



Chief Executives Board for Coordination

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Report of the High-level Committee on Management at its thirty-ninth session (virtual consultation, March 2020)

I. Introduction

1. In March 2020, with all HLCM organizations confronting a rapidly evolving situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, and with HLCM members on the front line in managing and delivering their organizations' response to the crisis, the HLCM Chair, in consultation with the Vice-Chair and with the CEB Secretariat, took the decision to cancel the thirty-ninth session of the High-level Committee on Management (HLCM), which was scheduled to take place on 30-31 March 2020 at UNOPS Headquarters in Copenhagen.
2. This decision was made with the health and safety of all staff in mind, understanding that during those difficult times organizations needed to focus and prioritize management and response to COVID-19.
3. Subsequent to the cancellation, the Committee conducted, where appropriate and possible, virtual consultations to take forward its deliberations on the various subjects that were planned to be discussed at its 39th session.
4. The original agenda included a thematic discussion on Data Management in the UN System, which had to be re-scheduled. The Committee completed virtual consultations on the following themes:
 - a. Future of the UN System Workforce;
 - b. Risk management;
 - c. Supporting the transformation of UN System's operations towards a repositioned UN Development System;
 - d. Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organisations of the UN System; and,
 - e. System-wide Roadmap for Innovating UN Data and Statistics.
5. The HLCM Secretariat sought input from the HLCM members on the aforementioned topics via email; relevant comments and feedback were incorporated in the final versions of the documents and informed the drafting of the present Report



II. Future of the UN System Workforce

6. The Task Force on the Future of the UN System Workforce was established by HLCM at its October 2019 session, and organised its work around three workstreams: (1) *Contractual Modalities*, aimed at developing a proposal to pilot new sustainable contract modality(ies) to enable a more agile and diverse UN workforce while considering the needs of a future workforce; (2) *New Ways of Working*, to propose elements to foster an enabling culture and positive employee experience from multiple perspectives, including leadership, people management, flexible work arrangements, transparency and dialogue, and (3) *Leveraging technology*, aimed at launching pilot projects on new technologies (robotics, artificial intelligence, machine learning, Blockchain, etc.) applied to human resources management.
7. Under the leadership of its Chair and Deputy Chair, since its establishment the Task Force held four plenary meetings and took work forward in a cross-functional manner, interlinking contract modalities with culture elements and technological aspects. The different streams actively exchanged with each other to avoid duplication and leverage the work of each group for the benefit of all.
8. The COVID-19 crisis forced large parts of the UN system workforce into different working arrangements in a matter of weeks or even days. The crisis brought the importance of resilience, agility and flexibility in ways of working even more to the forefront.
9. While proposing sustainable contract modalities, fostering an enabling culture and leveraging technology remained the critical areas of its focus, the Task Force undertook to assess the impact of the crisis and adapt the direction of its work.
10. The Task Force therefore agreed to develop an adjusted plan of work and expected deliverables, and to submit them to HLCM for its consideration and endorsement ahead of its 40th session.

III. Risk management

11. At its thirty-sixth session, held in October 2018, the Committee approved the Terms of Reference for a cross-functional Task Force on Risk Management, established to improve the overall harmony of risk management processes and practices in the United Nations system. During the first phase of its work, the Task Force developed a Reference Risk Management Maturity Model, which was endorsed by the Committee at its April 2019 session. The second phase of the work continued along three distinct workstreams: (a) practical guidelines for establishing a Risk Appetite Statement (endorsed by the Committee at its 38th Session); (b) development of pragmatic guidance for the Embedding of Risk Management in strategy formulation, planning and implementation; and (c) exploration of a platform or platforms, or a repository or repositories, to enable the sharing of best practices and risk information.
12. The Committee was provided with the “Embedding Risk Management” guidance document (CEB/2020/HLCM/4) and with a report on “Risk Information Sharing” (CEB/2020/HLCM/6). In addition, the Task Force presented its Terms of Reference for 2020 (CEB/2020/HLCM/5), which included two new workstreams, selected by Task Force members as the two with the highest priority: (1) Managing Risks in the Field and for Decentralised Organisations; (2) Managing Fraud Risk. The documents were reviewed by the members of the Committee, who provided comments and suggested changes; this feedback was then incorporated in revised versions of the documents, which were circulated again to the Committee for final endorsement.

13. Comments focused on key areas of interest, including: using risk management outputs to support communication with Member States; strengthening organisational culture on risk as an enabler for its effective embedding; and, ensuring that specific measures implemented in each functional area are centrally documented, to inform the overall risk management processes. Several organisations underlined how, similarly to the Maturity Model, the Embedding Risk Management guidance was not prescriptive and was to be integrated in the individual approaches of individual organisations. The evident links between strengthening Risk Management and the effective management of the COVID-19 emergency were underlined by many.
 14. Overall, all documents were well received by the Committee. Members commended the structured approach followed by the Task Force and looked forward to further developments in 2020.
- ***The High-Level Committee on Management:***
15. *Endorsed the Guidance Note on Embedding Risk Management.*
 16. *Took note of the report on Risk Information Sharing.*
 17. *Expressed support for the Task Force to continue its work in 2020, endorsing the Terms of Reference for the next phase of work, to be carried out in accordance with the Task Force proposal of two distinct workstreams: (1) Managing Risks in the Field and for Decentralised Organisations; (2) Managing Fraud Risk*

IV. Supporting the transformation of UN System’s operations towards a repositioned UN Development System

18. The Secretary-General, in his reports on repositioning the United Nations development system (A/72/124-E/2018/3 and A/72/684-E/2018/7), set a number of ambitious objectives for a radical transformation of United Nations system operations, which were subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 72/279. In the past years, HLCM has continuously supported the work of the Business Innovations Group (BIG) of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group in the achievement of these objectives.
 19. The Committee was provided by a document detailing the progress of BIG since the previous HLCM session. This included: deployment of the Business Operations Strategy (BOS) online tool and handing of this workstream to the UNSDG Development Coordination Office (DCO) for global rollout; finalisation of the Common Business Operations (CBO) model and toolkit for testing; and, the development of premise consolidation planning tools.
 20. The Committee appreciated the pragmatic, non-prescriptive approach taken by the BIG, and noted that the COVID-19 outbreak may affect the timelines originally envisaged for the various workstream under the purview of BIG - Business Operations Strategy, Common Back Office, Global Shared Service Centers and Common Premises. Members also suggested that future progress reports include information on the uptake by UN system organisations of the various deliverables and a section on “constraints encountered and solutions found”.
- ***The High-Level Committee on Management:***
21. *Took note of the update of the Business Innovations Group of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and invited the Group to provide it with further updates on its work at next sessions.*

V. Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organisations of the UN System

22. The CEB Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the organisations of the UN system Task Force was established in December 2017 to enhance system-wide coherence and coordination on an issue that requires priority attention across the entire UN system. Its work focuses on establishing relevant policies, ensuring accountability, enhancing personnel awareness and increasing trust in the Organisation, and fostering constructive dialogue and closer coordination between investigatory bodies to harmonise standards, align methods, ensure consistency, strengthen capacities throughout the aid sector, and integrate a victim-centred approach.
23. From the outset, the Task Force was meant to be a time-bound, collective effort to develop game-changing Policy and Accountability tools, for subsequent and coordinated implementation by individual UN system entities. Accordingly, while in 2018 the Task Force mostly conducted substantive work in the areas of Sexual Harassment policy, reporting, hotlines, communication, and screening tools, in 2019 the Task Force mostly focused on making sure all such policies and tools did not remain on paper but instead be translated into a concrete strengthening of the UN system's ability to prevent, fight and punish Sexual Harassment in the Organization.
24. The *UN System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment* was the first essential step towards fostering a common and consistent response to sexual harassment system-wide and reducing the complexity and fragmentation of the policy and regulatory environment. The Model Policy was endorsed by the CEB in November 2018. According to a brief survey conducted by the HLCM Secretariat in February 2020, most agencies have either already issued a new policy aligned with the CEB Model Policy or are planning to issue one within one year at the latest.
25. One of the key products of the *Support and outreach* workstream was the Model Code of Conduct to Prevent Sexual Harassment During or in Relation to UN System Events. The Code of Conduct is a tool for communicating to both an internal and external audience the standard of conduct that is expected at UN organised or sponsored events, and how an attendee of such an event can raise a complaint if he/she experiences or witnesses conduct by another attendee that does not meet this standard. The relevance of this tool and its immediate applicability has been demonstrated by its adoption by many organisations, with the few who have not yet adopted it planning to do so within the following months.
26. During 2019, the Task Force was particularly active in the field of *Strengthening investigations*, with several key products completed or ongoing. These include several guidance notes for UN decision-makers when considering sexual harassment matters and several deliverables directed at effectively selecting, training, and supporting the work of investigators, improving the way victims are treated and enhancing accountability. In addition, the CEB Task Force and the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) organised two joint CEB-IASC meetings of Investigatory Bodies on Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment, to strengthen investigative capacity for sexual exploitation and sexual harassment cases across the United Nations entities and partners.
27. Finally, the workstream on *Accountability and improved reporting* continued its work based on the System-Wide Questionnaire on Improved Reporting on Sexual Harassment in the UN System, with the aim of allowing the comparison of sexual harassment reporting mechanisms within and across entities and over time. The questionnaire administered in 2019 indicated increased awareness among staff of the tools at their disposal, and a growing trust among victims in the commitment of organisations and management to take sexual harassment seriously. In February 2020 a new questionnaire was launched and the results were being analysed. In addition, the Clear-Check database was continuously updated and improved, and was used by UN Secretariat entities, as well as over 25 UN agencies, funds and programmes.

28. Building on this work, the Task Force was focusing on four key areas for 2020, including: leadership and culture; data collection and analysis; victim-centred approach, and communication. The overarching objective would be to enable a persistent change in the organisational culture by increasing awareness of the structures in place to support and protect victims, including through the tools produced by the Task Force. A data-driven approach would guide the overall effort, delivering measurable and analysable insights to enable focused, surgical interventions.

➤ ***The High-Level Committee on Management:***

29. *Took note with appreciation of the work of the Task Force, endorsing the priority areas of work for the year 2020 and expressing its strong commitment to further support progress in this important agenda.*

VI. System-wide Roadmap for Innovating UN Data and Statistics

30. In October 2019, the Committee of Chief Statisticians of the UN System (CCS-UN) presented the paper ‘Innovating UN data - The contribution of UN data to the 2030 Agenda and UN Reform’ to the 38th session of the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP). The paper outlined ideas to modernise the production, analysis and dissemination of official United Nations data for faster, more accessible, innovative and relevant monitoring of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.
31. The HLCP, after considering the paper, requested the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System to prepare, in collaboration with interested members of the Committee, a draft roadmap and system-wide approach for modernising United Nations data, to be considered at its thirty-ninth session (CEB/2019/6). The Roadmap was envisioned as part of the overarching objective of strengthening United Nations system capacities for data collection and analysis, and to improve the quality, availability, timeliness, and relevance of data to inform effective policy and decision-making.
32. In order to ensure effective coordination by all functions and organisations across the UN system, the Roadmap was shared with the members of the High-Level Committee on Management, to gather their views and comments and inform the finalisation of the document.
33. Several members provided their views, which included specific comments on terminology, together with highlights on key areas of interest for the Committee: the need of carefully considering budget and resources implications; addressing confidentiality and security; engaging with partners from the private sector and the scientific community (including issues related to private ownership of large amounts of personal data); and addressing the issue of biased algorithms, in particular with regards to gender and racial biases.
34. HLCM members welcomed the Roadmap and strongly supported its approach and stated objectives. The clear connection of the Roadmap with the Secretary-General’s Data Strategy for Action by Everyone, Everywhere was highlighted, suggesting that the linkages be made clearer and concrete.

➤ ***The High-Level Committee on Management:***

35. *Welcomed the Roadmap on Innovating UN system Data and Statistics, expressing its interest in engaging with any further development and implementation actions.*

VII. Any other business

36. The Committee was provided with a briefing on the UNLOCK initiative, as recommended by the Joint Inspection Unit in its Review of change management in United Nations System organisations (JIU/REP/2019/4). UNLOCK – UN Lab for Organizational Change & Knowledge – is an initiative of the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC), and an integral part of the UNSSC Knowledge Centre for Leadership and Management. UNLOCK – based in Turin, New York and Bonn – is a network that provides change management services to UN organisations through four main streams: providing advisory services, learning and capacity building, knowledge creation through case studies and best practices, and leveraging subject-matter networks derived from such case studies. UNLOCK serves as a neutral partner, providing subject matter expertise around change management in a cost-effective way. In addition, since late 2017 it has been supporting the Secretary-General’s reform agenda, helping staff and managers adapt to new organisational structures and mandates.

➤ ***The High-Level Committee on Management:***

37. *Welcomed the Roadmap on Innovating UN system Data and Statistics, expressing its interest in engaging with any further development and implementation actions.*
