



General Assembly

Distr.: General
6 August 2025

Original: English

Eightieth session

Item 124 of the provisional agenda*

Strengthening of the United Nations system

UN80 Initiative: workstream 2

Mandate implementation review

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In its resolution [79/318](#), the General Assembly, *inter alia*, looked forward to receiving proposals aimed at strengthening the impact of the United Nations and enhancing its agility, responsiveness and resilience while addressing the issue of duplicative efforts and ensuring effective and efficient mandate delivery across all three pillars of the work of the United Nations. Consistent with that request, the present report, part of the second workstream of the UN80 Initiative, provides analysis that offers useful perspectives on the mandate life cycle. It also provides a number of proposals – both for the United Nations system and for the consideration of Member States – to strengthen the impact of mandates.

* [A/80/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. Mandates are the property and responsibility of Member States, which adopt them. Decisions on how or when to create, review or retire them are likewise entirely the prerogative of Member States. The role of the United Nations system is to implement these mandates, delivering Member States' decisions as effectively and efficiently as possible. The present report provides analysis that offers useful perspectives on the mandate life cycle. It also provides a number of proposals, both for the United Nations system and for the consideration of Member States, to strengthen the impact of mandates. It is part of the second workstream of the UN80 Initiative, launched in a letter to Member States on 11 March 2025. Separate UN80 Initiative workstreams are also under way to achieve efficiencies and improvements within current arrangements and to identify possible structural changes and programme realignments across the United Nations system; their findings will complement the present report.

2. These efforts are consistent with the request made in General Assembly resolution [79/318](#), in which the Assembly, *inter alia*, looked forward to receiving proposals aimed at strengthening the impact of the United Nations and enhancing its agility, responsiveness and resilience while addressing the issue of duplicative efforts and ensuring effective and efficient mandate delivery across all three pillars of the work of the United Nations. Should Member States later decide that they wish to initiate a more formal review of mandates, the United Nations system stands ready, if requested, to support them throughout the process.

Mandates for the greater good

3. Since 1946, three principal organs of the United Nations – the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council – and their subsidiary organs have issued mandates¹ to United Nations entities through more than 40,000 resolutions, decisions and presidential statements. These mandates are not simply texts or numbers on a page; they represent the enormous, accumulated capital of nearly eight decades of global cooperation and multilateralism. They have helped to forge agreement and develop global norms on some of the most important issues of our time: sustainable development, peace and security, humanitarian action, human rights and many more.

4. Mandates also guide and enable what the United Nations system² does today. Working in over 1,100 locations across more than 190 countries and territories, the United Nations system serves the aspirations of more than 8 billion people and directly improves the lives of more than 440 million people every year. The United Nations provides a forum for all Member States to come together to resolve challenges including conflict, climate change, socioeconomic disparities and other

¹ For the purposes of the present report, “mandate” generally refers to a request or directive for action by the United Nations Secretariat or other implementing entities, set out in the Charter of the United Nations or a resolution or decision adopted by a United Nations intergovernmental organ. The present report refers mainly to mandates cited by United Nations entities in support of resource requirements in the proposed programme budget for 2026 and the peacekeeping budget for the period 2025/26. “Mandate” (or “mandate source”) may also refer to the various documents that contain these individual requests or directives (e.g. resolutions, decisions, presidential statements, etc.). Mandate sources may also refer to recommendations in reports of subsidiary organs, such as advisory or technical committees or bodies, which, once adopted by the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council, require action.

² For the purposes of the present report, “United Nations system” refers to the United Nations, specialized agencies and related organizations. The United Nations is composed of six principal organs and subsidiary organs. Specialized agencies and related organizations are composed of their own intergovernmental bodies and other entities.

crises, while also working to create a fairer world for all through gender equality, disability inclusion and protection of the most vulnerable. Through mandates, Member States and the United Nations system have worked together to achieve this extraordinary impact. The skill and commitment of United Nations personnel who carry out these mandates, including in conditions of hardship, remains a cornerstone of the United Nations system's ability to deliver.

Report objectives

5. These collective achievements are the result of mandates created by Member States. They must remain front and centre as we work together to build a United Nations system that can deliver even greater impact in the years to come. Reviewing the mandate life cycle is an important step in that process.

6. Specifically, the present report provides insights into how mandates are created, delivered and reviewed, as well as proposals for consideration regarding how each of these functions might be strengthened. The report is entirely restricted to the processes and services around mandate creation, delivery and review. It does not include any attempts to assess the merits of the mandates themselves.

Rationale and lessons learned

7. While mandates are essential, their large number can bring practical challenges. Member States have noted that it is difficult to keep sight of the overall mandate landscape, there is a danger of duplication and overlap between mandates, the aggregated instructions in mandates may place an unreasonable burden on both the United Nations system and Member States, the mandates may not always translate into clear resource allocations or programmes for maximum impact, and mandates may also outlive their original use and purpose if not subject to regular examination. Shortcomings in United Nations Secretariat support for Member States may also create challenges throughout the mandate life cycle.

8. The eightieth anniversary of the United Nations is an appropriate moment to review this situation. The UN80 Initiative provides the opportunity, coming at a time when there are just five years left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and there is a pressing need to fulfil the Pact for the Future. Embarking on such a review with the best chance of a successful outcome requires learning from experience. Efforts to streamline mandates go as far back as 1954, and the previous major effort was initiated following the 2005 World Summit when Member States called for a review of mandates older than five years. In the report of the Secretary-General in which that review was initiated ([A/60/733](#)), issued in 2006, four headline problems were identified: burdensome reporting requirements; overlap between and within organs; an unwieldy and duplicative architecture for implementation; and the gap between mandates and resources.

9. Regrettably, that review and the intergovernmental process which resulted from it by common consent did not yield the envisioned results. The problems that it identified are still here today and, unaddressed, have intensified over the past 20 years.

New opportunities and approach

10. There are reasons to believe that the UN80 Initiative can produce better results than past efforts, on the condition that Member States are ready to invest sufficiently in a process that will be demanding and complex. The present report serves to leverage several factors that together can promote strong outcomes. It reflects calls by Member States during informal meetings of the General Assembly on the UN80 Initiative to

ensure that transformational change reinforces the Charter of the United Nations, strengthens all three pillars of United Nations work equally and builds on existing reforms to deliver concrete results at the country level. As noted above, it is also consistent with the request made in General Assembly resolution [79/318](#).

11. Through data analytical capacities not previously available, the present report provides Member States with more information and a fuller understanding of the current mandate landscape. Even the intensification of the problems identified in 2006 can help to focus attention and political will. Perhaps more importantly, the report shows a markedly different approach from previous efforts, which may open a way forward.

12. Instead of taking up and examining individual mandates one by one as in 2006 in an ultimately unmanageable process, in the present report the Secretary-General proposes an approach focused on the system-level or structural issues identified across the life cycle of mandates. It contains an analysis of the conditions in which mandates are first created, then delivered and finally reviewed for impact, with proposals offered at each step that could address potential challenges. The report lays the groundwork for a possible renovation of the ways in which the will of Member States expressed in mandates is translated into impact on the ground.

13. It will be for Member States to assess the approach set out in the present report and to determine what further steps may be warranted. These might include a carefully designed intergovernmental process to be undertaken within a specific time frame. Within his existing authority, the Secretary-General also intends to take a number of actions to enhance the visibility of mandates, streamline work, improve mandate delivery and strengthen reviews.

Scope and methodology

14. Mandates vary greatly in character, ranging from those setting long-term, wide-ranging frameworks to more targeted directives addressing specific issues. The scope of the present report includes an assessment of the life cycle of mandates issued by the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary organs. Although these organs can and do issue mandates that affect the wider United Nations system, the Sustainable Development Goals being just one notable example, many mandates principally concern the Secretariat.

15. Examples in the present report draw often – although not exclusively – from data across the Secretariat to illustrate issues experienced across the wider United Nations system. Data sources are cited throughout the report and primarily include the United Nations Digital Library; United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination statistics; data from reports to relevant principal organs; United Nations system strategic plans; United Nations programme budgets; system-wide reviews; and donor reports.

II. Mandate creation

16. By creating mandates, Member States instruct and guide the United Nations system on how to address global challenges and improve hundreds of millions of lives around the world every year in accordance with the values and objectives of the Charter. These mandates are aimed at producing real-world results. Effective approaches are therefore essential to create mandates that will drive impact.

17. In the present section, two key hurdles facing effective creation are identified: (a) poor visibility across the landscape of existing mandates and the work of different mandating bodies; and (b) challenges in mandate design that may constrain impact

during mandate delivery. Each of these issues is examined, and potential solutions are proposed to create mandates that will deliver even stronger impact in the years to come.

Poor visibility across mandates and mandating bodies

18. An essential precondition for creating impactful mandates is full visibility across the mandate landscape: which mandates already exist on the same or related topics; who adopted them; and who is implementing them, and with what results. Comprehensive answers to these questions are often difficult for Member States to obtain, to the detriment of effective mandate creation.

Incomplete mandate registries and uneven support

19. Across the United Nations system, more than 20 intergovernmental bodies, including the three principal organs mentioned above, issue mandates.³ However, only a limited number of registries compile mandate texts and make them easily accessible to Member States, which poses a serious practical challenge to obtaining comprehensive information on existing mandates and current responsibilities within the United Nations system and a full understanding of the overall landscape. These gaps persist despite calls by the General Assembly and others to expand the use of digital repositories to strengthen institutional memory (see e.g. General Assembly resolution [77/335](#)).

20. Although the Secretariat provides dedicated substantive support to individual mandating bodies, few services exist to promote visibility or coordination across these bodies. As a result, they may work in relative isolation, without full awareness of the others' programmes of work. Capacity to provide intergovernmental support also varies widely across United Nations system entities, and there is little formal interface across these entities that can quickly channel collective United Nations system expertise on relevant issues to Member States during mandate creation. Consequently, Member States may need to consult many different United Nations counterparts in order to obtain the information that they want during the mandate creation process, which raises transaction costs, particularly for smaller delegations, and can contribute to less impactful results.

Overlap across mandating bodies

21. Poor visibility and uneven coordination across mandating bodies also contribute to overlap in the subjects that these bodies address. For example, since 1990, an average of 20 subjects covered in General Assembly resolutions every year have also appeared in resolutions adopted by the Economic and Social Council or the Human Rights Council. Such overlap may be beneficial where it fosters complementarity across mandating bodies on a given subject. This can occur, however, only if the decision to address a subject across different bodies is intentional and based on full information.

22. Otherwise, it may lead to unproductive duplication. There are already examples of this, such as parallel reporting requirements across mandating bodies on the same subject matter. Such duplication may dilute impact and generates considerable additional costs, while again placing a heavy burden on Member States. Assessing in advance whether potential overlap will prove productive depends in large part on visibility across the mandate landscape, which currently remains elusive.

³ For the purposes of the present report, “mandating bodies” will be the term used to refer to any of these intergovernmental bodies, including the relevant principal organs of the United Nations and their subsidiary organs.

Proposed solutions to improve visibility

23. A number of initiatives are already under way to improve visibility across the mandate landscape. These include a digital mandate registry created through the UN80 Initiative,⁴ a digital mandate registry covering the Human Rights Council created by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights⁵ and a digital registry covering documents and decisions related to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.⁶ The General Assembly also continues to develop a catalogue of relevant provisions to revitalize its work. In addition, the following proposals could help to further improve visibility, coordination and support for Member States during mandate creation:

- (a) Accelerate the creation of comprehensive registries of existing mandate texts issued by all mandating bodies;
- (b) Improve Secretariat support for Member States during mandate creation, based on priorities established by Member States;
- (c) Strengthen support by United Nations entities to coordinate and promote greater visibility across the work of mandating bodies;
- (d) Develop tools using artificial intelligence to assist with mandate drafting, including by producing summarized information to enable Member States' decision-making, flagging potential complementarities or duplications in draft texts or meeting agendas across mandating bodies.

Challenges in mandate design

24. Optimizing mandate design from the start helps to ensure maximum impact during delivery. However, recent trends in mandate design may give rise to concern. Mandates are growing longer and more prescriptive and are also less likely to make provision for resources to fund the new activities they call for.

More and longer resolutions

25. There has been a substantial increase in both the number and length of resolutions adopted by mandating bodies over time. Numbers of resolutions per year grew sharply in the General Assembly in the 1980s and the Security Council in the 1990s and have now mostly plateaued at these high levels. Increases in the length of individual resolutions are even more striking. Since 2020, Assembly resolutions have seen average word counts rise by 55 per cent, and Economic and Social Council resolutions have grown by more than 95 per cent. Security Council resolutions have more than doubled in word count since 1995. In 2024, resolutions adopted by these three principal organs averaged more than 3,000 words each – nearly triple their average length 30 years ago.

26. Longer texts may add value, addressing issues comprehensively, citing relevant considerations and advancing important objectives. However, more complex texts can also obscure priorities and detract from potential impact. In addition, the costs associated with producing and processing texts rise as they get longer. These trends have taken place against a backdrop of largely stagnant regular budget funding since 2020. Mandating bodies recognize these challenges, with the General Assembly, for example, recommending shorter, action-oriented texts to facilitate impact (see resolution [77/335](#)).

⁴ Available at <https://mandates.un.org/>.

⁵ Available at <https://hrcmap.ohchr.org/>.

⁶ Available at <https://unfccc.int/documents>.

More tasks with fewer resources and less flexibility

27. Even more concerning from the perspective of resource availability, mandating bodies are now also increasingly requesting new tasks without providing corresponding resources. In 2024, more than 15 per cent of General Assembly resolutions mandated new activities “within existing resources”. Resolutions requiring implementation “within existing resources” are over four times more prevalent today than they were in 2000. The 2006 mandate review had already identified inadequate resourcing as a critical problem, yet it has intensified since. Continuing to mandate new activities without resources is unsustainable. It undermines capacity to deliver impact and limits flexibility to allocate resources strategically. Over time, this creates a growing disconnect between expectations and real impact, ultimately eroding trust in the Organization.

28. A related issue is the tendency of mandates to specify which entities should implement them. Nearly half of active mandates⁷ include at least one instruction to a specific entity to carry out tasks. Anecdotal evidence also suggests a rise in mandates that prescribe in detail the activities to be undertaken and how. Such prescriptive assignments may fail to take account of available resources or capacities across the United Nations system, potentially weakening impact and disrupting other activities. Prescriptivism also constrains efforts to determine the most effective arrangements for mandate delivery based on comparative advantages across the United Nations system, which may further limit impact.

Proposed solutions to improve mandate design

29. Efforts to improve mandate design must proceed in full respect of the prerogatives of Member States, which adopt them. The following proposals are intended for Member States’ consideration and to help them to craft clear, concise and actionable texts that are more likely to deliver impact during implementation:

- (a) Reduce the length of mandate texts wherever possible in order to ensure that mandates are implemented effectively and with greater impact (in line with the recommendations in paragraph 45 of General Assembly resolution [77/335](#));
- (b) Frame mandates that allow the Secretary-General appropriate flexibility to assign tasks based on comparative advantages and resources across the United Nations system;
- (c) Refrain from mandating new tasks that are not backed by corresponding resources or an explicit reduction in other mandated tasks;
- (d) For new mandates, complement estimates of regular budget expenditures prepared by the Secretary-General (in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly) with additional information on related programmatic activities across the United Nations system and across all sources of funding.

III. Mandate delivery

30. Mandate delivery is how the United Nations system implements the tasks entrusted to it by Member States, from major global initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the Pact for the Future to specific programmes and activities. It is how the United Nations system helps to translate agreements on key objectives,

⁷ “Active mandates” refers to the nearly 4,000 mandate sources cited in programme and peacekeeping budget documents from 2026 from the Secretariat, including those entities whose secretariats are part of the Secretariat.

such as gender equality, into real and meaningful improvements on the ground. Mandate delivery is also the basis on which Member States and the wider public assess the value of the United Nations system. As with mandate creation, impact must therefore remain the guiding principle.

31. In the present section, three concerns are identified that may hinder mandate delivery and reduce impact: (a) proliferating meetings and reports; (b) inadequate management of mandate delivery; and (c) misaligned funding modalities. Each of these issues is considered, and potential solutions that build on the 2018 United Nations reforms and complement other efforts under way through the UN80 Initiative are proposed.

Proliferating meetings and reports

32. Meetings and reports are an essential component of mandate delivery. They enable dialogue and information exchange, both of which are critical to creating agreement on important issues and developing the norms that guide the international system. Meetings and reports keep Member States informed of key developments and allow them to provide the necessary guidance. Ultimately, they are key means of enabling stronger impact.

33. They are also expensive: in 2024, the Secretariat spent more than \$360 million on direct costs associated with meetings and reports, such as editing and translation, or more than 10 per cent of the regular budget. Indirect costs, including research and drafting, would raise that figure considerably. Given both their important functions and substantial resource consumption, it appears appropriate to review these mandates to ensure that they deliver maximum impact.

More meetings

34. The United Nations facilitates thousands of meetings every year, including 27,000 in 2024 alone. These are essential platforms for Member States to come together to resolve challenges and set priorities. However, meetings and associated support requirements have also increased in recent years. As a result, a larger share of overall capacity is now devoted to meeting support. The number of meetings peaked in 2019 but fell sharply during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Meetings have since resumed a strong upward trend but have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels.

35. In 2025, more than 240 bodies, including committees and other forums established by the three principal organs, required Secretariat support. Despite earlier efforts to streamline these bodies, there are now 8 more than a decade ago, with more than 60 new bodies created and more than 50 discontinued during that period. Work associated with the cycle of establishment and closure of these bodies places additional demands on Secretariat resources beyond regular meeting services. New technology such as artificial intelligence could strengthen efficiency and better support Member States during meetings. While some of these tools are already being used, wider adoption could lead to even further improvements.

More reports

36. Mandated reports represent a large share of Secretariat deliverables, with about 55 per cent of active mandate sources requiring reports. Like meetings, reports are an important part of mandate delivery. In 2024, the Secretariat published more than 1,100 reports, an increase of nearly 20 per cent since 1990. More than 60 per cent of these reports cover recurring topics. Reports also address similar issues for different bodies.

37. Reports are also growing longer, with average word counts rising by 40 per cent since 2005. Reports to the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council now average around 11,300 words each, about one third longer than the recommended limit for Secretariat reports. Despite the vast output, or perhaps partly because of it, most reports are not widely read. In 2024, nearly 65 per cent were downloaded less than 2,000 times, compared with the top 5 per cent of reports that were accessed at least 5,500 times. Download statistics alone are not proof of a report's utility: important issues may not always find wide public readership. However, these figures are an indication of the need for wider discussions when considering reports.

Proposed solutions to streamline meetings and reports

38. The following proposals are presented with a view to maximizing the value of meetings and reports and seek to promote an appropriate balance between supporting functions for Member States and direct impact:

- (a) Prioritize and streamline requests in mandates for reports or meetings;
- (b) Provide shorter reports and reduce maximum word counts;
- (c) Combine reports covering similar issues and contexts wherever feasible (for example by merging separate regional reports on the same issue or submitting one report to different mandating bodies requesting reports on similar issues);
- (d) Introduce different report formats based on needs and content type; first reports could be longer, followed by shorter updates, visual dashboards, in-person briefings or other formats;
- (e) Publish download statistics for all reports to inform further discussions on reporting practices.

Inadequate delivery management and coordination

39. While meetings and reports are a means to an end, Member States' ultimate objectives for mandates are to improve people's lives and resolve challenges. Achieving this kind of impact depends heavily on the effective management of mandate delivery. Any shortcomings in this regard would detract from Member States' objectives and ultimately reduce impact.

Poor division of labour within the United Nations system

40. Efficient and impactful delivery requires a clear allocation of responsibilities based on agreed competencies and accountabilities. However, current processes and practices do not enable the United Nations system to achieve a clear division of labour. Effective coordination across entities during the preparation of budgets and programmes is limited. Although recent reforms have strengthened coordination at the country level, these have not yet been matched by similar improvements at the global level.

41. Existing oversight in the United Nations system focuses mainly on programme planning, budgets and operational issues of individual United Nations entities in isolation, rather than seeking to ensure strategic alignment across the system to drive impact and efficiency. This is especially visible in the Secretariat, where entities cite nearly 4,000 mandate sources as a legislative basis for proposed programme budgets. Many entities cite the same mandates. About 50 citations refer to mandates that appear inactive, such as the Millennium Development Goals.

Duplication risks

42. One potential outcome of unclear division of labour is duplication, which becomes more likely when many United Nations entities are working to deliver the same mandates. Such situations are not inherently negative: partners working together on complex issues can add complementary value when part of an intentional, coherent strategy. Global frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Pact for the Future show how mandates can bring the United Nations system together to deliver and multiply impact rather than duplicate efforts. In some cases, positive overlap may be required to achieve this multiplier effect.

43. However, there are signs of duplication risks in mandate delivery that merit closer review. In the development pillar, for example, about half of mandates cited in the programme budget are cited by multiple entities. In the peace and security pillar, the rate is about 33 per cent. Overlapping mandate citations may also contribute to functional overlap, in which multiple entities carry out the same functions to deliver the same mandates.⁸ This overlap is clearly visible in a number of functions, including policy, data, statistics, capacity-building, technical assistance, normative support and coordination. Common services including information technology, procurement and human resources are also widely replicated across the United Nations system. Separate UN80 Initiative workstreams are examining these issues in greater detail. Recent evaluations of ongoing reform efforts, including the repositioning of United Nations country teams,⁹ are also shedding light on opportunities to consolidate efforts across the United Nations system to deliver better together.

Proposed solutions to improve delivery management

44. United Nations reforms adopted in 2018 have improved mandate delivery, resulting, for example, in generally higher satisfaction among Member States on support for Sustainable Development Goal implementation. These efforts are helping to move the United Nations system towards a more coherent, joined-up approach. The following proposals are aimed at building on these improvements to strengthen the division of labour across the United Nations system, supported by more rigorous strategic oversight, to deliver even greater impact in the years to come:

- (a) Strengthen internal strategic oversight of the United Nations system division of labour at all levels to ensure effective, efficient programmatic and operational support. This builds on the 2018 reform commitments and efforts to strengthen resident coordinator system leadership;
- (b) Ensure that United Nations entities review mandate citations in their programmes and budgets so that entities cite only those mandates for which they have demonstrable comparative advantages;
- (c) Make better use of system-wide coordination platforms (e.g. Inter-Agency Standing Committee, United Nations Sustainable Development Group and United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination) to avoid duplication and ensure the strategic use of resources across the United Nations system.

Misaligned funding modalities: entrenching fragmentation

45. Funding is an essential precondition for mandate delivery. The overwhelming majority of United Nations system funds come from voluntary contributions – about 80 per cent in 2023. For the Secretariat, that figure is about 40 per cent. Most country-

⁸ The functions in question are set out in General Assembly resolution [71/243](#).

⁹ See https://www.un.org/system-wide-evaluation-office/sites/default/files/2025-07/SWEO_2025_001%20Evaluation%20Report_0.pdf.

level delivery is funded from these voluntary contributions and is particularly vulnerable in the current environment of funding cuts. With regard to assessed contributions, Member States have an obligation under the Charter to pay in full and on time. Assessed funding should be predictable, but it is also extremely specific.

46. Therefore, Member States' practices in allocating funds have far-reaching consequences. These practices, including earmarking and small grant sizes, often hinder maximum impact and can exacerbate programme fragmentation.

Funds heavily earmarked and spread too thin

47. Despite commitments in the funding compact, which was adopted in 2019 and most recently revised in 2024, earmarking remains a widespread and growing challenge. In 2023, over 85 per cent of voluntary funding for the United Nations system was earmarked, and nearly 40 per cent of Member States reported earmarking as their preferred approach in the 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review survey. This impedes United Nations entities' agility in directing resources to maximize impact.

48. In addition to earmarking, donors tend to allocate relatively small amounts in each grant, essentially spreading funds thinner across many activities. In 2023, more than 60 per cent of grant transactions with government contributors were below \$1 million. As a result, about 75 per cent of grant transactions covered just 16 per cent of total voluntary funds that year. Smaller, more numerous grants push overhead and transaction costs upward, requiring United Nations entities to spend more time on process at the expense of impact.

Declining support for pooled funds

49. In 2023, less than 10 per cent of voluntary funding was channelled through pooled funds – far below the 30 per cent target established in the funding compact. Pooled funds provide a mechanism for overcoming challenges that arise from earmarking and smaller grant sizes, but donor support for them is declining. The share of humanitarian funding channelled through pooled funds has been decreasing over the longer term and now represents about 7 per cent of all funds. After an earlier rise, contributions to pooled funds with a development focus have also recently fallen again, dropping by more than 30 per cent since 2021.

Entrenching programme fragmentation

50. Member States' highly specific funding modalities can interact with existing fragmentation of programmes in the United Nations system, to the detriment of mandate impact. This fragmentation can be seen in delivery across key themes, such as the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2023, an average of four United Nations entities accounted for more than 80 per cent of expenditure on each Goal. The remaining 20 per cent of funding was scattered across up to 20 other entities, raising questions as to whether these entities are leveraging comparative advantages or spreading themselves too thin.

51. Fragmentation is also clearly visible in the Secretariat, which receives only about 20 per cent of United Nations system resources yet houses about 80 per cent of United Nations system entities led at the Assistant Secretary-General level or above. It is especially apparent in the United Nations regular budget, which represents only 5 per cent of total United Nations system resources but is divided into hundreds of programmes and subprogrammes, some covering activities with as few as three staff.

52. In the current environment of declining total funds, fragmentation is likely to intensify and competition for resources to grow, incentivizing more opportunistic and

less strategic approaches by individual entities. Practical options to address these challenges are being developed through the workstream examining structural changes and programme realignment.

Proposed solutions to improve funding modalities

53. Several actions are proposed to adapt funding modalities for impact:

- (a) Fully apply all commitments by Member States and the United Nations system through the funding compact and strengthen dialogue to this end;
- (b) Allow United Nations system entities greater flexibility to redeploy resources quickly with reasonable justification, including to protect essential country-level delivery from funding cuts;
- (c) Consider implementing relevant forthcoming recommendations from the UN80 Initiative workstream on structural changes and programme realignment.

IV. Mandate review

54. Regular reviews of mandates are essential to assess their impact and ensure that they remain relevant, actionable and aligned with priorities. Such reviews serve to clarify where the United Nations system adds the greatest value and where resources can be most productive. In the present section, two principal challenges facing mandate reviews are identified: (a) limited review mechanisms; and (b) gaps in United Nations system-wide accountability for impact. Each of these issues is examined, and solutions to strengthen mandate review processes are proposed.

Limited review mechanisms

55. Many mandates continue for extended periods and are discussed repeatedly with varying degrees of frequency. This is not in itself necessarily problematic, given the enduring nature of many of the challenges involved and the essential role of interactions among Member States to address them. However, the high rate of recurring business over the decades, combined with a frequent lack of formal provisions for review, suggests room to strengthen mandate review mechanisms.

Frequently recurring business with limited changes to mandates

56. There is a tendency to repeat discussions on mandates over long periods of time. More than 30 per cent of General Assembly resolution subjects in 1990, for example, were still the subject of resolutions in 2024. The agenda of the Assembly for the seventy-eighth session included 371 items and sub-items that are regularly discussed, including 215 that are discussed every year. Discussions of these items do not always lead to concrete, intergovernmentally agreed outcomes: about one in five annually recurring agenda items or sub-items did not result in the adoption of any resolution or decision in 2024. When resolutions on recurring business are adopted, the texts often remain similar to previous versions. Since 2010, more than half of Assembly resolutions adopted on recurring subjects were either extremely or very textually similar to previous versions.

57. This does not mean that all repetition is negative or superfluous. Repeated discussions are often productive even without resolutions, as they may provide needed focus on important issues, contribute to establishing norms for the international system or help to build consensus for future action. Small textual revisions may also lead to significant practical changes for implementation. However, in general the high rate of recurring business – including the absence of major textual

changes to previous discussions – merits consideration of how to ensure that time and resources are used as effectively as possible.¹⁰

Lack of review instructions or standard review processes

58. The high share of recurring business coincides with a frequent lack of clarity on precisely when or how to review mandates, including consideration of when to retire them altogether or stop certain activities. Some mandates, such as for peacekeeping missions, do have clear review procedures, but most do not: more than 85 per cent of active mandates lack instructions on review or termination. In addition, the Secretary-General has not frequently used the existing authority to propose to the General Assembly a list of deliverables for termination. Even when review instructions are clear, there may also be a certain degree of mandate “inertia” – a tendency to renew mandates as the default.

59. Member States may wish to review all mandates regularly, either at the individual level or as part of a collective assessment of multiple mandates addressing the same issue. Collective reviews are more likely to promote wider coherence across the mandate landscape and the United Nations system, identifying activities to expand, reduce or terminate. Although collective mandate reviews do occur – such as for the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly – they remain relatively rare. Member States have also put in place other review processes that, even if not explicitly linked to mandates, could provide inspiration for collective mandate reviews. The quadrennial comprehensive policy review process, to provide guidance on policy across the entire United Nations development system every four years, is one example.

Proposed solutions to strengthen review mechanisms

60. Mandate review mechanisms remain the prerogative of Member States, which have already taken important steps to strengthen them. These steps include ongoing efforts in the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council to streamline work, adjust the frequency of recurring business and review outputs. Member States have also recognized that more should be done in this regard. The following proposals are aimed at supporting and complementing ongoing efforts, with a view to effective, system-wide mandate reviews for maximum impact. Member States may wish to consider the following proposals:

- (a) Systematize and reinforce efforts under way to strengthen mandate review mechanisms and ensure that these efforts are in place across mandating bodies;
- (b) Include expiry clauses in new resolutions (as recommended in General Assembly resolution [77/335](#));
- (c) Introduce processes to facilitate more collective reviews of mandates that address specific issues, learning from existing practices (e.g. General Assembly revitalization) and similar processes (e.g. the quadrennial comprehensive policy review);
- (d) Increase the use of existing mechanisms to identify opportunities to consolidate and streamline work, including recommendations by the Secretary-General to terminate specific outputs (in accordance with staff rule 105.6 of [ST/SGB/2018/3](#));
- (e) Streamline how mandates are discussed, including by revising intergovernmental bodies’ programmes of work, consolidating agenda items of

¹⁰ The Secretariat already takes a number of measures to promote efficiency when it comes to recurring business, including adjustments to ensure that translators spend less time translating resolutions containing reprise text than new resolutions, without sacrificing accuracy.

individual bodies and aligning work across the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council.

Gaps in United Nations system-wide impact accountability

61. The present report maintains a consistent focus on impact. For mandate reviews to obtain a clear picture of impact, it is important for United Nations system entities to be able to link their activities, resources and results. Results-based management provides a way to do so. Despite improvements, considerable differences persist in how United Nations entities manage for results. This may affect the ability of individual entities and the system as a whole to demonstrate collective achievements, which, in turn, may adversely affect the ability to mobilize and direct resources to maximum effect.

Incomplete results chains

62. The overarching accountability¹¹ objective is clear: to align United Nations system resources around measurable outcomes and offer a view of collective impact that demonstrates value to Member States and informs any necessary adjustments. This requires effective, consistent results chains at two levels: at the level of individual entities and system-wide.

63. Recent reforms have led to significant improvements in how individual United Nations system entities manage for results. About 40 per cent of these entities now have strategic plans in place to organize resources around outcomes, and about 30 per cent already possess integrated results and resource frameworks to support their strategic plans. However, there remains significant scope for more entities to introduce these results chains.

64. At the system level, the considerable variation in how individual United Nations system entities manage for results makes it more difficult to assess the system's aggregate impact. This is both because about 60 per cent of individual United Nations entities lack key elements of the results chain and because the tools to support results chains, such as strategic plans or results frameworks, differ across the entities that use them. Harmonizing these tools to the greatest extent possible would create robust, system-wide results chains that can provide clear, compelling evidence of the United Nations system's collective impact.

Gaps in communicating results

65. Demonstrating United Nations system impact clearly and with evidence, both at the entity level and system-wide, is essential for accountability and for successful resource mobilization. It is also central to making mandate reviews effective. United Nations system entities invest heavily in communicating their achievements and have recently achieved significant improvements: for example, all United Nations country teams now produce collective results reports, compared with 64 per cent before the 2018 reforms.

66. However, gaps in results chains across the United Nations system may undermine the effectiveness of these communications. Lack of resources to support such efforts is also an issue: in 2024, only 62 per cent of United Nations country teams had dedicated joint communications budgets. These factors, in addition to fragmentation in funding that leads to multiple reporting requirements, may partially

¹¹ The General Assembly defines "accountability" in its resolution [64/259](#), in part, as follows: "Accountability includes achieving objectives and high-quality results in a timely and cost-effective manner, in fully implementing and delivering on all mandates to the Secretariat approved by the United Nations intergovernmental bodies and other subsidiary organs...".

explain why concerns about reporting persist among some donors. For example, in the 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review survey, about one in three donor countries rated their satisfaction with the United Nations development system's results reporting as "fair" or "poor".

Potential solutions to strengthen impact accountability

67. Mandate reviews strengthen the United Nations system's accountability for impact and should pay close attention to how mandates are translated across the system's results chains. Recent progress, including in managing for results, is encouraging and should be built upon. The following recommendation builds on this improvement: strengthen and harmonize mechanisms to manage for results across the United Nations system, including how results are measured and communicated.

V. Way forward

68. The present report provides data, analysis and proposals across the mandate life cycle, with a view to supporting the creation, delivery and review of mandates for maximum impact. Proposals are made in full recognition that Member States own the mandates given to the United Nations system and will decide the next steps.

69. The hope is that the present report and the proposals therein will prove useful as Member States consider options for the way forward. Proposals are divided into actions that the Secretary-General intends to take under his own authority mainly to strengthen support for Member States throughout the mandate life cycle, followed by additional proposals for Member States' consideration. All these proposals are part of the broader UN80 Initiative, under which we are working to create a more coherent, efficient, effective and results-oriented United Nations system – fit for the present and future challenges.

Summary of proposals

70. Specific proposals for each phase of the mandate life cycle are summarized below. Actions by the Secretary-General to support these proposals, within his existing authority, appear in section VI, followed by possible steps for Member States' consideration in section VII.

- **Support mandate creation.** Provide full visibility of the overall mandate landscape; and support Member States in creating mandates that maximize relevance and impact
- **Improve mandate delivery.** Establish optimal arrangements for meetings and reports; strengthen delivery management mechanisms; and enhance effective use of resources
- **Strengthen mandate review.** Reinforce mandate review mechanisms; and strengthen the United Nations system's accountability for impact

Path forward

71. In its resolution [79/318](#), the General Assembly called upon the entities and specialized agencies of the United Nations system to align their reform efforts with the approach set out therein, as appropriate. Although the present report is focused principally on mandates issued by the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary organs, the proposals are relevant for the entire United Nations system and could be considered for wider application through the appropriate mechanisms.

72. UN80 Initiative workstreams complementary to the present report also continue. The Secretary-General will broaden the analysis of mandate delivery across the United Nations system, with a particular view to identifying potential needs for structural changes and programmatic realignments, as well as proposing measures to strengthen internal efficiency and effectiveness. These efforts will feed into, benefit from and support the work of the seven thematic clusters established under the Initiative. Upon completion of this further analysis, the Secretary-General will submit relevant proposals.

73. The United Nations system stands ready to continue engaging with Member States and to provide technical support and analytical insights, as requested. In his letter of 11 March 2025 launching the UN80 Initiative, the Secretary-General underlined that achieving a stronger, more effective United Nations would depend on assuming shared and complementary responsibilities. This, in turn, requires vision, leadership and resolve to carry forward a bold transformation in how mandates are conceived, delivered and reviewed. Ultimately, these efforts will build a more agile, coherent and impactful United Nations.

VI. Actions by the Secretary-General

74. Based on the findings in the present report and under his existing authority, the Secretary-General will act in the following areas to improve support for Member States throughout the mandate life cycle:

Enhance mandate visibility and design

- (a) Accelerate the creation of comprehensive registries of existing mandate texts issued by all mandating bodies;
- (b) Improve Secretariat support for Member States during mandate creation, based on priorities established by Member States;
- (c) Strengthen support by United Nations entities to coordinate and promote greater visibility across the work of mandating bodies;
- (d) Develop tools using artificial intelligence to assist with mandate drafting, including by producing summarized information to enable Member States' decision-making, flagging potential complementarities or duplications in draft texts or meeting agendas across mandating bodies;
- (e) For new mandates, complement estimates of regular budget expenditures prepared by the Secretary-General (in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly) with additional information on related programmatic activities across the United Nations system and across all sources of funding;

Improve reporting

- (f) Provide shorter reports and reduce maximum word counts;
- (g) Combine reports covering similar issues and contexts wherever feasible;
- (h) Introduce different report formats based on needs and content type; first reports could be longer, followed by shorter updates, visual dashboards, in-person briefings or other formats;
- (i) Publish download statistics for all reports to inform further discussions on reporting practices;

Improve mandate delivery management

- (j) Strengthen internal strategic oversight of the United Nations system division of labour at all levels to ensure effective, efficient programmatic and operational support. This builds on the 2018 reform commitments and efforts to strengthen resident coordinator system leadership;
- (k) Ensure that United Nations entities review mandate citations in their programmes and budgets so that entities cite only those mandates for which they have demonstrable comparative advantages;
- (l) Make better use of system-wide coordination platforms (e.g. Inter-Agency Standing Committee, United Nations Sustainable Development Group and United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination) to avoid duplication and ensure the strategic use of resources across the United Nations system;
- (m) Fully apply all commitments by the United Nations system through the funding compact and strengthen dialogue to this end;

Establish effective review mechanisms

- (n) Increase the use of existing mechanisms to identify opportunities to consolidate and streamline work, including recommendations by the Secretary-General to terminate specific outputs (in accordance with staff rule 105.6 of [ST/SGB/2018/3](#));
- (o) Strengthen and harmonize management for results mechanisms across the United Nations system, including how results are measured and communicated.

VII. Proposals for consideration by Member States

75. The present report contains a number of proposals for the consideration of Member States. They are offered with full respect for Member States' sole authority at every stage of the mandate life cycle and recognition that decisions on the next steps lie entirely with them. The report also contains information and insights that may support Member States in their stewardship of mandates, should they wish to draw on them.

76. Progress in the objectives and proposed actions set out in the present report could be made through a dedicated UN80-related intergovernmental process, the modalities of which would be determined by the President of the General Assembly. Should Member States decide that they wish to launch such a process, the United Nations stands ready to assist and provide support as requested.

Effective mandate design

77. Member States may wish to consider the following proposals to enhance mandate design:

- (a) Reduce the length of mandate texts wherever possible in order to ensure that mandates are implemented effectively and with greater impact (in line with the recommendations in paragraph 45 of General Assembly resolution [77/335](#));
- (b) Frame mandates that allow the Secretary-General appropriate flexibility to assign tasks based on comparative advantages and resources across the United Nations system;
- (c) Refrain from mandating new tasks that are not backed by corresponding resources or an explicit reduction in other mandated tasks.

Improve mandate delivery

78. Member States may wish to consider the following proposals to strengthen mandate delivery:

- (a) Prioritize and streamline requests in mandates for reports or meetings;
- (b) Fully apply all commitments by Member States through the funding compact and strengthen dialogue to this end;
- (c) Allow United Nations system entities greater flexibility to redeploy resources quickly with reasonable justification, including to protect essential country-level delivery from funding cuts;
- (d) Consider implementing relevant forthcoming recommendations from the UN80 Initiative workstream on structural changes and programme realignment.

Support mandate review

79. Member States may wish to consider the following proposals to support mandate review:

- (a) Systematize and reinforce efforts under way to strengthen mandate review mechanisms and ensure that these efforts are in place across mandating bodies;
- (b) Include expiry clauses in new resolutions (as recommended in General Assembly resolution [77/335](#));
- (c) Introduce processes to facilitate more collective reviews of mandates that address specific issues, learning from existing practices (e.g. General Assembly revitalization) and similar processes (e.g. the quadrennial comprehensive policy review);
- (d) Streamline how mandates are discussed, including by revising intergovernmental bodies' programmes of work, consolidating agenda items of individual bodies and aligning work across the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council.
