



# General Assembly

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Agenda item 146  
**Joint Inspection Unit**

## **Review of the use of non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities in the United Nations system organizations**

### **Note by the Secretary-General**

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly his comments and those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled “Review of the use of non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities in the United Nations system organizations” ([JIU/REP/2023/8](#)).



## I. Introduction

1. In its report entitled “Review of the use of non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities in the United Nations system organizations” (A/79/694), the Joint Inspection Unit assesses the status of policies, regulations, rules, practices and processes relating to the use of non-staff personnel across the organizations and the adequacy and effectiveness of those policies and practices, identifying challenges, lessons learned and good practices. The purpose of the review is to apprise the legislative and/or governing bodies and the executive heads of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) participating organizations of the status of the policies and practices, with the aim of guiding ongoing and future workforce-related initiatives.

## II. General comments

2. Organizations welcome the report and its findings and express their appreciation for the analysis contained therein.

3. There is general concurrence with the Inspectors that labour principles and standards are of paramount importance when it comes to the use of non-staff personnel to support the regular/core work of the United Nations system organizations. Concerns that the hiring of affiliate personnel by the organizations contributes to the creation, mainly for budgetary reasons, of second-class personnel with substandard coverage, benefits and entitlements are also shared by some organizations. It is noted that the spectrum of such modalities and their focus, circumstances and arrangements are quite diverse, in line with the programmatic and operational diversity of the United Nations system organizations, somewhat limiting the utility of general recommendations on all such modalities.

4. While the Inspectors do not quantify the financial impact of their proposed recommendations, if implemented, organizations express reservations regarding the potential increase of budgetary provisions, at a time when the trend among governing bodies is to support a zero nominal growth budget.

5. Organizations partially support the proposed recommendations.

## III. Comments on specific recommendations

### Recommendation 1

**The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations who have not already done so should adopt, by the end of 2025, the term “affiliate personnel” as the common system-wide nomenclature for referring to all categories of contract holders who are not considered staff and include the term in their relevant policy documents by the end of 2027.**

6. Organizations partially support this recommendation.

7. Some organizations observe that while it may be feasible to jointly define all categories of non-staff (for example, interns, United Nations Volunteers, consultants etc.) as “affiliate personnel” at the regulatory framework level, it may not be warranted to also define them as “affiliate personnel” at each policy level, given that these modalities are distinctly different from one another and that a distinction at the granular level should be maintained. In addition, it is understood that the change in the nomenclature would not have budgetary implications or affect the budget methodology and format and the presentation of budgets to the legislative bodies.

Lastly, many express reservations on the proposed timeline, noting that policy updates have established cycles and timetables.

8. The use of common system-wide definitions is seen as too prescriptive by some. Others note that a shared nomenclature would not be aligned with existing methodologies for identifying the most appropriate resources for a requirement, including the drawing on individuals obtained through outsourcing, such as administrative staff from temporary agencies, or individual experts obtained through specialized institutional suppliers.

9. Greater clarity on the applicability of this definition to loaned personnel administered by the releasing United Nations system organizations or personnel who are hired through and administered by another United Nations system organization is also sought.

10. The International Labour Organization (ILO) uses only “consultancy-type” contracts called “external collaboration”. ILO uses external collaboration contracts only where there is a specific well-defined task or set of tasks to be performed and the output can be considered as a specific end product (for example, a study, research assignment or a translation) or where the task assigned is of an advisory or technical nature. The external collaborators are paid through a lump sum or a daily fee. The contracts are not used for ongoing regular activities that continue to be performed by staff members. ILO does not employ any other non-staff personnel or affiliate personnel and therefore considers this recommendation as not applicable to ILO.

## **Recommendation 2**

**The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2025, adopt the following as a common system-wide definition of all categories of contract holders who are not considered staff: “Any individual engaged by a United Nations system organization to perform work or services for a limited period of time or for a period of time tied to a specific project, and whose contractual relationship is not governed by a letter of appointment subject to the staff regulations and rules of the respective organization.”**

11. Organizations partially support this recommendation.

12. While several organizations align with the proposed approach, although not with the proposed deadline of 2025, several others express their reservations regarding a prescriptive United Nations system-wide definition. In accordance with the above comments on recommendation 1, their concerns originate from the different methodologies that organizations employ for identifying the most appropriate resources for a requirement, including drawing on individuals obtained through outsourcing, such as administrative staff from temporary agencies, or individual experts obtained through specialized institutional suppliers.

13. A proposal to include not only projects, but also assignments in general, has been suggested by one entity, noting that not all consultancy contracts can be attributed to projects.

14. ILO considers this recommendation as not applicable, in accordance with paragraph 10 above.

## **Recommendation 3**

**The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should conduct periodic reviews of their non-staff contractual modalities, with a view to identifying critical positions of a continuous nature for the possible establishment of staff positions, funds permitting.**

15. Organizations partially support this recommendation.
16. Several organizations express support for this type of review, although with some reservations regarding the establishment of staff positions, as that would depend largely on the nature of and predictability in funding for such staff positions and cannot be guaranteed as a result of such reviews.
17. ILO considers this recommendation as not applicable, given that it does not use its consultancy-type contracts (external collaborators) to perform core functions of a continuous nature.
18. Lastly, in accordance with various resolutions of the General Assembly, non-staff personnel cannot be engaged in functions of a continuous nature in the Secretariat, rendering the proposed periodic reviews of their contractual modalities unnecessary.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**Taking into consideration the employment relationship principle, the executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2026, develop social benefit policies or schemes applicable to non-staff personnel performing functions of a continuous nature, with clear guidelines for their implementation.**

19. Organizations do not support this recommendation.
20. Some organizations note that the recommendation is relevant only to those organizations whose business model requires non-staff personnel to perform functions of a continuous nature.
21. Other organizations observe that the development of a non-staff staff benefits policy/scheme has a financial impact that needs to be evaluated, in line with budgetary cycles and current budgetary constraints. The question as to whether such contractual modalities should be used at all for continuous functions is also raised, as well as the potential legal risk of creating a subcategory of employees, with lesser benefits, performing continuous functions over a period of time.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**The legislative and/or governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should request the executive heads who have not yet done so to include in their reports on human resources relevant data and information on the use of non-staff personnel, such as the number of non-staff personnel, years of service, location of employment, nationality and gender.**

22. Organizations note that this recommendation is addressed to their legislative and/or governing bodies.
23. Many organizations already produce regular reports as requested by their governing bodies. Efforts are already under way to enhance the availability and quality of data, noting that the variable “years of service” is not fully applicable to non-staff personnel, who are often engaged on a shorter-term basis. It is also recalled that the spectrum of non-staff modalities is very diverse and may not lend itself to generalized comprehensive reporting.

#### **Recommendation 6**

**The executive heads of the United Nations system organization who are not already doing so should include non-staff personnel in their regular workforce assessments so as to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of their policies and practices relating to the use of non-staff personnel.**

24. Organizations partially support this recommendation.

25. While most organizations include non-staff personnel in the workforce assessment for workforce planning purposes and organizational alignment exercises, the assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of policies is a distinct process and varies based on the non-staff personnel contractual relationship with a given organization.

#### **Recommendation 7**

**Taking into consideration the various organizational mandates and the diversity of non-staff contracts, as well as the diverse operational environments, the executive heads of the United Nations system organizations, in their capacity as members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), should request the Human Resources Network of the High-level Committee on Management to review and set minimum standards and principles for non-staff contractual modalities commonly used by the United Nations system organizations, with a view to enhancing system-wide coherence and harmonization by the end of 2028.**

26. Organizations partially support this recommendation.

27. Notwithstanding the incomparability of non-staff contractual policies and the diversity of such modalities across the United Nations system organizations, reflecting the diversity of mandates, programmes and operational models, several organizations favour inter-agency discussions on such principles in the context of the CEB machinery, as applicable.

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