



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
21 March 2019

Original: English

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## 2019 session

26 July 2018–24 July 2019

Agenda item 20

United Nations research and training institutes

## United Nations System Staff College

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution [60/214](#). The report provides details of the progress of the United Nations System Staff College in the biennium 2017–2018 in terms of outreach and the impact of its services, substantive course portfolio and strategic orientation.

In the period under review, Staff College courses, services and products reached 47,000 beneficiaries across the globe. This figure marks a 56 per cent rise compared with the previous biennium, a significant level of growth. A total of 238 learning activities were delivered directly by Staff College trainers. The overall quality of learning products provided, captured through after-course evaluations, continued to be highly rated, with an average recommendation rate in the region of 96 per cent.

Since its inception, the Staff College has strived to meet the needs of the United Nations system, Member States and partners by providing them with programmes and services that are relevant, contemporary and multidisciplinary. In the period under review, the Staff College embarked on a strategic planning process, coupled with an organizational realignment, to amplify its response to the evolving global context.

In keeping with the understanding that traditional training alone is not enough to stimulate changes in institutional behaviours and performance, the Staff College offered various programmes and services through three “knowledge centres” that provide learning opportunities together with knowledge assets in support of its key drivers: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, United Nations reforms and the resolutions on sustaining peace.

The Staff College has continued on its path of growth, innovation and, most importantly, empowerment of the system’s most valuable resource – its people. The organization’s impact is reflected by the surge in the number of beneficiaries around



the world, demands for learning and training, and recognition of its successful efforts across the United Nations system.

Its growth is also reflected in its financial health. As an extrabudgetary organization, it relies mainly on self-generated income derived from course fees and contracts for services from United Nations organizations. Only a minor portion of its income comprises voluntary contributions from Member States.

During a period when sources of funding for multilateral organizations are limited, the Staff College continues to see robust financial results, which can be attributed to the quality of its programmes and services, as well as the efficiency of its business operations.

## I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution [60/214](#), in which, *inter alia*, the General Assembly reaffirmed the role of the Staff College as an institution for system-wide knowledge management, training and continuous learning for the staff of the United Nations system, in particular in the areas of economic and social development, peace and security, and internal management. The report provides a description of the progress made in relation to Economic and Social Council resolution [2017/5](#), in which the Council recognized the ability of the Staff College to mainstream the principles of the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through inter-agency learning, training and knowledge management.

2. Created by the General Assembly in 2002, the United Nations System Staff College is the learning organization of the United Nations system. It is headquartered in Turin, Italy, and has its Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Development in Bonn, Germany. In addition to residential programmes offered on its two campuses, a mobile team of Staff College experts is deployed to more than 50 countries each year to meet global demands. Its portfolio spans residential courses, blended programmes, distance-learning courses, knowledge-sharing platforms and knowledge assets, including case studies, primers and video-based content. In addition, tailor-made learning programmes are developed and delivered to meet specific requirements of United Nations organizations and other relevant partners. Its efforts benefit from the fact that it is the only United Nations learning provider with an inter-agency mandate. This allows the Staff College to stay on the pulse of the needs and demands in various parts of the United Nations system.

3. In addition to bringing together staff from across the United Nations through its learning and training offerings, the Staff College blends cutting-edge global expertise with practical United Nations experience. Programmes are taught by subject-matter experts from renowned academic institutions, think tanks, the private sector and civil society, working in unison with experienced United Nations practitioners. This fosters unique dialogue spaces in the spirit of multi-stakeholder collaboration and makes learning relevant to the United Nations context.

4. The Staff College recognizes the importance of a harmonized approach to the achievement of the different substantive United Nations priorities. Through its Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Development, Knowledge Centre for Leadership and Management, and peace and security programmes, the Staff College was able to provide holistic learning support for the United Nations system and its partners – across locations, organizations and distinct mandates. Its drivers – United Nations reforms, resolutions on sustaining peace and the 2030 Agenda continue to be central to its efforts.

5. Section II of the present report provides an overview of the key programmatic achievements of the Staff College over the past two years. Section III highlights how its learning interventions support the Agenda 2030, United Nations reforms and efforts for sustaining peace, while section IV emphasizes its role as a strategic partner for both United Nations system entities and Member States in support of the ambitious goals set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The final recommendation is that Member States and United Nations entities continue to provide full support to the College.

## II. Overview of key programmatic achievements

6. The work of the Staff College, during the period under review, was guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the resolutions on sustaining peace, and the United Nations reform efforts, as identified in the Staff College's latest strategic plan. The College focused on supporting staff and partners in meeting their learning needs, on the basis of United Nations priorities, through the work of its three main programmatic arms: the Knowledge Centre for Leadership and Management, the Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Development, and the Peace and Security Team. The work of the three programmatic pillars was focused on implementing their agreed outcomes, and resulted in increased delivery of learning products. Courses, services and knowledge products reached over 47,000 beneficiaries – a 56 per cent rise compared with the previous biennium.

7. The face-to-face learning events of the Staff College were delivered increasingly at the point of demand, with 60 per cent of in-classroom courses being held away from the two main College campuses (Turin and Bonn). This has been a growing practice for the institution, which attests to the mobile nature of its training teams. Ease of accessibility to the College's learning programmes is especially vital given the diminishing resources for travel and training available within the United Nations system. Geographical mobility also allows the College to effectively support United Nations regional and country teams in their reform efforts. In addition, 25 per cent of all of the College's offerings consisted of e-learning and blended trainings – a stable ratio over the past two years and a result of the College's continued efforts to reach field staff and staff who opt for distance learning options.

8. The overall quality of learning provided, captured through after-course evaluations, continued to be highly rated, with the average recommendation rate being approximately 96 per cent. In addition, the overall relevance of the Staff College's learning products was rated 5.18 out of 6 (with 6 indicating "extremely relevant" and 1 "not at all relevant"): an outstanding indicator of relevancy.

9. The increase in activities and participants, coupled with a positive financial performance, are the result of the enhanced visibility and positive reputation of the Staff College within the United Nations system and vis-à-vis Member States and other key partners. While the Staff College's primary focus remains on United Nations entities and United Nations staff, approximately 22 per cent of total participants attending the College's programmes were affiliated with external entities (government, civil society and the private sector), in a truly multi-stakeholder spirit.

10. In 2017–2018 new partnerships were forged with academic institutions and other key stakeholders, including an agreement with the IE School of Global and Public Affairs in Madrid. This partnership will see the creation of a new IE Master's Degree in Sustainable Development in 2019, for which the Staff College will provide a series of online courses as well as United Nations expertise (faculty), with a focus on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

11. The partnership complements the already existing Master of Business Administration on managing international organizations, which was launched in 2017 and developed in cooperation with the University of Stellenbosch Business School, South Africa, where the Staff College has provided similar inputs. In 2019, a new – entirely online – Master's degree entitled "Sustaining peace: from theory to practice", with the University of Turin, will also be inaugurated. Through these academic partners, the Staff College not only benefits from greater academic recognition and financial gain, but also contributes to building the capacity of new generations around United Nations values and the principles of the 2030 Agenda.

12. Overall, in the period under review the Staff College has further strengthened its organizational structure and strategic positioning, which has resulted in a growth in productivity and in outreach, and greater financial stability.

### **III. Main programmatic focus areas**

#### **A. Bringing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to life, through learning**

13. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the boldest agenda for humanity, the most ambitious anti-poverty, pro-planet agenda ever adopted by the United Nations. Its transformative nature reflects the interlinkages between the aims of achieving sustainable development, respecting human rights and the pursuit of peace and stability. Supporting the 17 Sustainable Development Goals requires the United Nations to work across sectors, creating collaborative and synergistic partnerships with current and new stakeholders, and to look for innovative ways to support Member States in the implementation of the Agenda.

14. In the Agenda, Member States called for new approaches to knowledge and skills development for all actors. Development progress requires holistic thinking, moving beyond separate mandates and structures and exploring relationships between different thematic issues. The Staff College not only supports the interconnected nature of the Agenda but also helps learners understand its significance through an integrated lens. The five critical dimensions at the heart of the Agenda – people, prosperity, planet, partnership and peace – are embedded throughout the Staff College’s programmes.

15. The aims of the Staff College in this regard are to bring the Agenda “to life” by designing and delivering learning tools, platforms for interaction and a mature set of learning products to equip United Nations personnel and partners with new skills and knowledge. In particular, through its Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Development in Bonn, the Staff College supports the policy and operational work of the United Nations and serves as a catalyst and convener, prompting dialogue and knowledge-sharing between United Nations staff and a diverse set of stakeholders from academia, the private sector and civil society.

16. Learning interventions in this area included popular programmes designed to build the capacity of United Nations country teams, such as the course on United Nations country programming in the context of the 2030 Agenda, which strengthens understanding of country priorities. This enables country teams to provide better contextual support to Member States. In addition, the long-standing course on United Nations country team leadership skills has been completely redesigned to enhance the skills and capabilities required for United Nations leaders to promote the 2030 Agenda, particularly in the areas of policy coherence, systems-thinking, strategic communications and collaborative leadership.

17. With a view to bringing about behaviour change by ensuring that different stakeholders internalize the paradigm shift brought about by the 2030 Agenda, the Staff College also piloted training courses for national civil servants, including in India, Turkey and Iraq, in order to support them in developing and taking ownership of their national sustainable development strategies. In addition, the first learning exchange on capacity-building for the 2030 Agenda was convened by the College at the 2018 high-level political forum. It attracted public administration schools from six countries.

18. Over the review period, open learning resources were made freely available to interested members of the public. They comprised micro-learning modules, including online modules on big data and sustainable development, launched jointly with the non-profit think tank Data-Pop Alliance. Free knowledge assets, including explainer videos, primers and open webinars on sustainable development were also produced and were well received.

## **B. Supporting United Nations reforms by strengthening leadership and management capacities and promoting a culture of change**

19. As part of the current round of the Secretary General's reforms, a new set of competencies is required for staff in order to better manage transformational change and meet today's complex and interlinked challenges. The management reform in particular – in which decision-making is decentralized, policies and procedures are simplified and responsibility for mandate implementation is aligned with authority to manage resources – requires strengthened, empowered leadership and collaboration, within and beyond the United Nations system. The goals of these efforts are to improve the effectiveness and accountability of programme delivery. It is crucial that the United Nations system is fully prepared to enact these reforms.

20. The Staff College, through its Knowledge Centre for Leadership and Management, provided a wide spectrum of learning opportunities to United Nations staff, aimed at developing leadership, management and core professional competencies, while at the same time strengthening the capability of the United Nations system to undertake the various reform processes currently under way. Its programmes continued to support a culture of change and innovation across the United Nations.

21. One of the highlights for the Staff College during the review period was leading the consultative process that involved a joint task team of the High-level Committee on Programmes and the High-level Committee on Management, which resulted in the delivery of a comprehensive proposal for the United Nations system leadership framework in 2017. The framework, adopted by the United Nations Chief Executives Board, provides the blueprint for the desired organizational culture at the United Nations, and for the underpinning leadership characteristics. It calls for leadership that is norm-based, principled, inclusive, accountable, multidimensional, transformational, collaborative, and self-applied.

22. Customized leadership and management programmes to foster adoption of the United Nations system leadership framework were conducted by the Staff College for numerous United Nations organizations, including the United Nations Population Fund, the Pan American Health Organization, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the International Telecommunication Union, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Economic Commission for Africa, as well as the United Nations Secretariat. Relevant leadership and management programmes make use of a customized 360-degree assessment tool developed specifically by the Staff College to reflect the competencies and behaviours outlined in the United Nations system leadership framework.

23. During the reporting period, the Staff College's portfolio of learning programmes on core professional skills and management development was also further curated, diversified and tailored to empower United Nations staff at all levels of their careers.

24. With a view to building core professional skills among United Nations staff, a suite of online courses was developed, covering a diversity of topics, including writing skills, specific skills for administrative assistants, media and communications training, and project management. The College also enriched its management development curriculum with the launch of a new blended learning programme, the United Nations System Executive Management Programme. The programme is tailor-made for United Nations managers across the system, at both headquarters and field locations. Online discussions and tutored sessions are combined with a face-to-face learning element, allowing participants to interact both virtually and in classrooms. The focus is on strengthening the managerial capacities of United Nations staff, using problem-based and case-based learning methodologies.

25. Increasing the capability of United Nations system organizations to undertake reform efforts has been the main objective of the Staff College's United Nations Laboratory for Organizational Change and Knowledge (UNLOCK) initiative. Through this initiative, the Staff College carried out numerous learning and advisory interventions focused on building and promoting a culture of change and innovation across the United Nations system. The initiative provides four interrelated and mutually supporting service lines:

(a) **Provision of integrated change management advisory services.** The overall objective is to help United Nations entities to implement change management processes in the light of United Nations reforms, by supporting them in scoping, designing and redefining to their internal processes and procedures, structures and strategic objectives;

(b) **Development of change-management capacity and capability.** Learning activities are used to promote a common approach to organizational change management in the United Nations system, with a focus on increased staff and stakeholder engagement, simplification and sustainability through systems thinking;

(c) **Knowledge management.** Case studies are designed to deepen the discussion of change practitioners and to distil and disseminate emerging good practices, such as setting up optimal governance structures and change agent networks. Case studies are also used for webinars, as pre-course reading and more broadly as "products" for knowledge dissemination;

(d) **Building and nurturing networks.** The Change Managers Network, established in 2016, is a key instrument for articulating system-wide engagement and knowledge-sharing around change management. The Network membership to date includes some 50 United Nations staff members (P-4 to D-2 levels) engaged in change management within their respective organizations.

26. The United Nations Secretariat, UNHCR, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Office at Geneva are some of the United Nations system organizations that received ad-hoc change management services during the reporting period. The UNLOCK Network Peer Exchange for Change Management Practitioners is now a recurring event that brings together senior-level change practitioners from across the United Nations system.

### **C. Towards a coherent narrative and a common understanding of the sustaining peace agenda**

27. Connected to the 2030 Agenda are the twin resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council on sustaining peace, in which the Assembly and

the Council called for a comprehensive and coordinated approach to enhancing the skills and capacities of societies to use peaceful means – not only to address the root causes of conflict but also to prevent the outbreak, continuation, escalation and recurrence of violence. The 2030 Agenda and the resolutions on sustaining peace are mutually reinforcing, since they share common principles and both recognize the need for the United Nations system to work collectively across sectors to provide support for Member State efforts to build a sustainable and peaceful future.

28. The concept of sustaining peace, in particular, puts emphasis on preventive actions that cut across all pillars and work streams of the United Nations system – from humanitarian action and peacekeeping to peacebuilding and sustainable development. The overarching goal of the Staff College is to support the convergence of those efforts.

29. The Staff College, through its Peace and Security Team, also focused on integrating elements outlined in the twin resolutions and on building both substantive knowledge and core professional skills related to sustaining peace. Tailored learning and training products were provided to United Nations staff and key partners with a coherent narrative and common understanding of the sustaining peace agenda and its applications across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Through a variety of capacity-building initiatives, the Staff College has also focused on equipping United Nations staff and key stakeholders with the necessary mind-set, knowledge and skills to address contemporary peace and security challenges and to operate in complex environments.

30. During the review period, the Staff College worked with the Strategic Planning and Monitoring Unit of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General to design, develop and deliver a series of system-wide learning events aimed at strengthening the capacities of United Nations senior staff to lead complex integrated planning processes. The training package was also adapted and tailored to support the development and implementation of prevention strategies at the regional level.

31. Within that framework, in February 2018, the Staff College and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General brought together senior staff – in key leadership and management positions – in Addis Ababa, to contribute to efforts to recalibrate the United Nations response in the Sahel, finalize the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel and develop an adequate financial strategy. The two partners also conducted a high-level workshop, bringing together regional directors, resident coordinators, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, selected staff members from United Nations Headquarters and representatives of key partners (such as the World Bank and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development) to define the priorities of the United Nations Regional Prevention Strategy for the Horn of Africa and to work towards a concrete implementation plan.

32. The Staff College also launched an initiative for building women's capacity for conflict analysis and prevention in West Africa and the Sahel. The first design meeting was held in Dakar with prominent partners including the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, the Nigerian Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development, the Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel, the Economic Community of West African States Gender Development Centre and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel. The initiative is aimed at strengthening local capacity and leveraging women's leadership to ensure that training and capacity-building do not become an end in themselves but rather a vehicle to support prevention and sustain peace efforts on the ground.

33. In parallel to the work related to sustaining peace, the Staff College has continued to prioritize the safety and security of United Nations personnel through its



products. The Secure and Safe Approaches in Field Environments training course has been equipping United Nations staff deployed to volatile and dangerous regions with essential and comprehensive safety and security skills since 2007. The programme, conducted in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Safety and Security, prepares participants to tackle critical and stressful situations. It combines theoretical knowledge and challenging practical simulations, and is delivered with the support of experts such as representatives of the Italian army. Nearly 60,000 United Nations members of staff and associated personnel, including those of non-governmental organizations, international organizations and government agencies, have been trained worldwide.

34. The review period also marked the launch of the Staff College's road safety programme. Following the official launch of the United Nations Road Safety Strategy in February 2018, the programme has been providing critical support to United Nations and partner organizations through the establishment of in-house capacity to develop contextualised road safety programmes. The Staff College worked to support the development of the Road Safety Strategy action plan, including by chairing the Safer Road User working group, conducting the first in-depth baseline assessment of road traffic crashes involving United Nations personnel, and hosting a workshop on the standardization of road safety training and learning across the United Nations system. More than 400 drivers were trained in advanced safe driving by qualified driver trainers in 2018. Unique to the United Nations system, the driver trainer network offered training in thirteen languages across Africa, Asia and the Pacific and the Middle East.

35. The Staff College's successful efforts in the area of peace and security in 2018 have built a foundation for it to move forward with the ambitious objective of developing a comprehensive knowledge centre for sustaining peace in 2019.

## **IV. Conclusions and recommendations**

36. Since its inception in 2002, the Staff College has continuously developed its structure and adapted its expertise to meet the progressive requirements and needs of the United Nations system and its partners. The transformative nature of the 2030 Agenda requires all stakeholders, including the United Nations, to transform the way they work. The Secretary-General's reforms require the United Nations – across all three pillars of its work – to change the way that it does business.

37. Building the capability of the United Nations workforce to learn and adapt to new ways of working by boosting staff capacity and substantive knowledge, beyond specific agency perspectives, is and will continue to be a top priority for the Staff College in the coming years. The Staff College's fundamental pedagogical approach is to offer learning programmes designed in an interdisciplinary fashion.

38. By building on the work performed so far and on its unique position as the only United Nations organization mandated to provide inter-agency knowledge-sharing, learning and training within the system, the Staff College is well positioned as a strategic ally for Member States, the United Nations system entities and their partners interested in developing capacity-building initiatives that make integrated thinking and change a core objective of policies and programmes.

39. It is recommended that Member States and entities of the United Nations system continue to provide full support to the Staff College in its efforts to build

the pivotal capacity of staff and other stakeholders to adapt to new, emerging challenges.

40. Member States are encouraged to view the Staff College as an instrument to accelerate change and reforms in the United Nations system, as well as a partner that can assist them in joint capacity-building efforts, in a multi-stakeholder spirit and context. The support of Member States for the Staff College will be crucial to consolidate a resource base commensurate with its goals.

41. Similarly, United Nations entities are encouraged to continue utilizing the Staff College's relevant and United Nations-centric expertise by considering it as the ideal learning provider for capacity-building for their staff. United Nations system entities should further advocate staff participation in the College's programmes and support the efforts of the College to facilitate organizational transformation.

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