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## Fifth Committee

### Summary record of the 4th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 15 October 2018, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Bird..... (Australia)  
*Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Ruiz Massieu

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Agenda item 135: Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations** (*continued*)

*Shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations: comparative assessment of human resources structures (A/73/366 and A/73/411)*

1. **Ms. Ribeiro Viotti** (Chef de Cabinet, Executive Office of the Secretary-General), introducing the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations: comparative assessment of human resources structures” (A/73/366), said that the General Assembly, in its resolution 72/266 B, had approved the reorganization of the current Department of Management and Department of Field Support into the proposed new Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and Department of Operational Support. The new structure would eliminate duplication, clarify the division of roles and responsibilities, and facilitate an appropriate system of checks and balances. The Assembly had also requested that the Secretary-General submit a comparative assessment of placing human resources functions in a single consolidated department or two distinct departments.

2. A number of reform efforts had been undertaken over the years, and while progress had been made in some areas, more needed to be done to ensure that the Organization’s human resources policies and structures supported the effective delivery of its mandates. The challenges related to human resources management had been highlighted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Board of Auditors and the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations. Some of those challenges could be addressed through changes in approach, while the ongoing streamlining of human resources policies and frameworks would resolve other issues. However, there were limits to what could be achieved through such changes alone; the structural issues that had hampered previous reform efforts must be addressed.

3. Many of the challenges affecting the Secretariat stemmed from the fact that the current human resources structures at Headquarters were responsible for both strategic and operational tasks, which inevitably resulted in competition for resources and attention, to the detriment of both sets of functions. More immediate or routine operational requirements tended to be prioritized, diverting resources and attention away from long-term strategic and policy-related goals. At the same

time, a single human resources structure was not conducive to a culture of excellence in service delivery, which was essential for improving operational effectiveness. In the light of those experiences, the Secretary-General believed that consolidating human resources functions within a single structure would hamper the new management architecture.

4. The General Assembly had requested that the new human resources structure ensure a unified approach to human resources management, optimize the distribution of functions and avoid duplication. Those objectives could be achieved only through the segregation of strategic and operational functions into separate structures. In addition to ensuring a unified approach and eliminating duplication, the establishment of two departments – the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and the Department of Operational Support – with separate, clearly defined responsibilities, but broad, Secretariat-wide remits, would strengthen accountability and internal controls by separating compliance from functions that supported operational activities. To ensure coherence, coordination mechanisms would be established between the two departments, as well as among both departments and other Secretariat entities.

5. The reform process was an opportunity to address both the structural and the non-structural issues that made human resources management one of the Organization’s perennial pain points. The Secretary-General believed that the objectives of the global human resources strategy could be achieved only through the segregation of strategic and operational human resources functions into separate departments. The Secretary-General was grateful for the continued support of Member States for his reform agenda.

6. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/73/411), said that the report set out the key legislative decisions leading up to the submission of the report of the Secretary-General. With regard to the comparative assessment of human resources structures, the Advisory Committee noted that the information contained in the report of the Secretary-General was general in nature, and trusted that full details would be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the matter.

7. In its report, the Advisory Committee expressed its expectations regarding the inclusion of further information on delegation of authority and accountability issues as they related to the management reform proposals in the next progress report of the

Secretary-General on accountability, and the elements to be included in the comprehensive review of the implementation of resolution 72/266 B. A new model for the delivery of administrative services could have an impact on the functioning and structures of the human resources function, as well as on delegation of authority and accountability issues. In view of the request contained in resolution 72/266 B (para. 16), it was for the General Assembly to decide on the action to be taken on the report of the Secretary-General. The totality of the subsections approved by the Assembly should be reflected under the introductory part of section 29 of the programme budget.

8. **Mr. Ahmed** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group wished to underscore the importance of resolution 72/266 B, by which the General Assembly had approved the reorganization of the Department of Management and the Department of Field Support into two new departments, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and the Department of Operational Support, thereby paving the way for the shift in the management paradigm advocated by the Secretary-General. Improving human resources management was crucial to that paradigm shift and to ensuring that United Nations staff had the skills and dynamism needed to respond to new and emerging challenges. The Group was proud of its contribution to the reform process, which was intended to enhance the ability of the Organization to deliver on its mandates at a time when multilateralism was being questioned.

9. The Group wished to know more about previous reform efforts, including their impact and the lessons learned; the rationale behind the current structure, in which human resources functions were performed by the Department of Management and the Department of Field Support; and the advantages and disadvantages of the various options. In addition, the Group wished to better understand the challenges facing the Secretariat, particularly with regard to recruitment, policy inconsistencies between Headquarters and the field, performance management, and difficulties in achieving balanced geographical representation at all levels. Understanding such challenges was critical for assessing the ability of a single or dual structure to address them effectively. The Group would also seek clarification on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

10. **Ms. Adamson** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization

and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the General Assembly had adopted a number of key resolutions on United Nations reform during its seventy-second session, including resolution 72/266 B. The Assembly had supported the Secretary-General's vision for shifting the management paradigm and had endorsed the idea that reform should lead to a transformation of the Organization, to ensure better delivery of programmes and mandates, through stronger support structures and more rational decentralization, accompanied by a comprehensive shift in leadership and organizational culture.

11. In addition, the General Assembly had agreed that managers should be given greater responsibility, that accountability should be strengthened, and that making human resources management more flexible and effective would improve performance. The European Union believed that such elements were mutually reinforcing and should be treated as a package.

12. The comparative assessment of human resources structures submitted pursuant to resolution 72/266 B confirmed that the decision taken by the General Assembly to approve the departmental reorganization and subsections 29A to 29D of section 29 of the programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 would indeed ensure a unified approach, optimize the distribution of functions and avoid duplication.

13. **Mr. Hawke** (New Zealand), speaking also on behalf of Australia and Canada, said that the Secretary-General should be congratulated on his leadership in bringing about much-needed reform. All three reform pillars were mutually reinforcing. Australia, Canada and New Zealand welcomed the adoption of resolutions 72/266 B and 72/199, and looked forward to the adoption of a resolution on the repositioning of the United Nations development system.

14. Changing the culture of an organization was no simple task. The reorganization of human resources functions was only the start of a long process. In that connection, his delegation looked forward to the constructive consideration of the proposals under the agenda item on human resources management.

15. His delegation trusted that the Secretary-General's report would address the reservations of certain delegations. Australia, Canada and New Zealand supported the Secretary-General's vision of decentralization and enhanced delegation of authority, backed by a strong corporate policy and accountability mechanisms.

16. **Mr. Wanner** (Switzerland), speaking also on behalf of Liechtenstein, said that his delegation fully endorsed the Secretary-General's vision for management reform. He commended his leadership of the reform process and said that the achievements so far had been impressive. However, there was still a great deal of work ahead. Human resources management was an essential part of the overall reform proposal. His delegation welcomed the comparative assessment of human resources structures.

17. **Mr. García Landa** (Mexico) said that human resources management was of the utmost importance. Personnel costs accounted for over three quarters of the Organization's expenses. Given the scale and significance of the services provided by the United Nations, including in the field, the Secretariat's policies and procedures must be modern and effective. At present, there were a number of major structural challenges hampering human resources management, as well as problems in terms of policy design, application and evaluation. The Organization needed an efficient human resources system in which responsibilities were clearly delineated, with a view to avoiding duplication and waste of resources and promoting transparency and excellence.

18. At its seventy-second session, the General Assembly had adopted a number of resolutions on the reform process, including resolution [72/266 B](#). His delegation hoped that Member States would continue to prioritize reform efforts during the seventy-third session and examine the issue of human resources management, with a view to establishing a coherent structure that ensured a unified approach, avoided duplication and enhanced accountability and results-based management.

19. **Ms. Duncan** (United States of America) said that while much remained to be done in order to truly reform the United Nations, her delegation wished to commend the Secretary-General for his vision and leadership of the reform process. United Nations reform must result in improved mandate delivery and more efficient operations. A comprehensive transformation of the organizational culture and leadership was essential.

20. Human resources management was a fundamental aspect of United Nations reform. The comparative assessment of human resources structures submitted by the Secretary-General had confirmed that the decision of the General Assembly to approve the proposed departmental reorganization and the new subsections of the programme budget would ensure a unified approach. The forthcoming months would be critical for ensuring the full implementation of the Secretary-General's reforms across all three pillars.

21. **Mr. Munir** (Pakistan) said that under the Secretary-General's galvanizing leadership, the General Assembly had adopted watershed resolutions intended to revamp the peace and security architecture, revitalize the development system and rationalize budgeting and planning cycles, as well as reorganize United Nations departments, in order to bring about a paradigm shift in the way the Organization worked. To make the United Nations agile and fit for purpose, there was a need to simplify complicated procedures and avoid duplication and fragmentation.

22. Pakistan had always called for a robust system of checks and balances. Accordingly, his delegation was particularly interested in the information contained in the Secretary-General's report on the establishment of coordination mechanisms between the two new departments to ensure effective feedback between the policy and operational functions, as well as an entry point for Member States to ask questions related to human resources policies and their implementation. It was important to draw on the lessons learned from previous human resources reforms.

23. The principle of equitable geographical representation, including adequate representation of troop- and police-contributing countries, must be observed. While the Secretary-General's commitment to gender parity was commendable, additional efforts should be made to increase the number of female staff from developing countries.

24. **Ms. Nishimura** (Japan) said that her delegation strongly supported the Secretary-General's reform initiative, including in the area of management, which would make the United Nations stronger and improve coherence and accountability. The management reform was due to start being implemented in January 2019. Steady implementation without delay was essential to ensure that the reform did indeed increase efficiency and effectiveness. Her delegation would engage constructively in the deliberations with a view to reaching consensus on a draft resolution on management as soon as possible.

25. **Mr. Gao Huijun** (China) said that his delegation supported the Secretary-General's efforts to improve the effectiveness of management and strengthen oversight and accountability through reform. Thanks to the joint efforts of Member States and the Secretariat, much progress had been made since the seventy-second session of the General Assembly. His delegation looked forward to the steady implementation of the reform.

26. In-depth discussions of the Secretariat's human resources management architecture should continue. Resolution [72/266 B](#) set out the principles for

restructuring human resources management, namely ensuring a unified approach, optimizing the distribution of functions and avoiding duplication. His delegation had taken note of the Secretary-General's report and the related report of the Advisory Committee, and looked forward to receiving more detailed information from the Secretariat during the next phase of the Fifth Committee's deliberations.

27. The principles of due process and consensus should continue to prevail. When Member States respected one another and accommodated national positions and concerns, progress could be made. All voices and positions should be taken seriously and respected. His delegation would participate constructively in the Committee's deliberations, with a view to achieving consensus on management reform as swiftly as possible.

28. **Mr. Hilale** (Morocco) said that his delegation fully supported the Secretary-General's management reform, which was intended to make the United Nations more flexible, efficient, accountable and responsive. His delegation welcomed the transparent consultation process, which had enabled all Member States to express their concerns and expectations regarding the proposed reforms. The fact that the Secretary-General had asked all Member States to indicate whether they wished to host a shared service centre was further evidence of his commitment to transparency.

29. His delegation welcomed the proposal to place human resources functions in two distinct departments, as it was of the view that consolidating all human resources activities within a single structure was an outdated model. Indeed, internal evaluations conducted by the Organization's oversight bodies had revealed that monolithic human resources structures had shortcomings that would hinder the functioning of the Secretariat.

30. To ensure the effectiveness and accountability of the United Nations, and enable the achievement of the Secretary-General's broader reform agenda, a paradigm shift was required in the area of human resources management. The objective of the management reform was not to establish new structures, but to facilitate the shift to a Secretariat that was capable of addressing challenges and delivering on its mandates in an effective and accountable manner.

31. A dual structure would ensure a unified approach across the Secretariat for human resources, optimizing the distribution of functions, facilitating a clear division of responsibility, strengthening accountability and avoiding duplication. While the existing structures had allowed the Secretariat to respond to the increasing

demands placed upon the Organization, the level and type of services provided was often inconsistent. In addition, there were problems with the recruitment and promotion of staff, and a lack of separation between strategic and operational functions.

32. **Ms. Frolova** (Russian Federation) said that, at the previous session, the Committee had unfortunately not reached agreement on the structure of the human resources units, an essential aspect of the management reform. If agreement on the matter were reached by consensus, any reorganization would need to ensure an integrated approach to addressing the main tasks related to the improvement and optimization of human resources management at the United Nations. In its report on the comparative assessment of human resources structures, the Advisory Committee recalled its recommendation, contained in its report on the proposed shift in the management paradigm in the United Nations (A/72/7/Add.49), that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to consider consolidating human resources functions under a single structure. It must also be taken into account, in considering the report on the comparative assessment, that the Assembly, in its resolution 72/262 C, had requested the Secretary-General to submit a new proposal for the global service delivery model no later than the first part of the resumed seventy-third session. The Advisory Committee had concluded that the new model could have a direct impact not only on the functioning and establishment of the human resources structure but also on delegation of authority and accountability issues. Her delegation advocated the consolidation of all human resources functions under a single Secretariat structure; the Department of Operational Support seemed the most appropriate choice.

33. **Ms. Ribeiro Viotti** (Chef de Cabinet), thanking the delegations for their constructive comments, said that the Secretariat stood ready to provide any additional information deemed necessary, including on the issues of equitable geographical representation, the coordination mechanisms between the two new departments, and enhanced oversight and accountability.

*The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.*