harmonization of human resources management policies in the common system, and to identify areas where action would be necessary.<sup>94</sup> **The ICSC secretariat could usefully complete or update this barrier analysis.**

164. UNIDO and ITU expressed to JIU the need for a central mechanism to address certain facets of inter-agency mobility, such as overall coordination, resolving disputes, supporting common application of the 2012 Agreement and facilitating exchanges with external organizations. In the view of ITU, such a mechanism could, inter alia, assess the competency profiles of applicants for potential reassignments and develop common functional definitions. **While the review process did not uncover a broadly-based desire among organizations for new machinery, the High-Level Committee on Management could usefully discuss what improved mechanisms are required to support inter-agency mobility.**

165. The following recommendation is intended to strengthen coherence and harmonization of the inter-agency mobility regime by enabling a common framework for its implementation.

#### **Recommendation 9**

**The Secretary-General and other executive heads who are members of CEB should, by the end of 2021, define how the mutual recognition of rules and procedures will be applied to overcome regulatory and procedural barriers to inter-agency mobility, and report on measures taken to the Economic and Social Council at its 2022 session in the context of the annual report of the Secretary-General on the work of CEB.**

### **D. Consider the impact of the resident coordinator reform on inter-agency mobility**

166. The reform of the resident coordinator system can have an important influence on “thinking as one” in support of and stimulate more organization-driven interest in inter-agency mobility. The enhanced role of the resident coordinator has increased the interest of organizations to provide candidates. The establishment of the resident coordinator function, the Development Coordination Office and the enlarged resident coordinator offices, with hundreds of posts under United Nations Secretariat contracts, will throw a spotlight on the need for agile inter-agency mobility mechanisms. While the United Nations Secretariat can house those functions, it remains to be seen if it is able to provide a home for the people after the assignments are over, as those functions are not required in quantity in other parts of the Secretariat. This will also draw attention to the right of return. **The Secretary-General is urged to document the experience with inter-agency mobility for the needs of the resident coordinator system, including the Development**

<sup>92</sup> JIU/REP/2010/8, recommendation 3.

<sup>93</sup> A/66/355/Add.1, para. 8.

<sup>94</sup> A/65/30, para. 27 (d).

**Coordination Office, with a view to identifying improvements to the inter-agency mobility regime.**

## VI. Concluding remarks

167. Inter-agency mobility needs to be approached as a vehicle for improved organizational and system performance, not as an objective or set of procedures. Reducing barriers to staff movement across organizational lines can be part of an architecture that responds both to a requirement for a “system” mindset to enable integrated United Nations system support for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to organization-specific needs to enable staff development and to adapt to changing workforce requirements. The importance of institutional messaging, either in terms of prioritization manifested by leadership, or by incentive systems – including those related to social security arrangements – are very important elements in the equation.

168. Despite there being a common system and the long-standing existence of tools to enable inter-agency mobility, the system is at an early stage in its collective reflection of how it can better function as One United Nations and how the opportunities of permeability of staff within the United Nations system and beyond can contribute. This report has endeavoured to outline measures that organizations can consider in positioning inter-agency mobility within such a policy context.

169. As a cross-organizational issue, inter-agency mobility has not been subject to intergovernmental oversight, beyond action of legislative bodies related to the policies of the organizations they oversee. Member States and legislative bodies have very limited visibility of developments concerning inter-agency mobility and how it contributes either to the performance of the organizations they oversee or to the more integrated functioning of the United Nations system as a whole. In view of the limitations on what the CEB mechanisms have been able to accomplish with respect to inter-agency mobility, and the argument of this report that inter-agency mobility can and should connect to strategic purposes, there is a requirement for more intergovernmental visibility and understanding of how it is developing, of its integration into the human resources policy framework of organizations, and of challenges that demand attention. There is no perfect formula for acquiring this because the work of the CEB mechanisms on inter-agency mobility is not the subject of intergovernmental review. However, as the General Assembly has on occasion requested that reviews be prepared by ICSC, there is no reason not to build on this precedent in order to strengthen transparency and accountability with respect to inter-agency mobility. The fact that some organizations see inter-agency mobility as falling within their purview and that of the CEB mechanisms is not incompatible with analysis, advice and reporting by ICSC, enabling the General Assembly to give such consideration to the matter as it considers appropriate.

170. The following recommendation is intended to enhance transparency and accountability in the progress of inter-agency mobility and its integration in human resources management policies.

### **Recommendation 10**

**The General Assembly should request ICSC to examine periodically the status of inter-agency mobility and the degree of its integration into the human resources management policies of organizations, to make recommendations to organizations accordingly and to report its findings to the General Assembly in the context of its consideration of the United Nations common system.**

## Annex I

### Status of implementation of the recommendations contained in the review “Inter-agency staff mobility and work/life balance in the organizations of the United Nations system” (JIU/REP/2010/8)

No	Text of recommendation	Status of implementation
1	The Chief Executives Board for Coordination, through its High-Level Committee on Management, should agree urgently on the contents and uniform use across the United Nations system of one legal instrument to regulate staff mobility among organizations of the United Nations common system. It should also define, inter alia, the respective responsibilities of organizations with regard to the allocation of financial liabilities related to the different types of staff movements.	Implemented
2	The Chief Executives Board for Coordination, through its High-Level Committee on Management, should develop system-wide standards for the systematic collection, monitoring and consistent reporting of staff mobility relevant data, including inter-agency mobility and mobility internal to the respective organizations.	Not implemented
3	The Chief Executives Board for Coordination, through its High-Level Committee on Management, should elaborate a plan of action, including specific deadlines and responsibilities, for the development of one set of common staff regulations and rules applicable to the whole United Nations common system.	Not implemented
4	The executive heads of the organizations of the United Nations common system should review their internal staff mobility and/or staff rotation schemes from a system-wide perspective, in order to make them supportive, consistent and coherent with inter-agency mobility initiatives.	In progress Many organizations are currently re-examining their internal mobility policies
5	In the context of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination, the executive heads of the organizations of the United Nations common system should review their internal relevant rules, with a view to granting that all vacant posts within their respective organizations are open to all United Nations staff members, including those working in other system organizations on an equal basis as those established for their own staff.	Not implemented
6	The Chief Executives Board for Coordination, through its High-Level Committee on Management, should elaborate an inter-agency common system policy, including its legal framework, for new contracts and the subsequent induction of new staff joining any organization of the common system with a view to developing a common system culture.	Not implemented
7	The Chief Executives Board for Coordination should consider introducing new staff rotational/mobility schemes at a system-wide level and with a view to facilitating the voluntary participation of staff in humanitarian and/or peacekeeping activities.	Not implemented

---

<i>No</i>	<i>Text of recommendation</i>	<i>Status of implementation</i>
8	The Chief Executives Board for Coordination should consider introducing new inter-agency staff mobility initiatives at a system-wide level based on the concept of common and specific occupational networks.	Not implemented
9	The legislative bodies of the organizations of the United Nations common system should bring to the attention of the host countries' authorities the need to facilitate the access to local labour markets for the spouses of staff members of international organizations, through, inter alia, the granting of work permits or similar arrangements.	Partially implemented
10	The executive heads of the organizations of the United Nations common system should systematically assess the performance of work/life balance programmes periodically and include, inter alia, a cost-benefit analysis of such programmes as part of their regular performance reporting.	Partially implemented

---

## Annex II

**Table A.1**  
**Evolution of staff movements (transfers, loans and secondments) during the period 2016–2018**

	2016				2017				2018				Total movements	Total staff population (2017)
	Loan	Secondment	Transfer	Total	Loan	Secondment	Transfer	Total	Loan	Secondment	Transfer	Total		
<b>United Nations Secretariat*</b>	32	192	133	357	78	233	136	447	99	212	393	704	<b>1 508</b>	<b>34 170</b>
<b>UNAIDS</b>	1	5	3	9	1	4	10	15	3	3	6	12	<b>36</b>	<b>684</b>
<b>UNCTAD</b>		5		5	1	5		6	1	5	1	7	<b>18</b>	<b>*</b>
<b>ITC</b>	2	3	1	6		1	1	2	1	4	2	7	<b>15</b>	<b>287</b>
<b>UNDP</b>	14	69	..	83	42	84	..	126	51	95	..	146	<b>355</b>	<b>7 177</b>
<b>UNEP</b>	2	2	4	8	3	1	7	11	0	4	10	14	<b>33</b>	<b>*</b>
<b>UNFPA</b>	6	18	19	43	9	13	27	49	14	19	28	61	<b>153</b>	<b>2 658</b>
<b>UN-Habitat</b>				0				0				0	<b>0</b>	<b>*</b>
<b>UNHCR</b>	9	21	22	52	16	21	22	59	13	9	25	47	<b>158</b>	<b>9 740</b>
<b>UNICEF</b>	9	92	33	134	13	88	23	124	13	80	20	113	<b>371</b>	<b>12 806</b>
<b>UNOPS</b>	..	..	..	0	..	..	..	0	..	..	..	0	<b>0</b>	<b>764</b>
<b>UNODC</b>	..	..	..	0	..	..	..	0	..	..	..	0	<b>0</b>	<b>*</b>
<b>UN-Women</b>	0	16	10	26	3	10	11	24	1	17	16	34	<b>84</b>	<b>825</b>
<b>WFP</b>	5	16	15	36	8	11	16	35	7	9	10	26	<b>97</b>	<b>6 091</b>
<b>FAO</b>	6	4	0	10	3	2	9	14	3	3	22	28	<b>52</b>	<b>3 134</b>
<b>IAEA</b>	..	..	..	0	..	..	..	0	..	..	..	0	<b>0</b>	<b>2 394</b>
<b>ICAO</b>	0	0	6	6	1	0	11	12	1	3	5	9	<b>27</b>	<b>795</b>
<b>IMO</b>	0	1	3	4	0	2	2	4	0	0	1	1	<b>9</b>	<b>270</b>
<b>ITU</b>		1	1	2		3	2	5		1	3	4	<b>11</b>	<b>680</b>
<b>UNESCO</b>	0	0	6	6	0	0	5	5	0	0	9	9	<b>20</b>	<b>2 148</b>
<b>UNIDO</b>	0	1	3	4	0	0	3	3	0	1	0	1	<b>8</b>	<b>617</b>
<b>UNWTO</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>ILO</b>	2	3	5	10	2	2	6	10	4	4	5	13	<b>33</b>	<b>3 008</b>
<b>UPU</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	<b>2</b>	<b>178</b>

	2016				2017				2018				Total movements	Total staff population (2017)
	Loan	Secondment	Transfer	Total	Loan	Secondment	Transfer	Total	Loan	Secondment	Transfer	Total		
<b>WHO</b>	5	9	30	44	10	11	42	63	13	9	34	56	<b>163</b>	<b>8 049</b>
<b>WIPO</b>	1	1	7	9	4	2	2	8	..	3	6	9	<b>26</b>	<b>1 159</b>
<b>WMO</b>	0	0	3	3	1	1	0	2	2	0	3	5	<b>10</b>	<b>324</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>857</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>1 026</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>1 306</b>	<b>3 189</b>	<b>98 045</b>

*Note:*

UNESCO: Transfers usually start as secondments. Secondments are not counted separately.

UNWTO has only applied special leave without pay in these cases.

UNOPS does not currently track the data in the form used above.

\* Total staff population for the United Nations also includes staff from UNCTAD, UNEP, UNODC and UN-Habitat.

**Table A.2**  
**Evolution of staff movements between sending and receiving organizations during the period 2013–2018**

	<i>Sending</i>				<i>Receiving</i>				<i>Movements balance</i>	<i>Total staff population (2017)</i>
	<i>Loan</i>	<i>Secondment</i>	<i>Transfer</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Loan</i>	<i>Secondment</i>	<i>Transfer</i>	<i>Total</i>		
<b>United Nations Secretariat*</b>	128	421	336	885	156	738	471	1 365	<b>+480</b>	<b>34 170</b>
<b>UNAIDS</b>	7	16	25	48	1	9	4	14	<b>-34</b>	<b>684</b>
<b>UNCTAD</b>	1	25		26			2	2	<b>-24</b>	<b>*</b>
<b>ITC</b>	2	7	7	16	1	3	3	7	<b>-9</b>	<b>287</b>
<b>UNDP</b>	144	215	..	359	37	309	..	346	<b>-13</b>	<b>7 177</b>
<b>UNEP</b>				0				0		<b>*</b>
<b>UNFPA</b>	51	46	66	163	7	45	96	148	<b>-15</b>	<b>2 658</b>
<b>UN-Habitat</b>				0				0		<b>*</b>
<b>UNHCR</b>	45	28	42	115	17	64	68	149	<b>+34</b>	<b>9 740</b>
<b>UNICEF</b>	62	234	78	374	26	269	69	364	<b>-10</b>	<b>12 806</b>
<b>UNOPS</b>	..	..	..		..	..	..			<b>764</b>
<b>UNODC</b>	..	..	..		..	..	..			<b>*</b>
<b>UN-Women</b>	1	22	19	42	4	59	61	124	<b>+82</b>	<b>825</b>
<b>WFP</b>	33	59	44	136	5	16	42	63	<b>-73</b>	<b>6 091</b>
<b>FAO</b>	4	6	12	22	10	10	21	41	<b>+19</b>	<b>3 134</b>
<b>IAEA</b>	..	..	..		..	..	..			<b>2 394</b>
<b>ICAO</b>	4	4	10	18		5	18	23	<b>5</b>	<b>795</b>
<b>IMO</b>	0	3	0	3	0	5	8	13	<b>+10</b>	<b>270</b>
<b>ITU</b>				0				0		<b>680</b>
<b>UNESCO</b>	0	0	29	29	0	0	25	25	<b>-4</b>	<b>2 148</b>
<b>UNIDO</b>	1	4	8	13	0	0	4	4	<b>-9</b>	<b>617</b>
<b>UNWTO</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		<b>87</b>
<b>ILO</b>	10	10	7	27	6	9	25	40	<b>+13</b>	<b>3 008</b>
<b>UPU</b>	0	0	1	1	0	1	2	3	<b>+2</b>	<b>178</b>

	<i>Sending</i>				<i>Receiving</i>				<i>Movements balance</i>	<i>Total staff population (2017)</i>
	<b>Loan</b>	<b>Secondment</b>	<b>Transfer</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Loan</b>	<b>Secondment</b>	<b>Transfer</b>	<b>Total</b>		
<b>WHO</b>	15	4	77	96	27	50	127	204	<b>+108</b>	<b>8 049</b>
<b>WIPO</b>	..	1	6	7	8	9	18	35	<b>+28</b>	<b>1 159</b>
<b>WMO</b>	2	1	3	6	1	2	8	11	<b>+5</b>	<b>324</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>1 106</b>	<b>770</b>	<b>2 386</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>1 603</b>	<b>1 072</b>	<b>2 981</b>	<b>+595</b>	<b>98 045</b>

## Annex III

### Practices of other international organizations

#### Global Fund and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization

1. The Global Fund is a public-private partnership with a workforce entirely based at headquarters in Geneva. It applies a provident fund scheme which allows its members to access the employer's contribution as well as the staff member's when leaving the organization. The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization is a small, non-career, public-private partnership organization, with headquarters based in Geneva and Washington, D.C. As with the Global Fund, the main objective of the Alliance is to attract and retain talent, while creating opportunities for its staff to move outside the organization and potentially come back. In addition, the pension scheme of the Alliance, like that of the Global Fund, does not incentivize long tenure. Staff members can take both the organization's contributions and their own when leaving the organization.

2. The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization advises that it invests in talent management with a human-centred approach, using temporary positions to expand talented staff's expertise but also having a competency framework focused on management skills and valuing development rather than solely emphasizing results and performance. The Alliance applies what it calls the 70-20-10 staff development rule, which prioritizes experience, then coaching and, finally, classroom learning. With this framework, staff owns its career development and managers are held accountable for supporting it.

3. Investing in people is an organizational priority for the Global Fund. Learning opportunities are mapped against a competency framework and are designed to enhance capabilities in the skills, behaviours and knowledge areas essential to achieving its mission. The Global Fund has developed a tiered leadership development framework including blended learning solutions for people managers up to the Management Executive Committee and Executive Director. Complementing the catalogue offered by human resources, further learning takes place through sophisticated technical training created and delivered by internal subject matter experts.

#### International Monetary Fund

4. The organization continues to see itself as a career service in which external mobility is not a priority. Nevertheless, it supports external mobility activity through three different modalities: a programme for leave without pay in the interest of the International Monetary Fund; the swap or staff exchange programme, and the loan programme. The leave without pay programme takes prominence. Its organizational lens is ensured by the role of the approval committee, which clears all requests. The staff exchange programme is driven by the organization's departments for ownership purposes. The loan programme has only been applied with the World Bank for practical affordability issues. Staff could move to the World Bank for a maximum of three years while the receiving entity would pay for the staff costs through an invoice sent by the Fund. The loan programme has now been suspended upon the request of the World Bank, which considered it too expensive to operate. The World Bank now only accepts Fund staff under the leave without pay option. The Fund observed that its compensation arrangements, which were costly, helped to make secondments difficult to realize.

#### World Bank

5. The World Bank Group provides two modalities for staff movement: external services without pay and leave without pay. The former allows staff to leave the Bank for periods of between 6 months and 4 years in order to work for another organization. While the salary is paid by the receiving organization, the staff member is allowed to continue contributing his or her share of pension payments into the Bank's pension (the employer's share is suspended) and to buy health insurance through the Bank. The leave without pay option allows staff to

leave the organization for up to four years for study or family reasons; however, working elsewhere is not allowed under this option. The Bank also operates a donor-funded staffing programme whereby the World Bank advertises areas of work in need of support from donor countries.

#### **Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe**

6. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is a large, non-career organization with a term-limit policy and a unique business model whereby most staff members are supplied by seconding government authorities, each having a specific ad hoc agreement with the Organization. As a result, the Organization has a strong relationship with Member States. The Organization is not a party to the 2012 Agreement, nor does it participate in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, which seem to point to an absence of analogy between the Organization and the United Nations system.

#### **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization**

7. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization is a non-career organization with term limits for its Professional staff. Mobility, together with substantial outreach activities to the scientific community, is part of its business model, but not a preoccupation as such. It accepted the statute of ICSC in November 2016 and has progressively come to apply United Nations common system practices based on ICSC standards. As at 1 January 2019, it participates in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund. The Organization is not party to the 2012 Agreement; it is an observer to the High-Level Committee on Management Human Resources Network, while not part of CEB.

#### **Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons**

8. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is not a career organization. It rigorously applies a seven-year term limit to its Professional staff. Time on secondment assignments would be counted toward the seven-year tenure. Not a party to the Inter-Organization Agreement, exchanges with organizations who are party to the Agreement use it as a point of departure. This has enabled loans from ICAO and the International Criminal Court and secondments to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigation Mechanism.

#### **International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

9. With a workforce of about 1,600 staff members (of which 600 are Geneva-based or international staff, while 1,000 are field-based), the staff of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are typically long-serving with small turnover. It has a talent pool that enables mobility, but it is not yet required. It has historically had secondment arrangements with national red cross societies. The national society may fund the secondee, or in some cases, the Federation and the national society both contribute. Officials of the Federation indicate there is growing awareness in the Federation of the benefits that could be derived from staff exchanges. It sees an affinity with organizations with a similar operating model, such as Oxfam.

## Annex IV

### Overview of actions to be taken by participating organizations on the recommendations of the Joint Investigation Unit

		Intended impact	United Nations, its funds and programmes														Specialized agencies and IAEA															
			CEB	United Nations*	UNAIDS	UNCTAD	ITC	UNDP	UNEP	UNFPA	UN-Habitat	UNHCR	UNICEF	UNOPS	UNRWA	UN-Women	WFP	FAO	IAEA	ICAO	ILO	IMO	ITU	UNESCO	UNIDO	UNWTO	UPU	WHO	WIPO	WMO		
Report	For action		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	For information		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recommendation 1		a		E																												
Recommendation 2		a		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	
Recommendation 3		f		E	E	E		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	
Recommendation 4		a		E	E	E		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	
Recommendation 5		f		E										E																		
Recommendation 6		f		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	
Recommendation 7		d		E	E	E		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	
Recommendation 8		d		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	
Recommendation 9		d		E	E	E		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	
Recommendation 10		a		L																												

**Legend:**

**L:** Recommendation for decision by legislative organ

**E:** Recommendation for action by executive head

: Recommendation does not require action by this organization

**Intended impact:** **a:** enhanced transparency and accountability **b:** dissemination of good/best practices **c:** enhanced coordination and cooperation **d:** strengthened coherence and harmonization **e:** enhanced control and compliance **f:** enhanced effectiveness **g:** significant financial savings **h:** enhanced efficiency **i:** other.