



# General Assembly

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Programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

### **Proposed regional restructuring of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: increasing efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of General Assembly resolution [48/141](#)**

#### **Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions**

## **I. Introduction**

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Proposed regional restructuring of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: increasing efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of General Assembly resolution [48/141](#)” ([A/71/218](#) and Corr.1). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses received on 7 October 2016.

2. The Advisory Committee recalls that the Secretary-General initially proposed a regional restructuring of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 (see [A/70/7](#), paras. VI.6-VI.12). At that time, the Committee recognized the intention of the Secretary-General to strengthen the field presence of OHCHR and expressed the view that a clearer and more detailed proposal should be presented for consideration by the General Assembly. In its related recommendation, the Committee indicated that the revised proposal should include, inter alia: (a) the location and geographical coverage of each hub; (b) an analysis of the expected workload and a corresponding staffing structure based on the specific needs for each location; (c) clearly defined reporting lines ensuring accountability and division of labour between country, regional and subregional offices, if any, and headquarters divisions and branches; and (d) a detailed cost proposal, taking into consideration



both one-time and recurring post and non-post requirements, as well as potential contributions from prospective host countries (*ibid.*, para. VI.12). The Assembly endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee and requested the Secretary-General to present a revised proposal on the regional restructuring of OHCHR (see resolution [70/247](#), paras. 7 and 84).

## II. Proposed restructuring of the field presence of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

3. The Advisory Committee notes that the revised proposal presented by the Secretary-General ([A/71/218](#) and Corr.1) provides detailed information on a number of issues, as requested by the Committee. The Secretary-General has maintained his overall approach to restructuring and proposes to strengthen six of the existing OHCHR regional offices and to establish two additional ones. Furthermore, the Secretary-General maintains that the restructuring would be resource-neutral, as the strengthening of the field structure would be offset by the redeployment of posts from Geneva to lower-cost duty stations in the field, along with the abolishment of General Service posts in Geneva.

4. The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the current proposal did not entail any change in the functions, programmes or mandates of OHCHR, but was rather of a managerial and budgetary nature only. The only posts affected are under subprogramme 3, Advisory services, technical cooperation and field activities, of section 24, Human rights, of the programme budget. In this connection, the Committee was further informed that this proposal would not affect posts related to the universal periodic review.

### *Locations and geographical scope*

5. The locations and geographical scope of the proposal are set out in paragraphs 19 to 29 of the report. The restructuring is envisaged as follows:

- (a) Strengthening of six existing regional offices: Addis Ababa; Bangkok; Beirut; Brussels; Dakar; and Panama City;
- (b) Establishment of two new regional offices: Istanbul and Washington, D.C.;
- (c) Maintenance of four other existing regional offices as subregional offices: Bishkek; Pretoria; Santiago; and Suva;
- (d) Establishment of an additional sub-office for the Caribbean in Barbados.

6. In this connection, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that no change in the locations of existing regional offices would be proposed. Furthermore, the proposal took into consideration such factors as: the ability of OHCHR to conduct its work on the basis of General Assembly resolution [48/141](#);<sup>1</sup> the presence of United Nations regional commissions, other United Nations centres and intergovernmental and regional organizations; cost considerations; and ease of access within the region and in relation to headquarters in Geneva. The Committee

<sup>1</sup> In its resolution [48/141](#), the General Assembly created the post of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and described the responsibilities of the High Commissioner.

was also informed that the privileges and immunities pertaining to each regional office were outlined in a host country agreement and that the potential host Governments for the two new regional offices and the proposed subregional office had been consulted and had indicated their agreement to the proposal in principle. **Overall, the Committee sees merit in the proposal of the Secretary-General to strengthen the field presence of OHCHR.**

7. The Advisory Committee notes instances in the report of the Secretary-General where certain terms are used inconsistently. For example, the terms sub-office and subregional office appear to be used interchangeably throughout the report, making it difficult to ascertain a clear distinction among the various operational entities within the overall field structure of OHCHR. The Secretary-General also states that the OHCHR country presences include country offices, human rights components of peacekeeping missions and human rights advisers to United Nations country teams (A/71/218, annex I, footnote a). In addition, the term “peace missions” in the report appears to refer to peacekeeping operations and field-based special political missions. In this connection, the Secretary-General indicates that heads of human rights components of peace missions will continue to have dual reporting lines to the head of mission and the High Commissioner (ibid., para. 46). At the same time, the Secretary-General states that the heads of the regional offices are accountable for the performance of OHCHR presences in the region (ibid., para. 38).

#### *Reporting lines*

8. An overview of the reporting lines and staffing structure under the proposal is set out in paragraphs 30 to 48 of the report.

9. The Secretary-General indicates that the regional offices will provide overall support to subregional offices, country offices, human rights advisers and other OHCHR subregional presences. The heads of the regional offices, proposed at the D-1 level (see paras. 22, 26 and 27 below), would serve as representatives of the High Commissioner for their respective regions and would report directly to the D-2 Director of the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division at OHCHR headquarters in Geneva. The heads of subregional offices and the heads of OHCHR country offices would, in turn, report to their respective regional offices. In addition, human rights advisers deployed to United Nations country teams would continue to report to the resident coordinator as the first reporting officer and to the head of the relevant regional office as second reporting officer. Furthermore, the heads of the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa in Yaoundé and the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region in Doha, which are tasked by the General Assembly with specific mandates but also have regional responsibilities, would report to the Head of the Regional Office for West and Central Africa and the Head of the Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa, respectively.

10. However, the Advisory Committee notes that the heads of human rights components in peacekeeping operations and field-based special political missions would continue to maintain the existing dual reporting lines to the head of mission and to the High Commissioner. There would therefore be no direct reporting relationship between these components and the respective regional components.

11. The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that no additional layers of supervision would be introduced as a result of the restructuring and was provided with a chart showing, in general terms, the aforementioned reporting lines (see annex I).

#### *New locations*

12. The Secretary-General indicates that the proposed new Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia in Istanbul will support 18 States, as well as Kosovo,<sup>2</sup> with four States to be directly supported by a sub-office in Central Asia in Bishkek, which is currently a regional office.<sup>3</sup> The Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the Istanbul location was selected as it was considered to be a United Nations hub, with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other entities already present, and because of the availability of regional transport connections.

**13. While not objecting to the selection of Istanbul as the new Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the Advisory Committee considers that the selection could have been better justified.**

14. It is also proposed to establish a Regional Office for North America and the Caribbean in Washington, D.C., to be supported by a new subregional office for the Caribbean in Barbados. The Regional Office in Washington, D.C., would support 17 States in the region.<sup>4</sup> Of these, a total of 15 States would be directly supported by the proposed subregional office in the Caribbean. The Secretary-General indicates that the main factor in selecting Washington, D.C., as the location for the Regional Office was the presence of international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group, as well as of the Organization of American States and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. In addition, regional and global policy and advocacy organizations concerned with human rights are located in Washington, D.C., as are the Pan American Health Organization and liaison offices for the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and UNFPA.

<sup>2</sup> In the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

<sup>3</sup> The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia would cover 18 States, namely, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, and Kosovo (in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo). The subregional office in Bishkek would provide direct support to four States: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, and the regional office in Istanbul would provide direct support to the remaining 14 States and Kosovo.

<sup>4</sup> The Regional Office for North America and the Caribbean will support 17 States. The majority of these (15 States), will be supported by the subregional office in the Caribbean. The Advisory Committee was informed that regional coverage would be provided for the following States: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Canada, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and United States of America.

15. On the question of whether the New York office could play a larger role, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the focus of the work of the OHCHR office in New York related primarily to interactions with the General Assembly and counterparts in the Secretariat, and not to the continuous interactive work required for effective partnership-building with the different entities in Washington, D.C. Upon further enquiry, the Committee was informed that the office in New York currently comprised a total of 33 posts and positions (18 posts funded under the regular budget, 10 positions funded under extrabudgetary resources and 5 positions funded under the peacekeeping support account).

16. In this connection, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that OHCHR staff had undertaken 19 trips to Washington, D.C., between April 2014 and May 2016 to participate in round-table discussions, workshops, conferences and bilateral meetings. The Committee points out, however, that six of these trips were led either by the High Commissioner or the Assistant Secretary-General, and that both of them would have been required to travel there, irrespective of the presence of a dedicated OHCHR office at that location.

**17. The Advisory Committee is of the view that regional coverage for North America and the Caribbean should be guided by operational realities and foreseeable workload considerations.**

**18. The Advisory Committee is of the view that the report does not demonstrate a compelling operational need to establish an OHCHR office in Washington, D.C. The Committee is also of the view that any liaison functions could be undertaken by the OHCHR office in New York, subject to the completion of a more thorough assessment of the existing capacity of the New York office.**

**19. Furthermore, the Advisory Committee recommends that consideration be given to establishing the envisaged Regional Office for North America and the Caribbean in Barbados to provide support to all 17 States in the region, with the commensurate minimum core staffing structure (1 D-1, 1 P-5, 2 P-4 and 2 P-3) for that office (see also para. 22).**

*Workload and corresponding staffing structure*

20. The proposed staffing changes resulting from the restructuring of the OHCHR field presence are illustrated in table 1 of the report of the Secretary-General, as follows: (a) a decrease of 21 of the 42 programme budget posts currently located in Geneva; and (b) an increase of 21 programme budget field-based posts, which would be in addition to the existing 27 posts.

21. The Secretary-General indicates that each of the eight regional offices would require a minimum core staffing structure, based on expected workload, supplemented with extrabudgetary resources (see [A/71/218](#), para. 32). According to the Secretary-General, a key principle determining staffing allocations would be to avoid the duplication of functions between regional offices, other types of field presences, the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division and any other parts of OHCHR.

22. The minimum core structure of the eight regional offices would comprise six staff members funded from the regular budget (1 D-1, 1 P-5, 2 P-4 and 2 P-3 posts).

The head of office position, which is currently classified as a P-5 post, would be reclassified as a D-1 post. The head of office would supervise the staff and activities of each regional office and the related sub-offices and be accountable for the performance of all other OHCHR presences in the region, including country offices, human rights advisers and subregional offices (see also para. 26). In this connection, the Secretary-General proposes the following staff changes:

- (a) Redeployment of 18 posts (2 D-1, 5 P-5, 6 P-4 and 5 P-3) from Geneva to the field;
- (b) Reclassification of 9 posts (5 P-5 posts as D-1 posts and 4 P-3 posts as P-4 posts);
- (c) Abolishment of 3 General Service (Other level) posts in Geneva;
- (d) Establishment of 3 new posts (1 D-1 and 2 P-5) for the regional offices;
- (e) Redeployment of P-2 and General Service (Other level) posts within the geographic units in Geneva to ensure comparable headquarters backstopping capacity for each region.

23. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with organization charts showing OHCHR headquarters and field staffing as approved for the biennium 2016-2017 (annex II) and the staffing structure in the context of the restructuring proposal (annex III).

24. With respect to national staff, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that OHCHR support staff in the field were contracted locally by UNDP or the relevant regional commission on behalf of OHCHR on the basis of a financial authorization. Therefore, related resources were included under the budget line for general temporary assistance and not included in the authorized staffing structure.

25. As regards the above-noted redeployments of posts to the field, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that 35 posts, comprising 18 regular budget and 17 extrabudgetary posts, would be redeployed from the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division in Geneva to regional offices, representing 50 per cent of the Division's current staff and equivalent to 6 per cent of the Geneva-based OHCHR staff. The Committee was further informed that the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division in Geneva, in close coordination with the regional offices, would:

- (a) Coordinate, augment and channel strategic advice, briefing materials and other key communications to OHCHR senior management and other actors, particularly those based in Geneva and New York;
- (b) Ensure that the issues and perspectives of regional presences are well represented in intra- and inter-agency task forces, crisis mechanisms and other bodies;
- (c) Conduct working-level communication, liaison, coordination and representation with Member States, United Nations partners, civil society and other stakeholders in Geneva.

26. With respect to the designation of the heads of the regional offices at the D-1 level, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the heads of

regional offices would serve as the designated representatives of the High Commissioner, leading the development of the vision and strategic direction for the work of OHCHR in the region to support Member States and play a lead role in maintaining and developing relationships at the highest level with the region's Member States. Furthermore, the D-1 heads of office would take the lead in cooperation with regional organizations and relevant United Nations entities and serve as the OHCHR regional director within the United Nations Development Group. The Committee was also informed, upon enquiry, that the functions proposed for redeployment from Geneva to the regional offices were currently being performed by heads of the geographic branches in the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division at the D-1 level. Consequently, it is proposed to establish one new D-1 post and to reclassify five P-5 posts as D-1 posts, in addition to the redeployment of two existing D-1 posts from Geneva to the regional offices.

**27. The Advisory Committee recognizes the need for the regional offices to be led at the D-1 level, including at locations where such offices are currently led at the P-5 level. The Committee also recognizes the need for the new D-1 heads of regional offices to be supported by senior staff at the P-5 level. The Committee therefore recommends approval of the related proposed staffing changes with respect to the posts at the D-1 and P-5 levels.**

**28. With respect to the proposed redeployments of posts at the P-4 and P-3 levels, the Advisory Committee recommends the provision of general temporary assistance positions until such time as the specific needs of each regional office become clearer and the actual workload can be assessed. The ongoing need for all existing posts within the regional offices should also be kept under review. The Committee trusts that any recruitment and/or appointment actions undertaken in connection with the restructuring of the OHCHR field presence will be conducted in accordance with established regulations, rules and procedures.**

29. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the process of estimating the workloads of the regional offices more precisely was constrained by the quality of data available. The Committee was also informed that the workload of the regional offices would not be uniform, nor would the offices have identical priority areas, but that a core staffing capacity was required in order to perform programme management, technical assistance and capacity-building functions.

**30. In view of the differing operational environments among the regional offices and the challenges in determining their precise workloads, the Advisory Committee is of the view that the proposed core staffing complement for this new regional structure should not be based on a "one-size-fits-all" approach. Staffing levels should be subsequently adjusted to allow for operational flexibility, based on actual workload, as appropriate.**

**31. The Advisory Committee also recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to report on the overall experience gained from the restructuring, for consideration by the Assembly no later than during the main part of its seventy-fourth session.**

*Cost implications*

32. The cost implications of the proposed restructuring are set out in paragraphs 49 to 60 of the report. The Secretary-General indicates that the reallocation of post and non-post resources between Geneva and the field, which would be effective 1 January 2017, would be resource-neutral. Specifically, the Secretary-General indicates that, under the regular budget, the proposed increased requirements with respect to the regions in the amount of \$5,261,300 would be offset by an equal reduction in Geneva. Furthermore, the proposal would have no staffing implications for the OHCHR country offices funded from voluntary contributions.

33. The Advisory Committee was informed that the costing of all regular budget posts concerned was based on continuing rates and that the application of a 50 per cent vacancy rate to the proposed three new posts would result in a reduction of \$277,200 during the biennium 2016-2017, with the delayed impact in this respect to be reflected in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019. With respect to travel resources, the Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that existing regular budget resources for that purpose would be redistributed more evenly within the regions, with decreases in sub-offices to be offset by increases in the respective regional offices, as a result of increased requirements for regional travel. For example, travel resources allocated to Bishkek would be shared with Istanbul, and travel resources allocated to Santiago would be shared with all other offices in the Americas.

34. On a related matter, the Secretary-General indicates that the overall resource calculation included five posts in the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa in Yaoundé and three posts in the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region in Doha. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the structures and staffing in the aforementioned offices would not lead to any cost implications. The Committee was further informed that these offices were not included in the table of cost implications, which focused on the distribution of resources between regions, as the two offices were unaffected in this regard by the changes, given their specific mandates and staffing.

35. With respect to the current and expected contributions from host countries, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the Government of Senegal was providing a building for the premises for the OHCHR Regional Office for West and Central Africa in Dakar at no cost, while the premises for other regional offices were to be financed from unearmarked voluntary contributions. Furthermore, the Government of Panama was constructing a site for all United Nations entities in the country, including OHCHR. The Committee was also informed that it was the understanding of OHCHR that the United Nations premises in Istanbul and Barbados, where the Government has constructed a “United Nations House”, may be provided by the respective Governments at no cost and that the Office would pursue similar in-kind contributions at other locations. **The Committee welcomes these contributions.**

**36. The Advisory Committee notes that the restructuring proposal has been presented on the premise of cost neutrality and requests that actual cost**

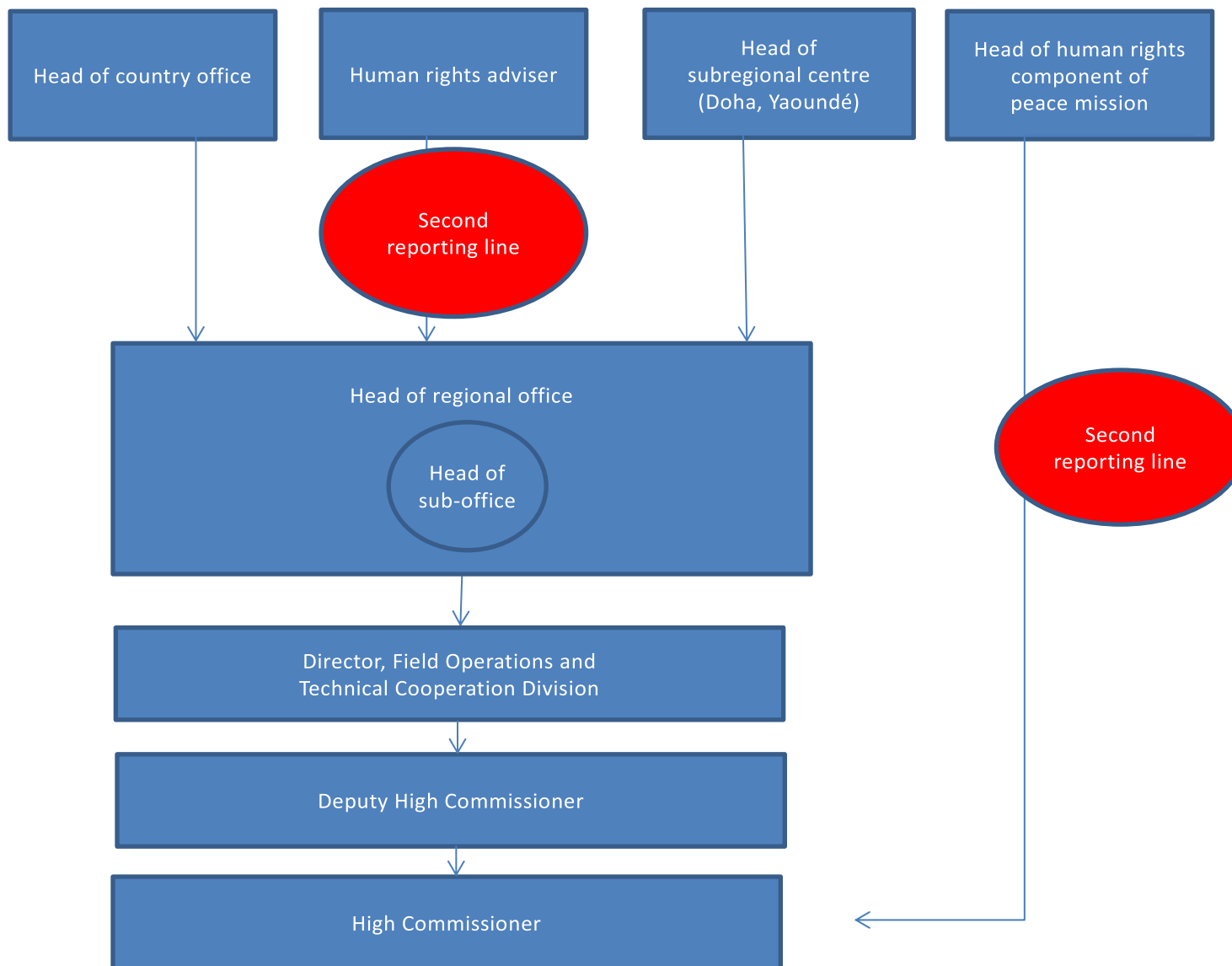


implications be included in the above-mentioned submission to the General Assembly (see para. 31 above).

### **III. Conclusion**

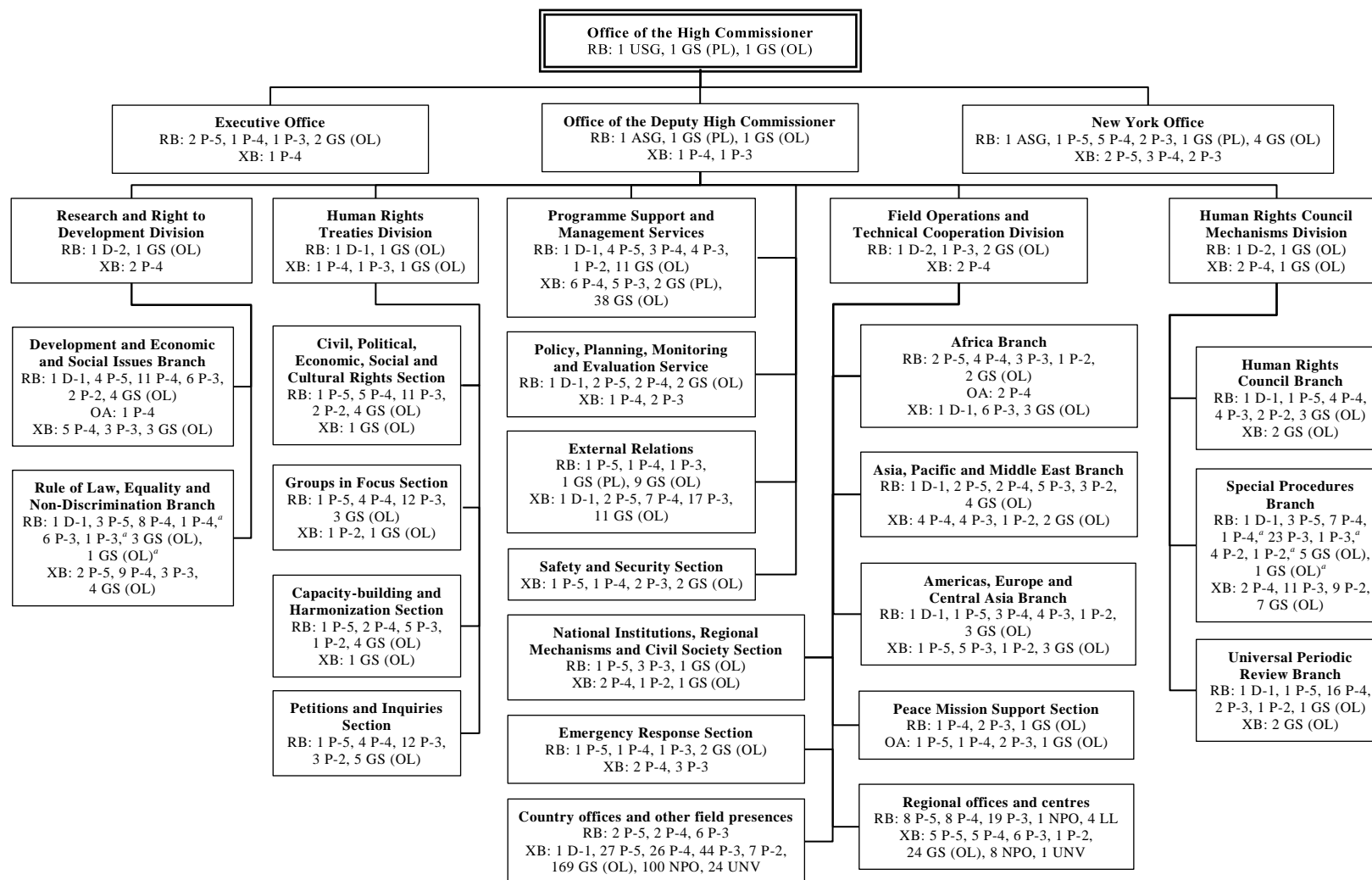
37. The actions required of the General Assembly, as requested by the Secretary-General, are contained in paragraphs 63 and 64 of his report.

38. Subject to its comments and recommendations above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly approve the proposals of the Secretary-General.

**Annex I****Proposed reporting lines**

## Annex II

# Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights approved organization chart for 2016-2017

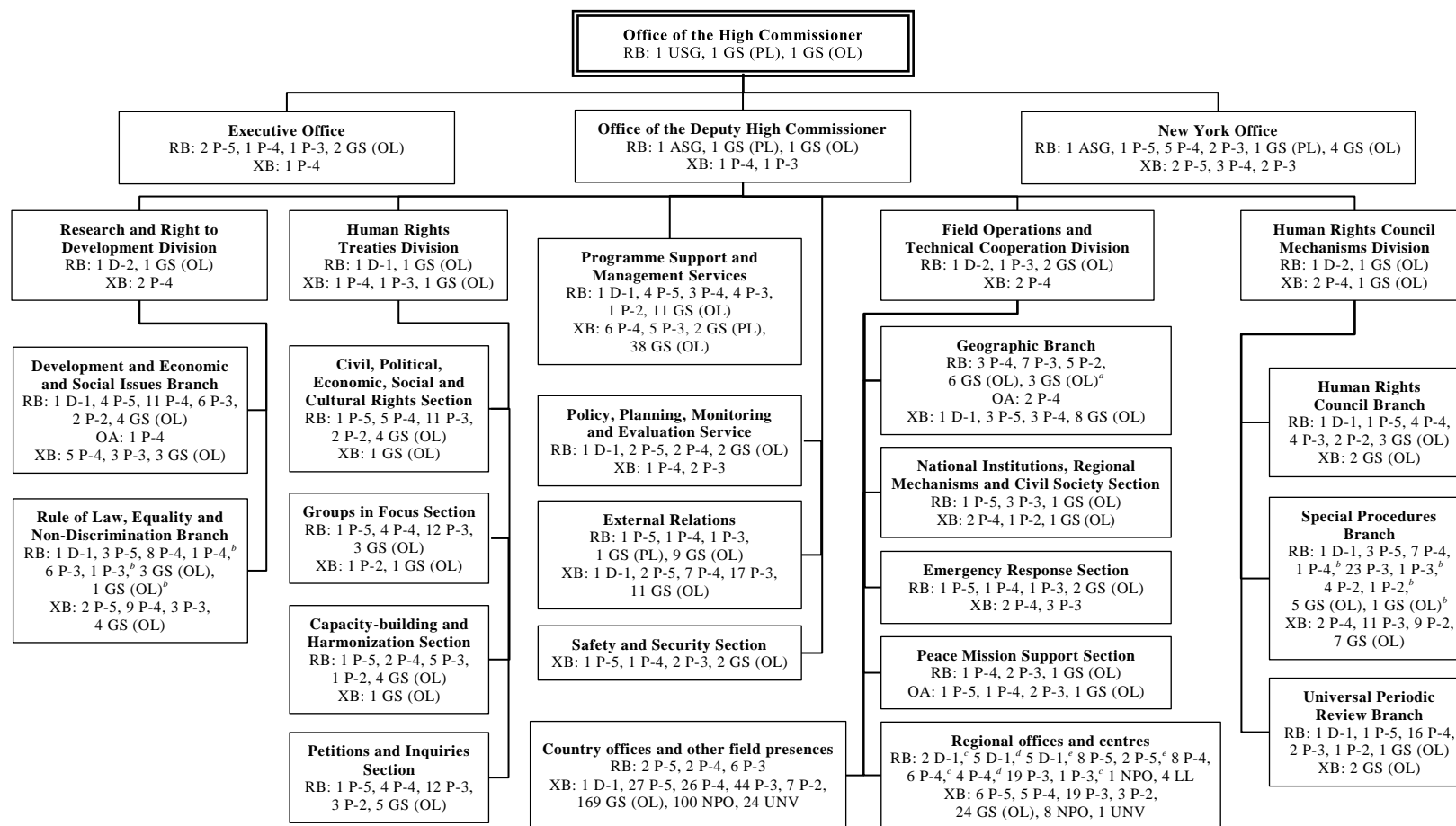


Abbreviations: ASG, Assistant Secretary-General; GS (OL), General Service (Other level); GS (PL), General Service (Principal level); LL, Local level; NPO, National Professional Officer; OA, Other assessed; RB, regular budget; UNV, United Nations Volunteer; USG, Under-Secretary-General; XB, extrabudgetary.

<sup>a</sup> Temporary posts.

## Annex III

# Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights proposed organization chart for 2016-2017 (after restructuring)



**Abbreviations:** ASG, Assistant Secretary-General; GS (OL), General Service (Other level); GS (PL), General Service (Principal level); LL, Local level; NPO, National Professional Officer; OA, Other assessed; RB, regular budget; UNV, United Nations Volunteer; USG, Under-Secretary-General; XB, extrabudgetary.

<sup>a</sup> Abolished posts.

<sup>b</sup> Temporary posts.

<sup>c</sup> Inward redeployments.

<sup>d</sup> Reclassifications/redeployments.

<sup>e</sup> New posts.