



**United Nations**

# **Business continuity management in United Nations system organizations**

**Report of the Joint Inspection Unit**

**Prepared by Eileen A. Cronin and Victor Moraru**





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*Executive summary***Business continuity management in United Nations system organizations**

Business continuity is defined as the capability of an organization to continue delivery of essential and time-critical services at acceptable predefined levels during and/or following a disruptive incident. Effective business continuity management is necessary to ensure the continuity of operations at all organizational levels as United Nations system organizations often operate in volatile environments and can be exposed to disruptions due to natural and human-made disasters.

A decade ago, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) completed its first review of business continuity in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2011/6), in which it found that business continuity management was nascent at the time; only a handful of organizations had approved business continuity policies or plans in place and even fewer had begun implementation in a comprehensive way. The present review, which was requested by participating organizations, was carried out in the midst of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and aims to provide an examination of the current business continuity management policies and practices in the United Nations system.

The prolonged COVID-19 pandemic has forced United Nations system organizations to continue to operate under extraordinary circumstances and take measures to sustain continual delivery of its core mandates. This has become a challenge for all United Nations system organizations in almost all administrative areas and operational processes, while also affecting the substantive activities of the legislative organs and governing bodies of the United Nations system.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, major disruptive incidents within the United Nations system were relatively rare but not uncommon, with some being extraordinary.

In the United Nations system, the concept of business continuity was tied to the need for pandemic influenza preparedness in the early 2000s, after which it gradually expanded to continuity planning in a wider sense, covering multiple organizational activities and applying a multi-hazards approach in order to reflect the variety of risks facing organizations.

As a result of several General Assembly resolutions between 2005 and 2010 aimed at implementing business continuity management in all United Nations Secretariat locations, in a comprehensive and coordinated way, an integrated approach eventually emerged. Between 2011 and 2014, the concept of organizational resilience management was first introduced with the aim of better coordinating efforts in the United Nations Secretariat in terms of safety and security emergency operations, business continuity planning, personnel and victim support, medical planning, information technology and disaster recovery planning. In April 2013, the General Assembly approved the organizational resilience management system proposed by the Secretary-General as the emergency management framework for the United Nations encompassing all these areas.

In this framework, the concept of organizational resilience embraces many different organizational aspects and identifies business continuity as a key contributor to organizational resilience. In 2014, the policy on the organizational resilience management system was first approved by the High-level Committee on Management and endorsed by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) to strengthen the resilience of each of its member organizations as well as the United Nations system community at each duty station. Organizational resilience is defined in the policy as the ability to anticipate, prepare for, prevent, mitigate, respond to and recover from an interruptive incident and its aim is for an organization to anticipate and respond to threats and opportunities arising from sudden or gradual changes in its internal and external environments.

## Objectives of the present review

This review was carried out on a system-wide basis and included all JIU participating organizations.

The purpose of the present review is to inform legislative organs, governing bodies and executive heads about the status of the utilization and integration of business continuity policies, plans, processes and practices across United Nations system organizations and to identify good practices and lessons learned to guide their decisions concerning ongoing and future initiatives. The objectives of this review were to assess the status of business continuity management policies, practices and capacities across United Nations system organizations; to review progress made during the past decade since the previous JIU report on the subject; to analyse how business continuity management across the United Nations system actually operated in managing the interruptions and disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic through a case study; and to identify business continuity management accountability and oversight measures.

## Main findings

### Policy guidance and core elements for business continuity management

Participating organizations have indicated that the United Nations system-wide policy on the organizational resilience management system has been a driver for developing their individual policies and/or other aspects of business continuity management guidance, as have internationally recognized professional standards. Through an analysis of the policy endorsed by CEB and the standard of the International Organization for Standardization on “security and resilience – business continuity management systems – requirements” (ISO 22301), as well as document reviews of existing business continuity management-related policies of participating organizations, JIU has identified core elements to support a comprehensive approach to business continuity management. The 11 core elements, which cover high-level areas on the promulgation of policies and elements related to business continuity plans, can be contained within a larger policy framework, such as one covering organizational resilience, a stand-alone policy on business continuity management and/or related guidelines. Based on validations of the elements, very few participating organizations fully reflect all 11 core elements in their frameworks, with significant gaps in areas such as capturing lessons learned and applying quality assurance measures, coupled with insufficient clarity in the maintenance, exercise and review regimes for business continuity plans.

An organization operating without an effective business continuity management framework runs the risk of incoherent and uncoordinated responses to interruptions and disruptions thereby amplifying crises and degrading organizational resilience. The COVID-19 pandemic served as a real-time stress test for business continuity management in the United Nations system. During the pandemic, many participating organizations have reconsidered the adequacy of their business continuity management reference documents and the effectiveness of their practices, with 16 updating policies or guidelines in the past two years. Officials from as many as 20 participating organizations have indicated that the pandemic will likely prompt new or further revisions to their current business continuity frameworks and/or related practices.

### Internal capacity to support business continuity management

Organizational arrangements for business continuity management point to less than a quarter of the participating organizations having a separate and distinct business continuity management function, either in the form of a dedicated unit tasked to ensure a coordinated

approach to business continuity management or a business continuity coordinator designated with a corporate role in this regard. The United Nations Secretariat and the World Food Programme are the only participating organizations with a dedicated unit aimed at supporting a coordinated approach to business continuity management activities and only the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Intellectual Property Organization have a full-time dedicated business continuity coordinator function. Most participating organizations identify the coordination of business continuity management as shared with another function, such as enterprise risk management or safety and security, in some cases the duties are within the portfolio of a senior official, and generally with a shared approach the percentage of time devoted to this responsibility is low. The remaining organizations rely primarily on a network of focal points, distributed across units, offices and locations, to address business continuity management activities. While the use of focal points is necessary in many organizations with extensive field networks, more attention needs to be paid to their training and to defining their particular roles and responsibilities.

The conclusion reached in the 2011 JIU report regarding the capacity dedicated to business continuity management among participating organizations was that it was weak and needed more attention. While some improvements have been noted in the current review, the capacity to support business continuity management should be revisited as more frequent and prolonged disruptive incidents have the potential to become more common. In the same vein, the reporting line of the business continuity coordinator to senior management, as well as the integration of business continuity management with other processes and procedures, such as enterprise risk management, may also require re-examination.

## **Business continuity planning processes and practices**

The processes and practices associated with business continuity planning are foundational for integrating and embedding business continuity management in organizations. In the 2011 JIU review only 6 of the 15 organizations covered by that review were considered to have adequate business continuity plans in place, while the others had no plans or only draft plans that had yet to be approved. As of the publication of the present report, all but three participating organizations responding to the present review have business continuity plans in place and all organizations with plans in place report that they maintain plans at multiple levels, including at headquarters and field locations.

In developing and updating such plans, the involvement of and consultations with other functions can be crucial to identify available resources and potential risks. In many participating organizations, the planning process is inclusive and comprehensive, calling on the experience and expertise of a variety of functions. While this is a positive finding in the present review, given the impact on the occupational health and safety of staff in the recent pandemic, the Inspectors encourage executive heads to include consultations with medical and counselling services in their business continuity planning processes.

In 2011, the Inspectors observed a disconnect between organizational risk management and business continuity. In the present review, the link between risk management and business continuity may require more effort to truly capitalize on its complementary potential. More than 85 per cent of the chief risk officers indicated that their corporate risk register was shared with the business continuity coordinator and that they believed that that resource was being referenced. However, only 68 per cent of business continuity coordinators indicated that they actually used the risk register in developing business continuity plans. Regular and substantive interactions between enterprise risk management and business continuity management functions are essential for risk identification, response and management at both the strategic and operational levels, and should be facilitated and encouraged by senior leaders.

As the primary reference for the continuity of operations, a business continuity plan should guide an organization in keeping the most critical operations functioning, to the extent possible, during and following disruptive incidents, to minimize downtime and recover as quickly as possible. Between 2014 and 2019, less than half of the participating organizations,

and to a large extent those with extensive field networks, had activated their business continuity plans. As the COVID-19 pandemic has provided a real-time test for business continuity management, it also has exposed shortcomings in some business continuity plans, which in some cases had never been activated before 2020. Several officials of participating organizations acknowledged their concerns over plans that had not been updated or sufficiently tested and that proved to be overly lengthy and complicated, difficult to implement and/or were not useful in responding to a particular crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Maintenance, exercise and review practices and requirements**

Provisions for maintaining, exercising and reviewing business continuity plans are essential to ensure that plans are not only updated regularly with new or emerging risks, but also serve to prepare staff and embed business continuity management as a dynamic and iterative practice. According to the responses provided to JIU questionnaires, 13 organizations have established criteria to update their business continuity plans and 10 have not. In the context of collecting baseline data related to the testing of business continuity plans prior to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Inspectors noted that only five participating organizations had actually tested their business continuity plans prior to the pandemic, apart from the period leading up to the widespread shutdowns, indicating that the maintenance, exercise and review regimes in place may need to be revisited on a regular basis, and that such periodicity, once established, should be adhered to and include accountability for follow-up actions.

Lessons learned from disruptive incidents and the activation of business continuity plans can be an important contributor to organizational resilience and can better prepare an organization for future incidents. A more disciplined approach to this type of learning will require conducting reviews after each disruptive incident to gather data regarding the efficacy of the particular response and the adequacy of the business continuity plan used, as well as more comprehensive periodic management reviews to provide assessments regarding business continuity management performance after a particularly severe incident, or in the course of reviewing or updating policies or guidelines.

Most participating organizations conduct outreach and/or training activities regarding business continuity management for staff and several conduct tabletop or simulation exercises based on specific scenarios. This type of training enables participants to practice their business continuity duties in simulated scenarios, familiarize themselves with procedures and may also help to reveal any “gaps” in a business continuity plan that need to be addressed. Participating organizations should assess their approach to business continuity management training and outreach activities in order to reach personnel at multiple levels, to develop teamwork and to facilitate confidence and competence regarding the roles and responsibilities inherent in responding to disruptive incidents.

### **Independent oversight and business continuity management**

There has been a marked increase during the past 10 years with regard to internal audits concerning business continuity, with 13 participating organizations reporting that their internal oversight offices have covered the topic in the past 5 years alone. These reviews have, for the most part, examined only some aspects of business continuity management, such as business continuity plans as part of country office audits or recovery plans related to information and communications technology. Among the least addressed in this area, as indicated by internal oversight offices, is overall business continuity management.

While external auditors and audit and oversight committees have provided advice and oversight to participating organizations with regard to aspects of business continuity management, given the operational aspects of the topic and its linkages to other processes, internal oversight offices are best placed to conduct comprehensive reviews of business continuity management policies and practices and should do so to capture lessons learned



and good practices of their organizations, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to verify if current arrangements are fit for purpose going forward.

## **Inter-agency coordination**

Following the adoption of the organizational resilience management system by the General Assembly, a system-wide commitment through the High-level Committee on Management was forged to “develop a common organizational resilience management system policy, key performance indicators for emergency management and a maintenance, exercise and review regime” (CEB/2014/3, para. 103). A working group was created and drafted a policy on the organizational resilience management system, which was endorsed in 2014 by CEB, thereby committing its member organizations to its implementation. Considering the linkage between organizational resilience and business continuity, the working group is considered the main body wherein business continuity management is tackled in a system-wide manner under the CEB umbrella and is a key aspect of this policy. The working group was also tasked with developing key performance indicators and a maintenance, exercise and review regime to support the implementation of the policy.

The set of indicators attached to the policy and reported on by United Nations system organizations to the High-level Committee on Management are designed to act as a proxy for an organization’s compliance with, and its implementation of, the policy. While these indicators are not reported to the General Assembly, the policy itself calls for organizations to report to their respective legislative organs and governing bodies on the implementation of the policy. At present, this aspect lacks widespread implementation among participating organizations.

In order to increase system-wide capacity in terms of organizational resilience and business continuity management, the High-level Committee on Management should consider various approaches to encourage the evolution of its working group to focus its efforts on sharing good practices and leveraging other inter-agency networks or communities of practices to add depth to deliverables and to accelerate the implementation of the policy on the organizational resilience management system and its intended coherence system-wide. Additionally, the Committee is encouraged to explore how the policy on the organizational resilience management system (with business continuity management as a key component) is being implemented at the field level to further its application and coordination at all levels, system-wide.

## **COVID-19 case study: early lessons learned and good practices for business continuity management**

Most disruptive incidents are localized, targeted and discreet in nature, lasting a few days or weeks. The COVID-19 pandemic has obviously been a different type of incident, and one that has been, and continues to be, unprecedented in terms of its magnitude, duration and impact. The United Nations system was not untouched by the pandemic as it affected both its internal operations and personnel. At the time of drafting the present report, approximately 20,230 United Nations system personnel and their immediate family members have tested positive for COVID-19, 322 have been medically evacuated and 174 have died as a result of the virus.

A case study regarding business continuity management was developed as a part of this review, which includes early lessons learned and good practices gathered from JIU participating organizations. This case study is framed by four stages of the pandemic: (a) baseline situation (policies and practices in place prior to the pandemic); (b) initial impact and response (how organizations responded during the early stages of the pandemic); (c) adjusted actions (what was put in place to adjust and respond to a prolonged disruptive incident); and (d) going forward (what are the good practices and early lessons learned to enhance business continuity management).

While the current pandemic has seriously tested business continuity management and the organizational resilience of the United Nations system and its organizations, it has already provided an opportunity to gain from good practices and early lessons learned to strengthen business continuity management in the participating organizations as well as other aspects of operations going forward. Some participating organizations have taken the opportunity to conduct internal management assessments during the ongoing pandemic to provide real-time learning. Once the pandemic subsides, structured management assessments should be carried out to determine how the organizations performed in terms of business continuity management during the various phases.

The disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic also reached United Nations system legislative organs and governing bodies, resulting in over 1,500 postponed and cancelled meetings in the second quarter of 2020 alone. Only about half of the participating organizations have a dedicated business continuity plan in case of disruptive events for their legislative organs and governing bodies. Business continuity plans to address disruptions to governance activities, including provisions for virtual meetings and decision-making, are encouraged.

## Conclusions and recommendations

In the past 10 years, substantial progress has been made in many areas of business continuity management across the United Nations system. However, gaps in core elements in business continuity management frameworks and capacity remain and those organizations operating without effective frameworks risk incoherent and uncoordinated responses to crises. The rigour and discipline around maintenance, exercise and review, which are the processes that ensure business continuity management is dynamic and sustained within offices and across an organization, have been found to be lacking sufficient attention in most participating organizations. Linkages to other processes, such as enterprise risk management, will serve to better integrate business continuity management into organizations and will enrich business continuity planning. Relatedly, and based on the early lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, more attention should be paid to occupational safety and health to support personnel during crises – in particular, during long-term disruptive events – pointing to the need to engage medical and counselling units in the development and/or updating of business continuity plans to identify risks and resources.

For business continuity management to contribute to organizational resilience and learning, it must include the discipline to conduct post-crisis reviews to highlight good practices and to address gaps and shortcomings to prepare for future disruptive incidents. Additionally, internal management reviews should be employed to provide a more comprehensive assessment of how various aspects of business continuity management have performed during particularly challenging and/or critical periods to inform revisions to policies and procedures. As most participating organizations have recently revised or plan to revise their business continuity policies, approaches and/or practices, more focus is necessary from oversight offices to ensure accountability. Additionally, inter-agency mechanisms can and should play a role in further integrating the organizational resilience management system policy (and business continuity management as one of its key components) across the United Nations system organizations, which can be enhanced through a requirement to report progress on implementation of the policy to the respective legislative organs and governing bodies of the participating organizations.

The present review contains six formal recommendations, of which one is directed to the legislative organs and governing bodies and five to the executive heads of JIU participating organizations. The formal recommendations are complemented by 19 informal recommendations, indicated in bold text, as additional suggestions that, in the view of the Inspectors, lead to and/or inform the formal recommendations and further enhance business continuity management within the United Nations system.

**Recommendation 1**

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2023, review their business continuity management framework and ensure that the core elements identified in the present report are established and owned by relevant stakeholders to enable effective coordination of business continuity processes and practices, build coherence in their implementation and promote accountability at all levels.

**Recommendation 2**

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2023, ensure that the maintenance, exercise and review components of their business continuity plans are applied through a consistent and disciplined approach to confirm that the plans remain relevant and effective.

**Recommendation 3**

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2023, strengthen their learning mechanisms to contribute to organizational resilience by requiring after-action reviews following disruptive incidents and periodic internal management reviews of their business continuity management frameworks.

**Recommendation 4**

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2024, report to their legislative organs and governing bodies on progress towards the implementation of the policy on the organizational resilience management system and its revised performance indicators, and highlight good practices and lessons learned, especially in the area of business continuity management.

**Recommendation 5**

In 2023, the executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should conduct an internal management assessment of the continuity of business operations during the COVID-19 pandemic to identify gaps, enablers, good practices and lessons learned and adjust policies, processes and procedures, in particular in areas such as human resources, information and communications technology management and occupational safety and health, and indicate necessary measures to better prepare for and respond to future disruptive incidents.

**Recommendation 6**

The legislative organs and governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should consider, at the earliest opportunity, the conclusions of the internal management assessment of the continuity of operations during the COVID-19 pandemic prepared by the executive heads of their respective organizations and, on that basis, take appropriate decisions to address the identified gaps and risks and to ensure continuity of business operations.



## Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Executive summary .....	iii
Acronyms and abbreviations .....	xiii
I. Introduction .....	1
A. Context.....	1
B. Objectives, scope and methodology .....	4
II. A framework for business continuity management.....	7
A. Policy guidance and core elements for business continuity management.....	7
B. Internal capacity is foundational for effective business continuity management.....	12
C. Placement and reporting lines may influence the effectiveness of business continuity management .....	15
III. Business continuity plans: processes and practices .....	17
A. Considerations for developing business continuity plans .....	17
B. Scope and content of business continuity plans.....	20
C. Staff awareness and training to support business continuity management .....	22
D. Maintenance, exercise and review practices and requirements.....	23
E. Business continuity management as a contributor to organizational resilience and learning .....	24
IV. Independent oversight of business continuity management .....	27
A. Internal audit.....	27
B. External audit.....	29
C. Audit and oversight committees .....	30
D. Oversight must be strengthened.....	31
E. Impact of the COVID-19 interruptions on oversight offices .....	32
V. Inter-agency coordination and coherence.....	33
A. The policy on the organizational resilience management system elevated business continuity as a system-wide priority.....	33
B. Business continuity management and organizational resilience at the field level .....	40
VI. COVID-19 case study: good practices and early lessons learned for business continuity management.....	43
A. Stage 1: pre-pandemic baseline (prior to 2020) .....	44
B. Stage 2: initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and response .....	46
C. Stage 3: adjustments made to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic as a prolonged disruptive incident .....	48
D. Stage 4: going forward.....	50
E. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic disruptions on legislative organs and governing bodies .....	52
Annexes	
I. Overview of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit included in the 2011 review of business continuity in the United Nations system .....	56
II. Business continuity management policy frameworks in participating organizations.....	58

III.	Core elements to support a comprehensive approach to business continuity management in participating organizations .....	61
IV.	Organizational arrangements for business continuity management in participating organizations .....	63
V.	Networks of focal points for business continuity in participating organizations.....	67
VI.	Business continuity plans in participating organizations.....	69
VII.	Risk assessment and impact analysis by participating organizations .....	71
VIII.	Outreach and training on business continuity processes and procedures in participating organizations .....	74
IX.	Maintenance, exercise and review practices of business continuity plans in participating organizations .....	76
X.	Business continuity management maturity matrix (developed by the Joint Inspection Unit) .....	78
XI.	Progress measured against the key performance indicators of the organizational resilience management system .....	79
XII.	Business continuity management: good practices and early lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic .....	81
XIII.	Policies and practices for remote working in participating organizations .....	86
XIV.	List of informal recommendations .....	89
XV.	Overview of actions to be taken by the participating organizations on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit .....	91

## Acronyms and 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
ICT	Information and communications technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMO	International Maritime Organization
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
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

### A. Context

1. **The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has made business continuity a priority topic.** The prolonged COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged in late 2019, forced the United Nations system organizations to operate under extraordinary circumstances and take measures to sustain the continuous delivery of their core mandates. It has become a challenge for all United Nations system organizations in almost all administrative areas and operational processes. Against this backdrop, the participating organizations of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) suggested an examination of the policies and practices pertaining to business continuity management in the United Nations system. The present review was included in the JIU programme of work for 2021 and is in line with the thematic areas of focus outlined in the JIU strategic framework for 2020–2029.<sup>1</sup>

2. **JIU found a weak business continuity management framework in 2011.** A decade ago, JIU completed its first review of business continuity in the United Nations system, in which it found that business continuity management was nascent at the time and only a handful of organizations had approved business continuity policies or had plans in place, and even fewer had begun implementation in a comprehensive way. This conclusion was in line with an assessment made by the Secretary-General in 2008 when he stated that for many years business continuity management had been considered only superficially by the United Nations system.<sup>2</sup> The present review includes references to the findings and conclusions of the previous JIU review, as appropriate, and provides statistics on the acceptance and implementation of the nine recommendations made in 2011 (annex I). In many areas, progress has been considerable in comparison with the situation observed in 2011, especially in those entities with business models, activities and outputs that are particularly sensitive to delays and disrupted supply lines. The pandemic constituted a wake-up call in terms of planning, preparedness and response and served as a trigger for improvements and enhancements, especially for the organizations in which business continuity management had attracted less attention on the part of management.

3. **Business continuity arrangements necessary to face and recover from disruptive incidents.** The United Nations system organizations often operate in volatile environments and can be exposed to disruptions due to natural and human-made disasters. Effective business continuity management is necessary to ensure continuity of operations at all organizational levels. Prior to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, major disruptive incidents were relatively rare but not uncommon, and sometimes were extraordinary. The 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States of America brought to light gaps in emergency preparedness and capacity to put business back on track after catastrophic events. Since 2000, attacks on United Nations staff and entities have become more frequent and the United Nations system has begun to improve its security standards. The outbreaks and epidemics of, for example, human avian influenza (1996–2003) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (2002–2004) tested the arrangements that were in place to respond to those public health emergencies of international concern. Several participating organizations reported the activation of business continuity plans at various levels (headquarters, regional or country offices) during the past five years as a result of emergencies such as natural disasters, industrial and civil unrest, and political or social crises. Often, such disruptive incidents demonstrated the need for enhancing and adjusting planning, preparedness, response and recovery, and constituted an opportunity to revise policies and strengthen organizational arrangements for business continuity.

4. **Organizations may face prolonged disruptions.** The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that emergencies can be prolonged and that the United Nations system organizations should also be prepared to maintain their essential business processes for extended periods

<sup>1</sup> A/74/34, annex I.

<sup>2</sup> A/63/584, para. 4.

under uncertain circumstances. One of the threats, climate change, has been described as the “the greatest challenge of our time: a crosscutting, multidimensional threat multiplier”, as well as the “defining narrative of human health” in the years to come – a crisis defined by widespread hunger, respiratory illness, deadly disasters and infectious disease outbreaks that could be even worse than COVID-19”.<sup>3</sup> Going forward, the threats highlight the importance of establishing robust business continuity arrangements for the unexpected and ensuring organizational resilience.

### **From business continuity management to organizational resilience management**

5. **Early developments in terms of business continuity in the United Nations.** The notion of business continuity is not new to the United Nations system. Originally, in perhaps a narrow and traditional view, it was associated with information and communications technology (ICT) and disaster recovery planning. In the United Nations system, the concept of business continuity was most seriously considered as a response to the need to ensure pandemic influenza preparedness. This gradually expanded to a wider scope of continuity planning covering multiple organizational activities, applying a multi-hazards approach in order to reflect the variety of risks facing organizations. Between 2005 and 2006, the United Nations system organizations developed ad hoc coordination structures (an inter-agency steering committee, coordinators and focal points), strategies and contingency plans, again mainly in the context of responding to an influenza pandemic. For example, a United Nations system influenza coordinator was appointed to develop and implement a comprehensive and unified strategy on pandemic influenza prevention, preparedness and response, and to improve efforts to control avian influenza. The United Nations Secretariat, offices away from Headquarters and regional commissions were requested to prepare contingency plans with budgetary requirements that would protect the health, safety and security of personnel and physical assets, and ensure the continuation of the critical functions and operations of the United Nations.<sup>4</sup>

6. **A business continuity management framework for the United Nations Secretariat.** Building on these initiatives, and following a request from the General Assembly in its resolution 62/238 (2007), the Secretary-General submitted a comprehensive report aimed at the implementation of business continuity management in all offices of the United Nations Secretariat, including offices away from Headquarters and regional commissions.<sup>5</sup> The rationale for a strong business continuity management framework, as described in the report, was to minimize the impact of disruptive events on the Organization and to more easily enable recovery from a potential interruption of business processes. In short, business continuity management was seen as assisting the Organization with: (a) ensuring maintenance and recovery of critical business processes after a disruptive event; (b) keeping the impact of disruptive events on day-to-day business to a minimum; and (c) protecting the reputation of the Organization through continuity of services that it is expected to deliver under all circumstances.<sup>6</sup> In a subsequent resolution, the General Assembly pointed to the need to avoid a “piecemeal approach to business continuity” and noted the complementarities and close linkages between ICT disaster recovery and business continuity management.<sup>7</sup>

7. **Emergency management framework and organizational resilience.** In 2010, the General Assembly further stressed the need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach to emergency management, including preparedness and support based on close cooperation and the sharing of best practices and lessons learned among relevant units, agencies, funds and programmes.<sup>8</sup> The following year, the concept of the organizational resilience management system was first introduced with the aim of better coordinating efforts in place in the United Nations Secretariat in terms of safety and security emergency operations,

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<sup>3</sup> High-level meeting on delivering climate action – for people, planet and prosperity, 26 October 2021, see [www.un.org/pga/76/event/deliver\\_climate\\_action](http://www.un.org/pga/76/event/deliver_climate_action) and [www.un.org/sg/en/node/260330](http://www.un.org/sg/en/node/260330).

<sup>4</sup> A/62/7/Add.2, para. 3.

<sup>5</sup> A/63/359.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., para. 16.

<sup>7</sup> General Assembly resolution 63/268.

<sup>8</sup> General Assembly resolution 64/260.

business continuity planning, staff and victim support and medical planning, and information technology and disaster recovery planning.<sup>9</sup> In April 2013, the General Assembly approved the organizational resilience management system proposed by the Secretary-General as the emergency management framework for the United Nations encompassing all these areas.<sup>10</sup> In the framework, the concept of organizational resilience indeed embraces more than just business continuity and includes many different organizational aspects, from adaptive capacity to culture, and points to resilience in several different organizational areas (such as financial, operational and technological).

8. **Policy on the organizational resilience management system.** Following the adoption of the General Assembly resolution, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) approved the policy on the organizational resilience management system to strengthen the resilience of each of the United Nations system organizations as well as the United Nations system community at each duty station (2014).<sup>11</sup> Organizational resilience is defined in the policy as the ability to anticipate, prepare for, prevent, mitigate, respond to and recover from an interruptive incident. Its aim is for organizations to anticipate and respond to threats and opportunities arising from sudden or gradual changes in their internal and external environments.<sup>12</sup> As stated in the policy, the organizational resilience management system builds upon existing capacities and mandated responsibilities of the United Nations entities and represents an approach of coordination, harmonization and integration that drives the United Nations system-wide collaboration in emergency preparedness, prevention, response and recovery in the event of disruptive incidents.<sup>13</sup> As such, it is meant to provide a holistic framework for system-wide efforts. The policy, which was revised in 2021, identifies business continuity as a key component of resilience.<sup>14</sup> Given its definition, as the capability of an organization to continue delivery of essential and time-critical services at acceptable predefined levels during and following a disruptive incident, business continuity is also a key contributor to organizational resilience. The present report generally uses the definitions provided by the policy on the organizational resilience management system.

9. **Reference to international standards and guidelines.** In addition to the system-wide policy, many agencies have developed their business continuity management frameworks based on international standards, such as the standard of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) on “security and resilience – business continuity management systems – requirements” (ISO 22301) or the Good Practice Guidelines of the Business Continuity Institute.<sup>15</sup> The standards and guidelines provide definitions and directions for the concept of a business continuity management system and the elements that business continuity management covers, including: operational planning and control; business impact analysis and risk assessment; business continuity strategies and solutions; business continuity plans and procedures; exercise programme; and assessment. These elements are referred to as the operational parts of business continuity, which are implemented under business continuity management. The Inspectors employ the concept of business continuity as outlined in ISO 22301 as a reference for the various technical aspects of business continuity management in the United Nations system.

<sup>9</sup> A/66/516, paras. 4–5.

<sup>10</sup> General Assembly resolution 67/254 A.

<sup>11</sup> CEB/2014/5, annex III.

<sup>12</sup> CEB/2014/HLCM/17/Rev.1. Available at [https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/Policy%20on%20the%20Organizational%20Resilience%20Management%20System-Revised\\_18%20Jan%202021.pdf](https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/Policy%20on%20the%20Organizational%20Resilience%20Management%20System-Revised_18%20Jan%202021.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> A similar definition of organizational resilience is found in the second edition of ISO 22301, which was issued in 2019. It defines business continuity as the “capability of an organization ... to continue the delivery of products and services ... within acceptable time frames at predefined capacity during a disruption”.

<sup>15</sup> ISO 22301; and Business Continuity Institute, *Good Practice Guidelines 2018 Edition* (Caversham, United Kingdom, 2017); and ISO 22313 on “security and resilience – business continuity management systems – guidance on the use of ISO 22301”, second edition, 2020. The organizational resilience management system policy revision was also inspired by ISO 22316.

## B. Objectives, scope and methodology

### Objectives

10. The purpose of the present review is to inform the legislative organs, governing bodies and executive heads of JIU participating organizations about the status of business continuity policies, plans, processes and practices in the United Nations system and to identify good practices and lessons learned to guide ongoing and future initiatives.

11. The specific objectives of the review are:

(a) To assess the status of business continuity management practices across United Nations system organizations, including organizational and system-wide policies and guidelines, internal capacity supporting business continuity management, and the processes and procedures that complement, integrate and sustain business continuity planning;

(b) To review progress made during the last decade and examine the status of acceptance and implementation of the recommendations contained in the previous JIU report on this subject;<sup>16</sup>

(c) To analyse how business continuity management, across the United Nations system, operated to manage the interruptions and disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and its subsequent contribution to organizational resilience efforts;

(d) To identify business continuity management accountability and oversight measures.

### Scope

12. **System-wide coverage.** The review was carried out on a system-wide basis and included all JIU participating organizations, namely the United Nations Secretariat; its departments and offices; the United Nations funds and programmes; other United Nations bodies and entities; the United Nations specialized agencies; and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Three organizations did not fully take part in the review process and therefore are not always featured in the aggregated figures included in the present report. The International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) indicated that they were in the process of developing their respective business continuity management framework during the preparation of the present review. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) communicated that it aligned itself with the United Nations Secretariat framework.

13. The present report focuses on organizational arrangements and frameworks pertaining to business continuity management designed to operationalize preparedness, response and recovery in the event of disruptive incidents. Although the scope of the review is intended to be comprehensive in terms of the various operational levels covered in business continuity management, the primary focus is on the headquarters level, at which policies and practices are promulgated. Reference to the United Nations organizational resilience management system is made when it is relevant but it is not the focus of the present study. The Inspectors also took into consideration the fact that business continuity has complementarities and linkages with other management procedures, such as enterprise risk management, safety and security, ICT disaster recovery, and staff occupational health and safety. However, these linkages and interactions are mentioned to the extent possible within the focus of business continuity management.

### Methodology

14. In accordance with JIU internal standards and working procedures, the Inspectors used a range of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods from different sources to ensure the consistency, validity and reliability of their findings. Information used in the preparation of the present report is current as of October 2021:

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<sup>16</sup> JIU/REP/2011/6, Business continuity in the United Nations system.

- **Desk review of relevant documents and literature.** The Inspectors studied policy and guidance documents provided by the participating organizations to understand the components of the business continuity management frameworks in place. An examination of the General Assembly resolutions on the United Nations comprehensive emergency management framework and the organizational resilience management system, as well as the reports of the Secretary-General on the progress in the implementation of these initiatives, contributed historical and contextual background. The analysis of the reports of the High-level Committee on Management provided indications about the inter-agency work on the development and approval of the policy on the organizational resilience management system and the monitoring and follow-up actions taken by the United Nations system organizations, individually and collectively, on the matter. The Inspectors also consulted relevant industry standards, such as ISO 22301, ISO 22313 and business continuity-related literature, for example documentation issued by the Business Continuity Institute.<sup>17</sup> An expert consultant was employed to assist with the development of questionnaires and the validation and analysis of findings and conclusions.
- **A series of questionnaires.** A questionnaire addressed to business continuity coordinators, or their equivalent, facilitated the gathering of qualitative and quantitative information on the status of business continuity management in each participating organization. The questionnaire included two annexes focusing on the COVID-19 pandemic and were designed to assess, in context, its consequences on business continuity processes and procedures within the organizations and on the legislative organs and governing bodies and to identify the response measures taken by participating organizations, as well as good practices and lessons learned. The responses to the questionnaires and annexes from participating organizations varied in terms of quality and depth.
- **Questionnaires addressed to specialized professional audiences.** Questionnaires were addressed to specialized professional audiences to collect their views on business continuity management in their respective organizations. Internal and external auditors commented on the integration of business continuity-related matters in their work. The oversight perspective was complemented by the responses provided by the chairs of the audit and oversight committees of the United Nations system organizations through an online survey that captured their assessment of business continuity management within their respective organization. An online survey was addressed to institutional risk focal points (often called “chief risk officers”) to seek their views on the linkage between enterprise risk management and business continuity management.
- **Interviews.** The Inspectors conducted a total of 49 interviews with 104 individuals from the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, and experts from various sectors. Drawing on the responses to questionnaires, the Inspectors conducted interviews with officials tasked with business continuity responsibilities within the participating organizations and senior officials from select organizations based on their size, mandate and business continuity maturity. Subsequent follow-up interviews were conducted with officials responsible for risk management, oversight, human resources management, safety and security, and medical and counselling services in order to provide a broader organizational perspective.

15. **Limitations.** The present review was carried out in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. It commenced in February 2021 and was completed in December 2021. Due to the particular timing of the review, there were delays in the data collection process and interviews had to be conducted exclusively by videoconferencing, which may have affected access to some interlocutors as well as their willingness to share sensitive information that could have otherwise been obtained through in-person interactions. While the pandemic served as a backdrop for participating organizations in referencing their business continuity management frameworks, it made distinguishing between the business continuity structures,

<sup>17</sup> See [www.thebci.org](http://www.thebci.org).

processes and practices that were in place prior to the pandemic and those that had been specifically adjusted to the current circumstances difficult to ascertain. Relatedly, as the pandemic was still a concern during the conduct of the review, it was also challenging to assess how various business continuity management adjustments made to respond to the pandemic would be carried forward in the future. A case study on the pandemic is presented in chapter VI of the present report to capture the initial lessons learned by the participating organizations and share good practices within the United Nations system communities. While field missions represent an important and crucial level for effective implementation of business continuity management, due to limitations in access, this level is not fully explored in the review.

16. **Acknowledgments.** The Inspectors wish to express appreciation to all the officials of the United Nations system organizations and representatives of organizations outside the system who assisted in the preparation of the report, especially those who participated in the interviews and so willingly shared their knowledge and expertise during a particularly challenging time. For quality assurance purposes, an internal peer review method was used to solicit comments from all JIU Inspectors on the draft report, which was subsequently circulated to the organizations concerned for substantive comments on the findings, conclusions and recommendations, as well as for the correction of any factual errors.

17. **Structure of the report.** The Inspectors reviewed the elements of the business continuity management framework of the participating organizations, such as policy guidance, internal capacity and arrangements (chap. II), business continuity planning, processes and practices of the United Nations system (chap. III), oversight mechanisms (chap. IV) and inter-agency cooperation, including the organizational resilience management system (chap. V). Special consideration is given to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the United Nations system in a case study (chap. VI).

18. **Recommendations.** The present report contains six formal recommendations, of which one is to the legislative organs and governing bodies and five are to the executive heads of JIU participating organizations. To facilitate the handling of the present report and the implementation of its recommendations and the monitoring thereof, annex XV contains a table indicating whether the report was submitted to the relevant organizations for action or for information, specifying whether the recommendations require action by the organizations' legislative organs and governing bodies or by the executive heads. The formal recommendations are complemented by 19 informal recommendations indicated in bold text, as additional suggestions that, in the view of the Inspectors, can lead to and/or inform the formal recommendations and further enhance business continuity management within the United Nations system (see annex XIV for a compilation of informal recommendations).

## II. A framework for business continuity management

19. **Overview.** A business continuity management framework comprises the policies, capacity and approach an organization employs to ensure the continuity of its business operations during and/or following a disruptive event. This framework is tailored to an organization based on its mandate, business model and available resources. An organization operating without a business continuity management framework runs the risk of incoherent and uncoordinated responses to interruptions and disruptions thereby amplifying crises and degrading its resilience. Ideally, a framework ensures that business continuity management provides crucial learning from its processes and, when crises occur, it can contribute to how an organization learns and grows, prepares for and responds to future incidents; that is, what the United Nations system has defined as organizational resilience. Resilience means that organizations not only recover from disruptions, crises and interruptions but learn from events by adjusting policies, revising procedures and adapting to new challenges.

### A. Policy guidance and core elements for business continuity management

20. **The organizational resilience management system approach provides system-wide guidance.** Participating organizations have indicated that the United Nations system policy on the organizational resilience management system, adopted by the CEB in 2014 and updated in 2021, has been a driver for developing policies and other aspects of business continuity management guidance, as has the professional standard ISO 22301, including providing definitions and outlining their approach to business continuity management. Based on responses to JIU questionnaires and interviews, it is fair to say that the system-wide policy has served to increase awareness of the importance and the main components of business continuity management and has provided a framework for the development of policies for individual organizations. The policy states that participating organizations should adopt their own policies to comply with the organizational resilience management system<sup>18</sup> and provides organizations with a holistic approach to organizational resilience and would, by design, include business continuity as one component of resilience, which is an approach some participating organizations have taken.

21. **Need to have own policy guidance aligned with the system-wide policy.** It should be noted that, while the United Nations Secretariat and a few other participating organizations, indicated that the policy on the organizational resilience management system is their default business continuity management policy, it is clearly not intended to be a stand-alone policy for each CEB member organization to adopt as written without adaptation to an organization's particularities. Even by its own language in relation to its application, CEB members are called upon to adapt the policy to the needs of the respective organization.<sup>19</sup> The key performance indicators that were designed to monitor the implementation of the policy would also seem to indicate that the intention was for organizations to use the common policy for reference and alignment in developing their own policies and/or guidelines (see chapter V for more on the policy on the organizational resilience management system).

22. **Policy statement shows intention and direction.** Often a policy statement is the foundation for a commitment an organization makes concerning a particular topic and is a high-level and transparent indication to its personnel and stakeholders that the organization takes the topic seriously. A business continuity management policy statement should define the organization's objectives and its obligations. It is a high-level statement of senior management's intention and direction for the business continuity management system and should reflect the culture, dependencies and operating environment of the organization.<sup>20</sup> Such a policy statement is necessary to drive a corporate view of business continuity management and reinforce a harmonized and coherent approach across an organization. The statement must define the overarching guiding principles for business continuity management to enable its effective operationalization, in terms of preparedness, response and

<sup>18</sup> CEB/2014/HLCM/17/Rev.1.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> ISO 22313, sect. 5.2.1 (establishing the business continuity policy).

recovery, notably through the establishment of business continuity plans for all offices and units as described in chapter III. Whether an organization incorporates business continuity management considerations into a comprehensive organizational resilience policy tailored to its business model or has a stand-alone policy or policies covering business continuity, it remains that basic components are necessary to signal that business continuity is not only approached in a coherent manner but also is an organizational priority. In other words, a policy statement is necessary to drive an organizational view of business continuity management and reinforce a harmonized and coherent approach across the organization, acting as a ballast between the central coordination of business continuity and more “localized” implementation of business continuity plans at operational levels.

23. **A weak picture found in 2011.** In 2011, JIU identified the absence of business continuity management policies and strategies as a weakness across the United Nations system: “The general level of business continuity preparedness in the United Nations system organizations is well below the recommendations of the relevant international standards. ... Only a few organizations have an approved business continuity policy and plan.”<sup>21</sup> The Inspectors also pointed out that “not having a policy statement results in a lack of information and knowledge throughout an organization about the intentions and purpose of [business continuity management].” This led to the first formal recommendation of the report, requesting the executive heads of the organizations to develop a business continuity policy and strategy. The intention was to establish a commitment to business continuity management and avoid inadequate political and financial support of legislative organs and governing bodies and insufficient attention by management.<sup>22</sup> The recommendation was largely welcomed by the executive management and contributed to an uptick in business continuity policies and guidance in participating organizations (see annex I).

24. **More elaborated policy guidance available in 2021, but a variety of approaches.** Over the years, several disruptive incidents have amplified the need for business continuity plans, comprehensive business continuity management and a more holistic approach to and placement of the business continuity function within an organization. The United Nations Secretariat conducted considerable work on the establishment of a comprehensive emergency management system and several organizations promulgated their own policy statements. At the same time, the concept of organizational resilience emerged in the United Nations system, as described in chapters I and V. While it is positive to note that policy frameworks have been enhanced since 2011, the Inspectors observed a variety of ways in which the implementation of the 2011 recommendation had been interpreted – from promulgating a dedicated policy or including references to business continuity management in multiple policy documents (e.g. safety and security documents, and enterprise risk management policies) to conflating a reference policy document with guidance for the establishment of business continuity plans. Annex II provides an overview of the main reference documents for business continuity management as communicated by the participating organizations and illustrates that diversity.

25. **A stand-alone policy may be unrealistic.** One finding of the present review is that both the system-wide policy on the organizational resilience management system and the ISO 22301 standard are frequently referenced across the participating organizations (and reflective of core element 2, alignment with relevant United Nations standards, below), with 18 referencing the policy adopted by CEB and 9 referencing ISO 22301 in their policies, guidelines or guidance documents. Another finding is that few participating organizations have promulgated a stand-alone policy on business continuity. Therefore, the core elements driving and framing business continuity management in participating organizations are distributed in other policy documents, a corporate business continuity plan, more specific business continuity plans for offices, units or locations, or in other guidance documents. This may pose challenges to a coordinated approach within the participating organizations with regard to their preparedness, response and recovery. However, although a stand-alone business continuity management policy may have been an intention of the recommendation made by JIU in 2011, it can no longer be viewed as an imperative given that the CEB policy

<sup>21</sup> JIU/REP/2011/6, p. iii.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., para. 29. See also recommendation 1 in the same report.



calls for a more holistic approach, which includes business continuity management. As this policy has been agreed upon across the United Nations system, its legitimacy and approach must be appreciated.

26. **The COVID-19 pandemic forced organizations to reconsider policy guidance.** It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic served as a real-time stress test for the participating organizations and forced them to reconsider the adequacy of their business continuity management framework and the effectiveness of their practices. Some participating organizations have been more active in this regard, with 4 adopting a business continuity reference document and 16 of them reporting updates to their guidance documents, specifically in the last two years.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, officials from as many as 20 participating organizations indicated in interviews or in their responses to JIU questionnaires that the pandemic would likely prompt new or further revisions to their current business continuity frameworks or related components, processes and procedures.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, organizations that have a clearly stated frequency or procedure to update their business continuity management frameworks represent a good practice and discipline for policy promulgation and reflect core element 6 (reviewing and/or updating the policy or guidelines) as covered below. This is in line with standard provisions on reviewing policy frameworks periodically and whenever significant changes to internal factors (e.g. a change in senior management or new or emerging risks) or external factors occur, such as updates to system-wide policies or international standards.

27. **Core elements for a comprehensive approach business continuity management.** Through an analysis of the United Nations system policy on the organizational resilience management system endorsed by CEB and ISO 22301, the two most cited sources in current business continuity policies across the system, as well as reviews of existing business continuity management documents from participating organizations, JIU identified core elements that would support a comprehensive approach to business continuity management (fig. I) for inclusion in the policies and guidance documents of participating organizations. The Inspectors believe that these core elements must be established and owned by relevant stakeholders within an organization to enable effective coordination of business continuity management processes and procedures and to ensure accountability for implementation of the framework. These elements can be contained within a larger policy framework, such as one covering organizational resilience, a stand-alone policy on business continuity management or related guidelines. However, these core elements are not exhaustive as other elements may be included on the basis of the business model and mandate of an organization.

Figure I

**Core elements to support a comprehensive approach business continuity management**

High-level elements for policy guidance on business continuity management	
1.	<b>A statement defining the approach</b> to business continuity management, its scope and alignment with the organization's business model, operational requirements and objectives.
2.	<b>Alignment with relevant United Nations standards</b> (and other international standards, as necessary).
3.	<b>Description of the governance structure for coordination of business continuity activities</b> across the organization, including the mechanism(s) for coordination in response to a disruptive incident.
4.	<b>Clearly defined roles, responsibilities and reporting lines</b> for the main internal stakeholders (e.g. senior management, line managers, the business continuity coordinator and focal points).

<sup>23</sup> The following participating organizations have updated their business continuity management policies or guiding documents since 2020: FAO, ICAO, ILO, IMO, ITU, UNEP, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, United Nations Secretariat, UNODC, WHO, WIPO, WMO and IAEA.

<sup>24</sup> The following organizations are planning updates or further changes: FAO, IAEA, ICAO, ILO, IMO, ITU, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, United Nations Secretariat, UNODC, UNOPS, UN-Women, UPU, WFP, WHO, WIPO and WMO. ITC and UNAIDS indicated that they were each in the process of developing a business continuity management framework during the preparation of the present review.

### High-level elements for policy guidance on business continuity management

5. **Integration of business continuity management with other policies and processes** (e.g. risk management, human resources management, ICT and security and crisis management).
6. **Periodic reviewing and/or updating of the policy or policy guidelines** containing the core elements driving business continuity management.
7. **Details of the mechanism(s) for capturing and processing lessons learned** (e.g. after-action reviews and internal management assessments).
8. **Training on and awareness of the business continuity management framework** (within and across the organization and to interested parties, as necessary).

### Elements related to business continuity plans

9. **Established business continuity plans** at defined levels (e.g. offices, units and field offices).
10. Unit/divisional-level business continuity **plans to be reviewed and quality assured at the corporate level.**
11. Stated requirements for **maintenance, exercise and review** of business continuity plans.

*Source:* prepared by JIU.

28. **Only a third of participating organizations fully reflect all core elements.** The 11 core elements were validated by participating organizations against their current business continuity management policies, guidelines and/or related documents (fig. II). Annex III provides a detailed breakdown by participating organization of each element. Only a third of participating organizations have indicated that their policies, guidelines and guidance documents fully reflect all 11 core elements. Both the roles and responsibilities in terms of business continuity (core element 4) and the approach and scope of business continuity management (core element 1) are present in all organizations and, for the most part, fully reflected in their business continuity frameworks. The elements with significant gaps are discussed in other areas of the present review and are reflected in informal and formal recommendations throughout, including core element 7 with the fewest number of organizations fully reflecting how they are capturing lessons learned (see chapter III and recommendation 3) in order to contribute to organizational resilience (see chapter VI, recommendations 5 and 6). Core element 11, calling on participating organizations to clearly outline requirements for the maintenance, exercise and review of their business continuity plans, has a significant number of partially reflected responses and is of concern across the entire system, as described in more detail in chapter III.

Figure II  
**Inclusion of core elements in the business continuity management frameworks of participating organizations, by number of organizations**



*Source:* prepared by JIU based on information provided by the participating organizations. ITC and UNAIDS indicated that they were each developing a business continuity plan at the time the JIU questionnaire was administered. UNCTAD communicated that it aligned itself with the United Nations Secretariat framework without providing further information. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) did not provide information.

29. **Clarity of approach and accountability.** While the promulgation of business continuity management policies and guidance across the United Nations system has significantly improved since 2011, the Inspectors reiterate the importance of making sure that the approach to business continuity management is defined according to the organization's business model, and its implementation and coordination is clearly understood across the organization (core element 1, statement-defining approach). Whether an organization has a stand-alone policy or incorporates business continuity management into a more holistic policy or guidelines, the formalization of a business continuity management framework and its core elements in terms of roles, responsibilities, processes and practices must ensure that it is effective, efficient and sustainable. As one focal point noted on having a comprehensive business continuity management policy: "We were managing business continuity risks before the business continuity policy. What it did was to put a useful flag in the ground. It made someone responsible at the senior management level." Some business continuity coordinators working without a framework indicated that routine processes, such as the frequency of testing business continuity plans, were driven by "annual traditions" that they or their supervisors started and adhered to. When pressed it became obvious that "the tradition" may not survive routine staff turnover and may not be sustainable beyond the current incumbent. Clear accountability for the framework must be in place and a solid understanding across the organization of business continuity processes and procedures are necessary to ensure that it is comprehensively implemented and not just focused exclusively on its primary product, a business continuity plan.

30. **Core elements are essential for harmonization and coherence.** Establishing the core elements driving business continuity management thus supports more effective monitoring of processes across the organization and greater accountability of internal stakeholders. Based on interviews with relevant officials, this can be challenging in the case of a decentralized approach (covered below in more detail), which is common in participating organizations with extensive field networks and numerous business continuity plans and process owners. Interviews with oversight professionals illustrated that this lack of corporate-level coherence and harmonization of business continuity planning practices means that the

quality of business continuity plans across an organization can be remarkably uneven and that delegation of authority in this area can also mean a blurring of responsibilities. This is in no way denigrating a decentralized approach, which is both practical and appropriate in organizations with a large field presence; it is simply cautioning that all approaches should strive for coherence, harmonization and accountability at all levels in order to have an overarching view of business continuity management across an organization. Coherence and harmonization of business continuity management across an organization, as outlined in core element 10 (quality assurance), regardless of approach, should be a priority in order to further its integration and promote accountability at all levels. **Building on recommendation 1 from the 2011 JIU report, the Inspectors encourage the executive heads to review the policies and guidelines covering business continuity management to ensure that the core elements outlined above are included for a comprehensive and coherent approach.**

## **B. Internal capacity is foundational for effective business continuity management**

31. **Capacity is a key point for effective business continuity management.** Absent appropriate capacity, and more specifically coordination, internal governance and support and engagement by leadership, business continuity management will likely be siloed with a single person or office or regarded as a project within the organization, at risk of becoming a “check the box” exercise rather than an integrated process. The capacity of an organization or person refers to its ability to do something. In the case of business continuity management, both individuals and organizational processes must be present and capable of sustaining and supporting it. Both the CEB policy and ISO 22301 identify capacity as foundational for effective business continuity management. Across the United Nations system, the organizational arrangements for sustaining and coordinating business continuity management are extremely diverse. Such diversity may be the result of both the requirements imposed by the business model of an organization and the attention and priority given to business continuity processes and procedures over the years, often directly correlated with the disruptive incidents experienced by the organization.

32. **Capacity dedicated to business continuity management varies among the organizations in the system.** The organizational arrangements for business continuity management, summarized in figure III, point to less than a quarter of the participating organizations having a separate and distinct business continuity management function, either in the form of a dedicated unit tasked to coordinate business continuity management or a business continuity coordinator designated with a corporate role in this regard. The United Nations Secretariat and the World Food Programme (WFP) are the only participating organizations with a dedicated unit aimed at supporting a coordinated approach to business continuity management activities, such as providing technical guidance, templates and training. Most participating organizations indicated that the coordination of business continuity management was shared with another function, such as enterprise risk management or safety and security. While in some headquarters-based organizations, such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and WMO, the business continuity duties are within the portfolio of a senior official, such as the managing director of corporate management and operations or the chief of staff, respectively. Generally, with a shared arrangement, the percentage of time devoted to business continuity responsibilities is low. The remaining organizations primarily rely on a network of focal points for business continuity management who are distributed across units, offices and locations and, in many cases, ad hoc coordination of associated activities. Annex IV provides an overview of the organizational arrangements with indications of the reporting lines and placement of the function within the organization. In addition to existing arrangements, almost all participating organizations recently reinforced their internal capacity and appointed central business continuity coordinators to face the extraordinary circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether this will translate into new arrangements for the future remains to be seen.

Figure III

**Organizational arrangements for business continuity management**

<b>Arrangement</b>	<b>Organizations</b>
Organizations have a <b>unit coordinating</b> business continuity management responsibilities and activities	United Nations Secretariat and WFP
Organizations have a <b>single function</b> of business continuity coordinator responsible for business continuity management activities	ITU, UNICEF and WIPO
Organizations in which business continuity management responsibilities and activities are <b>shared</b> with the duties of another function (e.g. enterprise risk management, safety and security or human resources)	IAEA, ICAO, ILO, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNODC, UNOPS, UNESCO, UNRWA, UN-Women, UPU and WMO
Absence of central coordination function, organizations mainly rely on <b>designated focal points</b> distributed within organizations to support business continuity management activities	FAO, IMO, UNEP and WHO

*Source:* prepared by JIU on the basis of information provided by participating organizations. ITC and UNAIDS indicated that they were each developing a business continuity plan at the time the JIU questionnaire was administered. They indicated that they envisaged arrangements relying on focal points. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) does not have business continuity management capabilities. UNCTAD communicated that it aligned itself with the United Nations Secretariat framework without giving further details about their arrangements.

33. **Coordination capacity remains low.** The conclusion reached in the 2011 JIU report about coordination capacity dedicated to business continuity management was that it was weak and needed more attention: “it still remains a challenge for most [participating organizations] to position it as a valuable part of organizational resilience. Organizations have not yet moved from managing business continuity as a programme to embedding it into everyday managerial culture.”<sup>25</sup> Based on responses to the JIU questionnaires in the current review, improvements have been realized but coordination capacity remains low in participating organizations and full-time business continuity management and coordination does not seem to be a trend across the United Nations system, as only three participating organizations (the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)) confirmed having a full-time (indicating that 100 per cent of time was devoted) dedicated business continuity coordinator. This assessment of low capacity was confirmed by officials from several participating organizations who were interviewed by the Inspectors, some even acknowledging the weakness of their own organization in this regard. What is clear from the responses is that for the majority of participating organizations, business continuity management processes and practices have not been perceived as requiring significant centralized coordination capacity and most of them have relied on and continue to rely on focal points at operational levels to support business continuity processes. **Although the Inspectors note that in the past coordination and support of business continuity management may not have required a significant level of capacity, based on the recent pandemic, the capability requirements should be revisited as more frequent and prolonged disruptive incidents may become more common.**

34. **Variety of approaches.** Based on the information gathered from questionnaires and interviews, there are essentially three models to approaching business continuity

<sup>25</sup> JIU/REP/2011/6, para. 23.

management that are practised among participating organizations. The first is adopting a centralized approach, in which ownership and control of business continuity policies and plans rests with a corporate-level business continuity coordinator. The second is a decentralized approach in which business continuity activities are addressed through a system of focal points. What JIU observed most often is a hybrid model, in which coordination and decentralization are balanced according to the requirements of the organizations (at best) or according to the maturity of the business continuity management function and internal capacity available (most likely). Some participating organizations indicated that they were moving towards a hybrid model in which their business continuity policy guidance and templates would be centrally formulated by a coordinator, often at the headquarters level, but their operational application would be entrusted to each department, unit or office. Essentially, the coordinator in a hybrid approach provides knowledge and methodological coordination, and the head of the entity, office or unit “owns” the business continuity plans and is accountable for related activities.

35. **Capacity leads to coherence.** The practice used by participating organizations is very much influenced by the internal capacity assigned to it and a full-time business continuity management function simply may not be necessary for all participating organizations. Here, as for many system-wide initiatives, the one-size-fits-all approach may not be the most adequate, as acknowledged in the CEB policy and ISO 22301. That said, those having established a business continuity unit or a coordinator position are likely to ensure a more coherent approach and a certain level of coordination and quality assurance across the organization. The primary role of a business continuity coordinator, as stressed by the officials interviewed, is to provide technical assistance to internal stakeholders and facilitate overall coherence, harmonization and accountability for business continuity management. When a disruptive incident occurs, some stated that they were also there to provide backup to the affected office, liaise with headquarters and coordinate follow-on processes such as after-action reviews. The Inspectors observed good practices in several participating organizations in which the business continuity function was tasked to review plans prepared by offices for quality assurance, to coordinate with the network of focal points, to design relevant training for them, as well as for all personnel, and to design and disseminate templates to support offices and units in their business continuity activities.

36. **A network of focal points can expand capacity and improve the effectiveness of business continuity management.** While the level of corporate coordination varies across the system, the vast majority of participating organizations have developed a network of focal points to support business continuity management activities, especially those with extensive field networks (see annex V). The primary role of the focal points is to support business continuity activities within their office or unit. The focal points usually “own” their respective business continuity plan and the maintenance activities associated with its testing and updating. Focal points for business continuity are a critical adjuvant for implementing and operationalizing business continuity practices across an organization. The importance of their role increases as the capacity devoted to central coordination diminishes, and they are essential to integrating business continuity management and ensuring its processes and practices remain dynamic at their office or unit.

37. **Focal point training and accountability is essential.** Networks of focal points for business continuity are present in 20 of the participating organizations reviewed, yet only 4 have developed generic terms of reference defining such a crucial role; while 14 stated that related provisions were included in job descriptions of the personnel in charge. In the view of the Inspectors, it is important for the participating organizations, especially those heavily reliant on their network of focal points, to carry out business continuity management processes and to ensure that their roles and responsibilities are clearly outlined, preferably in a separate terms of references document, in order to recognize their contribution to sustaining and embedding business continuity management, as well as to provide accountability for the maintenance, review and testing of business continuity plans. (The terms of reference developed by the United Nations Secretariat for the focal points at Headquarters and annexed to their business continuity guidelines are considered a good practice in this regard.) Essentially, focal points own crucial business continuity processes, such as testing, and products, such as plans. This ownership responsibility must come with sufficient training. However, less than half of participating organizations indicated that they provided business

continuity management training, with only a few indicating that they specifically trained focal points. For an essential duty such as this, training should be mandatory. For organizations that include business continuity management responsibilities in the job descriptions of their respective focal points, adequate training must be provided and accountability must be promoted through an organizational performance appraisal system to ensure that the duties have been performed satisfactorily – especially those related to maintenance, review and exercise of business continuity plans.

38. **Capacity for business continuity management may need more attention.** In sum, the overall capacity for business continuity management has improved since 2011 across the United Nations system, largely through the use of networks of focal points that allow organizations to delegate some of the responsibilities to operational levels, which typically have the most insight and knowledge and are best positioned to respond to localized incidents. **As so much capacity for business continuity management is vested in the use of focal points, more attention needs to be paid to defining their roles and responsibilities and properly training them to realize coherent and accountable business continuity management practices across an organization.**

### C. Placement and reporting lines may influence the effectiveness of business continuity management

39. **Business continuity management reporting lines matter.** As reflective of core element 4 (clear roles, responsibilities and reporting lines), the organizational placement and the reporting line of the business continuity management function is a key factor in ensuring that it is viewed as essential and can be integrated across an organization. In that regard, recommendation 2 in the 2011 JIU report called for its placement in the office of the executive head or the executive officer for management. The intent of the recommendation was to make it easier to achieve overall coherence and harmonization of the different components of business continuity. Given the development of the policy on the organizational resilience management system and other standards, business continuity should not just be viewed in and of itself but should be regarded as a key component that contributes to organizational resilience. This overall coherence and harmonization within an organization should serve a higher purpose for the organization in order to benefit from its processes and practices and is best achieved if the reporting line of the business continuity management function has access to leadership and if governance mechanisms are in place to respond during a crisis.

40. **Business continuity coordination mostly placed in management and administration.** Annex IV presents the reporting lines of the business continuity management function among participating organizations and outlines where the function is placed within the organizational structure and who constitutes the highest official responsible for overseeing it. For the most part, the coordination function is placed within the entity responsible for management and administration, with a few exceptions, including placing it under either safety and security (two organizations) or the office of the comptroller or finance (three organizations). The Inspectors also note that the highest-level official responsible for business continuity management is often positioned at the executive management level. However, in about one third of the organizations, the reporting line only reaches the director level. The importance of the reporting line of the function is essential for the access it provides to senior leadership, as well as the credibility of the internal governance mechanisms in place to respond to crisis incidents.

41. **Tone at the top is a key factor.** As several interlocutors conveyed in interviews and in their responses to JIU questionnaires, “tone at the top” is a key factor in terms of business continuity management. Buy-in at the most senior level is a crucial building block for embedding business continuity management practices within the organization and ensuring that it is a vehicle for furthering organizational resilience. The ownership of the business continuity management framework from the top can also be influential in terms of the roles and responsibilities of staff to adhere to its principles. In that regard, it was positive to note that, during the present review, the elaboration and approval of policies related to business continuity management often reached top management levels and were reviewed and/or

approved at the executive or senior management level in almost all of the participating organizations.

42. **Integration of business continuity management should come from the top.** As business continuity management is largely an operational process, it reaches into the strategic level when crises occur and an organization must be agile in order to set, adjust and refine policies and procedures to respond to any disruptive incident. This is not likely to occur without senior-level support and buy-in. Executive management is best placed to ensure the appropriate linkages between business continuity management, information technology management, enterprise risk management and other relevant corporate processes to inform organizational resilience. Many officials interviewed put it bluntly: “If you are developing business continuity plans during a crisis, it is too late.” Ensuring that business continuity management considerations have buy-in from the highest level is crucial in promoting organizational resilience and cultivating a culture that learns from crisis events.

43. **Internal governance mechanisms to respond to disruptive incidents.** When a crisis occurs, the internal governance roles, responsibilities and reporting lines outlined in a business continuity management framework become crucial to the response. Some organizations have teams or committees comprised of senior managers and key functional staff who are activated to coordinate the response to a crisis. Based on responses to JIU questionnaires regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, 24 participating organizations indicated that they had committees for responding to disruptive incidents, albeit in some cases, they were ad hoc committees formed when the pandemic started. These mechanisms, as identified as core element 3 (description of governance structure), are crucial for coordination during a crisis and rely on the integration of various functions to effectively respond to and coordinate at the highest levels in order to streamline decisions, messaging and any policy overrides that may be necessary. **The reporting lines to senior leadership of the business continuity management coordinator (or unit) and the unit in which the coordination is placed should be carefully considered as they can affect integration and coordination of the various stakeholders and, in particular, the role the coordinator plays when a plan is activated.**

44. **Core elements and capacity should be reassessed.** While both recommendations 1 and 2 from the 2011 review have had traction in most participating organizations, improvements and a more detailed examination of the overarching business continuity management frameworks, including core policy elements and the capacity to support their activities, are warranted. Additionally, given the recent stress test of business continuity management as a result of the pandemic and the numerous participating organizations intending to revise or update their policies and practices, it has obviously become a central concern for most participating organizations. In concert with reviewing these policies, the approach an organization takes in implementing business continuity management should be reflected in its capacity to sustain and support relevant processes and practices. This means having fit-for-purpose mechanisms in place to sustain business continuity planning at all levels and harmonization and coherence across the organization in terms of planning and accountability for those tasked with various business continuity management roles and responsibilities.

45. The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to strengthen the effectiveness of the business continuity management framework within participating organizations.

#### **Recommendation 1**

**The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2023, review their business continuity management framework and ensure that the core elements identified in the present report are established and owned by relevant stakeholders to enable effective coordination of business continuity processes and practices, build coherence in their implementation and promote accountability at all levels.**



### III. Business continuity plans: processes and practices

46. **Overview.** The processes and practices associated with business continuity planning are foundational for integrating and embedding business continuity management in organizations. In the 2011 JIU review, nearly half of the recommendations were associated with planning processes and procedures as only 6 of 15 JIU participating organizations covered by that review were considered to have had adequate arrangements in place in that regard while the others had no plans or draft plans that had not been approved. The plans that were in place, by and large, were found lacking in terms of their level and scope of coverage, and the analysis and rigour of their maintenance, exercise and review regimes.<sup>26</sup> As was concluded by JIU in 2011 and conveyed by several focal points in the present review, the main focus of business continuity management in the past was ICT and several went on to say that it was not uncommon for senior leaders to view business continuity as “primarily an ICT issue”. While ICT is an important enabler for business continuity management with the advent of the policy on the organizational resilience management system and ISO standards, it can no longer be viewed in such narrow terms. Additionally, the maturing of business continuity planning practices has been essential to effective business continuity management and the scope and coverage of its main product, business continuity plans.

47. **Evolution since 2011.** According to responses from participating organizations and analysis by JIU, the current situation paints a much-improved landscape for business continuity planning processes and procedures, with the work of the JIU, the adoption of the policy on the organizational resilience management system and ISO 22301 mentioned as drivers and enablers. Today, all but three participating organizations responding to the present review have business continuity plans in place (core element 9, established business continuity plans), and all organizations with plans in place report that they maintain them at multiple levels, including headquarters offices and field locations (annex VI). However, while business continuity planning has realized significant improvements over the past 10 years, this is the area that is most vulnerable to neglect due to processes that may not be inclusive or comprehensive, plans that lack sufficient analysis and linkages, and maintenance, exercise and review practices that are not rigorous, structured and/or consistent.

#### A. Considerations for developing business continuity plans

48. **Process and involvement of key staff.** One of the roles of the business continuity coordinator, as covered in the previous chapter and reflective of core element 5 (integration of business continuity management with other policies and processes), is as a facilitator for the processes and practices of business continuity management, including those associated with business continuity planning. This is especially the case for those organizations employing a decentralized approach, in which the head of a unit or office typically takes charge of developing or updating the plan, and the coordinator provides support that generally includes distributing guidance, monitoring the status of plans, ongoing technical support, conducting training, and capturing and sharing good practices for continuous improvement. While the coordinator provides technical guidance, the owners of business continuity plans are generally the heads of offices, departments or units that deliver essential and time-critical services and who may delegate the operational functions to their focal points.

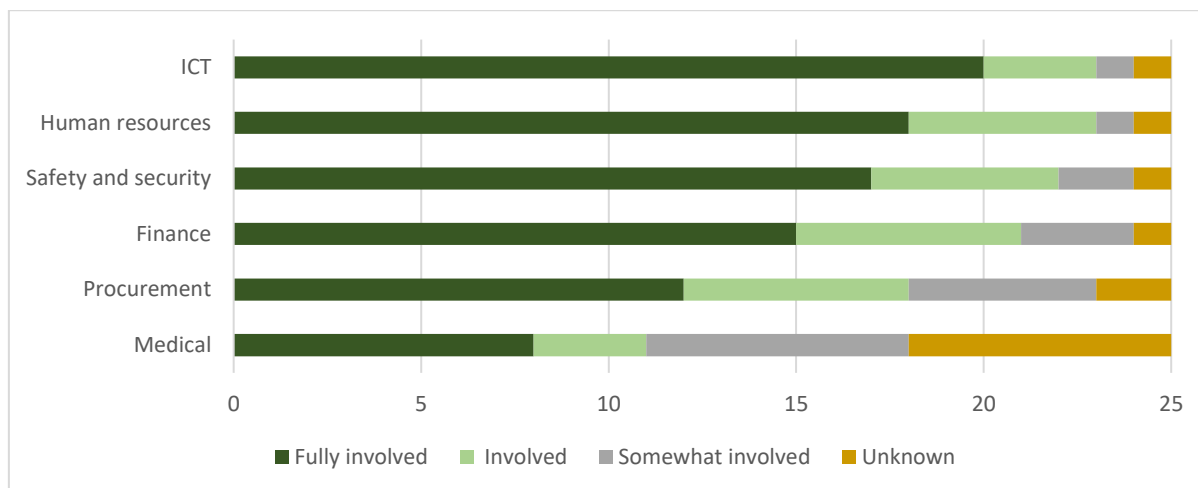
49. **Consultations with medical and counselling services.** In developing and updating plans, consultations and the involvement of other functions can be crucial to identifying available resources and potential risks. In many participating organizations responding to this review, the planning process is described as inclusive and comprehensive, calling on the experience and expertise of a variety of functions. Figure IV below captures the information reported by the organizations on the level of involvement of other departments and functions in developing and updating business continuity plans. The functions of safety and security, human resources, ICT, finance and procurement are generally well involved, yet fewer organizations are engaging with their medical units. While the input from a variety of critical sources to inform the development of plans is a positive finding in the present review, given

<sup>26</sup> JIU/REP/2011/6.

the impact on the occupational health and safety of staff in the recent pandemic, **the Inspectors encourage executive heads to include consultations with medical and counselling services in their business continuity planning processes.**

Figure IV

**Organizational functions involved in developing and updating business continuity plans, by number of participating organizations**



*Source:* JIU questionnaires (2021). UNAIDS indicated that it was developing its business continuity plan at the time the JIU questionnaire was administered. UNCTAD communicated that it aligned itself with the United Nations Secretariat framework without providing further information. UNWTO does not have a business continuity plan.

50. **Links to risk assessments and processes.** Typically, an enterprise risk management framework will identify and assess, among other threats, strategic risks that may impact the execution of strategies, taking into account the business model and risk profile. Risks are recorded in risk registers along with the likelihood and the possible impact that they may have, as well as the management strategies to prevent and/or respond to them. Business continuity management planning processes come to the fore when the identified risks can interrupt or disrupt operations, specifically the continuity of essential and time-critical services. The primary resource for considering risks in business continuity planning is the corporate risk register, which is developed and maintained through the enterprise risk management processes, nowadays well-established in most organizations across the United Nations system.<sup>27</sup> It is important to note that, while enterprise risk management is at a strategic level within an organization, reflecting on the goals and objectives of the organization, business continuity management is largely operational and, as one risk officer stated, acts “as a risk mitigation mechanism. It is a corrective control, minimizing the damage caused by a disruptive incident.” In fact, in a few risk registers of participating organizations, business continuity is listed as a risk and a mature business continuity management system as a mitigation measure.

51. **Bridging risk and business continuity management may be improved.** In 2011, the Inspectors observed a disconnect between risk management and business continuity,<sup>28</sup> and in an earlier review characterized business continuity as a subset of enterprise risk management.<sup>29</sup> A more contemporary view is that the two processes complement one another and should converge around common goals such as identifying, assessing and managing interruption risks that could serve to prevent an organization from achieving its objectives. This was echoed by some senior leaders with combined enterprise risk management and

<sup>27</sup> JIU/REP/2020/5, Enterprise risk management: approaches and uses in United Nations system organizations.

<sup>28</sup> JIU/REP/2011/6, para. 51.

<sup>29</sup> JIU/REP/2010/4, Review of enterprise risk management in the United Nations system: Benchmarking framework.

business continuity management functions, who pointed out that the processes and networks in place to support enterprise risk management were, in many cases, leveraged to also support business continuity management, thereby ensuring their complementary features and coverage of the most likely and impactful risks. In the present review, there are signs that, outside the two combined functions, the bridge between risk and business continuity management may need to be reinforced to truly capitalize on its complementary potential. More than 85 per cent of the United Nations chief risk officers who responded to the JIU survey<sup>30</sup> indicated that their corporate risk register was shared with the business continuity coordinator and believed that it was being referenced. However, only 64 per cent of business continuity coordinators indicated that they actually used the risk register in developing business continuity plans. Further to this disconnect, more than 40 per cent of chief risk officers were either unsure if the relevant strategic risks contained in the corporate risk register that could disrupt operations were reflected in their organization's respective business continuity plans or indicated that they were not. The Inspectors acknowledge that organizational and strategic risks are not always relevant to business continuity either because they do not impact time-critical operations (e.g. reputational risks and longer term political risks) or it is impossible to define a predetermined point or time to recover. That said, risk registers are a crucial reference tool for business continuity management and, conversely, enterprise risk management can also gain insights into operational risks identified by business continuity management that can point to trends (such as Internet connectivity-related issues and disruptions to financial transactions) at operational levels that inform their strategic-level processes. Complementary business continuity management interactions with enterprise risk management could include: (a) joint workshops to identify risks; (b) requests to identify which risks might have a high impact on business continuity; (c) inclusion of business continuity in risk treatment plans; and (d) consideration of inadequate business continuity as a top risk. The linkage between the two functions or units, in the end, is beneficial to senior management as risks are generally not static and the velocity of some risks (such as pandemics, regional conflicts and natural disasters) can also affect the continuity of operations. **The Inspectors note that regular and substantive interactions between enterprise risk management and business continuity management functions are essential for risk identification, response and management at both the strategic and operational levels and should be facilitated and encouraged by senior leaders.**

52. **Objectives of a business impact analysis.** The primary purpose behind a business impact analysis is to inform senior management about which services or products of the organization are to be delivered as a priority in the event of disruptions as the analysis generally assesses the possible impact on the delivery of services and predetermined time frames for its recovery. The time frames include the maximum tolerable period of disruption, which is the "threshold" or the time period beyond which the impact of not resuming activities would become unacceptable to the organization; and the recovery time objective, which is the time frame to restore disrupted activities to a predetermined level. A business impact analysis also identifies the dependencies that the critical operations depend on, such as resources, personnel and external and internal suppliers.<sup>31</sup> Theoretically, an impact analysis contributes to the scoping process of business continuity operations, which is a decision of the organization based on its business context.<sup>32</sup> According to responses to JIU questionnaires, 14 organizations responded that they had conducted business impact analyses, while 11 had not. Among the respondents, almost all of those that had conducted such an analysis also included a maximum tolerable period of disruption and a recovery time objective. However, several organizations commented that they determined time-bound requirements through informal analysis and not a formal business impact analysis (see annex VII for more details).

<sup>30</sup> A separate survey was conducted by JIU of chief risk officers or those in charge of enterprise risk management processes to capture the use and consideration of risks in business continuity management practices and to better understand the linkages between these two important corporate processes.

<sup>31</sup> ISO 22301, sect. 8.2.2 (business impact analysis).

<sup>32</sup> JIU/REP/2011/6, paras. 46–47.

53. **The use of business impact analysis.** Among participating organizations, there are divergent views on systematically conducting formal business impact analyses. The questionnaire responses and interviews revealed that there are arguments both for and against the conduct of formal business impact analysis. As reasons to conduct such an exercise, organizations mentioned that it assisted them in determining the functions that would be affected by threats and the critical areas that organizations wanted to continue operating, and in assessing the possible extent of the disruptions on various departments. One participating organization conducted a business impact analysis to determine the potential impact of a disruption at one of its primary ICT service centres, including the measures that could be put in place to continue operations at other locations. As one organization commented, “a business impact analysis allows you to prioritize” in terms of business continuity planning. Conversely, some organizations suggested that conducting a formal business impact analysis could be very time consuming and expensive if carried out by outside consultants. Additionally, the efforts to complete the analysis could sometimes outweigh the benefits gained from the final product. One organization commented that they had conducted such an analysis using a consulting firm, but the process exhausted the participating departments and the organization could not drive the analysis to the next level. The intent of an impact assessment, formal or otherwise, is to assist an organization in identifying and prioritizing services to be delivered in the event of a disruption, which is necessary and valuable information to include in business continuity management processes and practices; that said, an assessment may not need to be formal or conducted by external consultant to be useful. **The Inspectors support participating organizations in employing tools to analyse the potential impact of disruptions and determine prioritized services and suggest that these tools should also include the costs and benefits of the analysis, especially if using an external consultant.**

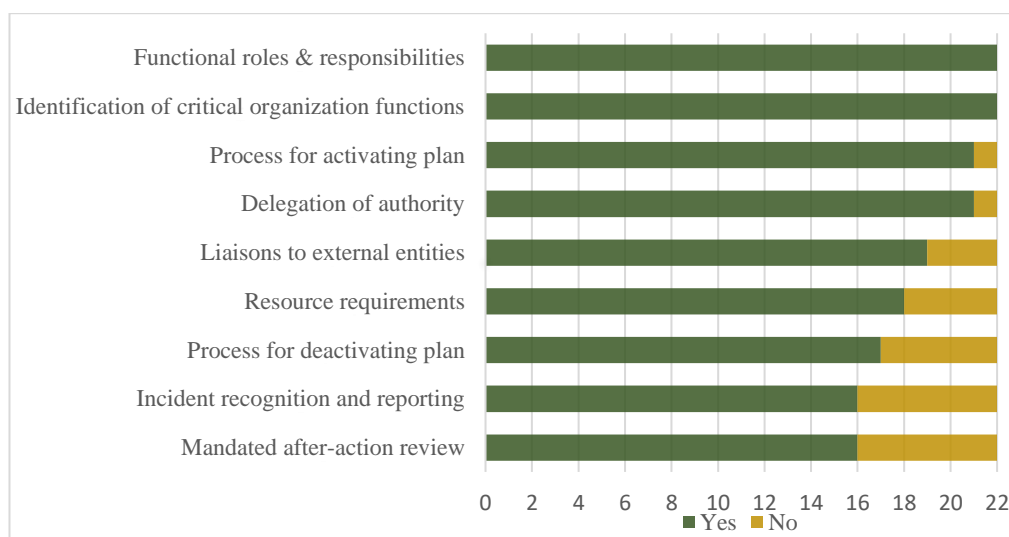
## B. Scope and content of business continuity plans

54. **Overview of business continuity plans.** Business continuity plans are a central pillar and the main deliverables of business continuity management. Such a plan is documented information that guides an organization to respond to a disruption and resume, recover and restore the delivery of products and services consistent with its objectives.<sup>33</sup> As the primary reference for the continuity of operations, a business continuity plan should aid the organizations in keeping the most critical operations working, to the extent possible, during and following disruptive incidents to minimize downtime and to assist the organization in recovering as quickly as possible.

55. **Contents of business continuity plans.** Desk reviews of several plans submitted by participating organizations found, in general, that they included provisions on delegation of authority, functional roles and responsibilities, liaisons with external entities, resource requirements, incident recognition and reporting, identification of critical organizational functions, processes for activating and deactivating the plan and, to a lesser extent, requirements for conducting after-action reviews (fig. V). In the policy on the organizational resilience management system, one of the performance indicators requires United Nations organizations to have several plans to respond to crises, one of which is a business continuity plan, together with a security plan, crisis management plan, ICT disaster recovery plan, crisis communication plan, mass casualty incident response plan and a staff support plan.

<sup>33</sup> ISO 22301, sect. 8.4 (business continuity plans and procedures).

Figure V

**Main elements included in business continuity plans, by number of participating organizations**

*Source:* JIU questionnaires (2021). ITC and UNAIDS indicated that they were each developing a business continuity plan at the time the JIU questionnaire was administered. UNCTAD communicated that it aligned itself with the United Nations Secretariat framework without providing further information. ITU and UNWTO did not provide information.

56. **Linkages to other processes and policies.** As core element 5 (integration of business continuity management with other policies) in chapter II outlines, the provisions to ensure linkages between business continuity management and other relevant processes and policies is essential to identify risks, competencies and resources to develop business continuity plans. The performance indicators of the system-wide policy on organizational resilience also require that those plans be harmonized as the plans are complementary and can be interconnected in the context of business continuity.<sup>34</sup> Some participating organizations are moving in this direction and as one official stated: “We need to link business continuity planning to our annual planning for security, medical response, disaster recovery, to have a coherent response to disruptive incidents. That is the bit of the policy framework we need in order to ... link with other elements of the organizational resilience management system.” In another participating organization, this linkage is still aspirational: “Focal points are not necessarily responsible for other elements. We have to communicate and coordinate with them in every response. For example, business continuity focal points are not responsible for security but we have to coordinate with security colleagues when it comes to safety and security of premises and make sure personnel participate in drills.” This is most relevant, obviously, when plans are activated due to a crisis incident.

57. **Activation of business continuity plans revealed shortcomings.** Based on responses to JIU questionnaires, in the past five years, less than half of the participating organizations and, to a large extent, those with extensive field networks, had activated their business continuity plans. Activation was primarily at regional and/or country office levels to address different types of disruptive incidents, such as natural disasters, social and industrial unrest, accidents and regional conflicts. In all but a few organizations, plans were activated at all levels in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the COVID-19 pandemic has provided a real-time stress test for business continuity management, it has also exposed shortcomings in some business continuity plans, which in some cases had never been activated. Several officials of participating organizations acknowledged their concerns over plans that had not been updated or sufficiently tested and proved to be overly lengthy and complicated, difficult to implement and/or were not useful in responding to a particular crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This could partially be due to inadequate monitoring and

<sup>34</sup> CEB/2014/HLCM/17/Add.1. Available at <https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/ORMS%20-%20Key%20Performance%20Indicators.pdf>.

updating mechanisms as officials from organizations with an extensive field network suggested that updating scores of business continuity plans had become very complicated due to the volume and complexity of the plans themselves.

58. **Digital tools can improve efficiency and effectiveness.** With the objective to reduce the excessive workload and simplify business continuity plans, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) has been rolling out a desktop and mobile application, the business continuity and crisis management application, which simplifies and automates the development of business continuity plans, sending an automatic notification when a plan is activated and providing real-time information on compliance updates and testing. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has also implemented a digitalized monitoring tool for business continuity plans. The tool provides corporate coordination and oversight of FAO decentralized plans, particularly for its country offices, and a comprehensive view of the status of plans, any activation and worldwide crisis events. **The Inspectors consider automated tools for streamlining business continuity management, notably for organizations with extensive field networks, a good practice that could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of business continuity planning, especially in terms of monitoring their activation, maintenance, exercise and review regime.**

### C. Staff awareness and training to support business continuity management

59. **Training is essential for business continuity management.** In the previous JIU review, the Inspectors made a final recommendation in the chapter on business continuity planning processes in order to address the “low level of awareness of business continuity” and called for expanded staff training.<sup>35</sup> Both the system-wide policy on the organizational resilience management system and professional standards emphasize the need for training, awareness and exercises to support business continuity management. In terms of the policy, four of the five performance indicators associated with maintenance, exercise and review relate to training and awareness.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, the policy’s maintenance, exercise and review regime refers to training and awareness with the objective to ensure that all managers and staff are aware of emergency management plans and procedures and include an action plan to annually conduct awareness campaigns.<sup>37</sup> ISO 22301 emphasizes implementing an exercise and testing programme to “validate over time the effectiveness of its business continuity strategies and solutions”. This approach includes appropriate scenarios that are well planned and clearly defined; that develop teamwork and competence to fulfil roles in case of disruption; and that are performed at planned intervals.<sup>38</sup>

60. **Simulation training as a good practice.** Several organizations commented that they conducted tabletop or simulation exercises based on specific scenarios as part of their business continuity training and awareness activities. This type of training, which the Inspectors consider a good practice, enables participants to practice their business continuity duties in simulated scenarios and familiarize themselves with procedures; it may also reveal any “gaps” in a business continuity plan that need to be addressed. According to ISO 22301, an exercise programme should develop teamwork, competence, confidence and knowledge for those who have roles to perform in relation to disruptions. Business continuity coordinators who had conducted such exercises with staff at various levels indicated that they encouraged interactions between senior management and other levels as it enhanced the organizational culture of business continuity. At the same time, classroom learning is still

<sup>35</sup> JIU/REP/2011/6, recommendation 8.

<sup>36</sup> CEB/2014/HLCM/17/Add.1, indicators C1, C2, C3 and C5.

<sup>37</sup> CEB/2014/HLCM/17/Add.2, annex A. Available at [https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/imported\\_files/High-Level%20Committee%20on%20Management/Document/ORMS%20-%20Maintenance,%20Exercise%20and%20Review%20\(ME%26R\)%20Regime.pdf](https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/imported_files/High-Level%20Committee%20on%20Management/Document/ORMS%20-%20Maintenance,%20Exercise%20and%20Review%20(ME%26R)%20Regime.pdf).

<sup>38</sup> ISO 22301, sect. 8.5 (exercise programme).

relevant and an important tool for many personnel who need to understand the technical skills related to business continuity.

61. **Comprehensive and targeted business continuity management training and outreach.** Most participating organizations conduct outreach or training activities on business continuity management for staff (see annex VIII), in compliance with core element 8 (training and awareness), although only about half refer to it in their respective frameworks. Outreach and awareness activities are most widely used and varied across organizations with briefings and meetings for units being the most common, followed by one-on-one meetings and workshops. Regarding training programmes, relatively few participating organizations provide on-demand training or in-class training focused on business continuity. The training that is provided tends to be targeted to orienting those personnel directly concerned with business continuity operations, such as focal points, crisis management team members and field mission personnel, and only in a handful of cases is it mandatory for such personnel. While most participating organizations conduct some form of business continuity management training or awareness activities, **the Inspectors encourage executive heads of participating organizations to assess their approaches to providing comprehensive and targeted business continuity management training and outreach activities for personnel at multiple levels in order to develop teamwork and facilitate confidence and competence with the roles and responsibilities inherent in responding to disruptive incidents.**

#### D. Maintenance, exercise and review practices and requirements

62. **Weak maintenance, exercise and review requirements.** Provisions for maintaining, exercising and reviewing business continuity arrangements within business continuity management policy guidance (core element 11) are essential to ensure that business continuity plans are not only updated regularly with new or emerging risks but also serve to prepare staff and embed business continuity management as a dynamic practice. An organization delivering essential and time-critical services should be reasonably assured that its business continuity management remains sufficient, efficient and functional. It should also have mechanisms to capture lessons learned after a plan has been deactivated in order to ensure that business continuity management is effective and contributes to organizational resilience. ISO 22301 expects that an organization will implement and maintain an effective exercise programme, evaluate business continuity documentation and capabilities and continually improve the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the business continuity management system.<sup>39</sup> The policy on the organizational resilience management system also requires United Nations organizations to adopt a maintenance, exercise and review programme since a business continuity plan “cannot be considered reliable unless it has been exercised and subject to constant improvement, and tested to ensure emergency management procedures are consistent with business priorities and policy”.<sup>40</sup> Although most of the indicators associated with the maintenance, exercise and review area in the policy are tied to training and awareness, based on the 2018 reported results on the key performance indicators from participating organizations this area is most lacking in terms of compliance. According to the responses provided to JIU questionnaires, 13 organizations have established criteria to update their business continuity plans. Some criteria are time-based (months/year), while others are based on changes to situations, risks, organizational structures and systems or following a test and lessons-learned exercise. On the other hand, 10 organizations with frameworks in place responded that they did not have any criteria in place to update their plans. **The Inspectors strongly believe that the lack of criteria to update business continuity plans must be addressed as the most crucial and comprehensive approach to dynamic business continuity management requires the establishment of criteria for maintenance, exercise and review procedures.**

<sup>39</sup> See ISO 22301, sects. 8.5 (exercise programme), 8.6 (evaluation of business continuity documentation and capabilities) and 10.2 (continual improvement).

<sup>40</sup> CEB/2014/HLCM/17/Add.2, para. 1.

63. **Rigour in maintenance, exercise and review is lacking.** While the maintenance, exercise and review regime of the CEB policy mentions that organizations should ensure that plans are semi-annually updated, endorsed annually and approved for alignment with emergency management plans, it also requires that organizations conduct annual functional tests to validate plans, policies, procedures and identify deficiencies for subsequent actions.<sup>41</sup> In terms of the frequency of reviews, nine organizations said that they were conducted annually, while eight conducted such reviews either every other year or when changes occurred. As outlined in annex IX, 21 organizations have established procedures for the maintenance and review of their business continuity plans. With regard to the scope of such reviews, aspects such as ICT systems and equipment and business processes, roles and responsibilities, communication and safety and security assigned in the context of business continuity activities, disaster recovery plans and service providers are not comprehensively covered. Among those that have conducted a review of their business continuity plans, 17 organizations responded that the results of the review included recommendations, an action plan for remediation and lessons learned and/or led to the revision of the plan. In the context of collecting baseline data related to the testing of the business continuity plans prior to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Inspectors noted that only five participating organizations had actually tested their plans prior to the pandemic, apart from the period leading up to the shutdowns in which an additional seven had conducted tests, indicating that the maintenance, exercise and review regimes in place across participating organizations may need to be revisited and a periodicity should be established that is adhered to and includes accountability for follow-up actions.

64. The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to enhance control and compliance by establishing and maintaining rigour around a maintenance, exercise and review regime to sustain a dynamic business continuity planning process.

#### **Recommendation 2**

**The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2023, ensure that the maintenance, exercise and review components of their business continuity plans are applied through a consistent and disciplined approach to confirm that the plans remain relevant and effective.**

### **E. Business continuity management as a contributor to organizational resilience and learning**

65. **Applying lessons learned.** The system-wide policy on organizational resilience requires that lessons learned during its application are identified, assessed, recorded, applied to continuous improvement of policies and procedures, and shared with other United Nations system organizations and relevant stakeholders.<sup>42</sup> Its maintenance, exercise and review regime also states that emergency management capabilities be evaluated to identify improvements to both programme implementation and organizational resilience. As a specific action, it requires that organizations conduct after-action reviews after each crisis incident and exercise, as appropriate, to identify tasks, schedules and responsibilities for corrective actions and to further improve monitoring. ISO 22301 emphasizes evaluation, monitoring and corrective actions to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of business continuity management, as well as the conduct of management reviews to further learning and continuous improvement.<sup>43</sup> Several organizations indicated in their responses to JIU questionnaires that they had implemented such mechanisms to ensure that good practices were identified, and lessons learned were captured and shared within the organizations. This was confirmed during interviews – one senior leader commented on applying learning: “The questions we pose should not lull us into a false sense of security. A cyber incident could have a different implication in terms of business continuity. We need to make sure that we

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., annex A.

<sup>42</sup> CEB/2014/HLCM/17/Rev.1, paras. 10 (d) and 13 (d).

<sup>43</sup> ISO 22301, sects. 8.6 (evaluation of business continuity documentation and capabilities), 9.3.2–9.3.3 (management review) and 10.2 (continual improvement).

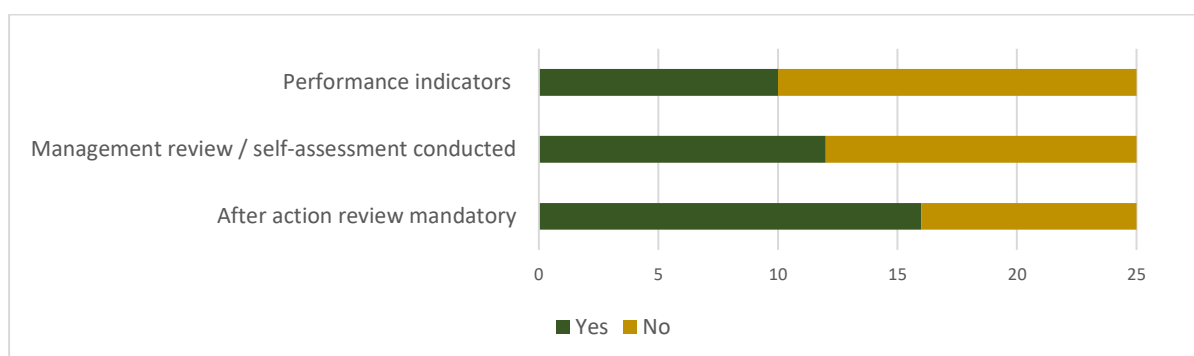


are not drawn into designing a model based only on the last crisis.” Some organizations have a system in place to share best practices with business continuity focal points, risk focal points and/or different offices and have implemented a common online platform to share good practices. Some also conduct after-action reviews, as suggested in core element 7 (capturing and processing lessons learned).

66. **More disciplined approach to learning is necessary.** Lessons learned from disruptive incidents and the activation of business continuity plans can be important contributions to organizational resilience and specifically to better prepare an organization for future incidents, thereby taking an iterative approach. This learning must be explicit in order to be capitalized on. As figure VI shows, 16 participating organizations have officially included an after-action review or assessment requirement in their policy, guidelines or planning documents. After-action reviews are intended to be conducted subsequent to an incident with the purpose of improving or revising business continuity plans and, for more broadly assessing business continuity management, internal management reviews are appropriate; 12 participating organizations mentioned that they had conducted internal management reviews or self-assessments to assess business continuity. JIU also asked whether the organizations had developed or used existing performance indicators or benchmarks to track improvements or measure business continuity maturity; only seven organizations refer to using the indicators of the policy on the organizational resilience management system to measure their progress and maturity, while three other organizations use other such indicators.

Figure VI

**Organizational learning mechanisms used by participating organizations, by number of organizations**



*Source:* JIU questionnaires (2021). ITC and UNAIDS indicated that they were each developing a business continuity plan at the time the JIU questionnaire was administered. UNCTAD communicated that it aligned itself with the United Nations Secretariat framework without providing further information.

67. While the primary purpose of business continuity management in an organization is to enable it to prepare and respond to disruptions and interruptions, its secondary purpose could and should be considered its contribution to organizational learning and resilience. In 2011, the Inspectors commented that most United Nations system organizations were far from this reality due to their low level of maturity.<sup>44</sup> In the current review, the increase in maturity, compared with 10 years ago, was evident in some participating organizations and has been accelerated by recent disruptive events, most prominently the COVID-19 pandemic. The recognition and formalization of business continuity management as a contribution to resilience and learning should be a goal going forward. It will require discipline in conducting reviews after each disruptive incident to learn from the particular response and the adequacy of a plan, as well as periodically more comprehensive management reviews to provide assessments of how business continuity management is performing after a particularly unique incident or in the course of reviewing or updating policies or guidelines.

<sup>44</sup> JIU/REP/2011/6, paras. 18–19.

68. The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to strengthen the effectiveness of business continuity management and enhance its contribution to organizational resilience and learning.

**Recommendation 3**

**The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2023, strengthen their learning mechanisms to contribute to organizational resilience by requiring after-action reviews following disruptive incidents and periodic internal management reviews of their business continuity management frameworks.**

## IV. Independent oversight of business continuity management

69. **Oversight reference documents for business continuity management.** Several key reference documents point to the role of oversight in providing assurance regarding business continuity management. ISO 22301 includes a requirement for an organization to conduct internal audits at planned intervals to provide information on whether business continuity management conforms to the organization's own requirements, is effectively implemented and maintained and meets the requirements of the standard.<sup>45</sup> Another example is the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing of the Institute of Internal Auditors, which guide internal auditors in evaluating and contributing to the improvement of an organization's governance, risk management and control processes, using a systematic, disciplined and risk-based approach.<sup>46</sup> The Institute also published the "Practice guide: business continuity management", in which it affirmed that the internal auditor's responsibility to add value and improve an organization's operations and risk management efforts should extend to business continuity management assurance or advisory engagements, depending on the maturity of the organization's programme.<sup>47</sup> At the level of the United Nations system, the policy on the organizational resilience management system provides a set of indicators that can be considered a system-wide oversight tool. As described in more detail in chapter V, organizations self-report on their progress towards meeting the key performance indicators. The 2021 revised version of the policy reminds CEB member organizations what they have agreed to and that they are responsible for "incorporating this policy into their organization's respective regulatory framework, tailoring it as may be needed and implementing it".<sup>48</sup> Recalling the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, how an organization rates itself against system-wide key performance indicators can vary widely in terms of their interpretation across the system, as well as within an organization, and independent validation of those ratings can contribute to increased credibility and a more accurate measurement of system-wide performance indicators, as well as a greater understanding of the larger intention and goal of the mechanism.<sup>49</sup>

### A. Internal audit

70. **Limited number of audits carried out.** In 2011, one of the findings in the JIU review was that business continuity management, in general, and the implementation of business continuity plans was the subject of very few audits and, at the time, mainly carried out by three organizations.<sup>50</sup> Based on responses to JIU questionnaires for the present review, there has been a marked increase with regard to internal audits, with 13 participating organizations reporting that their internal oversight offices had covered business continuity in the last five years. These reviews, for the most part, have examined only some aspects of business continuity management as part of country office audits or ICT-related recovery plans, rather than being a comprehensive review of the matter.

71. **Internal oversight planning must integrate business continuity considerations.** An internal audit office's programme of work is most often the result of a risk-based planning approach, which allows it to prioritize and focus its work on the basis of identified and critical risks to the organization and "to provide assurance that governance, risk and control processes are operating effectively and efficiently, and to offer advice for improvement".<sup>51</sup> While there has been an increase in interest and focus on business continuity management in the past five years compared with what was found in 2011, the interest has been most

<sup>45</sup> ISO 22301, sect. 9.2 (internal audit).

<sup>46</sup> Institute of Internal Auditors, "International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing (standards)" (2016), p. 12, "2100 – Nature of work".

<sup>47</sup> Institute of Internal Auditors, "Practice guide: business continuity management" (Altamonte Springs, Florida, 2014), p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> CEB/2014/HLCM/17/Rev.1, para. 17.

<sup>49</sup> JIU/REP/2019/2, paras. 83–85 and recommendation 5.

<sup>50</sup> JIU/REP/2011/6, para. 65.

<sup>51</sup> JIU/REP/2016/8, State of the internal audit function in the United Nations system, p. iii.

significant of late due to the interruptions and disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews with internal oversight offices indicated an increase in awareness and concern, especially from oversight committees and legislative organs and governing bodies. Many oversight offices were circumspect on their coverage of business continuity management as a stand-alone risk in their risk registers, while others indicated that business continuity would continue to be covered within other topics.

72. **Business continuity as a risk.** It is clear from the few audits that have been conducted at the corporate level that, until recently, most oversight offices did not consider business continuity to be a significant priority since it was viewed as a relatively low risk area. For the most part, when the internal audit function covers business continuity management, it has mostly done so by focusing on aspects of business continuity management, with ICT featuring prominently as an area of concern, or auditing features of a business continuity plan for a unit or office. Based on responses to JIU questionnaires, the aspects of business continuity management that are covered include ICT disaster recovery plans, which is the most prominent, followed by risk assessments in the context of business continuity and specific business continuity plans. Among those aspects receiving less attention, as indicated by internal oversight offices, is the overall coordination and management of the business continuity function. **The Inspectors suggest oversight offices should reconsider business continuity management in their audit risk universe and prioritize it for more consistent and comprehensive coverage where necessary.**

73. **Examples of comprehensive oversight reviews of business continuity management.** While comprehensive reviews covering business continuity management policies and practices have been uncommon, WFP did conduct a timely and comprehensive review that also included an assessment against key performance indicators of the policy on the organizational resilience management system.<sup>52</sup> The Universal Postal Union (UPU) also carried out a business continuity-related review focused on remote work, as well as an audit of the management of business continuity in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>53</sup> Conducted between January and August 2020, the WFP audit covered business continuity management in a comprehensive manner and gave special consideration to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It included an assessment of WFP policy alignment with the policy on the organizational resilience management system, corporate business continuity management roles and responsibilities, linkage to its enterprise risk management processes and procedures, resilience measures within its ICT infrastructure and its initial response to the pandemic.

74. **Limited use of guiding frameworks for conducting reviews.** One finding of the present review is that internal oversight offices rarely use specific performance indicators, benchmarks or maturity frameworks to assess business continuity management or its elements in their organizations. This was confirmed by responses to JIU questionnaires, as well as by the majority of officials that were interviewed. The oversight offices of only two participating organizations (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) indicated that they were using a guiding framework, while two (IAEA and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) indicated that they were in the process of developing an approach and one (UNICEF) referred to regularly using the indicators of the CEB policy. Similarly, only three organizations (FAO, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and UNIDO) stated that the reviews conducted would be based on or use a business continuity maturity model in their assessments. However, **the Inspectors stress the importance for each oversight office to develop a framework for assessing the business continuity management of the respective organization that includes appropriate assessment elements according to the organization's own policies and requirements.**

75. **JIU business continuity management maturity matrix.** During the preparation of the present report, JIU worked with a consultant to develop a maturity matrix using sources

<sup>52</sup> WFP, Report No. AR/21/03 – March 2021.

<sup>53</sup> UPU, "Internal audit report 06.2020: management of the business continuity in relation to COVID-19" (Bern, 2020).

such as the matrix produced by JIU in 2011, the performance indicators associated with the policy endorsed by CEB, ISO 22301 and audit reports covering business continuity management from outside the system. The matrix presented in annex X identifies six maturity levels, ranging from policy promulgation and its elements to business continuity management as an integrated, embedded and iterative process. This maturity matrix was submitted to the chiefs of internal oversight offices, external auditors and chairs of oversight committees to collect their assessments of the maturity levels of their respective organizations. The Inspectors note that the internal oversight offices, which represent the largest cohort to respond to the maturity matrix, on aggregate, rated their respective organizations' business continuity management as having been "implemented".

Figure VII

**Assessment of the maturity level of business continuity management by the oversight offices of participating organizations, by number of organizations**

Maturity level	Rated by		
	Internal auditors	External auditors	Oversight committee chairs
<b>Optimized</b>	-	-	-
<b>Embedded</b>	1	1	3
<b>Implemented</b>	12	-	7
<b>Planned</b>	3	2	2
<b>Initiated</b>	2	1	1
<b>Ad hoc</b>	2	-	-
<b>Not applicable</b>	3	10	3
<b>Total responses</b>	23	14	16

Source: JIU questionnaires and online surveys (2021).

76. **Advisory role for internal oversight.** Besides conducting audits, some internal oversight offices also provide advisory services within their organizations. In the case of business continuity management, nine (FAO, IAEA, ICAO, ITU, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNFPA, UNIDO, UNRWA and UPU) oversight offices responded that they had provided such services. Typically, advisory services provided by oversight offices are not formalized and often take the form of informal consultations with key stakeholders to provide ad hoc advice on a particular topic or area. Often, the advisory services provided were to build internal capacity, such as to review the status of the organizational resilience management system within the organization (UNHCR), support the development of a business continuity management framework (FAO) or to assist management in the implementation of audit recommendations and advance the maturity of business continuity management (IAEA).

77. **A more comprehensive approach by internal oversight services to business continuity management is necessary.** Internal oversight services have a role to play in various aspects of business continuity management and their oversight activity in this area has increased significantly since 2011. Given that several participating organizations have indicated that they have already updated or plan to update their business continuity management policy guidance, practices and approaches as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, internal oversight should prioritize verification and validation of existing, evolving or new business continuity management policies and processes to ensure that they are fit for purpose.

## B. External audit

78. **Little attention to overall business continuity management.** Comprehensive coverage of business continuity management has not attracted much attention from external

auditors across the system as business continuity management policies and practices are viewed as primarily an operational concern and therefore more suitable for internal oversight offices to cover. This was confirmed in interviews with external auditors who stated that “comprehensive coverage of business continuity management is likely in the purview of internal auditors and the external auditors tended to take a more macro perspective”. This “macro perspective” was particularly pertinent in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic when the financial impact of the pandemic, disaster recovery and ICT became focus areas, such as the case in several of the financial reports and audited financial statements of the Board of Auditors in 2020.<sup>54</sup> The coverage in these reports, for the most part, points to aspects of business continuity management that were further exposed due to disruptions and interruptions during the pandemic.

79. **WIPO and ITC external auditors.** Nevertheless, it should be noted that the external auditors of WIPO included a substantive section on business continuity and the pandemic response in their 2021 report to the Program and Budget Committee.<sup>55</sup> The assessment of WIPO business continuity planning includes a review of the actions taken by its staff to put in place pandemic-specific business continuity plans ahead of the March 2020 shutdown, as well as observations on the processes used and a recommendation to “conduct a comprehensive and systematic assessment of the lessons learned from its deployment of preparedness plans in response to the pandemic to inform the development of business continuity procedures”. The Internal Oversight Division’s review of the response by WIPO to the pandemic was under way at the time of writing the present report; it was presented to the Director General in its final form on 1 November 2021. Furthermore, the Board of Auditors, in its 2019 financial report and audited financial statements for ITC, also included a recommendation to establish “a well-documented and adequately tested business continuity plan to effectively mitigate risks of work interruptions posed by disruptive events”. ITC accepted the recommendation.<sup>56</sup>

## C. Audit and oversight committees

80. **Business continuity not formally included in the terms of reference of audit and oversight committees but tackled from a broader angle.** As defined in the 2019 JIU report on audit and oversight committees in the United Nations system: “the purpose of the audit committee is ... as an independent advisory body primarily to assist the governing body, and the executive head of a United Nations entity and other multilateral institutions as appropriate, in fulfilling their oversight and governance responsibilities, including the effectiveness of internal controls, risk management and governance processes”.<sup>57</sup> In responses provided to JIU from chairs of audit and oversight committees, their role in terms of business continuity management, for most of those interviewed, was tied to other areas, most often risk management. With only one exception (UNOPS), all 15 respondents considered business continuity management to be part of the mandate of their committees, although a review of the terms of reference of most committees represented in the present review revealed that business continuity management was not specifically mentioned in any of them. Coverage varies among the committees with 10 indicating that it is only covered when necessary and as a subset of other topics such as enterprise risk management or in some cases ICT management; only six (FAO, International Labour Organization (ILO), UNESCO, UNHCR, United Nations Secretariat and WMO) indicated regular, mostly annual, coverage of business continuity management issues. While business continuity management is not formally included in any of their terms of reference, a content analysis of the annual reports of the committees of 12 participating organizations,<sup>58</sup> from 2018 to 2021, reveals that aspects of business continuity management were only mentioned in the reports of five committees.

<sup>54</sup> A/76/5/Add.1 (UNDP), paras. 21–24 and 350–357; A/76/5/Add.4 (UNRWA), para. 123; A/76/5 (Vol. I) (United Nations Secretariat), para. 71; and A/76/5/Add.11 (UNOPS), paras. 128–133.

<sup>55</sup> WIPO, “Report by the External Auditor”, WO/PBC/33/5, paras. 1.50–1.61.

<sup>56</sup> A/75/5 (Vol. III), para. 26.

<sup>57</sup> JIU/REP/2019/6, Review of audit and oversight committees in the United Nations system, para. 16.

<sup>58</sup> Content analysis was conducted on audit and oversight committee reports for FAO (2018, 2019 and 2020), ILO (2018–2019, 2019–2020 and 2020–2021), ITU (2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021), UNDP

81. **Coverage and assessment of business continuity management by oversight committees.** The chairs of audit and oversight committees reflected on how the legislative organs and governing bodies covered business continuity management, indicating that only half considered it as an ad hoc topic; with only two covering it regularly, albeit within a larger agenda item. When asked about their discussions with senior management on the matter, 11 chairs indicated that they did discuss business continuity management either as an ad hoc topic or within a larger agenda item, and 1 (ITU) indicated that it was treated as a separate topic. In terms of the interactions of the audit and oversight committees with senior management on business continuity management, 75 per cent of the respondents indicated that they had provided advice and that advice was largely taken on board by management, with one cautioning that their advice was not fully addressed. Relatedly, 13 of the 16 indicated a very supportive or supportive tone at the top in terms of business continuity management; half pointed to senior leadership as being the most important factor for the successful implementation of business continuity management in the organizations, followed by past experiences with disruptions (25 per cent). As for providing a view of the effectiveness and efficiency of business continuity management in their organizations, only two chairs strongly agreed that it was very effective and efficient, while eight agreed and six were unsure. Relatedly, figure VII also shows a wide variance of maturity levels among the audit and oversight committees.

82. **Absence of specific expertise in business continuity.** Responses to the JIU questionnaire addressed to chairs of audit and oversight committees showed that specialized expertise in business continuity management was not systematically present within their membership, with only four chairs indicating that they had members with such expertise; this was in marked contrast to enterprise risk management, in which almost all chairs indicated that they had such capacity within their committees.<sup>59</sup> Given the core role of an audit and oversight committee, the Inspectors understand that expertise in finance, audit, United Nations operations, risk management, ITC security and fraud may take precedence. However, **as the appointment of new members for audit and oversight committees is considered, attention should be paid to include members with business continuity management expertise to enhance the profile of the committee.**

83. **Change of approach in the near term.** Interviews with several chairs confirmed that more attention to business continuity management is necessary given the experience with the COVID-19 pandemic in their respective organizations, the heightened interest shown from the legislative organs and governing bodies and the anticipated changes that senior management will likely make in business continuity management policies and practices. **The Inspectors believe that audit and oversight committees have a role to play to enhance oversight and accountability regarding adjustments to business continuity management policies and practices, as well as the application of relevant good practices and lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and other disruptive incidents.**

## D. Oversight must be strengthened

84. **Opportunity for more comprehensive oversight on business continuity management.** While the coverage of business continuity management by internal and external oversight entities has improved since 2011, it has been uneven, primarily focused on certain aspects and not conducted with a global objective in mind. Oversight reviews have not sufficiently employed benchmarking, maturity models or system-wide key performance indicators to gauge how business continuity management is evolving or performing against established performance measures. As described in chapter II, 20 organizations have updated, are planning to update or are planning further revisions to their policies and practices based on the good practices and lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. This means that

(2017, 2018 and 2019), UNESCO (2019 and 2020), UNFPA (2018, 2019 and 2020), UNHCR (2018–2019 and 2019–2020), United Nations Secretariat (2018–2019 and 2019–2020), UN-Women (2019), WHO (2018, 2019 and 2021), WIPO (2019–2020 and 2020–2021) and WMO (2018 and 2019).

<sup>59</sup> JIU/REP/2020/5, para. 96.

the vast majority of the participating organizations covered in this review are implementing new policies, practices and/or approaches in this area or will do so in the near future.

85. **Internal oversight offices must expand coverage.** While external auditors may need to pay more attention to the possible financial implications of business continuity management and audit and oversight committees should adjust their capacity and coverage of business continuity management in the near term, given the operational aspects of business continuity management, as well as its linkage to other processes, internal oversight offices are best placed to conduct comprehensive reviews of business continuity management policies and practices and should do so to capture the lessons learned and the good practices of their organizations, notably during the pandemic, as well as to verify if current arrangements are fit for purpose going forward. **The Inspectors encourage internal oversight offices to conduct comprehensive reviews of business continuity management policies and practices in light of the updates and lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, using key performance indicators and other benchmarking and maturity measures to advance the integration and evolution of business continuity management within their organizations.**

## **E. Impact of the COVID-19 interruptions on oversight offices**

86. **Impact of the pandemic on auditing work.** JIU issued surveys and questionnaires to oversight offices and external auditors, requesting information on the impact of the pandemic on their operations, which included the number of reports planned, cancelled, postponed and initiated on pandemic-specific issues or topics. The responses from internal oversight offices were primarily focused on audits and revealed that the majority of internal auditors had completed their planned audits (81 per cent) despite the challenges arising from the pandemic. However, some adjustments were made as several organizations had to change the scope of, or create new, assignments in their workplans. For instance, WFP revisited its workplan to include real-time assurance work on the COVID-19 response as it was being developed. UNHCR refocused its workplan on high-risk areas, FAO included an audit related to risks heightened by the pandemic, UNIDO performed a risk assessment to adjust its workplan, and ICAO and ILO adjusted the scope of some audits to focus on the ICT security aspects of telework during the pandemic. Furthermore, a few auditors reported replacing some audit assignments with advisory engagements focusing on the immediate impact of the pandemic.

87. **Remote auditing as a tool.** Internal and external auditors agreed that the main challenges in continuing oversight operations during the COVID-19 pandemic was the lack of access to the field and stakeholders due to travel restrictions, as well as the time-zone differences between the auditor and the auditee, and the limited availability of electronic documentation. Other limitations raised were poor Internet connectivity in some field locations, challenges related to triangulating data, as well as the limited non-verbal feedback and personal interactions inherent in virtual settings. In subsequent interviews with five oversight offices on adjustments auditors had made to conduct their work, remote auditing was viewed as a valuable tool for the continuity of their operations during the pandemic. However, it was stressed by several oversight personnel that, while remote auditing could supplement their work, it should not be viewed as a replacement for in-person auditing and inspection work. Going forward, many oversight offices are planning adjustments to their business continuity procedures, including alternative work arrangements for staff and remote auditing tools to address parts of their workplans. **The Representatives of Internal Audit Services of the United Nations System Organizations are encouraged to further explore the advantages and limitations of remote auditing in oversight efforts and consider guidance materials on how and when to use remote auditing as a tool to complement and supplement the work of United Nations system oversight offices.**



## V. Inter-agency coordination and coherence

### A. The policy on the organizational resilience management system elevated business continuity as a system-wide priority

88. **Business continuity not seen as a system-wide endeavour in 2011.** In 2011, JIU found that only a few attempts had been made to deal with business continuity on a system-wide basis.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, the Inspectors were of the opinion that inter-agency cooperation was an absolute necessity if the United Nations system organizations wanted to optimize the cost and achieve a reasonable level of business continuity system-wide. Acknowledging that certain elements of business continuity management may differ from one organization to another given the specific mandates and types of activities carried out, the Inspectors tried to create the conditions for more system-wide cooperation and coherence on business continuity management and suggested inter-agency cooperation through an item on the agenda of the High-level Committee on Management. Thus, recommendation 9 contained in the 2011 report outlined a framework for addressing business continuity issues, including a maturity model for business continuity preparedness, templates and good practices for United Nations system organizations. There is no recorded follow-up to this recommendation. However, this 10-year-old recommendation seems particularly salient as it was preceded and followed by several General Assembly resolutions with similar aims, resulting in a comprehensive system-wide policy that prominently includes business continuity management, which is still being refined today.

89. Consistent calls for inter-agency cooperation in the area of business continuity management. As is highlighted in the box below, there are several General Assembly resolutions that point to coordination and collaboration to establish and clarify roles and responsibilities in crisis situations. Between 2005 and 2007, the United Nations system developed some coordination structures (inter-agency steering committees, organization or corporate business continuity coordinators or focal points) at various levels to ensure operational preparedness and business continuity in cases of disruptions or interruptions. In 2007, the General Assembly called for a “comprehensive review of all business continuity measures, including human influenza pandemic and other kinds of emergency planning” and requested a report by the Secretary-General at its sixty-third session.<sup>61</sup> This resolution and the human influenza pandemic it is referring to, as well as other crisis incidents, prompted calls for a coordinated approach to business continuity management. These calls were not just for the headquarters level, but particularly for offices away from headquarters, and regional and field levels, where natural and human-made disasters and crises were believed to be most common. Between 2007 and 2011, the General Assembly repeatedly emphasized close coordination of business continuity management policies, a coordinated approach to emergency preparedness and management and a comprehensive framework, including early indications that business continuity management needed to fit within a larger approach to organizational resilience. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions also emphasized “the importance of ensuring that the information technology infrastructure, business continuity and disaster recovery arrangements put into place are sufficiently robust and effective to ensure the continuation or restarting of operations in the event of a disruption”.<sup>62</sup> From 2013 to 2014, the United Nations system focused on creating a common framework for organizational resilience, serving as the emergency management framework for the United Nations Secretariat, and on responding to the requests to outline steps to expand it system-wide. The organizational resilience management system was finally approved by the General Assembly as the emergency management framework for the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations system organizations in 2014.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>60</sup> JIU/REP/2011/6.

<sup>61</sup> General Assembly resolution 62/238, pp. 5–6.

<sup>62</sup> A/68/780, para. 30.

<sup>63</sup> General Assembly resolution 67/254 A.

**Examples of General Assembly resolutions calling for a system-wide approach to business continuity management and organizational resilience**

- In its resolution 63/268, the General Assembly emphasized the importance of close coordination of business continuity management policies among all United Nations entities, and of systematically sharing and exploiting lessons learned and best practices on a system-wide basis. In paragraph 11 of that resolution, the General Assembly stressed the need to draw upon the experiences of other United Nations entities in formulating the business continuity strategy.
- In its resolution 64/260, the General Assembly stressed the need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach to emergency management, including preparedness and support based on close cooperation and the sharing of best practices and lessons learned among relevant units, agencies, funds and programmes.
- In its resolution 67/254 A, the General Assembly adopted the organizational resilience management system as the emergency framework of the United Nations and requested the Secretary-General to submit a progress report on its implementation, including on the steps taken to expand the system to include the specialized agencies, funds and programmes.
- In its resolution 68/247 B, the General Assembly, in the context of an after-action review of the impact of the 2012 storm Sandy on United Nations entities in New York, re-emphasized the importance of implementing a framework for organizational resilience, including cost implications and its expansion to all offices away from Headquarters, regional commissions, field missions as well as system-wide.

90. **Inter-agency workstream led by CEB after approval of the policy on organizational resilience management system.** Following the approval of the organizational resilience management system, a system-wide commitment through the High-level Committee on Management was forged to “develop a common organizational resilience management system policy, key performance indicators for emergency management and a maintenance, exercise and review regime”.<sup>64</sup> The organizational resilience workstream was created in the form of a working group placed under the High-level Committee to serve as a coordination mechanism, which was operationally supported by the United Nations Secretariat through the Sustainability and Resilience Management Unit (formerly called the Business Continuity Management Unit). Considering the linkage between resilience and business continuity, the working group is considered the main body tackling business continuity management in a system-wide manner under the CEB umbrella, and business continuity is a focus area of the policy. The working group was tasked to draft a common organizational resilience policy for the United Nations system and to develop key performance indicators and a maintenance, exercise and review regime to support and monitor the implementation of the policy.<sup>65</sup>

91. **The policy provides groundwork for system-wide implementation.** Responsive to the request, the working group delivered on its mandate by drafting a policy on the organizational resilience management system, which was first approved by High-level Committee on Management and endorsed by the CEB at its second regular session of 2014.<sup>66</sup> The policy provides a framework for United Nations system organizations to build and strengthen resilience by aligning and harmonizing efforts of emergency preparedness and response. The policy is an important milestone and reference document for providing a basis for a system-wide approach and cooperation as it applies to all member organizations of the United Nations system represented in CEB. The policy “describes the organizational resilience management system and prescribes its application within and among the individual organizations of the UN System, with the objective to strengthen the resilience of each of the

<sup>64</sup> CEB/2014/3, para. 103.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., para. 109.

<sup>66</sup> CEB/2014/5, para. 70 (a); and CEB/2014/2, para. 28.

UN system organizations as well as the UN System community at each duty station”.<sup>67</sup> The policy is considered a key factor in turning business continuity management into a system-wide collaborative priority. However, it has posed some challenges in terms of its implementation, coordination and refinement system-wide.

92. **The policy comes with a reporting framework.** The system-wide policy is based on a multidisciplinary approach with business continuity designated as one of the seven primary components of resilience. Business continuity management is seen as a broad functional area that should be implemented, integrated and harmonized for an effective application of the policy. One primary value of the policy was its intention to provide a reporting framework to monitor its implementation as it includes a set of 28 key performance indicators built around five main thematic components (policy, governance, maintenance, exercise and review, risk management and planning). Although only one of the indicators refers explicitly to business continuity, almost all of them can be seen as contributing to enhancing business continuity management, which ultimately contributes to organizational resilience. The policy is also annexed by a maintenance, exercise and review regime, as referenced in chapter III.

93. **High-level Committee on Management tasked to monitor adherence to the policy.** The policy on the organizational resilience management system designates the High-level Committee on Management to monitor adherence to its provisions by all organizations that have agreed to it. It states that: “Adherence to this CEB policy is mandatory. The High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) will monitor adherence to this policy on behalf of the Chief Executives Board. All member organizations of the United Nations System represented in the CEB should report on the application of the [organizational resilience management system to the High-level Committee on Management].”<sup>68</sup> The monitoring is primarily based on the self-reporting of the key performance indicators by each participating organization, as well as narratives that form the basis of a progress report by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly. Since 2014, participation in reporting has increased, showing that the concept of resilience is attracting more attention, with, in 2018, 26 organizations reporting on their status with regard to the indicators.

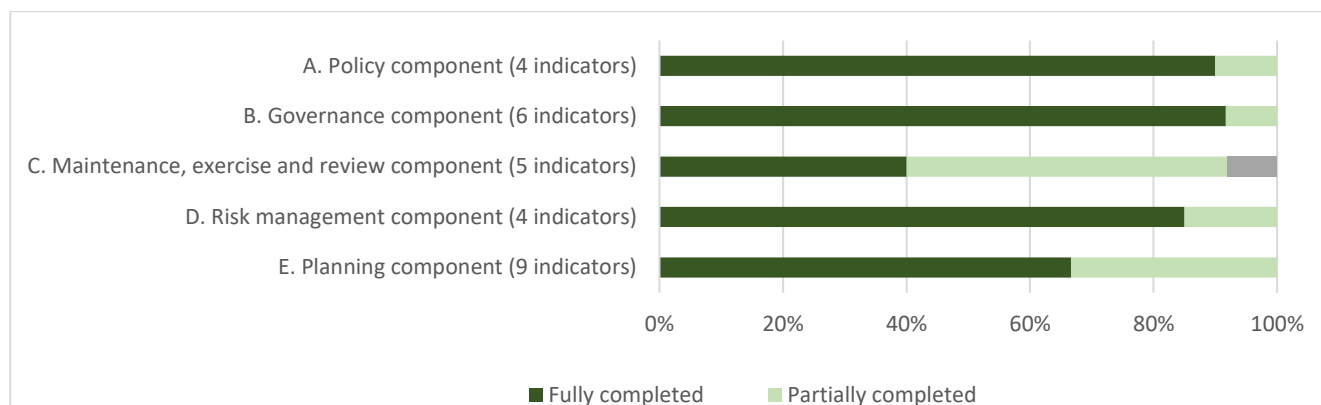
94. **Status of performance indicators.** JIU was informed that the key performance indicators for organizational resilience were being revised on the basis notably of remarks made by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. The revised indicators were not released in time for a serious examination in the present report and the latest reporting information (2018 status) was made available to JIU upon request. Figures VIII and IX provide an aggregated picture of compliance with the indicators clustered by the main thematic components of the policy for the entities reporting under the United Nations Secretariat and for the other participating organizations, respectively. These overviews are provided as an indication of where the system stood (as of 2018 reporting) in terms of implementation of the policy in each component area.

<sup>67</sup> CEB/2014/HLCM/17/Rev.1, para. 4.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., sect. G.

Figure VIII

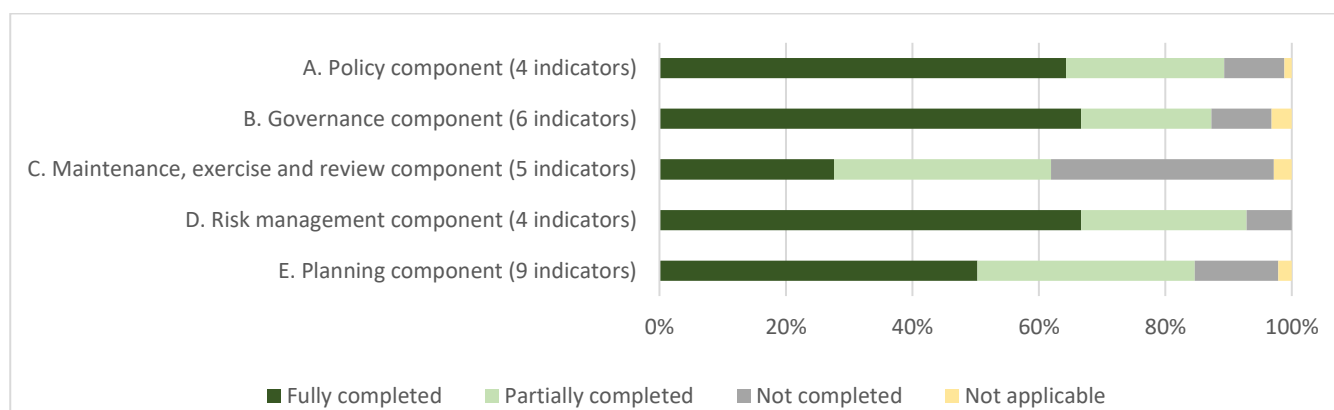
**Overview of the levels of completion of performance indicators for each of the thematic components of the policy on the organizational resilience management system, United Nations Secretariat entities (percentages, 2018)**



*Source:* prepared by JIU on the basis of data provided by CEB. The completion levels for the respective indicators as reported by the organizations have been aggregated to create a representation for each thematic component.

Figure IX

**Overview of the levels of completion of performance indicators for each of the thematic components of the policy on the organizational resilience management system (2018), funds, programmes and specialized agencies (percentages, 2018)**



*Source:* prepared by JIU on the basis of data provided by CEB. The completion levels for the respective indicators as reported by the organizations have been aggregated to create a representation for each thematic component.

**95. Enhanced reporting mechanisms on business continuity management to contribute to organizational resilience.** Once the organizational resilience management system was approved in 2014, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to present periodic progress reports. The General Assembly outlined what it wanted to see in those reports, including an update on implementation of the policy within Secretariat entities and a summary of progress made by specialized agencies, funds and programmes and the inter-agency community of practice.<sup>69</sup> Similar to other system-wide reporting mechanisms and processes under CEB, the policy relies on reporting organizations to provide a self-assessment of their progress against a set of indicators. This type of reporting is not always ideal as self-reporting has an inherent bias that can easily call into question its reliability and credibility.<sup>70</sup> While some of the aggregated data align with JIU findings in the present report, specifically the weaknesses of the maintenance, exercise and review regimes (see

<sup>69</sup> General Assembly resolution 68/247 B, sect. III.

<sup>70</sup> JIU/REP/2019/2, para. 5.

recommendation 2 in chapter III), some of the aggregated results may paint a more positive picture than the one the Inspectors found during the present review.

96. **Opportunities for more transparency.** By and large, the progress reports do not present a comprehensive picture of the United Nations system's implementation of the policy on the organizational resilience management system as they are preoccupied with qualitative data and do not contain a view of how each reporting organization is performing against the key performance indicators, which in and of themselves need further refinement as explained below. It should be noted that the results according to the performance indicators of the organizational resilience management system, even when they are revised, are not part of the progress report to the General Assembly. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions even acknowledged, as JIU has done, that it was only provided with the results after having made a request. Four progress reports have been issued as of December 2021.<sup>71</sup> In the view of the Inspectors, there is an opportunity to enhance the current reporting mechanism to be more transparent on progress and in turn promote accountability for implementing the policy. Its monitoring, reporting and accountability is far less rigorous and transparent compared with other system-wide reporting.

97. **Weak maintenance, exercise and review indicators.** The indicators, which are designed to act as a proxy for an organization's compliance with the policy, have raised several concerns. The current performance indicators are not fully adequate nor optimal in designating a clear rating or overview of the implementation of the policy. Most of the indicators call for the reporting organizations to provide ratings to indicate if they: (a) meet or comply ; (b) do not meet or do not comply or (c) partially comply . In terms of the quality of the reporting by participating organizations, the data set JIU examined contained several anomalies, including ratings that were not part of the aforementioned standard but were provided as an explanation by the reporting organizations as the ratings were either insufficiently clear or were simply inadequate to describe the particular circumstances. Additionally, the rating of "partially complies" has obviously created confusion and may have been used by some organizations to indicate an aspiration rather than a true rating on certain aspects of the policy. A specific concern of the Inspectors relates to the maintenance, exercise and review thematic component, which contains five indicators: all but one of these indicators are related to training and awareness aspects, with only one indicator actually covering concrete maintenance, exercise and review elements, albeit in a high-level and binary way.<sup>72</sup> As covered in chapter III of the present review, a rigorous maintenance, exercise and review regime is crucial for effective business continuity management and associated indicators should be more precise.

98. **Inherent challenges to inter-agency reporting should not be an obstacle to improvement.** Given the different business models inherent in the United Nations system, it is difficult to have a one-size-fits-all set of performance indicators that will paint a clear picture of the level of implementation of a system-wide policy on organizational resilience. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in 2019 acknowledged this challenge and made specific reference to it concerning business continuity: "the Committee notes that the United Nations entities may have a different approach to business continuity and would need to establish clearer guidelines to ensure coherence and consistency in their implementation".<sup>73</sup> The shortcomings of the rating system were also pointed out by a few officials of the participating organizations; some noted that a performance indicator could be considered "partially implemented" indefinitely and that the guidance for attributing ratings was simply imprecise, leaving plenty of room for interpretation. The inadequacy of the performance indicators retained for monitoring the implementation of the organizational resilience management system and their rating regime was also noted in more detail by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: "[The self-assessment] may not necessarily yield a meaningful and comparable assessment of the compliance level across the Secretariat entities, funds, programmes and other system entities." The Advisory Committee also noted that "the three-point scale does not appear to contain clear definitions

<sup>71</sup> A/68/715, A/70/660, A/73/666 and A/76/607.

<sup>72</sup> CEB/2014/HLCM/17/Add.1. The indicator, C.4, simply asks if a maintenance, exercise and review programme has been implemented.

<sup>73</sup> A/73/775, para. 9.

of each rating and the requirements underpinning each rating, such as percentage compliance, completion criteria, detailed processes or rating-specific evidence in order to guide evaluators in selecting a specific rating on the scale”.<sup>74</sup>

99. **Improvements to the organizational resilience performance indicators are under way.** The High-level Committee on Management has acknowledged these limitations and has created a sub-working group to address the concerns. Under the facilitation of the United Nations Secretariat, it is specifically tasked to work on improving the quality and clarity of the indicators and to review the scale used to validate their accomplishment, with the goal of ensuring that they provide an accurate assessment of the degree of compliance and that there is information available for the user to apply the scale effectively – in a manner that ensures comparable results across United Nations entities. As pointed out above, the Inspectors were informed that revised key performance indicators had been submitted to the High-level Committee on Management in late November 2021 for approval and were not provided with a revised set of indicators for comparison or assessment. The revised indicators were subsequently released in December 2021 but could not be adequately analysed or considered for this review.<sup>75</sup>

100. **Other inter-agency reporting models.** The inherent challenges of monitoring and assessing implementation, while acknowledging the different business models in the United Nations system, may not end at refining performance indicators and their rating regime. A more nuanced approach may be necessary to achieve coherence; an approach requiring more transparency and accountability, which is fit for purpose for the organizations that report on implementation. This can be accomplished when sufficient attention and competence is invested. The Inspectors recall that, in contrast, the performance measures relating to the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women provided focal points with detailed guidance, tools and a forum for sharing practices. The indicators included in the Action Plan and reporting began as, primarily, a binary exercise in 2015 aimed at measuring the existence of structures, policies and plans, and subsequently evolved into a more nuanced effort with reporting organizations providing more details on their progress. The current iteration of the Action Plan now allows for more comprehensive reporting on performance, which is driven by a set of indicators with extensive guidance and materials about each indicator to support the reporting process, an adept facilitator for the process (UN-Women) and a very active and supportive community of practice. The other more salient example is the cross-functional task force on risk management under the High-level Committee on Management, which developed a risk maturity matrix that provides reporting organizations with a rigorous and credible self-assessment tool.<sup>76</sup>

101. **Reporting to legislative organs and governing bodies is part of the policy.** Reporting to the legislative organs and governing bodies is envisaged in the policy in its section on monitoring: “Such United Nations System organizations shall adjust relevant internal policies and procedures to ensure the continued adherence to this policy and report thereon to their respective governing bodies according to each organization’s reporting mechanisms.”<sup>77</sup> The Inspectors point this out as the policy and its elements provide a framework for preparing for and responding to crisis incidents, as well as building organizational resilience within an organization and across the United Nations system. Its performance indicators should be indicative of the maturity of an organization in terms of business continuity management and, more holistically, its resilience measures. Therefore, pointing to section G of the policy, which calls for the member organizations to report on the implementation of the organizational resilience management system to their respective legislative organs and governing bodies, seems a worthy reminder that the strategic element of business continuity management lies in its contribution to organizational resilience, and

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., para. 10.

<sup>75</sup> CEB/2014/HLCM/17/Add.1/Rev.1. Available at [https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/Approved%20revision%20of%20Add.1.Rev.\\_1\\_ORMS%20KPIs.pdf](https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/Approved%20revision%20of%20Add.1.Rev._1_ORMS%20KPIs.pdf). As the progress report on the implementation of the organizational resilience management system by the Secretary-General (A/76/607) was issued on 16 December 2021, it was not included in the analysis of this review.

<sup>76</sup> CEB/2019/3, paras. 71–77.

<sup>77</sup> CEB/2014/HLCM/17/Rev.1, sect. G.

reporting on performance indicators to legislative organs and governing bodies as a proxy for implementation of the policy on the organizational resilience management system should be applied to all member organizations of the United Nations system represented in CEB as outlined and agreed to in the 2014 policy and reiterated in subsequent updates.<sup>78</sup> Based on responses to the JIU questionnaire, 10 participating organizations (FAO, ICAO, ITU, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIDO, United Nations Secretariat, UN-Women, UPU and WIPO) indicated that they reported on business continuity management to their legislative organs and governing body, largely under the umbrella of enterprise risk management or in the context of other topics, such as the uptick in interest in that issue by the legislative organs and governing bodies related to the pandemic. The Inspectors note that only two organizations (United Nations Secretariat and UN-Women) indicated that they reported on business continuity management in the context of their obligations under the system-wide policy.

**102. Enhanced reporting on business continuity management to contribute to organizational resilience.** The Inspectors reiterate that business continuity management is largely an operational process and therefore not in and of itself a topic that would routinely be in the realm of legislative organs and governing bodies. Organizational resilience, though, is a strategic if not existential area that legislative organs and governing bodies should be interested in, as how an organization prepares for, responds to and learns from interruptions, disruptions and crises is essential to meeting its mandate. Business continuity management is a central feature of the organizational resilience management system and how organizations are progressing in terms of their implementation of the policy is a strategic area that should be of interest to legislative organs and governing bodies. Up until 2018, the information on performance indicators and qualitative data were collected every other year in preparation for the progress report to the General Assembly. The next report is scheduled for the resumed seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly and may be shaped according to the revised set of indicators and provide an opportunity for enhancing the qualitative aspect of the reporting. The indicators reported on in the next report should provide a more refined assessment of progress towards implementation of the policy and should, as the policy states, be reported to legislative organs and governing bodies. Furthermore, periodic reporting on progress to legislative organs and governing bodies will provide an additional layer of accountability and reinforce the position of business continuity management as a contributor to organizational resilience.

**103.** The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to enhance transparency and accountability to strengthen the oversight role of legislative organs and governing bodies.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2024, report to their legislative organs and governing bodies on progress towards the implementation of the policy on the organizational resilience management system and its revised performance indicators, and highlight good practices and lessons learned, especially in the area of business continuity management.**

**104. Expanded role of the working group may accelerate implementation of the policy.** Since 2014, the working group has focused its efforts on the preparation of the policy and its review process. Once the policy was drafted and adopted, the High-level Committee on Management decided on the continuation of the working group as a community of practice to support its implementation by producing applicable tools and guidance.<sup>79</sup> The information collected by JIU through corporate questionnaires and interviews confirmed that it provided

<sup>78</sup> CEB/2014/HLCM/17, sect. C (“This policy applies to all entities of the United Nations System”) and CEB/2014/HLCM/17/Rev.1, sect. C (“This policy applies to all member organizations of the United Nations System represented at the CEB”). The former document is available at [https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/imported\\_files/High-Level%20Committee%20on%20Management/Document/Policy%20on%20the%20Organizational%20Resilience%20Management%20System\\_0.pdf](https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/imported_files/High-Level%20Committee%20on%20Management/Document/Policy%20on%20the%20Organizational%20Resilience%20Management%20System_0.pdf).

<sup>79</sup> CEB/2014/5, para. 70 (b).

such an opportunity to facilitate sharing of good practices and lessons learned across the United Nations system and hosted discussions of experts both from within and outside the system.

**105. Membership of the working group reflects the diversity of corporate arrangements.** The membership of the working group includes 31 members, representing a variety of functions and profiles from the security office, management/administration divisions and enterprise risk management units. It reflects the diversity of internal arrangements for addressing organizational resilience and business continuity that were described in chapter II as several internal functions endorsed the responsibility for business continuity management. As the working group has completed its primary task, which concerned the policy and performance indicators, an expanded role should be embraced to fully support knowledge-sharing and capacity-building within organizations and system-wide. The diversity of its membership provides an opportunity in this regard. In that spirit, the General Assembly, in its resolution 73/279 B, requested the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of CEB, to encourage all entities in the United Nations system to participate in the inter-agency community of practice on the organizational resilience management system.

**106. Cross-functional sharing to add depth.** Several focal points indicated that more sharing of good practices and lessons learned from business continuity coordinators would assist in building the capacity of those participating organizations that were less advanced in their implementation of the policy on the organizational resilience management system. As stated above, the examples of two more evolved mechanisms, the gender community and the task force on risk management, provide useful guidance on how a community of practice can move the needle in terms of policy uptake (United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) and sharing of good practices (task force). The gender community used a multipronged effort that included annual meetings, knowledge management tools and targeted listservs to drive the adoption of gender policies. The comparison between the working group and the task force was not lost on several of those interviewed for this review, commenting that the former, now that the indicators have been updated, should focus “discussions around practices”. Following the model of the task force, there are potential benefits for more formal and informal linkages with the other working groups and task forces operating under the CEB umbrella, including the task force itself, as well as the Finance and Budget Network, the Digital and Technology Network and the Human Resources Network. Outside the CEB environment, a linkage to the Representatives of Internal Audit Services of the United Nations Organizations may also prove useful in terms of future deliverables. These informal cross-functional associations could provide greater depth to efforts on developing a maturity model on business continuity management and/or knowledge-sharing. **The Inspectors encourage the High-level Committee on Management to consider various approaches to encourage the evolution of the working group to focus its efforts on sharing good practices and leveraging other inter-agency networks or communities of practices to add depth to deliverables and accelerate the implementation of the policy on the organizational resilience management system and its intended coherence system-wide, in the spirit of General Assembly resolution 73/279 B.**

## **B. Business continuity management and organizational resilience at the field level<sup>80</sup>**

**107. Weak business continuity management coverage of the field level in 2011.** JIU recommendations 4 and 5 in the 2011 review focused on field operations and their coverage

<sup>80</sup> In the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations system, the General Assembly emphasized cooperation and coordination at the field level in facing crises by calling upon United Nations entities “to leverage their comparative advantages, in full compliance with their respective mandates to continue to enhance cooperation, collaboration and coordination with humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding efforts at the national level in countries facing humanitarian emergencies, including complex emergencies, and in countries in conflict and



in terms of business continuity management. At the time, parts of the United Nations Secretariat and just five participating organizations had business continuity plans covering field locations. In that review, the Inspectors pointed to “a weak link between the [business continuity] plans of headquarters and field offices and also an unclear division of responsibility between the headquarters and the field”. The recommendations to executive heads called upon organizations with a field network to ensure field offices were included in the scope of their business continuity management, as sufficient monitoring, coherence and interoperability between headquarters and field locations was necessary. The second recommendation, which was addressed to the Secretary-General, was to ensure that resident coordinators oversaw business continuity preparedness in their respective duty stations to “enhance knowledge sharing and identify possible areas of cooperation and complementarity”.<sup>81</sup> These two recommendations were viewed with scepticism across participating organizations, with the recommendation to executive heads receiving the lowest acceptance rate of all the 2011 recommendations. Such scepticism included comments that the recommendation needed to take into account “the different field structures across the system”. The recommendation addressed to the Secretary-General was not accepted by the Secretariat on the basis, it was claimed, that it was for the United Nations Development Group, which manages the resident coordinator system, to implement such a recommendation. Although these two recommendations were not widely accepted, their intent to call attention to the field level, where crises were most likely to occur, and to the importance of the coverage and coordination of business continuity management at this level was nevertheless heeded.

**108. Improvements in coverage for field offices.** The coverage of business continuity management at the field level, in the present review, shows a significant improvement since 2011, with 17 of the 19 participating organizations that have field offices indicating that their field locations have plans in place (annex VI). These improvements could be attributed to the attention paid to crisis events by the General Assembly and its promotion of the policy on the organizational resilience management system, as well as the various reform efforts focused on the United Nations development system and the new roles and responsibilities vested in the resident coordinators. Moreover, the revised policy requires the head of each United Nations system organization in the field to invest in resilience-building in their own organization at the regional and local levels, while the coordination of the application of the policy for the entire United Nations system at the country level occurs through the United Nations country team (where it is present), or through any other United Nations system-wide coordination forum at the managerial level.

**109. Real-time business continuity management test for the field.** Given their roles and responsibilities, coordination of business continuity planning and response in field missions is primarily in the hands of resident coordinators. This coordination was demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic by the provision of strengthened medical capacity for country teams to support staff at the request of the Secretary-General’s Executive Committee, with funding from 14 United Nations agencies. Also, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group came together to support and enable the response of the resident coordinator system to ensure the continuity of operations of the United Nations offices worldwide, with business continuity plans activated across 130 field offices by May 2020.<sup>82</sup>

**110. Practical applications for the field.** UNICEF recognized the need to bring emergency management under a common framework to reduce the burden on country offices to implement effective emergency preparedness and response. Other field-based participating organizations have shown a similar interest and focus. Some business continuity coordinators

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post-conflict situations, including through agency-specific actions and inter-agency collaboration at the country level, in full compliance with respective mandates of the United Nations development system entities, which contributes to collective outcomes on the basis of jointly developed and risk-informed analysis and coherent and complementary joined-up planning and action in order to foster greater self-reliance and resilience and promote development, in accordance with national plans, needs and priorities” (General Assembly resolution 75/233, para. 36).

<sup>81</sup> JIU/REP/2011/6, paras. 57–64 and recommendations 4 and 5.

<sup>82</sup> E/2021/55, para. 28.

in organizations with field offices stated that their focus had been, over the previous few years, on implementing business continuity management at the field level. As one coordinator noted: “When I am thinking about business continuity management, I think about the head of office in Yemen, Somalia, Zimbabwe. Will it be beneficial for them during a crisis?” Based on responses to JIU questionnaires, in the five years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, most disruptions and interruptions across the United Nations system had occurred in field locations. The field, for many participating organizations, is both a focus area and testing ground for ensuring that business continuity management is both practical and useful. As several coordinators noted and one put succinctly: “An academic approach to business continuity management is not going to be helpful to field staff facing a crisis; it has to be practical.” For a few participating organizations, the field has been at the forefront of their business continuity management innovations. ILO simplified and streamlined its policies and templates with its field offices in mind. As mentioned in chapter III, UN-Women developed a smartphone and tablet application aimed at assisting field office staff in automating their testing and compliance procedures related to business continuity plans, as well as providing crisis response information that works with or without Internet access.

111. **An inter-agency opportunity.** Inter-agency cooperation on business continuity management at the field level has shown good progress over the past 10 years with expanded coverage by participating organizations with field networks, clearer responsibility and coordination by resident coordinators and consistent calls by the General Assembly for collaboration. Further examination of how organizational resilience and business continuity management is applicable to the field, where more than 70 per cent of United Nations staff worldwide are located, may be necessary and may also present an opportunity to make the organizational resilience management system, as one focal point suggested, “less bureaucratic and Headquarters-centric and more practical”. **The Inspectors encourage CEB and its High-level Committee on Management to task its working group to explore how the organizational resilience management system (and business continuity management as one of its key components) is being implemented at the field level and share good practices and lessons learned to further its application and coordination system-wide.**

## VI. COVID-19 case study: good practices and early lessons learned for business continuity management

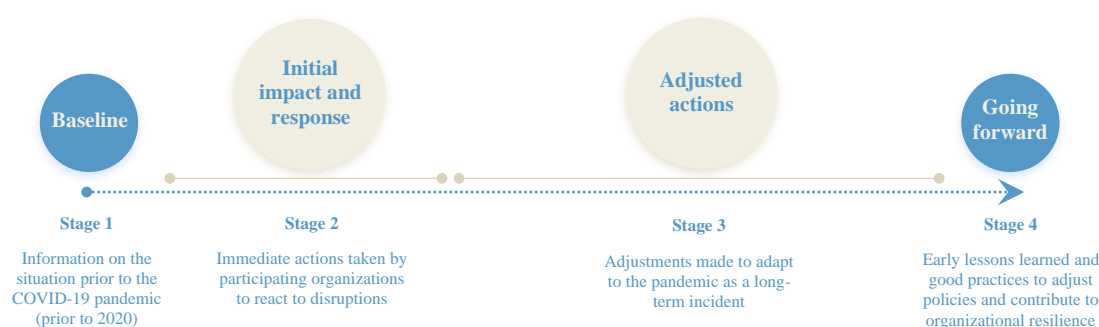
112. What have United Nations system organizations learned so far from this unprecedented disruptive incident and what opportunities does it provide for organizations in the future in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of operations as they deliver on their respective mandates? Most disruptive incidents are localized, targeted and discreet in nature, lasting a few days or weeks. The COVID-19 pandemic has obviously been different; an incident that has been, and continues to be, unprecedented in terms of magnitude, duration and impact. Described by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization as “the greatest shared global challenge since the founding of our Organization”,<sup>83</sup> the current pandemic has also been the most far-reaching challenge to business continuity among United Nations system organizations. This pandemic has significantly affected both personnel and internal operations within the United Nations system. At the time of writing, approximately 20,230 United Nations system personnel and their immediate family members have tested positive for COVID-19; 322 have been medically evacuated and 174 have died as a result of the virus.<sup>84</sup>

113. The present chapter is a case study concerning business continuity management. It includes both a situational analysis and a summary of early lessons learned regarding business continuity processes and procedures in JIU participating organizations. The analysis is framed by four stages of examination in which organizations were requested to provide qualitative and quantitative data on a wide range of operational aspects (fig. X). It is important to note that these stages were found to be common to all participating organizations, although they may have been reached at different times, at different speeds and with different levels of magnitude. The stages covered in the present case study include: (a) baseline situation (policies and practices in place prior to the pandemic); (b) initial impact and response (how organizations responded in the early stages of the pandemic); (c) adjusted actions (what was put in place to adapt and respond to such a prolonged disruptive incident); and (d) going forward (what are the good practices and early lessons learned to enhance business continuity management). Findings and conclusions are noted and reinforced where appropriate as are enablers, barriers, good practices and lessons learned as conveyed by review focal points, senior managers, external experts and other stakeholders. As this review is being drafted during the COVID-19 pandemic, the present case study is intended to be neither comprehensive nor exhaustive; its data and observations are an early reflection in situ and offer a view of what the Inspectors found most pertinent and applicable to furthering business continuity management. As such, this case study culminates in two recommendations reflecting core element 7 (capturing lessons learned) and a best practice: for organizations to conduct an assessment after a crisis to determine good practices and lessons learned with the objective to ensure that business continuity management is effective and contributes to organizational learning and resilience.

<sup>83</sup> A/76/1, para. 1.

<sup>84</sup> Data provided by the Health-Care Management and Occupational Safety and Health Division. Data reflect all personnel and family members, as of 8 September 2021, from all JIU participating United Nations Secretariat entities, funds and programmes and specialized agencies.

Figure X  
Business continuity management case study stages



Source: prepared by JIU.

## A. Stage 1: pre-pandemic baseline (prior to 2020)

### Level of business continuity planning and preparedness

114. Prior to 2020, as reported in chapters II and III, most participating organizations had a policy and/or guidance documents in place covering business continuity management and all but three had business continuity plans at some or most levels (annex VI). In early 2020, many organizations were on alert that the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, the coronavirus first discovered in December 2019 and later referred to as the COVID-19 virus, may impact their operations. This slow onset of the health crisis provided some organizations with valuable time to prepare. Testing and updating of guidelines and plans prior to the pandemic took place in 13 organizations and at multiple levels; three organizations (ITU, UNFPA and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) had plans for a pandemic scenario. In 12 organizations testing was conducted as either previously scheduled or was performed specifically to prepare for the pandemic. Plans were updated in seven organizations to prepare for a pandemic. Three organizations (ITU, UNDP and UNFPA) specifically ran their tests for a pandemic scenario. In early March 2020, ILO was able to test its virtual private network to ensure that it had the bandwidth to withstand the workload of their headquarters-based staff accessing and working simultaneously, as well as to test broadcast messages to staff using mobile networks. At the United Nations Office at Geneva, a short simulation exercise using a pandemic scenario was conducted with the aim of updating essential and time-critical operational plans. The focus was put on preparing staff for remote work and testing teleworking capabilities for a possible lockdown scenario.

115. Organizations with business continuity plans in place prior to the COVID-19 pandemic stated that the plans provided a foundation for the initial response, but the plans were originally conceived to address short-term disruptions and local impacts. As the COVID-19 pandemic became more protracted and complex, the plans proved insufficient. One senior official remarked: “[Our business continuity plan] was a very good reference document to get us going and be able to make decisions the first week or so .... It was something that allowed us to survive long enough to get our heads around what the situation was.” While existing plans provided some with a basis for responding to such an interruption, some participating organizations had only recently begun to focus on business continuity management. In 2019, IAEA worked to formulate its business continuity management policy and procedures, and conducted a master class focusing on a pandemic scenario, thereby fortuitously better preparing it for what was about to occur. UPU had prepared for remote work due to its legislative organs and governing body meeting in 2019, as well as a concerted move towards digitization of some of their operations and processes in recent years.

116. In one grant-making organization outside the United Nations system, a business continuity management framework had not yet been put in place and valuable time was spent in the initial phase identifying essential and time-critical operations, developing plans for different units to continue remote operations and training and orienting staff regarding what work could continue in a remote working environment. This ad hoc approach, as conveyed

to the Inspectors by auditors, resulted in a significant disruption of normal operations that may have been curtailed had adequate pre-existing guidelines and plans been in place to provide an effective response. This was also true in United Nations organizations that did not have an established business continuity management framework in place or any business continuity plans prior to the pandemic. In one such organization, even after experiencing a major disruption in the recent past, the leadership did not view business continuity management as a priority and did not develop business continuity plans, let alone a framework. For this organization, as well as others, business continuity management was viewed as an ICT issue to resolve. In another such organization that did not have a business continuity management framework or plans in place, a hastily developed business continuity plan was advanced to specifically address the COVID-19 pandemic and to satisfy the concerns of its legislative organ and governing body.

### **Information and communications technology continues to be viewed as a major enabler for continuity**

117. In 2011, JIU saw ICT as the most significant enabler for business continuity management. Not surprisingly, most participating organizations continue today to identify ICT as paramount for responding to a significant disruption and, more specifically, the ICT platforms and tools that support remote work. In fact, reliable and stable ICT systems for working remotely was by far the most cited enabling factor by participating organizations, followed by paperless policies, which in many cases were created in direct response to the limitation of being physically present at facilities. In terms of the COVID-19 pandemic, ICT has also been viewed as a significant contributor to organizational resilience, even for those organizations that did not have business continuity plans. Conversely one of the biggest challenges during the early stages of the pandemic was cybersecurity. In some participating organizations, cybersecurity incidents, due to the vulnerabilities related to remote working methods, have created additional risks during the pandemic.<sup>85</sup> In a survey conducted by JIU of chief risk officers, more than 30 per cent cited cybersecurity as one of the biggest risks in terms of continuity of business operations going forward.

### **Remote working arrangements – an enabler and amplifier for continuity**

118. In nearly 80 per cent of participating organizations contributing to this review, remote working guidelines had been put in place prior to the pandemic. However, several human resource officers and senior officials interviewed stated that, even though policies were in place to support remote work, there was significant cultural resistance within their organizations regarding their use.

119. ICT system tools were also available to support remote work in the majority of organizations, including: cloud storage (more than 80 per cent), remote access to email (88 per cent), virtual meeting platforms (75 per cent) and virtual conferencing tools (67 per cent). Yet, in the majority of the organizations with remote working arrangements in place, the practice of remote work was only used occasionally and less than half of participating organizations had provisions for full-time remote work. At the regional level, the use of remote work was even less common, with most locations indicating that remote work was not used at all. In summary, while policies and tools were in place across the United Nations system to support remote working arrangements prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, they were not widely used.

120. **Cultural shift concerning remote work.** The fact that policies on alternate working arrangements were in place in most organizations but were not widely used was undoubtedly a barrier to the continuity of operations in many United Nations organizations, which had to scramble to develop or refine ICT tools and train their staff to support remote work. In fact, 19 of the participating organizations have revised their remote working policies to accommodate the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as telecommuting, flexible working arrangements and lifting core working hour requirements. This revision of policies and the development and use of remote working tools over several months has triggered a cultural shift across the United Nations system. As one senior official whose organization did

<sup>85</sup> JIU/REP/2021/3, Cybersecurity in the United Nations system organizations.

not have alternate working guidelines in place commented that: “It is hard to imagine going back.” At the same time, organizations such as IAEA, which already had alternate working arrangements in place before the pandemic, noted that the delivery of their core missions required a physical presence in the office and working from home could not be the norm. In this sense, the particularities of some specialized agencies and their specific exigencies of service would continue to be relevant factors when considering flexible working arrangements going forward.

## **B. Stage 2: initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and response**

121. The initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic began, for most United Nations system organizations, in March 2020 with disruptions to operations and the shutdown of facilities due to health concerns regarding person-to-person contact or potential infection through contaminated surfaces. As one United Nations system medical professional stated: “What is different first is that [the pandemic] is worldwide. Everyone was affected. We were not outside the problem, as we were all worried about our own health and our families, everyone was overwhelmed by the situation.” Another health professional added: “I am part of the victims. How do I respond when I have to take care of my own well-being and am requested to do the same with others?” The real-time test of business continuity arrangements for participating organizations came when lockdowns were declared in several countries, and United Nations offices were physically closed to mitigate the spread of the virus.

122. The COVID-19 pandemic has moved rapidly through the first two phases of a health emergency cycle as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO),<sup>86</sup> with little time to prevent and prepare, although it has stalled in the last two phases, with the response and recovery phases stretching over a year at the time of writing. Following an unpredictable trajectory based on local health conditions, vaccine availability and virus variants, one expert characterized the pandemic’s impact on organizations and people as a “classic case of VUCA: volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity”.<sup>87</sup> This has cast a new light on business continuity management and how the United Nations system organizations were prepared for, and responded to, a global health crisis. In nearly all participating organizations, business continuity plans were activated at various levels. This necessitated the initiation of internal mechanisms to enable senior management to coordinate and communicate with staff. In 11 participating organizations, these mechanisms already existed and enabled them to respond in a way that was familiar and tested.<sup>88</sup> In another 11 organizations<sup>89</sup> ad hoc mechanisms were created to specifically respond to the pandemic; in two,<sup>90</sup> existing coordination mechanisms were adapted to respond to the unique situation.

### **Inter-agency response generally praised as effective**

123. **The COVID-19 pandemic forced inter-agency cooperation.** According to interviews with participating organizations and responses to JIU questionnaires, the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed for more inter-agency collaboration through relevant networks; prior to the pandemic, this sort of collaboration was less frequent. Inter-agency collaboration was made possible through existing mechanisms in several duty stations, such as New York, Geneva, Rome and Nairobi, and other regional locations to share information and attempt to harmonize practices, a goal that was not always achieved. As one senior official stated: “The goal was to coordinate policies so there was coherence and a ‘one United Nations’ response but that was not always successful due to varying mandates and business models across the

<sup>86</sup> The health emergency cycle includes: prevent, prepare, respond and recover. See [www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/pages/about-health-emergencies-in-the-european-region/emergency-cycle](http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/pages/about-health-emergencies-in-the-european-region/emergency-cycle).

<sup>87</sup> Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge* (New York, Harper and Row, 1985).

<sup>88</sup> FAO, ICAO, ILO, IMO ITC, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, United Nations Secretariat and UNODC.

<sup>89</sup> IAEA, UNESCO, UN-Habitat, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women, UNWTO, UPU, WFP, WHO and WMO.

<sup>90</sup> ITU and WIPO.

system” (a recurring issue across the system). That said, inter-agency cooperation and collaboration was deemed a good practice by several senior managers as it facilitated the coming together of United Nations organizations to share information and to develop common tools, such as the work conducted by the CEB Human Resources Network in developing administrative guidelines<sup>91</sup> and the inter-agency cooperation of medical directors for organizing medical evacuations of United Nations system personnel and family members. As one medical director commented: “For the first time, I felt we could work as a family in the United Nations. We are more powerful together ... we liaised with different networks like the High-level Committee on Management ... I think it is a great step to move forward [for the system].”

**124. The utility of the system-wide policy on the organizational resilience management system.** Perhaps surprisingly, a sentiment that was conveyed by most participating organizations was that the utility of the policy on the organizational resilience management system was minimal during the initial response, although it may not have been intended, as some pointed out, that it should play a prominent role once a crisis had commenced. As one business continuity coordinator explained: “The policy was not intended to be useful during a crisis; it was intended to better prepare organizations. If your organization was addressing the key performance indicators and its necessary components, then it was likely in a better position to respond to the pandemic.” While most participating organizations indicated that the system-wide policy was not useful, a significant minority indicated that it triggered inter-agency mechanisms for coordination, which, as mentioned above, were widely used and praised.

#### Identified enabling factors for business continuity

**125. Advanced ICT as a main enabler of continuity.** In addition to internal and inter-agency mechanisms, many participating organizations pointed to enablers that made the initial pandemic response effective and efficient, including ICT tools for facilitating remote work. All participating organizations, as indicated in figure XI, reported that reliable and stable ICT systems were crucial in the early days of the pandemic and nearly 60 per cent reported that robust cybersecurity was as well. The provision of laptops and, in some organizations, office equipment for home use by staff was also an early driver and enabler for adjusting to new working conditions, as is outlined in figure XII. UNFPA, as well as some other participating organizations, allowed staff to relocate some office equipment for home use and sponsored a one-time nominal financial allowance to make remote workspaces more functional. The main challenges for staff to continue effectively to work remotely, according to responses to JIU questionnaires, were an inadequate work environment at home and the challenges associated with balancing work and disruptions to other aspects of home life during the pandemic, such as school closures and negotiating an adequate workspace with a partner.

Figure XI

**Enabling factors identified by participating organizations that contributed to continuity of operations to support remote work, by number of organizations**

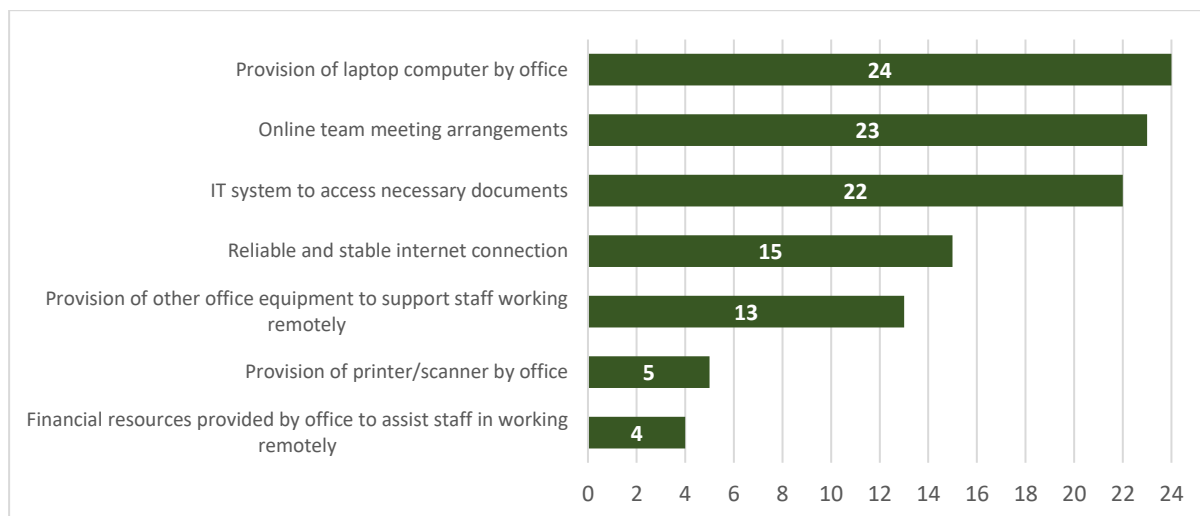


Source: JIU questionnaires (2021).

<sup>91</sup> CEB Human Resources Network, “Administrative guidelines for offices on the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic”, version 5.0 (2021).

Figure XII

**Enabling factors identified by participating organizations that contributed to staff being able to adjust to new working arrangements, by number of organizations**



Source: JIU questionnaires (2021).

**126. Importance of communications.** Communications during the COVID-19 pandemic was mentioned by several participating organizations in response to JIU questionnaires and interviews as an enabler for effectively responding to the initial crisis. Timely and effective messages provided, as one focal point termed them, a ‘single source of truth’ for staff. Effective communication served to not only convey important information but also provided credibility to the response – especially if it was streamlined and consistent. For instance, WIPO created a response committee to create “a single point of coordination for crisis-related communication to ensure consistent messaging.” IAEA used a messaging application to report travel movements quickly and to securely authorize users, as well as to resolve problems for staff traveling or working in the field to ensure continuation of physical inspections throughout the pandemic. Other organizations, such as the United Nations Secretariat, streamlined communications to staff with broadcast messages that were then supported by townhall meetings, up-to-date intranet content and a dedicated email address that was monitored by a designated team to address questions, comments and suggestions from staff.

**127. Adjusting business continuity planning.** Participating organizations reported that their business continuity plans provided a foundation for their response in the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, but business continuity management plans are not typically created for prolonged disruptive incidents; as the pandemic has worn on, the focus in most organizations has turned to adjustments for addressing an extended crisis. Prior to the pandemic, only a few organizations had business continuity management frameworks that included even a mention of long-term disruptive incidents. In fact, according to experts, planning for this type of disruptive event received very little attention prior to 2020. Going forward, 14 participating organizations have indicated that they will update their business continuity management frameworks to include provisions for long-term disruptions; a few others have stated that their current frameworks are already sufficient to respond to these types of events.

### C. Stage 3: adjustments made to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic as a prolonged disruptive incident

**128. Adapting to prolonged disruptions caused by the pandemic.** The approach to business continuity management started to shift in many participating organizations as the COVID-19 pandemic moved past the initial crisis phase. As one senior official stated: “In many organizations business continuity management has always been seen as a single event incident that affects your organization for 24 hours, 48 hours or a few days. The pandemic



changed that notion; that you can be in [a crisis] for an extended period of time. And it changed the way you apply business continuity management principles.” The change in how continuity of operations was viewed has also extended to the private sector as one human resources professional expressed: “The process that is put into business continuity planning is key and it serves as a reminder during crises to address priority areas. But [in the past] most disruptions only lasted a week.” In terms of the length of the crisis, the private sector human resources professional went on to emphasize that: “The mindset of agility – to be more solutions-oriented – has really been key to the process.” This agility was evident in various ways as the United Nations system adapted to a long-term disruption, which is atypical in most business continuity management frameworks.

**129. Adjustments to policies and procedures.** As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, stretching from weeks into months, the need to adjust administrative policies became a priority. This effort was guided by the CEB Human Resources Network, which developed inter-agency administrative guidelines in order to: “adopt a common approach on the most important aspects of administering staff members during the COVID-19 pandemic”.<sup>92</sup> In the United Nations Secretariat, nearly 60 administrative documents were issued between March 2020 and July 2021, adjusting guidelines, revising templates, presenting frequently asked questions and providing guidance for extraordinary circumstances, such as onboarding staff remotely and how to handle accrued leave for staff unable to use it. UNICEF issued emergency recruitment procedures to expedite hiring at duty stations in response to the pandemic, “to facilitate the timeliness and agility of UNICEF response across all countries”.<sup>93</sup>

**130. Managing through deliverables.** In several interviews with senior managers, human resources officers and health professionals, they conveyed the importance of supervisors making adjustments in terms of how they managed, placing more trust in personnel and “managing without eyes on your staff” was a leap of faith for many. Others spoke about adjusting to the various personal circumstances that their staff were facing, managing staff based on deliverables, not concerning themselves with when staff were working or where they were located, but with agreed upon results, something that has actually accelerated the performance of staff in some instances. Skills, such as the ability to simultaneously handle complexity and ambiguity, came to the fore as the unpredictability of the pandemic and changes in policies became a daily occurrence. While managing through results was a useful way to provide flexibility to staff, procedural agility was also valued, such as FAO converting all of its training courses to an online platform, or the many organizations that digitized and streamlined routine processes and procedures, as one said: “going from requiring eight physical signatures, to a single digital one”.

**131. The challenges of a prolonged crisis for staff.** Based on responses to JIU questionnaires, the most frequently cited challenge in supporting remote work was the difficulty managers experienced in monitoring the mental health of staff. The most frequently cited challenge for staff adjusting to remote work was home working environments, including disruptions from family or roommates, inadequate home office space, etc. As the baseline data showed, although policies regarding alternative working arrangements were in place for most participating organizations, their use across the system was negligible, thereby making the sudden adjustments staff needed to make to work from home, where Internet access and home situations were not always ideal, often challenging. As one United Nations medical professional staff person put it, “private life and work borders were broken at the same time”, and as two human resources officers commented: “Schedules of people exponentially grew, everybody wanted to be inclusive and connected, and because of time-zone differences, the day starts early and finishes late.” These challenges have created significant levels of burnout, stress and fatigue across the system and have put a renewed emphasis on occupational safety and health for the United Nations workforce.

**132. A new focus on occupational health and safety.** The duty of care is “a non-waivable responsibility on the part of the organization to mitigate or otherwise address foreseeable

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>93</sup> UNICEF, “Revised UNICEF HR emergency recruitment procedures for the coronavirus (covid-19) crisis”, version 3 (2020), which were effective from 16 October 2020 to 31 December 2021.

risks that may harm or injure its personnel and eligible family members”.<sup>94</sup> The emphasis in recent years has moved from the “legal” concept of duty of care to viewing the mental health and well-being of the United Nations workforce through the lens of occupational health and safety. The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted, as one senior official noted, “the need for culture shifts in leadership behaviour, founded on empathy and people-centred style”. As mentioned previously, the Human Resources Network released inter-agency administrative guidelines for offices on the COVID-19 pandemic, which include a section on mental health and actions for the common system to take during the pandemic, including exercising flexibility, communicating clearly and transparently, allowing the use of sick leave for mental health purposes and ensuring psychosocial support is readily available. As pointed out in chapter III (see fig. IV), medical services personnel are the least consulted in terms of business continuity planning processes. **Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on staff occupational health and safety, and particularly staff mental health and well-being, the Inspectors encourage greater integration of and focus on such issues in business continuity management processes and practices.**

133. **Importance of staff input in adjusting the response.** In more than 80 per cent of participating organizations covered in the present review, staff surveys were conducted at various times during the pandemic, often in collaboration with staff associations, to determine gaps in services and areas to improve staff well-being and/or productivity. In many organizations, multiple surveys were issued to follow up on initiatives or gain insight into a particular service. The United Nations Office at Geneva conducted a staff survey and used the results to adapt training content on topics such as working remotely. The survey results were influential in expanding mental health services and recruiting an additional staff counsellor. UN-Women conducted a well-being needs assessment survey to assess the impact of COVID-19. Based on the survey’s input, the Task Team developed a concrete action plan for how to better support the well-being of all UN-Women personnel and reported back to senior management and their executive leadership team with concrete recommendations. FAO conducted a survey on teleworking and flexible working arrangements in order to gain feedback and to inform the development of its updated policy on flexible working arrangements with an aim to increase flexibility given the lessons learned on what can and cannot be achieved away from the office and, importantly, clarifying issues such as approval processes, and the impact of extended teleworking on certain benefits and entitlements. One other important message that came from staff in the FAO survey was their right to be able to “switch off” while teleworking to ensure a more structured work-life balance.

134. Based on survey results as well as other feedback mechanisms, staff counselling services have been expanded in several participating organizations. The United Nations Secretariat has enlarged its counselling support in many offices away from headquarters and leveraged its health insurance providers to expand available services. Staff counsellors across the United Nations system have stepped up services. In one organization that lost a staff member to COVID-19 early in the pandemic, the staff counsellor organized family support and funeral services for the deceased staff member. Psychosocial support services expanded in several organizations. In interviews with human resources officers and senior staff, tele-health services were deemed a “game changer” for allowing staff to access medical and counselling services from anywhere at any time, especially for personnel in remote locations.

## D. Stage 4: going forward

135. **Return to workplace plans.** After the initial response to the COVID-19 crisis had passed and continuity of operations in most participating organizations had evolved to a steady state, the actions taken to adjust to new ways of working relied heavily, as one senior official noted, on “agility, flexibility and empathy”. As executive heads and senior management plan for the next phase, an opportunity should not be lost. As another senior official noted in terms of capitalizing on the opportunity to make organizational changes:

<sup>94</sup> Andrea de Guttry and others, eds., *The Duty of Care of International Organizations Towards Their Civilian Personnel: Legal Obligations and Implementation Challenges* (The Hague, T.M.C. Asser Press, 2018), p. v.

“The challenge for people coming back to the office is reassuring them that the place is a safe and inclusive culture. This is a risk; it does not change in six months. We have a journey ahead.” Another important consideration for occupational health and safety was comprehensive return to workplace plans and procedures, which nearly all participating organizations developed in anticipation of re-entering their facilities. These plans, developed in early 2021 by all but two organizations, included hygiene measures, rotation of personnel on premises, cleaning and disinfection of premises, meeting and conference facility guidelines and other measures to ensure the safe return of staff.

136. **Opportunity for learning.** In the context of setting up the United Nations after the Second World War, Winston Churchill was purported to have said: “Never let a good crisis go to waste.” The intent of the statement was to view a crisis as an opportunity to do things that would not have been possible in a previous context. Organizational resilience principles follow, to some extent, this very same principle – making use of a crisis incident in order to learn lessons and good practices in order to better prepare and respond to future incidents. As a matter of fact, the General Assembly reaffirmed the need for learning from the pandemic in its latest resolution on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and called on United Nations system organizations: “To analyse the lessons learned from the response plans to the pandemic at the national, regional and global levels and to identify gaps and challenges in order to better prepare and provide assistance, upon request, for possible related future shocks including through contingency planning, risk information and early warning systems, where appropriate.”<sup>95</sup> Such assessments, as well as those called for by ISO 22301, are not intended to be independent oversight reviews as discussed in chapter IV. A management assessment is intended to be an exercise to provide insight into what actions were taken, what worked, what did not, what was learned and what changes need to be made to better prepare and respond in the future.

137. **Early lessons learned towards resilience and a refined business continuity management approach.** The COVID-19 pandemic has tested business continuity management and organizational resilience within the United Nations system. It has also provided an opportunity to gain from the early lessons learned and good practices in order to strengthen business continuity management in participating organizations as well as other aspects of their respective operations going forward. In seven organizations, management assessments have already been conducted to learn in real time from the disruptions and interruptions caused by the pandemic and to apply lessons learned. For example, the United Nations Department of Safety and Security conducted an internal assessment with members of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network to collect safety and security good practices and lessons learned during the pandemic from across the system. The present review shows that these opportunities have been capitalized on by several participating organizations, from the development of an application for testing business continuity plans by UN-Women, investment of significant resources in developing business continuity management frameworks to align with the organizational resilience management system at IAEA and ITU, relinquishment of alternative working space by WIPO and the piloting of eight remote working hubs for UNICEF staff in the State of New Jersey and around New York City to enhance staff well-being and improve work-life balance and mental health.

138. **A structured approach to lessons learned towards organizational resilience.** Acknowledging that some participating organizations have taken the opportunity to conduct internal management assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide real-time learning, the Inspectors believe that, once the pandemic subsides, structured management assessments should be carried out to determine how organizations have performed in terms of business continuity management during the various phases. Eight organizations indicated that they intended to conduct such assessments once the pandemic had subsided. An after-action review conducted after a crisis is a core element to include in a business continuity management framework as argued in chapter III, as it provides an organization with an opportunity to assess what went well, what the challenges were and what changes could be made to improve responses to future incidents, thereby ensuring business continuity management contributes to organizational resilience efforts. In the view of the Inspectors,

<sup>95</sup> General Assembly resolution 75/233, para. 27 (d).

these assessments could also cover: (a) enabling factors during various stages of the pandemic; (b) what measures, permanent and ad hoc, were put in place to respond to the pandemic; (c) what has been learned by the organization to enable it to better prepare for and respond to future incidents, particularly prolonged ones; and (d) what aspects of the business continuity management framework should be revised or updated for it to contribute to organizational resilience.

139. The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to contribute to the dissemination of good practices in order to strengthen organizational resilience measures within participating organizations.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**In 2023, the executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should conduct an internal management assessment of the continuity of business operations during the COVID-19 pandemic to identify gaps, enablers, good practices and lessons learned and adjust policies, processes and procedures, in particular in areas such as human resources, information and communications technology management and occupational safety and health, and indicate necessary measures to better prepare for and respond to future disruptive incidents.**

140. A management assessment of this type is not only an opportunity for an organization to learn but also to inform legislative organs and governing bodies on the resilience measures taken and the potential costs and investments necessary to better prepare and respond to future interruptions and disruptions. The following recommendation is intended to enhance transparency and accountability and strengthen the oversight role of legislative organs and governing bodies.

#### **Recommendation 6**

**The legislative organs and governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should consider, at the earliest opportunity, the conclusions of the internal management assessment of the continuity of operations during the COVID-19 pandemic prepared by the executive heads of their respective organizations and, on that basis, take appropriate decisions to address the identified gaps and risks and to ensure continuity of business operations.**

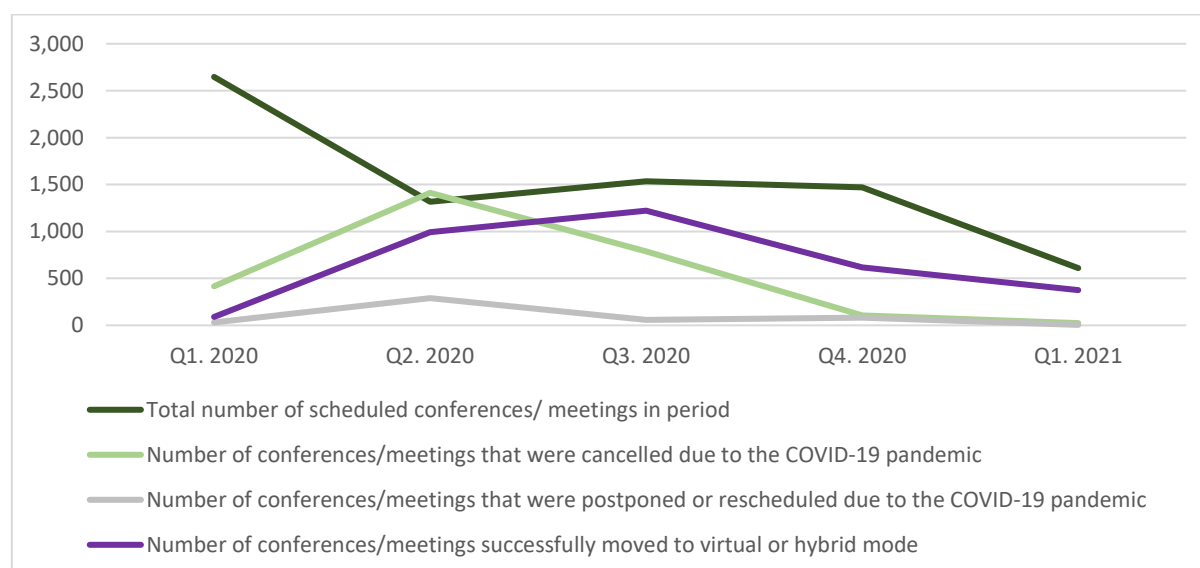
### **E. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic disruptions on legislative organs and governing bodies**

141. **Plans covering governance.** The disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic also reached the legislative organs and governing bodies within the United Nations system, resulting in postponed and cancelled meetings, delayed decisions and adjustments to procedures and meeting modes. Approximately half of the participating organizations covered in this review indicated that their legislative organs and governing bodies had a dedicated business continuity plan or covered governance activities in another plan in case of disruptive events. One example of this is the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), which developed such a plan for their governance activities following the 2007 Kenya general election and the associated violence that erupted in parts of the country. The business continuity plan, developed in close consultation with member States, included alternative locations for meetings in the event that Nairobi was deemed too high a risk. The plan for the UN-Habitat governing body was subsequently updated to include the risk posed by the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease. In nine participating organizations with business continuity plans covering legislative organ and governing body activities, plans included provisions for remote meetings, while seven organizations indicated a maximum tolerable period of disruption – ranging from between one and two hours to one week. In responding to the pandemic, five organizations indicated that they had achieved the recovery time objective stated in their business continuity plans.

142. **Virtual governance not widely used prior to 2020.** Although half of the participating organizations indicated that the activities of their legislative organs and governing bodies were covered by a business continuity plan, only three had legal or procedural tools to support substantive activities during a disruptive event. For some legislative organs and governing bodies, the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the initial stages resulted in cancellations or postponements (fig. XIII) with nearly 1,500 meetings cancelled in the second quarter of 2020 alone. At ILO, governance arrangements were adjusted in 2020, decisions were delegated to resolve through consultations and the International Labour Conference in May of 2020 was postponed. WFP postponed the 2020 first regular session of the Executive Board from the end of February until mid-April and urgent decisions were handled through a correspondence mechanism. At FAO, while all Council and Council committee sessions were held as planned, with minor adjustments, the regional conferences and technical meetings were postponed. Prior to the pandemic, 20 of the 22 legislative organs and governing bodies did not conduct virtual meetings, only 5 conducted hybrid (both virtual and in-person) meetings and none had provisions for electronic voting. A few organizations had paperless practices in place for their governance activities, including UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, moving towards online distribution of documents. However, more than 68 per cent of participating organizations (15 of 22) did not use virtual platforms prior to 2020.

Figure XIII

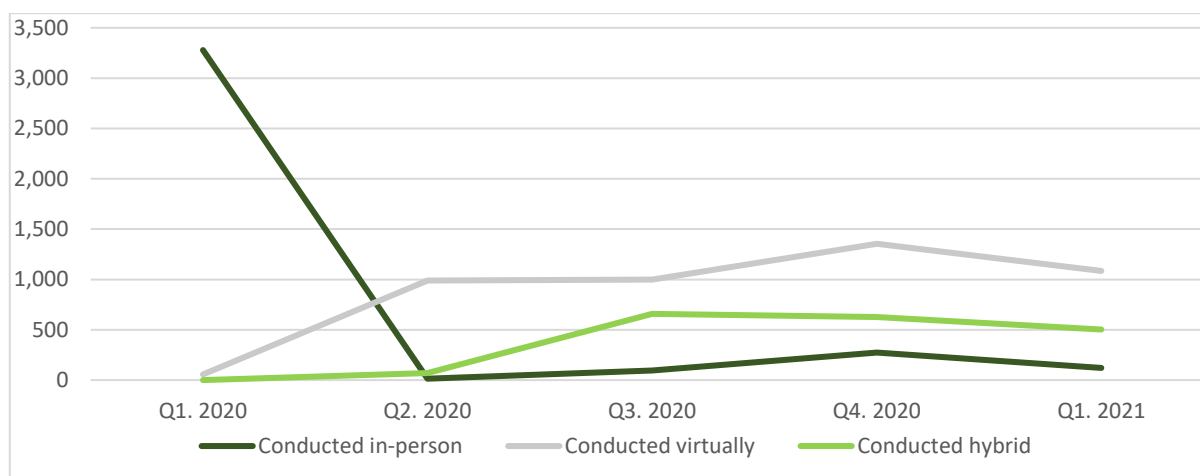
**Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on governance, by number of meetings each quarter (2020–2021)**



Source: JIU questionnaires (2021).

Figure XIV

**Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on governance, by number of meetings conducted (mode) each quarter (2020–2021)**



Source: JIU questionnaires (2021).

143. **Adjustments to continue governance.** Governance activities across the United Nations system were, like other activities, adjusted to take into account the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic by moving gradually to virtual platforms. As is shown in figure XIII, more adjustments were made between the second and third quarters of 2020, with fewer cancellations or postponements. Figure XIV displays the adjustments made in the mode in which meetings were conducted, with a rise in virtual and hybrid meetings beginning in the second quarter of 2020 to compensate for the decline of in-person meetings. Some bodies developed ad hoc instruments to ensure continuity. For instance, the General Assembly adopted a series of decisions on alternative means of taking decisions without holding formal meetings and the use of silent procedure mechanisms, which meant that the Assembly could only adopt decisions that had the agreement of all Member States.<sup>96</sup> Those proposals on which the silent procedure was interrupted could not be acted upon and were placed on hold until the Assembly could meet in-person. A few participating organizations mentioned the issue of interpretation, especially early on in the pandemic, as technical and security issues made virtual simultaneous interpretation a challenge. This caused some decisions to be postponed. While the General Assembly adopted a formal decision on its working procedures, some legislative organs and governing bodies adopted interim procedures, such as International Maritime Organization (IMO), which also provided for compressed sessions to accommodate time-zone differences. In its first virtual governing body meeting, IAEA agreed to suspend certain rules, such as simultaneous interpretation and provisions for voting. At ITU, a decision was taken to “wait until physical meetings resumed or approved by a vote by correspondence according to ITU legal framework”. Such actions demonstrated agility but may not ultimately prove sustainable in responding to future incidents.

144. **The move to virtual platforms.** As the COVID-19 pandemic has worn on, secretariats across the United Nations system have adjusted support for their respective legislative organs and governing bodies to ensure continuity of governance activities. Several indicated that, through trial and error, they had ensured secure and reliable virtual and hybrid meetings of their legislative organs and governing bodies through a variety of platforms, as well as remote simultaneous interpretation and formalization of decisions. While the move to virtual platforms resolved how legislative organs and governing bodies could meet, it did not necessarily address how the tradecraft of deliberations and negotiations by legislative organs and governing body members could be achieved. As one official reported: “The negotiations were rendered more protracted and complex due to the lack of face-to-face meetings, and the impossibility to spontaneously break out into smaller groups where negotiation deals are often made.” In another organization, the impact was also felt “given the limited time available to address substantive matters in the legislative organ and

<sup>96</sup> General Assembly decisions 74/544, 74/555, 74/558 and 74/561.

governing body agendas, the capacity to negotiate to find solutions ... the longer time to consider matters [and] the indefinite postponement of some issues”.

145. **Continuity of governance activities going forward.** As governance activities have continued despite the interruptions and disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, business continuity and resilience should not be overlooked. Legislative organs and governing bodies across the system have adapted so as to continue governance activities during this unprecedented period; they should also take the opportunity to develop plans to sustain their activities to prepare for and respond to future incidents in a more formal and sustainable manner. **The Inspectors encourage the development of business continuity plans to address disruptions to governance activities that would include provisions for virtual meetings and decision-making for the effective and efficient governance of the organizations.**

## Annex I

### Overview of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit included in its 2011 review of business continuity in the United Nations system

1. In 2011, JIU completed its first review of business continuity in the United Nations system,<sup>1</sup> which included nine recommendations on the development of business continuity policies, strategies and plans, the placement of business continuity managers in the office of the executive head or the executive office for management, stronger leadership on the matter, the allocation of dedicated human and financial resources and the need for business continuity training for critical staff. The Inspectors also recommended that the scope of business continuity plans should be organization-wide, including field offices, and that resident coordinators should oversee knowledge-sharing, cooperation and complementarity of preparedness for business continuity of the United Nations organizations at their duty stations. The recommendations were widely accepted with a remarkably high rate of implementation.

Recommendations
<p>1. The Executive Heads of the United Nations system organizations who have not done so yet should develop business continuity policy/strategy, including the assignment of business continuity management with responsibility for implementation, to be submitted for information to the legislative bodies.</p> <p>(83 per cent accepted and 90 per cent implemented)</p>
<p>2. Executive Heads should place business continuity management in the office of the executive head or the executive officer for management.</p> <p>(75 per cent accepted and 100 per cent implemented)</p>
<p>3. The Executive Heads of the United Nations system organizations who have not done so yet should develop and approve a documented business continuity plan based on a risk assessment, identified critical functions and recovery time objectives.</p> <p>(88 per cent accepted and 86 per cent implemented)</p>
<p>4. Executive Heads should ensure that the scope of business continuity plans of the United Nations system organizations includes their field offices. Overseeing and control mechanisms should be in place to ensure the coherence and interoperability of the business continuity plan with the headquarters and the United Nations country team, where appropriate.</p> <p>(71 per cent accepted and 88 per cent implemented)</p>
<p>5. The Secretary-General should ensure that the Resident Coordinators oversee business continuity preparedness of the United Nations organizations present in their duty station with a view to enhance knowledge sharing and identify possible areas of cooperation and complementarity.</p> <p>(Not accepted by the Secretary-General)</p>
<p>6. Executive Heads should ensure that business continuity planning and implementation form part of accountability and performance evaluation of line managers.</p> <p>(83 per cent accepted and 85 per cent implemented)</p>
<p>7. Legislative bodies of the United Nations organizations should, on the basis of the executive heads' budget proposals, provide the necessary financial and human resources for the implementation, continuous monitoring, maintenance and updating of the approved business continuity plans developed on the basis of the organization's [business continuity] policy/strategy.</p>

<sup>1</sup> JIU/REP/2011/6.



Recommendations
(75 per cent accepted and 89 per cent implemented)
<p>8. Executive Heads should ensure that business continuity training be incorporated in the career and staff development courses, including induction training, and that periodic training be provided to critical staff in the organizations as an integral component of business continuity management.</p> <p>(88 per cent accepted and 86 per cent implemented)</p>
<p>9. The Secretary-General, in his capacity as the Chairman of CEB, should direct that business continuity issues be put on the agenda in the harmonization of business processes of the framework of [the High-level Committee on Management]/CEB with the aim to develop and approve maturity models for business continuity preparedness, business continuity plan templates, and good practice guidelines designed for the United Nations organizations.</p> <p>(Not accepted by the Secretary-General/Chair of CEB)</p>

*Source:* prepared by JIU based on information available on its web-based tracking system.

## Annex II

## Business continuity management policy frameworks in participating organizations

Organization	Policy and other guidance documents related to business continuity management <sup>a</sup>	Year of adoption and last update	Document approved by executive head and/or senior management	Organization refers to policy on the organizational resilience management system	Organization refers to ISO 22301 <sup>b</sup>
United Nations Secretariat	Guidelines for Business Continuity	Jan. 2008 Jan. 2021	✓	✓	✓
UNAIDS	UNAIDS was developing its business continuity plan at the time the JIU questionnaire was administered.				
UNCTAD	UNCTAD communicated that it aligned itself with the United Nations Secretariat framework.				
ITC	ITC was developing its business continuity plan at the time the JIU questionnaire was administered.				
UNDP	Business Continuity Management Policy	June 2009 Jan. 2018	✓	✓	✓
UNEP	Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan	July 2017 Mar. 2021	X	X	X
UNFPA	Policy and Procedures for Business Continuity Management	Apr. 2017	✓	✓	X
UN-Habitat	Business Continuity Plan	Feb. 2013 Apr. 2020	✓	✓	X
UNHCR	Business Continuity Plan Template	Mar. 2020 Nov. 2020	✓	✓	X
UNICEF	Business Continuity Management	June 2007 Jan. 2021	✓	✓	X
UNODC	Business Continuity Plan	June 2020	✓	✓	X
UNOPS	Executive Office Instruction: Business Continuity Planning	Apr. 2010 Apr. 2018	✓	✓	✓
UNRWA	Business Continuity Planning for Amman Headquarters	Aug. 2017 Feb. 2020	✓	✓	X
UN-Women	Business Continuity Management Framework	May 2014	✓	✓	X

Organization	Policy and other guidance documents related to business continuity management <sup>a</sup>	Year of adoption and last update	Document approved by executive head and/or senior management	Organization refers to policy on the organizational resilience management system	Organization refers to ISO 22301 <sup>b</sup>
WFP	Business Continuity Management Plan: WFP Global Headquarters	Nov. 2016 June 2019	✓	✓	X
FAO	Business Continuity Management Policy, <i>FAO Administrative Manual</i> , sect. 114.1	Jan. 2020 Jan. 2021	✓	✓	X
IAEA	Business Continuity Plan  Policy on the Organizational Resilience Management System	2007 (revised May 2021)  2021	✓	✓	✓
ICAO	Business Continuity Plan  Business Continuity Administrative Instruction	Apr. 2020  May 2014 Oct. 2021	✓	✓	X
ILO	Policy on Business Continuity Management  Organizational Resilience Management Playbook	Mar. 2013  May 2015 Mar. 2020	✓	✓	X
IMO	Business Continuity Plan	Jan. 2004 Mar. 2020	✓	✓	✓
ITU	Business Continuity Policy (ORMS B1)	Jan. 2019 June 2021	✓	✓	✓
UNESCO	Organizational Resilience Policy	To be adopted by the Executive Board in 2022	✓	✓	X
UNIDO	Business Continuity Plan, Director General's Bulletin	Oct. 2007 Aug. 2020	✓	X	X
UNWTO	-	-	-	-	-
UPU	International Bureau Business Continuity Plan	Nov. 2010	✓	X	X
WHO	WHO Headquarters Business Continuity Management Governance Framework  WHO Guidance for Business Continuity Planning	Oct. 2009 Mar. 2020	✓	✓	X

Organization	Policy and other guidance documents related to business continuity management <sup>a</sup>	Year of adoption and last update	Document approved by executive head and/or senior management	Organization refers to policy on the organizational resilience management system	Organization refers to ISO 22301 <sup>b</sup>
	(regional offices may have their own frameworks)	2018			
WIPO	Business Continuity Plan: WIPO Consolidated Organizational Resilience	Aug. 2012 Nov. 2020	✓	✓	✓
WMO	Business Continuity Plan (not provided)	Mar. 2020	-	-	-

Source: prepared by JIU based on information provided by participating organizations.

✓	Yes
X	No

<sup>a</sup> The policy on the organizational resilience management system prescribes its application within and among the individual organizations of the United Nations system. In addition, guidance documents include policies, plans and other guidelines, as reported by the organizations.

<sup>b</sup> ILO, UNICEF, the United Nations Secretariat and WFP refer to the Good Practice Guidelines of the Business Continuity Institute.

## Annex III

### Core elements to support a comprehensive approach to business continuity management in participating organizations

Organization	1. Statement- defining approach	2. Alignment with relevant United Nations standards	3. Governance structure for coordination of business continuity activities	4. Clear roles, responsibiliti es and reporting lines	5. Integration of business continuity management with other policies and processes	6. Reviewing and/or updating the policy	7. Capturing lessons learned	8. Training on and awareness of the business continuity management framework	9. Establishing business continuity plans	10. Provisions for corporate review/ quality assurance	11. Maintenance, exercise and review of business continuity plan(s)
United Nations Secretariat											
UNAIDS	UNAIDS was developing its business continuity plan at the time the JIU questionnaire was administered.										
UNCTAD	UNCTAD communicated that it aligned itself with the United Nations Secretariat framework.										
ITC	ITC business continuity plan to be approved in 2022.										
UNDP											
UNEP											
UNFPA											
UN-Habitat											
UNHCR											
UNICEF											
UNODC											
UNOPS											
UNRWA											
UN-Women											
WFP											
FAO											
IAEA											

Organization	1. Statement- defining approach	2. Alignment with relevant United Nations standards	3. Governance structure for coordination of business continuity activities	4. Clear roles, responsibiliti es and reporting lines	5. Integration of business continuity management with other policies and processes	6. Reviewing and/or updating the policy	7. Capturing lessons learned	8. Training on and awareness of the business continuity management framework	9. Establishing business continuity plans	10. Provisions for corporate review/ quality assurance	11. Maintenance, exercise and review of business continuity plan(s)
ICAO											
ILO											
IMO											
ITU											
UNESCO											
UNIDO											
UNWTO											
UPU											
WHO											
WIPO											
WMO											

Source: prepared by JIU based on information provided by participating organizations.

	Fully reflected
	Partially reflected
	Not reflected
	No response provided

## Annex IV

### Organizational arrangements for business continuity management in participating organizations

Organization	Organizational function overseeing business continuity management <sup>a</sup>	Level and grade of function(s) and percentage of time dedicated to business continuity management	Placement of business continuity function in the organizational structure	Highest official responsible for business continuity management
United Nations Secretariat	Sustainability and Resilience Management Unit	Senior Management and Programme Analyst, P-5, 25% Management and Programme Analyst, P-4, 75% Team Assistant, G-4, 25%	Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance/Office of the Under-Secretary-General	Under-Secretaries-Generals, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, Assistant Secretaries-Generals
UNAIDS	UNAIDS was developing its business continuity plan at the time the JIU questionnaire was administered.			
UNCTAD	-	-	-	-
ITC	ITC was developing its business continuity plan at the time the JIU questionnaire was administered.			Executive Director
UNDP	Management Specialist, Compliance Division	P-4, 50%	Director, Office of Budget, Performance and Compliance, D-2	Director, Bureau for Management Services
UNEP	Enterprise Risk Management/Information Communication Officer	P-2, 20%	Head of Administration Unit, P-5	Director, Corporate Services, D-2
UNFPA	Chief, Office of the Security Coordinator	D-1	-	Executive Director
UN-Habitat	Oversight Officer	P-4, 5%	Management Advisory and Compliance Division	Director, Management Advisory and Compliance Service, D-1
UNHCR	Senior Field Security Officer	P-4, 15%	Chief of Operations, Field Security Service, P-5	Deputy High Commissioner (organizational resilience management system, globally)
	Senior Emergency Officer	P-4, 15%	Senior Emergency Coordinator, Emergency Service, P-5	Assistant High Commissioner – Operations (business continuity plan for field operations, globally) and regional bureau directors (business continuity plan for field operations)

Organization	Organizational function overseeing business continuity management <sup>a</sup>	Level and grade of function(s) and percentage of time dedicated to business continuity management	Placement of business continuity function in the organizational structure	Highest official responsible for business continuity management
UNICEF	Business Continuity Manager	P-4, 100%	Comptroller, Office of the Comptroller, Division of Financial and Administrative Management, D-2	Deputy Executive Director – Management
UNODC	Officer-in-charge	P-5	General Support Section/Division for Management	Executive Director
UNOPS	Director	Shared Service Centre, D-1	-	Executive Director
UNRWA	Director of Planning	D-1, 10%	Planning, UNRWA Headquarters Amman	Commissioner-General
	Senior Emergency Officer	P-4, 15%	Deputy Director of Planning, P-5	
UN-Women	Global Security Adviser	P-5, 10–20%	-	Executive Director
	Global Security Specialist – Business Continuity Manager	P-4, 50%		
	Regional Security Specialists	3 P-3s, 10%		
WFP	Business Continuity Management Unit	Corporate Business Continuity Manager, P-5, 50%	Deputy Executive Director for Operations	Deputy Executive Director
FAO	Logistics Services Division	Programme Officer, P-4, 20%	Logistics Services Division, Office of Director, D-1	Deputy Director General
		Consultant, 50%		
		Business continuity expert (40 days a year)		
IAEA	Central Security Coordinator	P-5, 20%	Office of the Deputy Director General for Management	Director General
	Security Coordination Officer (Policy and Planning)	P-3, 50%	Office of the Deputy Director General for Management	
	Director, Office of Information and Communication Systems	D-1, percentage varies according to need	Deputy Director General for Safeguards	
	Finance and Accounting Associate	P-2, percentage varies according to need	Office of Information and Communication Systems, Director	
ICAO	Chief, Conference, Security and General Services Section	P-5, 15%	Bureau of Administration and Services	Secretary-General
		Consultant, 50%		



Organization	Organizational function overseeing business continuity management <sup>a</sup>	Level and grade of function(s) and percentage of time dedicated to business continuity management	Placement of business continuity function in the organizational structure	Highest official responsible for business continuity management
ILO	Senior Risk Officer	P-5, 10%	Office of the Treasurer and Financial Comptroller	Treasurer and Financial Comptroller, D-2, who is a member of the Senior Management Team
IMO	Chief	Central Support Services, D-1		Director, Administrative Division, D-2
ITU	Organizational Resilience Management System Coordinator	P-4, 100%	Safety and Security Division	Head, Safety and Security Division, Information Services Department
	ICT Disaster Recovery Coordinator	P-4, 100%	-	-
	Organizations Business Risk Manager	P-4, 100%	-	-
UNESCO	Senior Executive Officer	P-5	Executive Office of the Sector for Administration and Management	Assistant Director General for Administration and Management
UNIDO	Managing Director	D-2	Directorate of Corporate Management and Operations	Director General
UNWTO	Security Coordinator	-	-	Secretary-General
UPU	In the absence of a business continuity officer, UPU indicated that it relied on its crisis management team during the COVID-19 pandemic	Not applicable	Not applicable	Deputy Director General
WHO	Office of the Assistant Director General/Business Operations at Headquarters	Assistant Director General, 10% P-5, 15%	Assistant Director General/Business Operations Division	Director General
	Office of Directors, Administration and Finance, in each regional office	Director, Administration and Finance Division, D-1 Regional Emergency Directors, 25–50%	Office of Directors, Administration and Finance, in regional offices and Office of Regional Emergency Directors (where available)	Regional Directors
	WHO Health Emergencies Programme for locations in which emergency levels are declared (headquarters and regional offices)	Country Operation Officer and, in certain countries, Field Security Officer, more than 50% at country office level	Office of the Operation Officer and/or Field Security Officer within the country office	Heads of country offices

Organization	Organizational function overseeing business continuity management <sup>a</sup>	Level and grade of function(s) and percentage of time dedicated to business continuity management	Placement of business continuity function in the organizational structure	Highest official responsible for business continuity management
WIPO	Business Continuity Coordinator	P-5, 100%	Office of the Assistant Director General, Administration, Finance and Management Sector	Director General
WMO	Risk and Quality Management Officer	-	-	Cabinet of the Secretary-General

*Source:* prepared by JIU based on information provided by participating organizations.

<sup>a</sup> During the COVID-19 pandemic, most participating organizations also indicated that they had a crisis management team.

## Annex V

### Networks of focal points for business continuity in participating organizations

Organization	Focal point network levels			Roles and responsibilities of focal points defined either in policy or in generic terms of reference	Business continuity responsibilities reflected in the job descriptions of focal points
	Headquarters	Regional	Country		
United Nations Secretariat	✓ (77)	✓ (104)		✓ (Terms of reference, Headquarters)	✓
UNAIDS	UNAIDS was developing its business continuity plan at the time the JIU questionnaire was administered.				
UNCTAD	-	-	-	-	-
ITC	X	X	Not applicable	X	X
UNDP	✓ (27)	✓ (5)	✓ (130)	✓	✓
UNEP	✓ All heads of duty stations: 39			✓ (Terms of reference)	✓
UNFPA	✓ (139)	✓ (6)	✓ (139)	✓	✓
UN-Habitat	X	X	X	✓	X
UNHCR	✓ (2)	✓ (30)	✓ (At least 1 for each operation)	✓	X
UNICEF	✓ (33)	✓ (10)	✓ (199)	✓ (Terms of reference)	✓
UNODC	X	✓	✓	X	X
UNOPS	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
UNRWA	✓ (2)	X	✓ (5)	✓	✓
UN-Women	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
WFP	✓ (20)	✓ (6)	✓	✓	✓
FAO	✓ (45)	✓ (10)	✓ (90)	✓	✓
IAEA	✓ (25)	✓ (4)	Not applicable	✓	X
ICAO	✓ (8)	✓ (8)	Not applicable	X	X
ILO	✓ (1)	✓ (5)	Not applicable	X	✓
IMO	✓ (10)	Not applicable	Not applicable	✓	X
ITU	✓	✓		✓	✓
UNESCO	X ("In progress")	X	X	X	X
UNIDO	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
UNWTO	X	X	Not applicable	X	X

Organization	Focal point network levels			Roles and responsibilities of focal points defined either in policy or in generic terms of reference	Business continuity responsibilities reflected in the job descriptions of focal points
	Headquarters	Regional	Country		
UPU	X	Not applicable	Not applicable	X	X
WHO	√	√	√	√	X
WIPO	√ (18)	Not applicable	√ (4)	√ (Terms of reference)	√
WMO	X	X	Not applicable	X	X

Source: prepared by JIU based on information provided by participating organizations.

√	Yes
X	No

## Annex VI

## Business continuity plans in participating organizations

Organization	Business continuity plan(s)	Plans available for all or some divisions/offices/units at headquarters	Plans available for regional offices	Plans available for country offices	Approved or draft business continuity plans (as of 2011)
United Nations Secretariat	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
UNAIDS	UNAIDS was developing its business continuity plan at the time the JIU questionnaire was administered.				-
UNCTAD	-	-	-	-	-
ITC	ITC was developing its business continuity plan at the time the JIU questionnaire was administered.			Not applicable	-
UNDP	✓	✓	✓	✓	Draft
UNEP	✓	✓	✓	✓	Not reviewed
UNFPA	✓	✓	✓	✓	Draft
UN-Habitat	✓	✓	✓		Not reviewed
UNHCR	✓	✓	✓	✓	Not reviewed
UNICEF	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
UNODC	✓		✓	✓	Not reviewed
UNOPS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
UNRWA	✓	✓ (Some)		✓	Not reviewed
UN-Women	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
WFP	✓	✓ (Some)	✓	✓	Draft
FAO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
IAEA	✓	✓	✓	Not applicable	✓
ICAO	✓	✓	✓	Not applicable	Draft
ILO	✓	✓	✓	✓	Not reviewed
IMO	✓	✓	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not reviewed
ITU	Business continuity plans are included in the security emergency response procedures. ITU indicated that it was converting them into a business continuity catalogue.				Draft
UNESCO	✓	✓ (Some)	✓	✓ (Some)	Draft
UNIDO	✓	✓	✓	✓	Draft
UNWTO	X	-	-	Not applicable	Not reviewed
UPU	✓	✓	Not applicable	Not applicable	✓

Organization	Business continuity plan(s)	Plans available for all or some divisions/offices/units at headquarters	Plans available for regional offices	Plans available for country offices	Approved or draft business continuity plans (as of 2011)
WHO	✓	✓	✓ (Some)	✓	Draft
WIPO	✓	✓	Not applicable	✓ (Some)	Draft
WMO	✓	✓	✓	Not applicable	Not reviewed

*Source:* prepared by JIU, columns 2 to 5 are based on information provided by participating organizations, column 6 is based on annex I of JIU/REP/2011/6.

✓	Yes
X	No

*Note:* The following organizations were participating organizations in 2011 but were not covered by the review: ILO, IMO, UNEP, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), UNRWA, UNWTO and WMO. ITC, UNAIDS and UN-Women were not participating organizations in 2011.

## Annex VII

### Risk assessment and impact analysis by participating organizations

Organization	Risk assessment		Business impact analysis		
	Corporate risk register is shared with the Business Continuity Officer	Corporate risk register is used in the development of business continuity plans <sup>a</sup>	Business impact analysis is carried out	A time frame within which the impact of not resuming activities would become unacceptable (e.g. the maximum tolerable period of disruption) is determined	A time frame for resuming disrupted activities (e.g. the recovery time objective) is determined
United Nations Secretariat	√	√	X	√	√
UNAIDS	√	√	-	-	-
UNCTAD	-	-	-	-	-
ITC	X	X	X	-	-
UNDP	√	√	√	X	√
UNEP	√	Business Continuity Officer <sup>b</sup>	√	√	√
		Chief Risk Officer: √			
UNFPA	√	√	√	√	√
UN-Habitat	UN-Habitat does not have a corporate risk register.		X	-	-
UNHCR	√	√	X	-	-
UNICEF	√	√	√ (Last conducted in 2011)	√	√
UNODC	√	√	X	-	-
UNOPS	X	X	√	√	√

Organization	Risk assessment		Business impact analysis		
	Corporate risk register is shared with the Business Continuity Officer	Corporate risk register is used in the development of business continuity plans <sup>a</sup>	Business impact analysis is carried out	A time frame within which the impact of not resuming activities would become unacceptable (e.g. the maximum tolerable period of disruption) is determined	A time frame for resuming disrupted activities (e.g. the recovery time objective) is determined
UNRWA	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
UN-Women	✓	Business Continuity Officer: ✓	✓ (Suspended)	✓	✓
		Chief Risk Officer: “Do not know”			
WFP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
IAEA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FAO	✓	Business Continuity Officer: ✓	✓ (Headquarters only)	✓	✓
		Chief Risk Officer: “Do not know”			
ICAO	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
ILO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
IMO	✓	Business Continuity Officer: ✓	X	Not applicable	
		Chief Risk Officer: X			
ITU	✓	Business Continuity Officer: X	✓	✓	✓
		Chief Risk Officer: ✓			
UNESCO	Not applicable	Business Continuity Officer: X	X	Not applicable	
		Chief Risk Officer: ✓			
UNIDO	✓	Business Continuity Officer <sup>c</sup>	✓	✓	✓
		Chief Risk Officer: ✓			
UNWTO	-	-	X	Not applicable	



Organization	Risk assessment		Business impact analysis		
	Corporate risk register is shared with the Business Continuity Officer	Corporate risk register is used in the development of business continuity plans <sup>a</sup>	Business impact analysis is carried out	A time frame within which the impact of not resuming activities would become unacceptable (e.g. the maximum tolerable period of disruption) is determined	A time frame for resuming disrupted activities (e.g. the recovery time objective) is determined
UPU	√	√	X	Not applicable	
WHO	√	X	√	X	X
WIPO	√	√	√	√	√
WMO	√	Business Continuity Officer: √	X	Not applicable	
		Chief Risk Officer: X			

Source: prepared by JIU based on information provided by participating organizations.

√	Yes
X	No

<sup>a</sup> Responses provided by the Business Continuity Officer and the Chief Risk Officer highlighted inconsistencies in several organizations, as reflected.

<sup>b</sup> Corporate risk register being approved.

<sup>c</sup> Corporate risk register under development.

## Annex VIII

### Outreach and training on business continuity processes and procedures in participating organizations

Organization	Organization conducts at least one activity aimed at raising awareness of business continuity	Organization has training on business continuity processes and procedures available for staff	
		Yes Yes (mandatory) No	Target audience
United Nations Secretariat	✓	✓	All staff Field missions
UNAIDS	-	-	-
UNCTAD	-	-	-
ITC	✓	X	Not applicable
UNDP	✓	✓	Business continuity plan focal points Operations managers Security focal points
UNEP	X	X	Not applicable
UNFPA	✓	✓	Business continuity plan focal points Office personnel All security focal points
UN-Habitat	X	X	Not applicable
UNHCR	✓	X	Not applicable
UNICEF	✓	✓	All personnel
UNODC	✓	✓	-
UNOPS	✓	✓ (Mandatory)	Business unit personnel
UNRWA	✓	X	Not applicable
UN-Women	✓	✓	Crisis management team
WFP	✓	X	Not applicable
FAO	✓	X	Not applicable
IAEA	✓	✓	Focal points for the organizational resilience management system Key staff
ICAO	✓	✓	Offices, Bureau, sections and units
ILO	✓	X	Not applicable
IMO	✓	X	Not applicable
ITU	✓	✓	Crisis Management Team members Activity Recovery Plans – responsible focal points (Crisis Management Team and Organizational Response Team)
UNESCO	✓	X	Not applicable

Organization	Organization conducts at least one activity aimed at raising awareness of business continuity	Organization has training on business continuity processes and procedures available for staff	
		Yes Yes (mandatory) No	Target audience
UNIDO	√	√ (Mandatory)	Critical personnel Heads of organizational units Field representatives
UNWTO	X	X	Not applicable
UPU	√	X	Not applicable
WHO	√	√	Key business functions/owners, incorporating business continuity management requirements and processes (across the organization)
WIPO	√	√ (Mandatory)	Mostly conducted on a need-to-know basis, with general information provided during staff induction
WMO	√	X	Not applicable

Source: prepared by JIU based on information provided by participating organizations.

√	Yes
X	No

## Annex IX

## Maintenance, exercise and review practices of business continuity plans in participating organizations

Organization	Established policy/ procedure for maintenance and review	Scope of maintenance, exercise and review								Contents of the review report Follow-up maintenance, exercise and review	
		ICT systems and equipment	Communication	Safety and security	Disaster recovery plan	Business processes	Service providers	Roles and responsibility	Crisis management plans	Recommendations/ action plan for remediation	Identification of lessons learned
United Nations Secretariat	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
UNAIDS	UNAIDS was developing its business continuity plan at the time the JIU questionnaire was administered										
UNCTAD	UNCTAD communicated that it aligned itself with the United Nations Secretariat framework.										
ITC	ITC was developing its business continuity plan at the time the questionnaire was administered.										
UNDP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
UNEP	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
UNFPA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
UN-Habitat	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-
UNHCR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X
UNICEF	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
UNODC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓ (Headquarters)
UNOPS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
UNRWA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-

Organization	Established policy/ procedure for maintenance and review	Scope of maintenance, exercise and review								Contents of the review report Follow-up maintenance, exercise and review	
		ICT systems and equipment	Communication	Safety and security	Disaster recovery plan	Business processes	Service providers	Roles and responsibility	Crisis management plans	Recommendations/ action plan for remediation	Identification of lessons learned
UN-Women	√	√	√	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	-
WFP	√	√	X	X	√	√	√	√	X	√	√
FAO	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
IAEA	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
ICAO	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
ILO	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IMO	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ITU	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	-
UNESCO	√ (Partially)	√	X	√	X	√	X	X	√	√	√
UNIDO	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
UPU	√	√	√	-	-	√	-	√	-	√	-
WHO <sup>a</sup>	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
WIPO	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
WMO	√	√	√	√	-	√	-	√	√	-	-

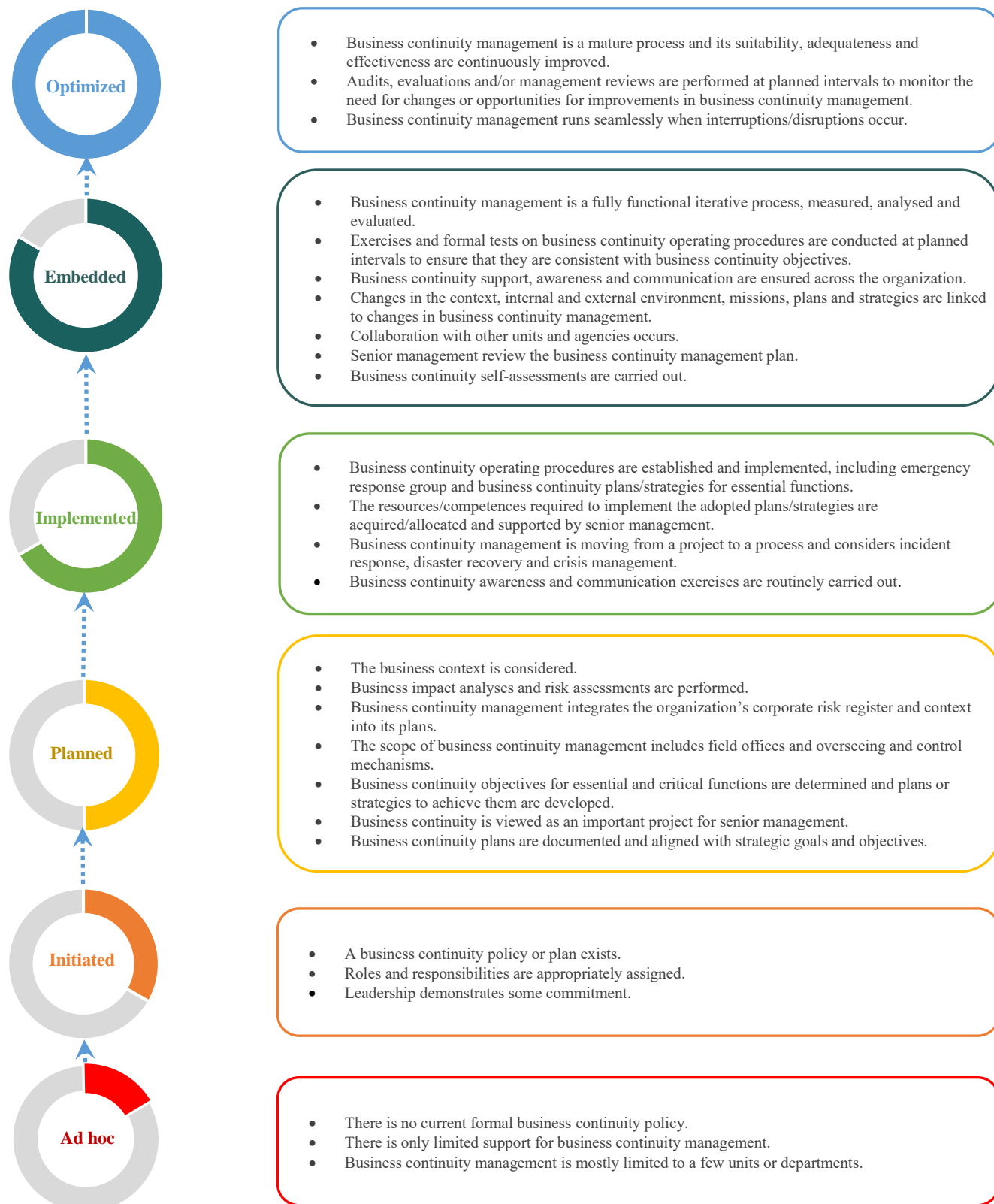
Source: prepared by JIU based on information provided by participating organizations.

√	Yes
X	No

<sup>a</sup> With reference to WHO Guidance for Business Continuity Planning (WHO/WHE/CPI/2018.60), WHO communicated that its business continuity management policies, operationalization, maintenance, exercise and review activities focused on situations in which public health emergencies had been declared.

## Annex X

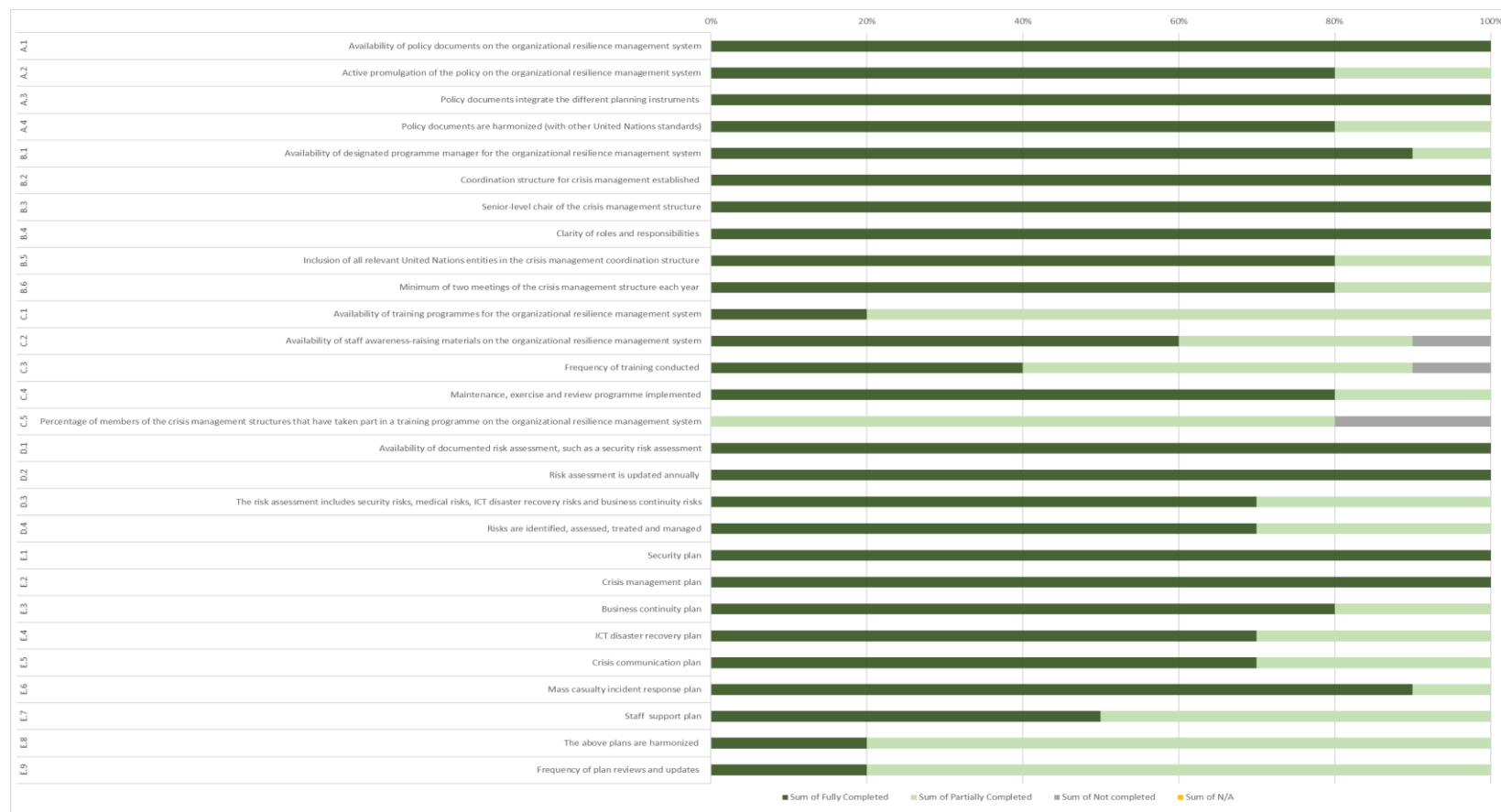
## Business continuity management maturity matrix (developed by the Joint Inspection Unit)



## Annex XI

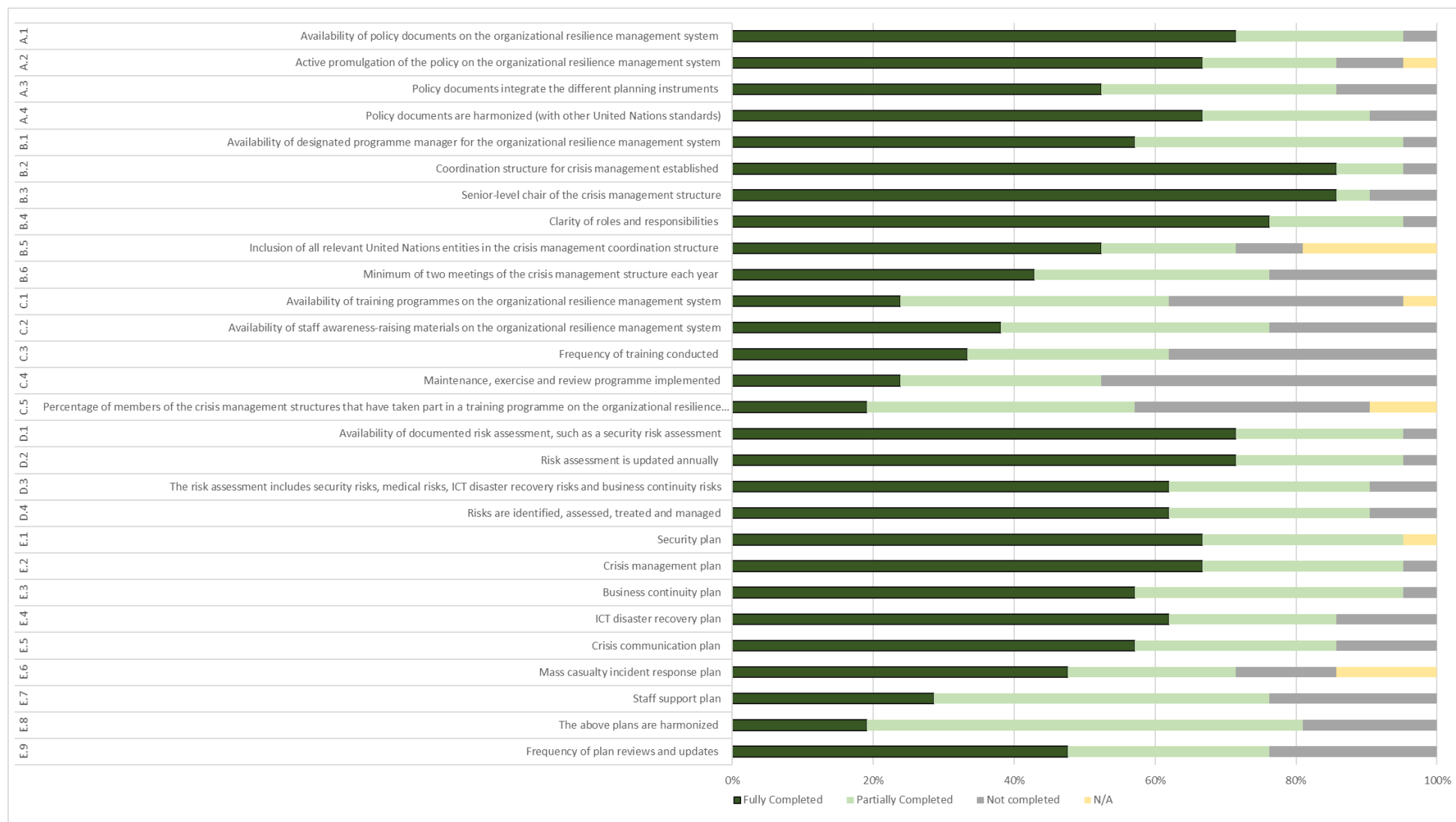
### Progress measured against the key performance indicators of the organizational resilience management system

#### A. Progress of United Nations Secretariat entities measured against the key performance indicators of the organizational resilience management system



Source: prepared by JIU on the basis of data provided by CEB.

## B. Progress of United Nations system organizations measured against the key performance indicators of the organizational resilience management system



Source: prepared by JIU on the basis of data provided by CEB.



## Annex XII

### Business continuity management: good practices and early lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic (please refer to the report for additional practices, which are mentioned throughout)

Aspects of business continuity management	Lessons learned	Good practices
<b>Business continuity planning</b>	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic has made clear that emergencies can be prolonged and that the Organization should also be prepared to maintain its essential business processes for extended periods under unforeseen circumstances (United Nations Secretariat).</p> <p>Business continuity plans were conceived for short-term disruptions and local impacts. Revisions to business continuity plans should consider disruptions with global impacts as well (United Nations Office at Nairobi).</p> <p>Need for an adaptive and flexible approach to business continuity and to update the business continuity plan in light of the challenges triggered by a crisis (United Nations Secretariat).</p> <p>Timely contingency planning complements business continuity planning once the exact nature of an evolving disruption is known (WIPO).</p>	<p>Updated business continuity planning template at Headquarters, which considers long-term disruptive events (United Nations Secretariat).</p> <p>Timeliness in updating the business continuity plans in the wake of the pandemic, which made the transition to flexible/remote working arrangements largely practical, smooth and successful (UNFPA and UNHCR).</p> <p>The crisis management strategy was considered in a phased approach and adaptive planning, with sufficient flexibility to reshape measures as the context required, through constant monitoring and observation of both the epidemiological situation and the effectiveness of measures in place. Such a strategy of regular reassessments, whereby each phase prepared the next one, has proven adequate to manage the challenges and risks posed by the fluidity of the situation (FAO).</p> <p>Development and promulgation of lessons learned at an early stage of the pandemic to inform responses (UNICEF).</p>
<b>Internal capacity and resources</b>	<p>Information infrastructure requires upgrading and investment if it is to continue to be fit for purpose, secure, meet the evolving needs of staff and other stakeholders and meet future business continuity and disaster recovery needs (ITU, United Nations Secretariat, UN-Women and UNWTO).</p>	<p>ITC and UNESCO scaled-up their provision of ICT equipment, technology tools and rolled out collaboration and storage platforms to enable remote working. UN-Women has a strategy for financing additional activities that may arise due to interruptions or disruptions.</p>
<b>Building capacity and training</b>	<p>Due to the greater level of uncertainty with regard to future disruptions, the focus should be put on spending less time on the development and maintenance of plans and more resources invested in developing skills and the capabilities of key personnel to deal with a crisis and business disruptions (UN-Women).</p>	<p>Development of dedicated training on virtual tools for staff (United Nations Secretariat and WHO).</p>

Aspects of business continuity management	Lessons learned	Good practices
	<p>Importance of substantial investment in building capacity to deal with crises and business continuity through facilitated exercises prior to such crises (ITU).</p> <p>Importance of conducting regular stress-test exercises and training based on various crisis scenarios (ITU).</p> <p>The necessity of having a training on virtual tools for new (and existing) staff as part of induction training (UNFPA, United Nations Secretariat, UNWRA and WHO).</p>	
<b>Internal coordination and crisis management during the pandemic</b>	<p>Importance of an effective governance structure composed of all concerned senior officials (crisis management team), which is consistently present throughout the crisis, sometimes with daily meetings (ILO and WIPO).</p> <p>Flexibility and timeliness to set up an internal mechanism (ad hoc or permanent) to coordinate the response to a crisis (FAO, ICAO, UN-Habitat, United Nations Secretariat, UN-Women and WIPO).</p> <p>Need to have flexibility in crisis management architecture, including increased use of risk-based management decision-making (United Nations Secretariat).</p> <p>Systematic integration across operational teams, and the ability to easily escalate issues, is essential for the day-to-day response to a crisis (WIPO).</p>	<p>Establishment of a multi-layered coordination structure (operational, tactical and strategic) to ensure the continuity of crisis-related decision-making (WIPO).</p> <p>Rapid deployment of a crisis management team to coordinate the approach among the departments of an organization and respond to the pandemic and to the different restrictions introduced by national authorities (ICAO, United Nations Secretariat, UN-Women and WIPO).</p> <p>Use of risk management tools for decision-making, the establishment of dashboards and monitoring tools (United Nations Secretariat).</p> <p>Scaling up of management client board, where field-focused entities, offices away from Headquarters and representatives of resident coordinators engage with the Secretariat's management architecture to provide inputs into management strategies, policies and processes (United Nations Secretariat).</p>
<b>Communication during the pandemic</b>	<p>Importance of streamlining all COVID-related communication through the COVID team to ensure that messaging was consistent and from a single source. The regular communication coming from senior management contributed to staff feeling supported (United Nations Secretariat).</p> <p>Criticality of communication with staff (and other stakeholders) during a crisis (FAO, IAEA, ILO, IMO, ITC, ITU, UNESCO, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, United Nations Secretariat, UNRWA, WHO and WIPO).</p>	<p>Single point of coordination for crisis-related communications to ensure consistent messaging (WIPO).</p> <p>Regular communication with staff and other stakeholders, including Member States (IAEA, ILO, IMO, ITU, UNHCR, UNICEF, United Nations Secretariat, UNRWA and WIPO).</p> <p>Communication with staff and beneficiaries was reinforced using a variety of means – the creation of COVID-19 portals or intranet sites with a repository for all information and internal and government announcements and procedures regarding the pandemic, town halls, meetings</p>

Aspects of business continuity management	Lessons learned	Good practices
		with representatives, checklists, broadcasts, surveys, social media, emails, text messages etc. (ILO, UNDP, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNRWA and WHO).
<b>Inter-agency cooperation and coordination</b>	<p>The pandemic has allowed for more continuous collaboration with other agencies through the relevant networks; prior to the pandemic, this collaboration was less frequent (UNWTO).</p> <p>Importance of establishing inter-agency working relationships to ensure a coordinated response to the pandemic. All guidance (e.g. on human resources, returning to the office and meetings) was discussed at inter-agency level (UNESCO, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, United Nations Secretariat and UNWTO).</p> <p>All medical guidance was discussed at inter-agency level and collaboration was more continuous at both global and local levels (United Nations Medical Directors' Network, the United Nations System-wide Task Force on Medical Evacuations in Response to COVID-19, the United Nations System-wide COVID-19 Vaccination Programme etc.). Networks should be established with local public health authorities and other relevant stakeholders in the preparedness phase (ILO).</p>	Investing time in inter-agency cooperation and coordination (UN-Habitat, UNHCR, United Nations Secretariat and UNWTO).
<b>Availability and security of ICT services during the pandemic</b>	<p>Need for secure digital backup of critical physical documents that are typically filed or stored at offices. The retrieval of documents was an immediate challenge following swiftly imposed restrictions on movements and lockdowns (UNFPA and UNWTO).</p> <p>Need to take regular stock of Internet and electricity connectivity for field-based organizations. These proved a challenge in many geographical locations during the pandemic (UNFPA).</p>	<p>The transition to cloud-based systems has significantly helped to embed resilience to disruptions at a physical location (FAO, ITC, ITU, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women, UNWTO, WHO and WIPO).</p> <p>Dongles for staff were provided in case of connectivity issues (WHO).</p> <p>ILO migrated several of its systems to cloud-based environments and provided equipment to staff to support prolonged remote working (e.g. screens and laptops). ILO benefited from the flexibility and availability of ICT services to prioritize the development of crisis-related software solutions for pressing needs, which allowed a more efficient medical and human resources development crisis management (ILO).</p>

Aspects of business continuity management	Lessons learned	Good practices
<b>Remote working arrangements</b>	<p>Need for equipment to support staff during prolonged remote working (FAO, ITC, ITU, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women, UNWTO, WHO and WIPO).</p> <p>Provision of adequate ICT resources to all staff for remote working is vital. While many staff have laptops issued by the United Nations due to the move to flexible workspaces at Headquarters, this did not cover all staff (United Nations Secretariat, Department of Global Communications).</p> <p>Importance of alternative flexible working arrangements (FAO, IAEA, ITC, UNOPS, UN-Women and WHO).</p> <p>Need to rethink flexible work, exploring virtual duty stations, skills of the future, leadership, collaboration etc. (UNHCR).</p>	<p>Equipment provided to staff to support prolonged remote working (i.e. to adapt homeworking spaces) in order to maintain a high level of service in an innovative way (ITC, ITU, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, UNRWA and UN-Women).</p> <p>Alternative working arrangements, including teleworking, flexitime, rotation and other work modalities, have been applied on a large-scale during the pandemic (FAO and UNDP).</p>
<b>Occupational health and safety initiatives for personnel</b>	<p>The health crisis highlighted the need for culture shifts in leadership behaviour, founded on empathy and a people-centred approach (FAO).</p> <p>The pandemic has brought into sharp focus the Organization's occupational health and safety obligations as a global employer, carefully balancing the need to safeguard the health and safety of personnel in light of local health advisories and WHO guidelines. This means that the investment is needed to ensure that the OHS protocols are in place (UNHCR).</p> <p>Need to consider and ensure staff well-being during prolonged disruptive incidents (UNOPS).</p> <p>Need for enhanced staff well-being/mental health programmes and for regular check-ins with staff in the absence of physical presence (UNHCR, UNRWA, UN-Women and WHO).</p> <p>Need to prioritize mental health and provision of counselling services where possible (UNOPS).</p> <p>Importance of consulting staff representative bodies when management is taking new decisions affecting staff (UNHCR).</p> <p>Importance of United Nations country team joint planning and preparedness for the first line of defence and medical capacities in the event of health crises, especially at duty stations at which there is</p>	<p>Development or expansion of mental health and psychosocial support for staff (FAO, ILO, ITC, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, United Nations Secretariat, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women and WHO).</p> <p>Regular meetings between management and staff representative bodies to ensure the latter's input and support (UNHCR).</p> <p>Scaling up and retooling of the emergency notification and personnel accounting system to ensure the well-being of staff during the pandemic (UN-Women).</p> <p>Following a staff survey and other feedback received, measures were taken to scale up mental-health support, assistance was provided to managers to coordinate teamwork remotely, adjustments were made to the performance appraisal process and an office-wide internal communications campaign intended to bring staff together virtually and in the new hybrid work environment (One ILO connect) was conducted, which engaged office-wide various stakeholders and helped to bridge the gap between headquarters and the field (ILO).</p> <p>Written guidance and a webinar series on remote people management was made available to managers (UNHCR).</p> <p>The ILO Committee on Occupational Safety and Health, a bi-partite advisory body with management and staff union</p>

Aspects of business continuity management	Lessons learned	Good practices
	no United Nations health clinic or medical capacity (resident coordinators system/United Nations Secretariat).	<p>representatives, met on an ad hoc basis with greater frequency to advise on the development of crisis management measures related to such issues, coordinating with regional and country committees (ILO).</p> <p>Scaled up and repurposed medical services to provide remote medical support to the field and contact tracing to limit the spread of disease in the workplace (ILO).</p> <p>Establishment of the United Nations System-wide Task Force on Medical Evacuations in Response to COVID-19, the First Line of Defence Task Force and the United Nations System-wide Vaccination Programme to ensure that the United Nations “stays and delivers” (coordinated by the United Nations Secretariat and in which all United Nations entities participate)</p>
<b>Ensuring continuity of governance activities</b>	<p>While platforms for virtual meetings, formal and informal, have become an essential component in ensuring continuity for the activities of legislative organs and governing bodies, not all Member States support the use of virtual platforms as a substitute for in-person meetings, given the challenges of connectivity, security concerns regarding confidential matters and lack of smooth in-person interactions, especially during negotiations (IAEA and ITU).</p> <p>Paramount importance of continuous engagement with the bureaux of the legislative organs and governing bodies and the creation of opportunities for consultations with Member States on matters that require urgent attention regardless of the circumstances (UN-Habitat).</p> <p>Need to review the rules of procedure of legislative bodies to address new working methods and the use of technology in decision-making processes, including voting (IMO, ITU and UN-Habitat).</p> <p>Need for legislative organs and governing bodies to consider maintaining a hybrid approach to conducting substantive meetings, which would allow for both in-person and virtual participation in proceedings (ITU, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, UN-Women and WIPO).</p>	<p>Holding the meetings of the legislative organs and governing bodies through videoconferencing platforms allowed for a reduction in travel for both representatives of Member States and organizations and for an increase in participation as additional delegates were able to join from capitals (ITU, UNECE, UN-Habitat, UNICEF and WHO).</p> <p>Establishment of remote interpretation hubs (FAO).</p> <p>ILO organized its Governing Body session online, as well as the ILO Conference, in 2021. Detailed risk assessments concerning occupational health and safety were carried out ahead of the events and corresponding control measures were implemented, including business continuity plans (ILO).</p>

Source: prepared by JIU based on information provided by participating organizations.

### Policies and practices for remote working in participating organizations

Organization	Policy or guiding documents for remote working in place prior to 2020	Periodic remote working: one to two days each week or a few days a month – scheduled and approved by supervisors			Full-time remote working: work is primarily conducted away from the office on the basis of preapproved arrangements with supervisors		Policies/procedures were adopted or updated for remote work in response to the COVID-19 pandemic	Adopted policies/procedures introduced on a temporary or permanent basis
		Headquarters - Utilization	Regional offices - Utilization	Field offices - Utilization	Headquarters - Utilization	Regional offices - Utilization		
United Nations Secretariat	✓	✓ Used for certain functions only Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	X	✓	Temporary
UNCTAD	UNCTAD communicated that it aligned itself with the United Nations Secretariat framework.							
ITC	✓	✓ Widely used by all staff	X	X	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	X	X	Not applicable
UNDP	✓	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Not used widely at all	✓ Not used widely at all	✓	Temporary
UNEP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
UNFPA	✓	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Depending on the Offices	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Not used widely at all	✓ Depending on the Offices	✓	Permanent
UN-Habitat	✓	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Not used widely at all	✓ Not used widely at all	✓ Not used widely at all	✓ Not used widely at all	✓	Temporary
UNHCR	✓	✓ Widely used by all staff	✓ Widely used by all staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓	Temporary
UNICEF	✓	✓ Used on for certain functions only	✓ Used on for certain functions only	✓ Used on for certain functions only	X	X	✓	Temporary
UNODC	✓	X	✓	Not applicable	X	Not applicable	✓	Temporary

UNOPS	✓	✓ Widely used by all staff	✓ Widely used by all staff	✓ Widely used by all staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✗	Not applicable
UNRWA	✗	✗	Not applicable	Not applicable	✗	Not applicable	✓	Permanent
UN-Women	✓	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	Not applicable	Not applicable
WFP	✓	✓ Widely used by all staff	✓ Widely used by all staff	✓ Widely used by all staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓	Temporary
FAO	✓	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Not used widely at all	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Not used widely at all	✓ Not used widely at all	✓	Temporary
IAEA	✓	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	Not applicable	✗	✗	✓	Temporary
ICAO	✗	✗	✗	Not applicable	✗	✗	✗	Not applicable
ILO	✓	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✗ Not used widely at all	✗ Not used widely at all	✓	Temporary
IMO	✗	✗	Not applicable	Not applicable	✗	Not applicable	✓	Permanent
ITU	✓	✓ Not used widely at all	✓ Not used widely at all	✓ Not used widely at all	✗	✗	✗	Not applicable
UNESCO	✓	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Used for certain functions only	✗	✓	Temporary
UNIDO	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	Draft policy on telecommuting	Temporary
UNWTO	✓	✗	Not applicable	Not applicable	✓ Widely used by all staff/used occasionally by some staff	Not applicable	✓	Temporary
UPU	✗	✗	Not applicable	Not applicable	✗	Not applicable	✓	Temporary
WHO	✓	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✓ Used occasionally by some staff	✗	✗	✗	✓	Temporary

WIPO	X	X	Not applicable	Not applicable	X Used for certain functions only	Not applicable	√	Permanent/temporary
WMO	√	√ Used occasionally by some staff	√ Used occasionally by some staff	Not applicable	-	-	√	Permanent

Source: prepared by JIU based on information provided by participating organizations.

√	Yes
X	No



## Annex XIV

### List of informal recommendations

#### Chapter II. A framework for business continuity management

1. Although the Inspectors note that in the past coordination and support of business continuity management may not have required a significant level of capacity, based on the recent pandemic, the capability requirements should be revisited as more frequent and prolonged disruptive incidents may become more common (para. 33).
2. As so much capacity for business continuity management is vested in the use of focal points, more attention needs to be paid to defining their roles and responsibilities and properly training them to realize coherent and accountable business continuity management practices across an organization (para. 38).
3. The reporting lines to senior leadership of the business continuity management coordinator (or unit) and the unit in which the coordination is placed should be carefully considered as they can affect integration and coordination of the various stakeholders and, in particular, the role the coordinator plays when a plan is activated (para. 43).

#### Chapter III. Business continuity plans: processes and practices

4. The Inspectors encourage executive heads to include consultations with medical and counselling services in their business continuity planning processes (para. 49).
5. The Inspectors note that regular and substantive interactions between enterprise risk management and business continuity management functions are essential for risk identification, response and management at both the strategic and operational levels and should be facilitated and encouraged by senior leaders (para. 51).
6. The Inspectors support participating organizations in employing tools to analyse the potential impact of disruptions and determine prioritized services and suggest that these tools should also include the costs and benefits of the analysis, especially if using an external consultant (para. 53).
7. The Inspectors consider automated tools for streamlining business continuity management, notably for organizations with extensive field networks, a good practice that could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of business continuity planning, especially in terms of monitoring their activation, maintenance, exercise and review regime (para. 58).
8. The Inspectors encourage executive heads of participating organizations to assess their approaches to providing comprehensive and targeted business continuity management training and outreach activities for personnel at multiple levels in order to develop teamwork and facilitate confidence and competence with the roles and responsibilities inherent in responding to disruptive incidents (para. 61).
9. The Inspectors strongly believe that the lack of criteria to update business continuity plans must be addressed as the most crucial and comprehensive approach to dynamic business continuity management requires the establishment of criteria for maintenance, exercise and review procedures (para. 62).

#### Chapter IV. Independent oversight of business continuity management

10. The Inspectors suggest oversight offices should reconsider business continuity management in their audit risk universe and prioritize it for more consistent and comprehensive coverage where necessary (para. 72).
11. The Inspectors stress the importance for each oversight office to develop a framework for assessing the business continuity management of the respective organization that includes appropriate assessment elements according to the organization's own policies and requirements (para. 74).

12. As the appointment of new members for audit and oversight committees is considered, attention should be paid to include members with business continuity management expertise to enhance the profile of the committee (para. 82).

13. The Inspectors believe that audit and oversight committees have a role to play to enhance oversight and accountability regarding adjustments to business continuity management policies and practices, as well as the application of relevant good practices and lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and other disruptive incidents (para. 83).

14. The Inspectors encourage internal oversight offices to conduct comprehensive reviews of business continuity management policies and practices in light of the updates and lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, using key performance indicators and other benchmarking and maturity measures to advance the integration and evolution of business continuity management within their organizations (para. 85).

15. The Representatives of Internal Audit Services of the United Nations System Organizations are encouraged to further to further explore the advantages and limitations of remote auditing in oversight efforts and consider guidance materials on how and when to use remote auditing as a tool to complement and supplement the work of United Nations system oversight offices (para. 87).

#### **Chapter V. Inter-agency coordination and coherence**

16. The Inspectors encourage the High-level Committee on Management to consider various approaches to encourage the evolution of the working group to focus its efforts on sharing good practices and leveraging other inter-agency networks or communities of practices to add depth to deliverables and accelerate the implementation of the policy on the organizational resilience management system and its intended coherence system-wide, in the spirit of General Assembly resolution 73/279 B (para. 106).

17. The Inspectors encourage CEB and its High-level Committee on Management to task its working group to explore how the organizational resilience management system (and business continuity management as one of its key components) is being implemented at the field level and share good practices and lessons learned to further its application and coordination system-wide (para. 111).

#### **Chapter VI. COVID-19 case study: good practices and early lessons learned for business continuity management**

18. Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on staff occupational health and safety, and particularly staff mental health and well-being, the Inspectors encourage greater integration of and focus on such issues in business continuity management processes and practices (para. 132).

19. The Inspectors encourage the development of business continuity plans to address disruptions to governance activities that would include provisions for virtual meetings and decision-making for the effective and efficient governance of the organizations (para. 145).

## Annex XV

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

		United Nations, its funds and programmes																Specialized agencies and IAEA													
		Intended impact	United Nations	UNAIDS	UNCTAD	ITC	UNDP	UNEP	UNFPA	UN-Habitat	UNHCR	UNICEF	UNODC	UNOPS	UNRWA	UN-Women	WFP	FAO	IAEA	ICAO	ILO	IMO	ITU	UNESCO	UNIDO	UNWTO	UPU	WHO	WIPO	WMO	
Report	For action		<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 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		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 2		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	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	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	E	E
Recommendation 5		b	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	E
Recommendation 6		a	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	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.