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Annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination for 2019

Summary

The present report provides an overview of inter-agency cooperation within the framework of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) in 2019. The report includes highlights of the key activities of CEB in fostering a coherent approach to policy, management and operational matters so as to enhance United Nations system-wide coordination in support of intergovernmental mandates.

In 2019, CEB and its subsidiary bodies focused their efforts on a wide range of programmatic and management issues in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and strengthened the collective capacities of the United Nations system through joint actions. Programmatic work included endorsing system-wide plans for capacity development in artificial intelligence, the future of work, the future of education and sustainable urban development; taking further steps towards scaling up innovation; and reflecting on the Board's role in catalysing efforts in the context of the decade of action to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals ahead of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. In the area of management coordination, the Board continued to foster the harmonization and the recognition of business practices; enhance disability inclusion across the system; promote greater collaboration on procurement; launch the development of a framework human resources strategy for the workforce of the United Nations system; and strengthen victim-centred prevention and response efforts to address sexual harassment, in particular with respect to system-wide investigative capacity and capability. The report also highlights coordination activities between CEB and other jointly financed bodies.

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I. Introduction

1.   Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2008 (LX), the present report provides an overview of the annual work of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). It is prepared in response to the request by the General Assembly, in paragraph 4 (b) of its resolution 64/289 on system-wide coherence, to include appropriate information on the work of the Board in its annual overview report to the Economic and Social Council, which is also considered by the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

2.   The General Assembly, in its resolution 70/1, emphasized the role of the United Nations system in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, which are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and noted the comparative advantage of an adequately resourced, relevant, coherent, efficient and effective system.

3.   The General Assembly, in its resolution 74/251, endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the annual overview report of CEB for 2018 (E/2019/10) and its support for the work of CEB, aimed at ensuring a coherent United Nations system-wide approach to supporting Member States in implementing the 2030 Agenda, as contained in the Committee's report on the work of its fifty-ninth session (see A/74/16, chap. III, sect. A).

4.   The present report includes highlights of the major activities carried out in 2019 under the auspices of CEB. As a coordinating body, CEB, as well as its subsidiary mechanisms, the High-level Committee on Programmes and the High-level Committee on Management, foster policy and management coherence to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of United Nations system activities. The Board's activities conform to intergovernmental mandates and support the priorities of Member States.

5.   The present report serves to illustrate how, throughout 2019, CEB and its subsidiary bodies focused their efforts on a wide range of programmatic and management issues in support of the global agenda through the strengthening of policy coherence and coordination, improving administrative and management functions, implementing International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), promoting transparency and accountability and coordinating with other jointly funded activities.

6.   Transparency and accountability remained key priorities for CEB. In 2019, the Board continued its practice of engaging actively in substantive exchanges with Member States through formal and informal dialogues and further enhancing the information provided on its website (www.unsceb.org). The Board also continued to coordinate with other jointly financed bodies, in particular the International Civil Service Commission and the Joint Inspection Unit, as well as the Board of Auditors, as needed.

II. Strengthening policy coherence and coordination in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

7.   In line with resolution 70/8, in which the General Assembly recognized the central role of CEB in ensuring coordinated United Nations system-wide support in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Board in 2019 focused much of its attention on strengthening system-wide policy and programmatic coordination and coherence in support of the Goals against the backdrop of rapid socioeconomic, environmental and technological change.

8.   Specifically, CEB spoke out strongly on climate change, as well as on system-wide plans for capacity development for artificial intelligence, the future of work, the future of education and sustainable urban development. Members took further steps towards scaling up innovation in their organizations, and, in that spirit, the High-level Committee on Programmes attempted to apply new tools and techniques to inform its policy coherence role. Before the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, and anticipating the need for the international community to accelerate efforts during the decade of action to meet the Goals by 2030, the Board also reflected on its role in catalysing action and strengthening ambition, as well as on the importance of a new strategic approach to communication.

A.   Climate action

9.   While carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere continued to break records in 2019, the United Nations system has been working to accelerate global, regional and local climate action, acknowledging the far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society that will be required to limit global warming.[1] Recognizing climate change as an existential global threat, the Secretary-General decided to convene a summit on climate action in New York on 23 September 2019, inviting world leaders to make a concerted effort to mobilize the international community to raise its ambition substantially and muster political will for transformative action to combat climate change. To leverage the collective capacities of the United Nations system in support of the vision of the Secretary-General of an action-oriented Summit, CEB, at its first regular session of 2019, held a dedicated discussion on climate change. In a system-wide input, the leaders of the United Nations system organizations issued a joint appeal to the summit, calling on Member States to step up ambition and take concrete action to limit global temperature increases to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, including committing to actions and targets in the areas of mitigation, adaptation, climate finance and innovation, as well as to raising the United Nations system's own ambition to combat climate change and integrate more systematically sustainable development considerations into its operations. The specific steps of a United Nations system-wide environmental and social sustainability strategy for the period 2020–2030 were outlined (CEB/2019/1). Phase I of the strategy was endorsed by the Board at its second regular session of 2019 (see para. 34 below).

B.   Implications of rapidly developing technologies

10.   In 2019, the Board and its high-level committees continued the work on the social, economic and environmental implications of rapidly developing technologies; their ability to contribute to accelerating achievement of the Goals; and the role of the United Nation system in supporting Member States, in particular the least developed, to harness the benefits of new technologies while addressing the risks and minimizing destabilizing effects (see E/2019/10, paras. 8–23). The effort is a response to paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 73/17 on the impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Goals and targets, in which the Secretary-General was invited to bring to the attention of CEB the importance for United Nations entities to take the issue into consideration.

11.   Following an inter-agency consultative process, the High-level Committee on Programmes approved, at its thirty-seventh session, in April 2019, and subsequently,

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[1] In the 2018 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, it was recognized that emissions of greenhouse gases must be reduced to net zero by the middle of the twenty-first century to have a reasonable chance of limiting global warming to 1.5°C.

CEB endorsed, at its first regular session of 2019, three interlinked products: (a) the United Nations system strategy on the future of work (see CEB/2019/1/Add.2), to enable the United Nations system to better support Member States in developing a shared policy framework for ensuring decent jobs for all in future societies; (b) the United Nations system-wide strategic approach and road map for supporting capacity development in artificial intelligence (see CEB/2019/1/Add.3), guiding United Nations entities in prioritizing their actions related to harnessing the benefits and mitigating the risks of artificial intelligence in the context of achieving the Goals and in support of Member States, in particular developing and least developed countries; and (c) the United Nations system-wide strategic approach for achieving inclusive, equitable and innovative education and learning for all (see CEB/2019/1/Add.4), to promote coordinated United Nations system support to Member States to enhance both access to and the quality of education and learning provision to better prepare for future social, economic, cultural and political changes in societies.

12.   In endorsing the three strategies, the Board stressed the importance of the United Nations system's role in assisting developing countries with priority-setting, policy development and capacity development. In addition, CEB observed the value of not only providing a platform for stakeholders but also taking an active role in shaping the discussion on norm- and standard-setting on the basis of the values of the United Nations. Linking this work by CEB and its high-level committees with other efforts, including those undertaken based on the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation, was also important.

C.   Sustainable urban development

13.   In the context of its discussion on new technologies and frontier issues, the High-level Committee on Programmes also revisited the topic of sustainable urbanization,[2] acknowledging the risks and opportunities for sustainable urban development associated with climate change and megatrends such as technological innovation. A consultative inter-agency process resulted in a United Nations system-wide strategy on sustainable urban development (see CEB/2019/1/Add.5), as called for in General Assembly resolution 72/226 on the implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conferences on Human Settlements and on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). In May 2019, CEB endorsed the strategy, which is aimed at enhancing coherence and coordination across the United Nations system in its efforts to help Member States to harness the transformative force of sustainable urban development to accelerate progress towards the attainment of the 2030 Agenda and the Goals and the fulfilment of the goals and targets of other agendas.

D.   Innovative approaches to supporting sustainable development

14.   In its deliberation on the implications of rapidly developing technologies, CEB had further recognized the imperative for the organizations of the United Nations system themselves to be more adept at understanding and utilizing new technologies. Members agreed it was important to mainstream the use of more innovative practices into their organizations' daily operations in order to be better equipped to deal with the challenges

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[2] At its thirty-first session, in March 2016, the High-level Committee on Programmes had approved, and CEB had subsequently endorsed, a paper on urbanization and sustainable development, developed under the leadership of UN-Habitat, as a system-wide input to and reaffirmation of the United Nations system's collective commitment to supporting the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), held in Quito in October 2016.

facing the world and to best support Member States in their pursuit of the Goals. The undertaking is aligned with the call for the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of CEB, and the executive heads of interested organizations to build on efforts to facilitate and stimulate innovation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, which is contained in resolution 73/254 towards global partnerships: a principle-based approach to enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners.

15.   As a contribution to realizing the goal, the Board had tasked the United Nations Innovation Network[3] in 2018 with leading a process to develop an innovation toolkit, which was to provide leading practices and guidance for United Nations system entities to help them to foster and scale innovation. At its first regular session of 2019, the Board previewed the online version of the toolkit, which included a diagnostic assessment and thematic modules on innovation strategy, partnerships, architecture, culture and evaluation. The toolkit content was informed by United Nations experiences and leading global practice on innovation, and it was tested and validated by practitioners from across the system to ensure that it met the needs of the United Nations. Recognizing the value of shared resources, the Board welcomed the United Nations innovation toolkit,[4] and members committed themselves to encouraging its use throughout the system as part of a broader effort to stimulate and promote a culture of innovation in United Nations system entities. The toolkit was formally launched on 21 November 2019 and will be hosted by the United Nations System Staff College, with the support of the United Nations Innovation Network.[5]

16.   In its own effort to apply innovative working methods with the aim of supporting the attainment of the 2030 Agenda and beyond, the High-level Committee on Programmes, at its thirty-sixth session, in October 2018, had engaged in an exploratory discussion on strategic foresight.[6] Recognizing the considerable benefit of anticipatory, adaptive and future-aware perspectives to enrich the Committee's work in addressing complex, interlinked, rapidly changing and unforeseen challenges that the world is facing, and taking into account existing foresight experiences and capacities within the United Nations system, the Committee, at its thirty-seventh session, in April 2019, agreed to pursue the creation of an informal network on foresight and conduct a pilot exercise thereon. In line with its role of promoting forward-looking, proactive, innovative and strategic thinking on current and emerging global challenges, the Committee decided to focus the pilot exercise on the specific theme of the future of work in sub-Saharan Africa while factoring in the impact of population movements, including owing to climate change. Building on recent work by CEB and the Committee on the theme, namely the United Nations system strategy on the future of work (see para. 11 above) and making use of other relevant analyses, insights and data available across the United Nations system, the Committee engaged in a one-day foresight exercise at its thirty-eighth session, in October 2019. It confirmed the practical relevance and applicability of strategic foresight to the Committee's system-wide analytical and policy coordination work

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[3] The United Nations Innovation Network is an informal, collaborative community of United Nations innovators interested in sharing their expertise and experience with others to promote and advance innovation within the United Nations system. The Network is open to innovators from all United Nations agencies, as well as external partners, and, to date, representatives from more than 65 entities in more than 100 countries have joined it. For more information, see www.uninnovation.network/.

[4] For more information, see https://un-innovation.tools/.

[5] For more information, see www.unssc.org/featured-themes/new-un-innovation-toolkit.

[6] Foresight is an organizational capacity that the United Nations system can use to gather and process information about the future operating environment, allowing for the creation of various scenarios of alternative futures and possibilities. While they do not predict the future, foresight tools, methodologies and design processes are able to mine the external political, economic, social, technological and legal environments for trends and developments and leverage those insights to envisage the emerging landscape related to the selected topic.

and provided concrete guidance in support of the implementation of the strategy of the United Nations system on the future of work.

E. Decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals

17.   Echoing Member States' determination to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to make the coming decade one of action and delivery in order to leave no one behind (see General Assembly resolution 74/4, annex), and in support of the global call of the Secretary-General for a decade of action to deliver the Goals by 2030, CEB, at its second regular session of 2019, engaged in an in-depth discussion on the steps necessary to achieve the paradigm shift at the core of the Goals over the course of the coming decade and the implications thereof for the United Nations system and its respective entities. Board members also explored how to maximize the potential of a decade of action and pledged their personal leadership and collective commitment to supporting it, once launched. In this context, CEB provided clear guidance on the elements and narrative for the strategy of the United Nations with regard to the decade of action, emphasizing the need to focus on the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development as a vital foundation for delivering the Goals.

18.   CEB members acknowledged that it would not be possible to deliver accelerated action to meet the Goals without the availability of high-quality, timely, disaggregated and open data and statistics, as well as the capacity to use them. In an effort to enable an effective decade of action and strengthen evidence-based support for sustainable development, the High-level Committee on Programmes returned to the topic of data and analytics at its October 2019 session. Recognizing the persistent and urgent need for improved data and statistics in support of the 2030 Agenda, the Committee requested that the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System prepare, in collaboration with interested members of the Committee, a draft road map for modernizing United Nations data and statistics, to be considered at its thirty-ninth session. With a view to advancing innovative approaches within the United Nations system and also in line with the innovation agenda of CEB, the Committee further supported the initiation of a pilot cross-pillar predictive analytics exercise focused on the interconnectedness of displacement, climate risks, food insecurity, increased violence and threats to livelihoods in the Sahel region, with the aim of delivering its findings in late 2020.

19.   Also essential to support the decade of action and accelerate progress on Sustainable Development Goal 10 is a cohesive and impactful contribution of the United Nations system to reducing inequalities. At its thirty-eighth session, the High-level Committee on Programmes took stock of progress in implementing the CEB-endorsed Shared United Nations System Framework for Action on Equality and Non-Discrimination,[7] which is aimed at guiding the system's collective efforts to realize the 2030 Agenda's central tenet of leaving no one behind. Against the background of broadly rising inequalities, the Committee's deliberations were informed by analysis of progress achieved in implementing the Shared Framework and gaps and systemic challenges to be overcome. The Committee supported the recommended actions to strengthen the impact of the United Nations system on reducing inequalities and to address emerging systemic challenges. A task team of Committee members will take forward those actions, and the Committee will consider the topic again in 2020.

20.   Four years into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, least developed countries continue to face significant obstacles to the attainment of the Goals. As part of its commitment to the decade of action, the United Nations system must amplify

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[7] See www.unsceb.org/CEBPublicFiles/CEB%20equality%20framework-A4-web-rev3.pdf.

its support to vulnerable countries and peoples. As mandated by the General Assembly,[8] CEB has, since 2013, supported the coordination of and follow-up to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 on a system-wide basis, through regular reporting to the High-level Committee on Programmes. Similarly, CEB retains on its agenda the issue of investment promotion regimes for the least developed countries, in accordance with the Political Declaration of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020.[9]

21.   At its thirty-eighth session, in October 2019, the High-level Committee on Programmes considered a progress report prepared by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. It highlighted the efforts of the inter-agency task force on graduation and smooth transition to provide strengthened and coordinated United Nations system-wide support to the countries graduating from the least developed countries category, opportunities for United Nations system entities to contribute to the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and its preparatory processes, activities of the Inter-Agency Technical Committee on investment promotion for the least developed countries, and progress achieved to date by the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries. CEB took note of the report and encouraged all relevant entities to collaborate closely with the inter-agency task force with respect to extended support for graduation from the Least Developed Countries category.

F.   Communicating with purpose

22.   Acknowledging that the world's greatest challenges demand a global, comprehensive and ambitious response by all segments of societies and all sectors of the world economy, CEB explored ways of communicating with purpose at its second regular session of 2019. The Board recognized the power of storytelling, the impact of positive messages and, in particular, the value of providing solutions to bring about change for the better. It is vital to reach diverse stakeholders, including Member States, beneficiaries and the wider public, as well as to provide space for dialogue. The United Nations system has a catalytic role to play in promoting action and is well positioned to build trust and alliances. Members agreed on the importance of modernizing their organizations' communication methods in order to engage a range of audiences authentically, connecting with their hopes and aspirations.

G.   Seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations

23.   The Board agreed that the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations offers a valuable opportunity to interact with a wide and diverse audience, to capture expectations for the world in 2045 and address gaps between hopes and fears. The data collected is expected to shift national and international policies and debate, foster a greater sense of global citizenship, and build a repository of crowd-sourced solutions to global challenges. The Secretary-General encouraged all CEB member organizations to make use of the anniversary to showcase the system's value, and to work more closely to ensure that communications across the United Nations system are convergent and strategically aligned, all in support of the decade of action and with the aim of helping the United Nations to shape itself to meet future needs.

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[8] Pursuant to a number of General Assembly resolutions, including, most recently, resolution 74/232.
[9] See General Assembly resolutions 70/294, para. 69, and 74/232, para. 22.

III. Improving and innovating administrative and management functions of the United Nations system

24.   In 2019, the High-level Committee on Management continued its efforts to promote and coordinate reforms relating to administrative and management issues by advancing and accelerating coordination, mutual recognition and harmonization of management policies and practices. The work of the Committee remained firmly anchored in mandates arising from General Assembly resolutions 67/226, 71/243 and, most recently, 74/251, which expressed support for the ongoing work on the harmonization and simplification of business practices aimed at increasing the coherence, coordination, effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and credibility of the United Nations system.

25.   In 2019, the High-level Committee on Management focused its efforts on strengthening victim-centred prevention and response efforts against sexual harassment, in particular with respect to system-wide investigative capacity and capability; launching the development of a Framework Human Resources Strategy for the United Nations system workforce; enhancing disability inclusion across the system; committing to pursue environmental sustainability in the area of management; continuing to foster harmonization and mutual recognition of business practices, including promoting greater collaboration on procurement; and applying innovative practices to management functions.

A.   Addressing sexual harassment in the United Nations system

26.   Encouraged by the support of the General Assembly in resolution 74/251 to address sexual harassment, the Committee continued to give priority attention during the reporting period to this topic through the CEB Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment, established in November 2017 with the goals of upholding a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment, strengthening victim-centred prevention and response efforts, and fostering a safe and inclusive working environment across the United Nations system.

27.   During the reporting year, the Task Force made a concerted effort to ensure that all policies and tools developed in the course of the previous year were translated concretely into strengthening of the United Nations system's ability to prevent, fight and punish sexual harassment in its organizations. Contextually, the Task Force delivered the following additional outcomes: (a) a Model Code of Conduct to Prevent Sexual Harassment During or in Relation to United Nations Events; (b) a set of 14 criteria to guide the effective establishment of helplines and hotlines for reporting sexual harassment and other types of misconduct, with the goal of proposing a common approach across the United Nations system; and, (c) a uniform mechanism for system-wide collection and analysis of data on the bases of a system-wide Questionnaire on Improved Reporting on Sexual Harassment, to allow the comparison of sexual harassment cases within and across entities and over time.

28.   The main focus of the work of the Task Force was strengthening investigations, as investigating sexual harassment complaints in a timely and competent manner is a key component of addressing sexual harassment and a stated priority of the Secretary-General and CEB. To this end, the Task Force established a Sub-working Group on Strengthening Investigative Capacity and Improving Investigations of Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the United Nations system. The work of the sub-working group included: (a) developing a model for the investigation of sexual harassment that includes a victim-centred approach; (b) improved communication with victims and other stakeholders throughout the investigation and the disciplinary

process, including a common methodology for conducting interviews utilizing international best practices; (c) the improved understanding and use of the available legal framework, methods and opportunities used to gather, analyse and present the best available evidence of sexual harassment; and (d) the use of digital forensic evidence to support investigation.

29.   As part of work against sexual harassment, in November 2019 the Chair of the CEB Task Force along with the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, co-convened the second CEB-Inter-Agency Standing Committee joint meeting of Investigatory Bodies on Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment to strengthen investigative capacity for sexual exploitation and sexual harassment cases across the United Nations entities and partners. The objectives of the joint meeting were to foster constructive dialogue and closer coordination between investigatory bodies, harmonize standards, align methods, ensure consistency, strengthen capacities throughout the aid sector and integrate a victim-centred approach.

B.   Innovative approaches to human resources management

30.   The High-level Committee on Management, at its thirty-seventh session, held in April 2019, together with the International Civil Service Commission, the Staff Federations and a focus group from the Young United Nations Network,[10] launched a work stream to deliberate more comprehensively and in an integrated way on the future of the United Nations system workforce. This initiative stems from the CEB discussions on the implications of frontier technologies on the work of the United Nations system (see para. 11 above), which culminated in the CEB-approved system-wide strategies on the future of work, the future of learning and education, and a strategic approach and road map for supporting capacity development in artificial intelligence. It also builds on points regarding the evolution of a global United Nations workforce highlighted by the Human Resources Network of the Committee in 2016. The work of the Committee in this field is carried out against the background of a changing global context within which the United Nations system operates, mainly driven by emerging geopolitical, development, peace and security and societal and financing challenges, as well as the impact of significant technological and other scientific advancements on labour markets.

31.   In one outcome of its discussion, the High-level Committee on Management decided to work towards a framework human resources strategy for the United Nations system workforce and established a cross-functional task force on the future of the United Nations system workforce to carry the work forward. The task force, informed by a forward-looking vision and best practices from within and outside the United Nations system, is advancing its work through a three-pronged approach, namely: (a) examining new sustainable contractual modalities; (b) proposing elements to foster an enabling organizational culture and positive employee experience; and (c) leveraging the digitized work environment enabled by new technology. These areas merit system-wide and joint action, and present opportunities for pilot initiatives by individual entities to be launched and used as references and benchmarks by others.

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[10] Established in 2016, Young United Nations: Agents for Change is a cross-United Nations global and inclusive network working towards a shared vision of a United Nations that fully embodies the principles for which it stands. With more than 1,500 members across United Nations entities in more than 80 duty stations, Young United Nations is demonstrating its value as a cross-United Nations space in which to crowdsource ideas, a platform from which to pilot and drive innovation and experimentation and a bottom-up mechanism for cultural change for United Nations values and the Sustainable Development Goals. For more information, see www.young-un.org/.

32. The High-level Committee on Management, through its Human Resources Network, actively collaborated with the International Civil Service Commission in several review and reform efforts, including a comprehensive review of the Post Adjustment System and a review of the current methodology for determining compensation for locally recruited staff. The Human Resources Network continued both its internal experience exchange and the dialogue with external partners on best practices and innovations in various areas of human resources management. This included the organization of a dedicated Future of Work workshop, jointly organized and hosted with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, with the aim of identifying strategic action areas to ensure that international organizations remain employers of choice for new talent. In 2019, participating organizations in the Human Resources Network further rolled out the newly established global centre for joint human resources services, for job classification and reference checking.[11]

33. Also in 2019, in support of the Secretary-General's strong commitment to enhance Disability Inclusion in the system, the High-level Committee on Management adopted the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy,[12] which includes a system-wide policy on the inclusion of persons with disabilities and an accountability framework. The strategy was the result of a process launched by the Secretary-General in April 2018 to strengthen the system-wide accessibility and mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities, informed by an extensive institutional review led by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities. It established the highest levels of commitment and a vision for the United Nations system regarding disability inclusion for the next decade and was aimed at creating an institutional framework for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda, among other international human rights instruments and development and humanitarian commitments. In the subsequent months, the Human Resources Network intensified its exchange on good practices to attract members of the workforce with disabilities in the United Nations system organizations. An inter-organizational online career fair targeted to candidates with disabilities was successfully piloted in cooperation with an external partner.

C. Environmental sustainability strategy in the area of management

34. As described above in connection with the CEB Joint Appeal from the United Nations system to the Climate Summit (see para. 9 above), the High-level Committee on Management approved phase I of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy in the area of management, an important step towards mainstreaming environmental and social considerations into the management of United Nations system programmes and support operations and ensuring that the United Nations system leads by example. The commitments are expected to be incorporated into a comprehensive strategy of the United Nations system for the period 2020–2030, encompassing a broader range of environmental and social sustainability elements for each entity's policies, programming and support functions, which is being further developed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) through the Environment Management Group, with the support of Sustainable United Nations.[13]

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[11] https://onehr.webflow.io/our-services-job-classification.

[12] www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/.

[13] The Sustainable United Nations facility, a UNEP initiative, provides support to the United Nations and other organizations in measuring and reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and improving their overall sustainability performance, promoting climate neutrality and improved resource efficiency in business practices (www.greeningtheblue.org/).

D. Simplifying and harmonizing business practices

35.   In direct reference to General Assembly resolution 71/243 and to the report of the Secretary-General on repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: our promise for dignity, prosperity and peace on a healthy planet (A/72/684-E/2018/7), work continued towards the further mainstreaming of the principle of mutual recognition. The mutual recognition statement has been signed by 17 executive heads thus far.[14] Mutual recognition was also the focus of a dedicated segment of the thirty-eighth session of the High-level Committee on Management, in October 2019, that was aimed at developing a common understanding of the principles affirmed in the statement, learning from shared experience and contributing to the further development of that approach, in particular with regard to its operationalization in the field.

36.   In General Assembly resolutions 67/226 and 71/243, the entities of the United Nations development system were requested to explore further opportunities for collaborative procurement. In response, the High-level Committee on Management continued its efforts to enhance mutual recognition and harmonization of business practices under the umbrella of the United Nations Global Marketplace, the common procurement portal that brings together United Nations procurement staff and the vendor community. As of January 2020, there were nearly 240,000 registered vendors. Several other initiatives, launched in 2019, are continuing, including: (a) the strategic vendor management initiatives, which included International Procurement Seminars endorsed by the Committee's Procurement Network; (b) the development of a United Nations-wide common methodology to consistently capture, calculate and report procurement savings across all organizations; and (c) the adoption of common procurement templates, which are the result of an extensive review process within the Harmonization Working Group of the Procurement Network.

37.   The High-level Committee on Management Finance and Budget Network continued its work on the harmonization of banking contracts extending the use of common local banking agreements to Cambodia and the Caribbean in 2019, resulting in an overall reduction in banking charges and operational risks.

38.   At its thirty-sixth session, in October 2018, High-level Committee on Management had approved the terms of reference for a cross-functional task force on risk management, which had been established to harmonize the risk management processes and practices in the United Nations system. Under the first phase of its workplan, the task force developed a reference risk management maturity model. The Committee, at its April 2019 session, endorsed the model to be used as a management and communication tool to help United Nations organizations to identify their current and target stages of maturity to provide a basis for continued improvement. The task force subsequently conducted several pilot self-assessments to test and validate the model. The second phase of the workplan, which commenced in May 2019, is currently being implemented under three distinct work streams: (a) the development of practical guidance for establishing a risk appetite statement; (b) the development

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[14] To date, the statement has been signed by the executive heads of the Secretariat, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration, the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Development Programme, UNEP, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization.

of a toolkit to guide the embedding of risk management in strategy formulation, planning and implementation; and (c) the launch of platforms or repositories to enable the sharing of best practices and risk information, including information on implementing partners.

39. In response to the continued commitment by the Secretary-General to provide duty of care to United Nations personnel in all environments where the United Nations is present, the High-level Committee on Management task force on duty of care made significant progress, including on the use of innovative tools, such as the further expansion of a booking platform for United Nations accommodations, flights, transportation, clinics and counsellors in the field, and on an electronic travel advisory application to help to locate and provide support to United Nations personnel in emergencies. At the Committee's thirty-eighth session, the task force presented its final report, which included a vision statement and a set of core principles for a healthier, safer and more respectful United Nations workplace; a draft framework for affiliate, standby and non-United Nations personnel; and practical guidance for integrating occupational safety and health into enterprise risk management processes. The Committee agreed to establish a forum on occupational safety and health, led by the World Health Organization: (a) to serve as a multidisciplinary inter-agency technical body to mainstream occupational safety and health and the tools developed by the task force into the United Nations system; (b) to coordinate, revise and update relevant norms and standards; (c) to further develop occupational safety and health risk management methodologies; and (d) to promote the integration of occupational safety and health risk management into the work of Resident Coordinators and United Nations country teams.

E. Innovation in management

40. In 2019, the Committee continued its activities on the United Nations semantic interoperability framework for normative and parliamentary documents. The project, co-led by the High-level Committee on Management, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, produced significant results, including: (a) a system of internationalized resource identifiers for Goals, targets and indicators, based on Linked Open Data principles,[15] developed in collaboration with Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, and a related statement of adoption;[16] and (b) a project to apply machine learning capabilities to General Assembly resolutions to improve the accessibility and retrieval of information in order to better support informed and efficient decision-making.

41. The Finance and Budget Network also maintained its focus on innovative approaches to finance, recognizing the need for organizations of the United Nations system to collectively study the role that innovation and automation may play in improving the work of the United Nations system in the area of finance. Building on the Network's 2018 conference on the future of finance, in July 2019, at its annual meeting, the Network invited a diverse group of experts to talk about innovative

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[15] The internationalized resource identifiers are available on the website of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library: http://metadata.un.org/sdg/?lang=en.

[16] Thus far, the statement has been signed by the Under-Secretaries-General of the three above-listed departments, as well as by the United Nations system executive heads of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs; the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management; the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance; ITU; the World Intellectual Property Organization; UNHCR; the World Meteorological Organization; and UNOPS.

advances in the field. They shared ideas and encouragement to further innovation within the financial management functions in the United Nations system.

42.   Moreover, the need for closer inter-agency coordination emerged from various discussions between the High-level Committee on Management Digital and Technology Network and other functional networks, representatives of which were invited to attend the Network's sessions to discuss potential areas of collaboration. As a result, two new sub-groups were established, on business transformation and on technology innovation, which will be aimed at better positioning information and communication technologies in support of business.

F.   Multilingualism

43.   Pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 54/64, 69/250, 70/9 and 71/262, 72/19 and 73/270, the CEB secretariat continued to support the personal commitment of the Secretary-General to fostering multilingualism throughout the United Nations system and his Coordinator for Multilingualism, the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management. The Secretariat, as the lead entity on multilingualism across the United Nations system, promotes a comprehensive and coordinated approach to multilingualism within the United Nations system.

44.   The CEB secretariat in 2019 supported the work of the Coordinator on Multilingualism by hosting a webpage dedicated to multilingualism on the CEB website, curated by the Coordinator for Multilingualism, which hosts related policies and tools across United Nations entities. The CEB secretariat also developed a collaborative platform for the exchange of information on multilingualism among the organizations of the United Nations. It also supported the Coordinator in the creation of a community of practice for multilingualism by facilitating the designation of focal points for multilingualism and the collaboration on policies and tools related to multilingualism across United Nations entities.

IV.   Sustaining compliance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standard

45.   In its resolution 60/283, the General Assembly approved the adoption of IPSAS for presentation of the financial statements of the United Nations system. The High-level Committee on Management established a jointly funded system-wide project on the adoption of IPSAS, to be implemented by the Task Force on Accounting Standards. All 24 organizations of the United Nations system that have adopted the Standards have implemented them and continue to receive unqualified audit opinions, bearing testimony to the commitment and ability of the United Nations system to sustain compliance with the evolving standards for improved quality of financial reporting, enhanced transparency and accountability.

46.   The Task Force on Accounting Standards continues to focus on sustaining compliance with the Standards and the realization of their expected benefits, including greater comparability of financial reporting policies and practices across the United Nations system. The Task Force continued its ongoing engagement in 2019 with the Board of IPSAS, which continues to update standards and issue guidance in response to changing user needs and environments. The Task Force continued to monitor the work of the Board, staying abreast of new pronouncements and upcoming projects and providing feedback to the Board on behalf of the United Nations system. In 2019, the Task Force reviewed consultation papers and exposure drafts issued by the Board in the areas of financial reporting for accounting for revenue and transfer expenses, leases and public sector measurements.

47.   The Task Force held a meeting in September 2019, at which it considered a range of issues. The meeting included interactions with the staff of the Board of IPSAS regarding the consultation papers on accounting for revenue and transfer expenses, leases and collective and individual services and emergency relief. The meeting also included interactions with the Board of Auditors regarding key audit observations and outcomes, fraud prevention, reform agenda, conflicts of interest and emerging audit issues. Other areas covered by the Task Force included a statement on internal control, the useful economic lives of assets and technological advancement and its implications for financial reporting. Those interactions are part of the mandate of the Task Force to facilitate dialogue among the organizations of the United Nations system to ensure the consistent interpretation, application and sustainability of the Standards in financial reporting.

V.   Improving transparency and accountability

48.   In 2019, the CEB secretariat continued to improve the quality of data collected in the course of its annual data collection exercises, including data on human resources and financial statistics. Considerable work was invested in the alignment of the financial statistics with the data cube's standards for United Nations system-wide reporting of financial data.[17] Work was begun on prototyping new functionalities in support of the data integration, visualization and analytical features of CEB data sets. Improvements made in access to and the availability of CEB data are expected to coincide with the launch of the new CEB website, late in 2020.

VI.   Coordination between the Chief Executives Board and other jointly financed bodies

49.   Through its subsidiary bodies, CEB continued to contribute to the programme of work of both the International Civil Service Commission and the Joint Inspection Unit. Further to the decision by the Commission, at its eighty-seventh session, to launch a comprehensive review of the consultative process and working arrangements in the Commission, the High-level Committee on Management continued to engage in discussions with Commission members and staff federations with a view to strengthening collaboration among all stakeholders. The discussions were held in the context of a contact group established by the Commission.

50.   The High-level Committee on Management Human Resource Network also continued its long history of participation in the sessions and working groups of the International Civil Service Commission and the meetings of the Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions. In addition to its collaborative work on reviewing the post adjustment system, as well as the methodology for setting salaries for locally recruited staff, the Human Resources Network, through its Field Group and participation in working groups, collaborated closely with the Commission on matters such as the review of hardship classifications and other entitlements conducive to fostering gender parity, such as parental leave provisions.

51.   In the current reporting period, the CEB secretariat and the Joint Inspection Unit continued their long-standing collaboration and dialogue, mainly through consultations

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[17] The data cube, a joint initiative of the High-Level level Committee on Management and the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, was completed in December 2018. Six data standards for United Nations system-wide reporting of financial information were developed. For more information, see www.unsystem.org/content/data-standards-united-nations-system-wide-reporting-financial-data.

during the preparation of the terms of reference for Unit reports and the drafting of the reports themselves. In particular, the Human Resources Network also invited the Unit Inspector in charge of the review of inter-organizational mobility practices to a more in-depth substantive discussion as part of its thirty-ninth session. The Unit Inspector in charge of reviewing the use of cloud services in the United Nations system was invited to the thirtieth meeting of the Digital and Technology Network.

52.   In February 2019, the CEB secretariat participated in a two-day biennial meeting of the Joint Inspection Unit focal points from participating organizations, who contributed to the sharing of lessons and experiences and mutual learning. In December, a virtual meeting between the Unit and the CEB secretariat enabled constructive discussions on current and future collaboration.

VII. Conclusions

53.   In 2019, CEB served as a driver of integration and coherence in the United Nations system, across a wide range of programmatic and management issues, in support of intergovernmental mandates and priorities. As the international community continued to face complex challenges, the United Nations system sought to support Member States by strengthening policy coherence and coordination in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, promoting system-wide preparation for and follow-up to United Nations conferences and summits and improving and innovating the administrative and management functions of the United Nations system, ever mindful of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the well-being of the people for whom it cares.

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