UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

CEB

Chief Executives Board
for Coordination

CEB/2016/HLCM/HR/19
15 December 2016

Summary of Conclusions of
the 33rd Session of the
Human Resources Network

28 June – 1 July 2016
UNDP/UNFPA Regional Office, Istanbul

Adoption of the Agenda

i.   Opening of the Session and Adoption of the Agenda

1. The Human Resources Network held its 33rd Session from 28 June – 1 July 2016 in Istanbul, Turkey. The Session was kindly hosted by UNDP and UNFPA and co-chaired by Ms. Carole Wamuyu Wainaina, ASG for Human Resources Management, United Nations, Ms. Karen Farkas, Director, Division of HR Management, UNHCR, Mr. Mark Levin, Director, HR Development Department, ILO.

2. The agenda was adopted as reflected in the table of content

3. The list of participating organizations and their representatives at the meeting is provided in Annex 1. All session documents are available on the HR Network website.

4. The HR Network Session was opened with a welcome from Ian McFarlane, Deputy Regional Director, UNFPA Eastern Europe and Central Asia and Rastislav Vrbensky, Manager of the UNDP Regional Hub for Europe and the CIS. This was followed by a presentation of the activities and challenges in both Regional Offices from a programmatic and HR-related perspective. The Network thanks both representatives for their insightful overviews.

Open Session

ii.   Updates from CEB and its Committees and Networks

a. Update from last CEB and HLCM Sessions

5. The CEB convened for its First Regular Session in April 2016 in Vienna. The main topic of the session was the impact of the refugee and migration crisis and the role of the UN System in these crises.

6. In March 2016 HLCM met for its 81st Session in Vienna. The SDG agenda as well as 'the workforce of the future' were two of the main issues that were discussed during the session. At the session HLCM agreed on establishing a working group which will be tasked to develop a new UN Leadership Model. The working group will be facilitated by UNSSC and a call for nominations of participants for the group has been distributed. HLCM expects an update of the progress of the working group at its 82nd session in October, based on which further guidance will be provided by HLCM.

7. At the Session an HR Network paper on the 'Workforce of the Future' was discussed and endorsed. HLCM requested the HR Network to present a more detailed proposal, which should include an implementation plan, at the 82nd HLCM Session. HLCM emphasized the importance of the work of the working group on Duty of Care and requested a renewed group to pursue and take forward the recommendations presented in the report.

b. Update from last FB Network meeting

8. The last Finance and Budget Network meeting took place in June 2016 in Geneva. One of the issues discussed at the Session was the cost of oversight in the UN System. According to collected figures 10-15% of the program budget in the UN is being spent on oversight and some smaller agencies spending as much as 20% of total costs. The next step for the FB Network is to validate and further clarify these collected figures prior to publishing and communicating them. This process will start in July 2016 and engagement of the HR Network could be advantageous.

9. The Working Group on ASHI provided the HR Network with an update on its work. The Group informed the Network that based on what has been observed and the information that has been gathered, there is no imminent risk of dilution of the entitlements received by retirees at the moment. Member states have so far rejected any liability for funding of the ASHI liability. With the purpose of reducing AHSI liabilities, member states have requested UN Secretariat to do a wide outreach amongst all the member states in order to understand if the nationals or residents of these member states can be accommodated in the national schemes.

c. Update from last IASMN

10. The last Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN) meeting was held in Montreux in June 2016. Topics of discussion at the session included budgetary and cost-sharing issues, as well as approaches for security management and crisis management in the field. A procedural update from the Working Group on Duty of Care was presented and followed by a discussion on how to take the work forward. The UN Cares PEP kit framework has been endorsed by the Security Management Network.

iii.   Updates from HR Network activities and other relevant bodies

a. Update from the Staff Counselors Working Group

11. The UNSSCG briefed the HR Network on its key initiatives for 2016-2017 for endorsement, adoption or discussion by the Network (CEB/2016/HLCM/HR/18). The Chair of the UNSSCG, Ms. Dubravka Suzic, presented each of the relevant topics to the organizations.

12. The UNSSCG has designated a working group to explore, through literature research and the analysis of existing best practices, the possibilities for introducing psychological screening in the workplace. This working group will present a position paper on its findings in fall 2016.

13. On the issue of domestic violence, the UNSSCG established a working group to develop internal guidelines for UN organizations. The final proposal will be presented to the HR Network for its endorsement and adoption.

14. The UNSSCG expressed interest in having a formal engagement of a UNSSCG representative in the work on Duty of Care.

15. Decisions: The HR Network thanked the UNSSCG for the proposals and updates presented. The Network requested the Group to present at the 34th HR Network meeting a position paper for the use of psychological screening in the workplace for endorsement. On the topic of domestic violence, the HR Network recognized the need for a framework of policies and guidelines for counselors handling cases of domestic violence. The Network is looking forward to receiving concrete proposals on the matter to be discussed at the 34th HR Network for endorsement and adoption.

The Network welcomed the proposal for a UNSSCG representative to have a formal presence in the further work on Duty of Care. The issue will also be raised at the HLCM at its next session in October 2016.

b.   Update from Medical Directors Working Group

16. The Chair of the Medical Directors Working Group, Ms. Jillann Farmer, briefed the members of the HR Network on the discussions and developments around the work of the Working Group. A separate working group for the development of the Mental Health Strategy has been established. A first meeting of the group will take place in late July 2016 and participation by one or more representatives from the HR Network was requested.

The PEP/HIV Working Group requested the endorsement of PEP Kit Management Framework at the IASMN in June 2016 and has the procurement planned for late June 2016.

The MDWG emphasized the need to address the growing health risk of air pollution for UN Staff. A working group has been established in March 2016 to develop guidelines on mitigation measures and the HR Network will receive regular progress updates.

17. ***Decision: The HR Network took note of the briefing provided by the Medical Directors Working Group and expressed appreciation for the work done on the Mental Health Strategy.***

The Network also took note of the progress made by the PEP/HIV Working Group, as well as the endorsement of the PEP Kit Management Framework which was endorsed at the IASMN in June 2016. On the topic of air pollution, the Network will welcome a proposal from the Working Group to provide further guidance.

The members of the HR Network took note of the IASMN, First Responder ETB and the IASMN, Road Safety Strategy Working Group. The Network also took note of the update from the Working Group on Learning Disabilities and will welcome a proposal for endorsement by the HR Network for a recommended approach to take the work further.

18. ***Decision: The HR Network agreed that a regular activity reporting and discussion of the work of both the UNSSCG and the MDWG should become a routine part of each HR Network meeting, in order to enhance coordination and prioritization of health- and wellbeing-related subjects.***

c.   Update from the Field Group

19. The Chair of the Field Group reported on the latest development of its activities and briefed the HR Network on the last meeting of the Group in June 2016. WHO, UNDP, UNICEF, UN, UNFPA, UNRWA, UN WOMEN, FAO and WFP are represented in the Field Group and participated in the latest meeting. 625 Duty stations have been reviewed during the last meeting and special attention was given to duty stations in extreme security situation.

The Field Group requested the Network for guidance concerning the ad-hoc measures in support of education grant in high-cost locations. Staff associations expressed concerns regarding inflation of hardship classifications, in particular "A" designations. Organizations were of the view that an evaluation of the ICSC classification methodology would be appropriate, especially for "H" and "A" duty stations.

The Network proposed that the Field Group will meet with both the MDWG and the ICSC to discuss potential health risks in specific duty stations and the possible revision of the hardship classification for those duty stations. This should include a briefing of the MDWG on the Country Health Risk Assessments currently foreseen for piloting in 2017.

20. ***Decision: The HR Network thanked the Field Group for its work and for the update provided. The Network encouraged closer cooperation between the Field Group, the MDWG and the ICSC to ensure that an objective assessment of country-specific health risks serves as an underpinning for future discussions on hardship classification for field duty stations.***

d. Update on activities in support of geographic mobility of staff

21. At the 32nd HR Network Session in Paris in February 2016 the Network discussed a proposal for improving support of geographic mobility of staff. To take this initiative forward, a workshop was organized in June 2016 in Geneva and kindly hosted by WIPO with representatives from UNHCR, UNDP, UNFPA, FAO, UNICEF, WFP, UNESCO, UN Secretariat, WIPO, WHO and the World Bank. Based on the comments and guidance from the HR Network, three main topics were discussed at the workshop: Provision of better communications and information to staff, consideration of spousal and family support and enhancement of in-country on boarding and induction support.

22. To provide geographically mobile staff with practical duty station specific information UNHCR has developed a set of 65 country guides which it is willing to share with other UN organizations. The UN Secretariat in 2015 introduced its Staff Induction Portal, which provides staff with a customized induction plan tailored to the needs of the specific situation.

23. Concerning spousal and family support, the participants exchanged several good practices and challenges. The UN Secretariat offered to share its Spouse Employment Guide which contains information for UN spouses on how to find employment opportunities.

24. On the topic of in-country support, it was suggested during the workshop to start a pilot for local mobility support for an initial period of two years. The pilot would focus on providing assistance to newly arriving staff in three duty stations; Bangkok, Nairobi and Istanbul or Amman.

25. To discuss and agree on the way forward for the discussed initiatives, a post-workshop conference call will be scheduled in July 2016. And the CEB Secretariat will set up an online documents repository where organizations will be able to exchange guides, policies and other documents related to supporting geographic mobility of staff.

26. ***Decision: The HR Network took note of the progress made by the Working Group and encourages the Group to continue its work.***

e. Update on revisions of HR statistics

27. Due to an increased need for data and evidence based decision making the CEB Secretariat presented to the HR Network a proposal for the revision of the annual HR Statistics (CEB/2016/HLCM/HR/13). The proposal put forward proposes a change of the specifications of the data to be collected in two separate phases. The first phase will bring changes to the specifications of the data for current year and include an expansion of the scope of the records that are collected, the modification of three previously existing data fields, and the request of eleven new data fields. The second phase of changes for the Personnel Statistics records will be performed as a comprehensive review of the data that is collected and the purposes for which it is, and can be, utilized.

28. The revised specifications resulting from phase one and two will be implemented in a newly created data collection tool between November 2016 and January 2017, in time for the collection of the 2016 Personnel Statistics.

29. ***Decision: The HR Network took note of and endorsed the proposed enhancements of the Personnel Statistics.***

f. HRN Working Group on Performance Management

30. At the 29th HR Network Session in July 2014 the Network decided on the establishment of the Working Group on Performance Management. The objective of the Working Group was to develop tools and resources that can be applied and utilized by both performance management practitioners and HR senior managers. An additional objective of the Working Group was to create a platform for more effective exchange of information within the wider UN performance management community.

31. At the current HR Network Session the Working Group reported on the results achieved and encouraged all UN organizations to utilize the presented Performance Management Framework. Additionally, the group highlighted the Performance Management Online Documents Repository, a tool through which the UN performance management community can find and share policy documents, frameworks and other PM in files. As a next step the Working Group proposed to make the PM maturity framework available to the broader PM community and to continue engagement by transforming the Working Group into a community of practice.

32. The HR Network expressed appreciation and thanked the Group for its work. In the discussion following the presentation it was highlighted that the issue of succession planning should be included when taking the work of Group forward. During the discussions it was also suggested to transform the Working Group into an internal consulting group, to make the expertise in the area of performance management available to all UN System organizations. A number of organizations asked for clarification on whether the Group has included performance management practices for (senior) management in their analysis. Also, since many organizations are struggling with the issue of underperformance, a need for increased attention for this topic was highlighted.

33. ***Decision: The Network expressed appreciation for the work of the Working Group and requested the group to continue its work, including enlarging its focus to broader talent management and engagement topics.***

g. HRN Working Group on Language Testing

34. The HR Network was presented an update from the Working Group on the subject, co-led by the UN Secretariat and UNHCR. The purpose of the presentation was to seek endorsement of the updated list of external text providers that were seen as technically suitable to verify Language Proficiency at a CEFR C1 level in the four languages (English, French, Spanish and Chinese) for which a discontinuation of the use of the present UN LPE had been decided by the HR Network at its 31st session in July 2015. In addition, very positive feedback from the current pilot if moving to external test providers with the exam in UNHCR was shared.

35. In the subsequent discussion, the UN Secretariat informed the HR Network that they see challenges in a discontinuation of the LPE exam in 2017, and would therefore prepare for a longer period of phase out with concurrent recognition of external exams and the in-house LPE. Staff Federations pointed out the need to communicate that the decisions taken will support the enhancement of multilingualism as desired by Member States.

36. In response to these comments, it was clarified that the recent decisions by the HR Network were geared towards enhancing multilingualism in several ways: (1) One of the key rationales for replacing the current LPE was its inconsistency in proficiency levels and the fact that the LPE cannot meet internationally recognized standards for quality language testing that ensure reliable and valid results, and the move to external test providers was seen to bring clear and transparent test criteria. (2) This move will also ensure comparability of the levels of language proficiency of UN staff with people external to the UN system, such as partners, applicants and others. It will therefore facilitate aspects of multilingualism when implementing new partnerships, a focus on such partnerships being a focus of the

new SDG agenda. It can also lay the methodological foundation for a more systematic consideration of multilingualism in recruitment and selection approaches. (3) Fully implemented, it will be more cost effective than the present system.

37. The Network noted the intention of the UN Secretariat to phase out the UN LPE over a longer period of time and of FAO to continue serving as a language examination centre for the time being and until 2018 pending the further review of cost-benefit and service quality. In the meantime, FAO will align the proficiency level of its examination to the C1 level of the CEFR as requested by the HR Network. It was also mentioned that, through the CEB Secretariat, support was sought from the HLCM Procurement Network to discuss possibilities for concluding framework agreements with relevant approved external test providers.

38. ***Decision: The HR Network thanked the Working Group for its work and endorsed the updated list of external test providers. The HR Network confirmed its earlier decisions on the matter, in particular:***
    a. ***The decision to discontinue the use and recognition of the current UN LPE by the end of 2016 on a system-wide level as recognition for language proficiency for four of the six UN languages (English, French, Spanish and Chinese), with the continued commitment to explore the feasibility of applying this approach to the other two official languages.***
    b. ***The confirmation that, as of 1 January 2016, language proficiency certificates issued by approved external providers at a C1 level are considered valid as proof of language proficiency on a system-wide level in those languages in all organizations***
    c. ***In case an organization wishes to continue with internal language certification for its own internal purposes, it would need to demonstrate in an objective and transparent manner that these examinations fully meet the CEFR C1 level, in order for any examination result to be recognized by UN System organizations as valid proof of language proficiency.***

39. As a consequence of these confirmed decisions of the HR Network, staff members of organizations not currently conducting internal language exams would be requested to use one of the approved external test providers as of 2017 for the four agreed languages. For staff members taking an internal language exam in these languages, language proficiency would only be recognized by other organizations (e.g. in case of transfer or secondment) if the requirements listed under (3) are met and such demonstration is endorsed by the HR Network. UNDP, who is currently providing on-site support in some field locations to the UN Secretariat for the administration of the UN LPE, highlighted the continued need to fully recover from the UN Secretariat all cost associated with a slower phase out of the UNLPE by the UN Secretariat.

h. Discussion of pension-related issues

40. The representatives of the Pension Fund gave an overview of the present efforts to resolve the backlog and stabilize the operation at a higher average operational number. They highlighted that, with the help of a special task force (comprised of 12 staff) assigned on the subject, all but 95 backlog cases (cases for which documentation was submitted complete to the Pension Fund by 1 March 2016). Also, a special Task Force for the Geneva operation was put in place.

41. They highlighted that they consider the backlog issue resolved, however they are faced with unexpected high numbers of new separation / retirement cases, in particular with reference to downsizing and closure of missions in Peacekeeping. The Fund was currently recruiting additional temporary support for benefits processing, calculation and auditing.

42. They highlighted efforts to look into internal processes with the help of an external consultant, the current OIOS review of the backlog and an Evaluation initiative at the UN Secretariat that will look into the separation and clearance procedures. These were seen as elements for an end-to-end process review, which the Fund is willing to engage in with organizations, and proposed the CEB HR Network to play a coordinating role.

43. The Fund representatives mentioned that additional resources had been put into communication, however the high volume (reference was made to about 20000 calls per month and about 100000 emails per month) of communication exceeded the possibilities even of the enlarged communication team. The Fund was also seeking support from the organizations in their request for additional resources for client services and a high case load in the upcoming Pension Board.

44. Network members recognized the hard work and noted that significant progress was made in addressing the backlog. There were however questions about how "backlog" in the Funds' presentation was defined, since there was evidence from several organizations that the number of uncompleted cases was in fact higher that presented by the Fund (e.g. UN/ DFS reported about 400 unfinished cases from March, UNHCR reported 169 unfinished cases from March).

45. HRN members noted that, according to the Fund, the current processing time (after submission of complete documentation) is at 6-8 weeks. This was seen as still too long as amid-term objective, noting that staff communication by organizations (as endorsed by the Fund) referred to 4-6 weeks. Members highlighted that peaks in separation due to missions' closing or downsizing initiatives are part of the normal work and agile reality in UN organizations.

46. Network members stressed the need for a true end-to-end review that includes the touch points between organizations and the Fund, based on Terms of Reference jointly defined between participating organizations and the Fund for such exercise. Members enquired about the possibility of paying advances, the Fund noting that this topic would be discussed at the upcoming Board meeting.

47. Members also discussed the possibility of communicating apologies to retirees for the long delays, and to pay them interest for the long waiting period. The Fund pointed to art 44 of the Pension rules that would not allow such payments. Members nevertheless suggested looking further into the matter, noting that a number of cases were about to be filed by administrative and national tribunals, and paying interests may be a sensible way to bring down the number of such cases.

48. HRN members, in particular those from the UN Funds & Programmes, stressed the need for more transparency in the case processing status, through regular status updates and / or an organizational self-service facility. With regard to the presented overview statistics, it was highlighted that more granularity was needed, such as clear information on the distribution of processing time across the cases under processing.

49. Members also sought clarity in the way in which case processing is prioritized, since a simple prioritisation by retirement date may disadvantage systematically those organizations that submit the documentation in an expedited way. WHO presented the broad lines of their CRP for the Pension Board with proposals to amend art 24 on restoration.

50. ***Decision: The Network confirmed that the issue of timely pension payments is very important for all organizations, in particular with a view that many staff depart after long service with UN family. Many are local staff and many depend with their families and communities on Pension-related payments. The Network looks forward to new ways of collaboration with the Fund for process simplification, significantly increased transparency per claim, improved communication to organizations and***

individuals, improved / accelerated processing times, innovative and creative thinking on how we can do things differently (also good practices), and leverage technology . The Network invited organizations to share more comments and input and their status on outstanding backlog cases with the CEB Secretariat, and that HRN member attending the Pension Board meeting to convey the discussion and conclusion to the other Board members. It was also agreed that the HR Network summer sessions could be used as a platform to better prepare and align organizations' position in the Pension Board in the future.

i.   **Discussion of ICSC-related topics**

51. The representatives of the ICSC Secretariat introduced the upcoming topics for discussion at the next ICSC Session in July / August 2016 in Geneva. The respective conclusions of the discussions on individual subjects can be found in the statements of the HR Network at the ICSC summer session.

ANNEXE 1

List of participants

Name	Organization
Pierre Moreau-Péron	IFAD
Mark Levin	ILO
Thierry Bregliano	IMO
Alison Holmes	IOM
Greet De Leeuw	IOM
Eric Dalhen	ITU
Paul de la Croix-Vaubois	PAHO
Carole Wainaina	UN Secretariat
Chhaya Kapilashrami	UN Secretariat
Geraldine Gourves-Fromigue	UN Secretariat
Matthew Sanidas	UN Secretariat
Fiona Bourdin Farrell	UN Women
Prasun Chakraborty	UN Women
Krista McKee-Samson	UNAIDS
Henrietta De Beer	UNDP
Martha Helena Lopez Rodriguez	UNDP
Annick Grisar	UNESCO
Ruth de Miranda	UNESCO
Michael Emery	UNFPA
Sarah Rose	UNFPA
Arnab Roy	UNHCR
Karen Farkas	UNHCR
Eva Mennel	UNICEF
Stephan Grieb	UNICEF
Fatou Haidara	UNIDO
Okusitina Bulavakarua	UNIDO
Nasser Shammout	UNOPS
Sebastian Rottmair	UNOPS
Victoria Unnerup	UNOPS
Brian Joseph Gleeson	UNRWA
Nopper Jutta	UPU
Razafy Louise	UPU
Aitor Magunacelaya	WFP
Andrew Patterson	WFP
Françoise Nocquet	WHO
Cornelia Moussa	WIPO
Therese Dayer	WIPO
Michael Buch	WMO
Michael Rosetz	CEB

Michael Kevin Snyder	CEB
Pieter Kraakman	CEB
Yeshiareg Mekonnen	CTBTO
Gemma Vestal	FICSA
Ian Richards	CCISUA
Susanne Seegers	ICC
Marta S. Leichner-Boyce	ICSC
Regina Pawlik	ICSC
Yury Orlov	ICSC
Floris Kist	STL
Paul Dooley	UNJSPF (by VTC)
Carmen de los Rios	UNJSPF (by VTC)
Lee Woodyear	UNJSPF (by VTC)
Jillann Farmer	UNMDWG (by VTC)
Dubravka Suzic	UNSSCG (by VTC)