2024 session
27 July 2023–24 July 2024
Agenda item 12 (a)
Coordination, programme and other questions: reports of coordination bodies

Annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination for 2023
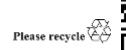
Summary

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 2023. The report includes highlights of key CEB activities that foster a coherent approach to policy and management matters and enhance United Nations system-wide coordination in support of intergovernmental mandates.

Board members reaffirmed their commitment to supporting the efforts of Member States to strengthen the multilateral system and regain traction in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including the road map set out in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Our Common Agenda".

Placing people at the core of its work, the United Nations system programmatic work included consideration of measures aimed at strengthening policy coherence and coordination, in particular in critical areas such as climate change, international financial architecture reform, human rights, internally displaced persons, intergenerational equity and solidarity, reduction of inequalities and support for least developed countries.

The Board expanded its efforts in international data governance, aiming to balance data protection with inclusive access, including the development of principles for a fair and inclusive international data governance framework.

The Board and its high-level committees renewed their focus on the opportunities and risks presented by artificial intelligence and acknowledged the importance of addressing its missed use as well as its misuse.

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In the area of institutional management coordination, the Board's work was focused on driving behavioural change in the work culture of the United Nations system, fostering a safe and inclusive working environment across that system while advancing innovations in working methods, including the adoption of modern tools and techniques, and efforts to ensure the reliability and timely availability of United Nations system data.

The Board unequivocally recommitted to urgently preventing and responding to sexual harassment across the United Nations system and to addressing the remaining challenges both collectively and individually. It established the United Nations Executive Group to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Harassment in the UN System, which took up its functions at the beginning of 2024, building on the work previously carried out by the CEB Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the United Nations System.

The report also includes highlights of coordination activities between CEB and other jointly financed bodies.

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 information on the work of the Board in its annual overview report to the Council, which is also considered by the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

2.   The report includes highlights of the major activities carried out in 2023 under the auspices of CEB. As a coordinating body, CEB and its subsidiary mechanisms, the High-level Committee on Management and the High-level Committee on Programmes, foster management, and policy coherence to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of United Nations system activities. The Board's work responds and conforms to intergovernmental mandates and supports the priorities of Member States.

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

3.   In 2023, faced with multiple and compounding crises, the Board and its subsidiary mechanisms reaffirmed their commitment to supporting the efforts of Member States to strengthen the multilateral system and regain traction in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including by supporting the vision set out in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Our Common Agenda".

4.   The High-level Committee on Programmes continued its efforts to strengthen policy coherence and coordination in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including by focusing on rescuing the Goals and supporting "Our Common Agenda", putting people at the centre of the work of the United Nations system, raising ambitions for tackling climate change and implementing the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries.

A. Rescuing the Sustainable Development Goals and supporting "Our Common Agenda"

5.   In an effort to rescue the Goals and support follow-up to the report of the Secretary-General on "Our Common Agenda", CEB and its High-level Committee on Programmes focused on three key topics, namely: duties to the future, international data governance, and a fair and inclusive international financial architecture that delivers sustainable development for all.

Duties to the future

6.   Building on the deep-rooted commitment of the United Nations to future generations,[1] in 2022, the High-level Committee on Programmes established the Core Group on Duties to the Future to explore how to operationalize the concepts of intergenerational equity and solidarity within the United Nations system in support

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[1] See General Assembly resolutions 75/1 (declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations) and 76/300 on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

of the 2030 Agenda and as highlighted in "Our Common Agenda". At the Committee's forty-fourth session, in September 2022, members welcomed the Core Group's proposal to develop a set of common principles for the United Nations system that would serve as a basis for a shared understanding of the concept of future generations and intergenerational equity.

7. The resulting United Nations System Common Principles on Future Generations[2] were approved by the High-level Committee on Programmes at its forty-fifth session, in March 2023, and endorsed by CEB in May 2023. The Principles are aimed at ensuring greater clarity on terminology and agreement on a set of common values across the United Nations system with regard to intergenerational equity and solidarity. At the same session, the Committee supported the Core Group's recommendation to unpack the Common Principles to support their operationalization in United Nations system entities. Subsequently, at its forty-sixth session, in October 2023, members of the Committee welcomed the Core Group's proposal outlining its next steps and planned activities. They included a set of frequently asked questions on duties to the future, a series of thematic deep dives to highlight and promote the application of the Common Principles in various sectoral contexts and a commentary on the human rights aspects of the Common Principles. In 2024, the Core Group will continue to work towards implementing these activities to inform the work of the United Nations system entities and the intergovernmental deliberations on the Declaration on Future Generations.

International data governance

8. Further to the decision taken by the High-level Committee on Programmes at its forty-third session, in 2022, to develop a paper on international data governance, including examining data as a global public good, in 2023, work proceeded under the Committee's working group on international data governance. At its forty-fifth session, the Committee approved the paper entitled "International data governance: pathways to progress",[3] which was subsequently endorsed by CEB in May 2023. Against the backdrop of related processes, including the work of the High-level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism, and ongoing preparations for a global digital compact and the Summit of the Future, the paper was aimed at striking the right balance between protecting data and making data access more inclusive.[4] In the paper, a vision for accountable, agile and fair international data governance for the benefit of all people was articulated. In approving the paper, members supported the view that the United Nations system could play an important role in promoting international data governance that was grounded in human rights, supported sustainable development and unlocked data for the public good.

9. Building on the recommendation contained in "International data governance: pathways to progress", the High-level Committee on Programmes requested that the working group on international data governance explore the normative foundations of an international data governance framework with a view to developing international data governance principles grounded in human rights and sustainable development that would promote accountability, agility and fairness. A draft was prepared by the working group in response to the request and considered by the Committee at its forty-sixth session. The Committee supported the overarching goals of value, trust and equity proposed in the paper as the normative foundations of an international governance framework and acknowledged the continuously changing landscape of data, including the impact of artificial intelligence and other emerging

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[2] CEB/2023/1/Add.1.

[3] CEB/2023/1/Add.2.

[4] See General Assembly resolution 78/132 on information and communications technologies for sustainable development.

technologies. In 2024, the working group will further refine its work in support of related ongoing efforts, including within the context of the Summit of the Future.

A fair and inclusive international financial architecture that delivers sustainable development for all

10.   Against the backdrop of multiple global crises that resulted in significant gaps in the achievement of the Goals, the Board, at its first regular session of 2023, deliberated on the topic of reform of the international financial architecture. Members observed that the scale and urgency of challenges, such as rising debt burdens, unfair distribution of risks and rewards of the international financial system, climate change, technological transformation and investments required to achieve the 2030 Agenda,[5] necessitated a reorientation of the international financial architecture. A long-term view of international finance was taken, including its role in contributing to the ability of Member States to respond to major shocks individually and collectively, such as disruptions relating to health and environment. At a time of increasing inequalities, a more equitable distribution of risks and rewards at the global level, as well as increased inclusion of developing countries in the governance of the international financial architecture, were also considered.[6]

11.   Focused on these concerns, and in support of the 2030 Agenda, members brought up a range of policy solutions that could strengthen the international financial architecture to better address global challenges. Multiple options to expand financing were suggested, including increasing the volume of finance, such as official development assistance, improving the deployment of existing capital by increasing leverage, mobilizing private capital with appropriate conditionalities, building up domestic capital markets, supporting more effective revenue collection systems and implementing progressive tax policies. Simultaneously, reform of the international debt architecture was discussed, including opportunities to increase the fiscal space for countries at risk of defaulting on their debt. Members expressed support for capacity development initiatives that enabled Member States to create the financial infrastructure necessary to achieve the Goals, mobilize domestic resources and enhance the management of public debt. The Board emphasized the importance of strengthened multilateralism to avoid further polarization and exacerbation of inequalities, and of collaboration across the United Nations system and with international financial institutions to ensure that the system effectively supported Member States.

B.   Putting people at the centre of the work of the United Nations system

12.   Committed to the principle espoused in the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind, CEB and the High-level Committee on Programmes addressed several topics to ensure that people remained at the centre of the work of the United Nations system, specifically with regard to international drug policy and human rights, the human rights of older persons, support for internally displaced persons, and strengthening United Nations system impact and visibility with regard to reducing inequalities.

International drug policy and human rights

13.   At its first regular session of 2023, CEB held a discussion on international drug policy from a human rights perspective. It was timed to precede the 2024 midterm

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[5] See General Assembly resolution 78/1 (political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly).
[6] See General Assembly resolution 78/136 on the international financial system and development.

review by the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs[7] of the 2019 Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening Our Actions at the National, Regional and International Levels to Accelerate the Implementation of Our Joint Commitments to Address and Counter the World Drug Problem,[8] in which inter-agency cooperation and enhanced coherence were encouraged within the United Nations system at all levels with regard to the world drug problem.

14.   Recognizing the complex and multifaceted challenges in this field of work, the Board reflected on concrete ways to fully realize the commitments in and strengthen implementation of its United Nations system common position supporting the implementation of international drug control policy through effective inter-agency collaboration of 2018.[9] Members underscored the role of the United Nations system in providing data, knowledge and evidence to inform national policies and agreed that the United Nations system needed to redouble efforts to promote a human rights-based and people-focused approach to drug policy, guided by the shared objectives in the common position. During the discussion, it was concluded that the United Nations system common position remained the reference point for informing the policy work, advocacy and capacity-building activities of organizations.

Human rights of older persons

15.   Further to a discussion of the Executive Committee established by the Secretary-General in September 2022 on the topic of the human rights of older persons, the Secretary-General decided to formalize the establishment of an inter-agency working group on ageing and to develop a United Nations strategy on older persons and ageing, and proposed to bring the relevant work to implement these actions to the attention of the High-level Committee on Programmes. Consequently, at its forty-fifth session, the Committee engaged with the co-leading entities of the working group, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and received an overview of the proposed phased approach with two outputs: a set of common messages to mobilize action and a paper on exploring options to ensure that issues related to older persons and their human rights would be mainstreamed across all levels of the United Nations, with the potential to work towards a United Nations system strategy on older persons and ageing.

16.   During the discussion, members noted the need for a holistic approach that protected the rights of older persons while countering ageism and age-based discrimination and highlighting the crucial roles that older persons played in society. The Committee saw value in mainstreaming the topic of older persons and their human rights across all levels of the United Nations system and provided guidance and feedback on the proposed way forward in developing a document that would support age-responsive and human rights-based approaches in the work of the United Nations.[10]

Internally displaced persons

17.   In the context of increasing displacement owing to the impact of climate change, disasters, conflict and violence, the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Solutions to Internal Displacement led a scoping discussion at the forty-sixth session of the High-level Committee on Programmes on addressing internal displacement.

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[7] See https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/session/67_Session_2024/review.html.

[8] See https://www.unodc.org/documents/hlr/19-06699_E_ebook.pdf.

[9] CEB/2018/2, annex I.

[10] In support of General Assembly resolution 78/177 on follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing.

During the discussion, the Committee considered the desirability and feasibility of developing a system-wide approach to promote coherent action across the United Nations system under the overarching vision of the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement.

18. During the discussion, members recognized that displacement was a complex, multidimensional and long-term problem that was growing in scale. It could not be solved by humanitarian actors alone, but rather required an integrated cross-pillar approach. No single United Nations system entity could effectively tackle internal displacement; at the same time, coordination and fragmentation challenges existed. The Committee saw merit in the United Nations system aligning itself with a comprehensive, systematic, solutions-oriented approach that would meet the needs of affected communities. Consequently, in line with paragraph 12 of General Assembly resolution 78/205,[11] the Committee agreed to collaborate, under the leadership of the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement, on a process that was aimed at promoting United Nations system-wide coherence regarding internal displacement and established a working group to prepare a proposal for consideration by the Committee at its forty-seventh session and to deliver a proposed system-wide approach to internal displacement by the end of 2024.

Strengthening United Nations system impact on and visibility in reducing inequalities

19. At its forty-fifth session, the Committee resumed its deliberations on inequalities to further elevate United Nations system engagement and ambitions for supporting Goals 10 (reduce inequality) and 5 (gender equality), most recently discussed one year earlier, at the Committee's forty-third session. Members engaged in a two-part discussion on a more equitable world and the deepening impact of the United Nations system on inequalities.

20. Members reflected first on moving towards a more equitable global order, with a focus on the financial dimensions. Their deliberations comprised five major divides that formed a basis for understanding inequalities and served as possible pathways to reducing them, namely: (a) economic power; (b) political power and trust; (c) gender; (d) climate change; and (e) knowledge and capacity. The discussion brought to the fore fundamental tensions around issues such as growth versus redistribution, present versus future needs, mitigation versus adaptation and national versus global action.

21. Building on the first part of the discussion, members proceeded to share their views on how the United Nations system could continue to work to combat inequalities. In that context, the Committee considered the prioritized action plan to increase the impact and visibility of reducing inequalities that had been produced by its inequalities task team. Members expressed support for the plan, to be taken forward by the actors identified therein. In addition, in the light of the time-bound nature of the Committee's ad hoc mechanisms, the Committee agreed to conclude the mandate of the inequalities task team. The breadth, scale and complexity of the challenge led members to acknowledge that addressing and reducing inequalities would remain a critical cross-cutting issue permeating the Committee's agenda.

C. Raising ambitions for tackling climate change

22. Against the backdrop of the Climate Ambition Summit convened by the Secretary-General, in September 2023 and prior to the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, CEB, during its second regular session of 2023, held a discussion on how to

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[11] On protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons.

rally the United Nations system for the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties and beyond and support accelerated climate action. The deliberations were built on previous system-wide efforts, including the Common Core Principles for a United Nations System-wide Approach to Climate Action[12] and the United Nations System Strategic Approach on Climate Change Action,[13] which had been designed to support the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the integrated action of Member States.

23. Noting the need for more ambitious climate action and maintaining momentum towards the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the Board agreed that the United Nations system needed to work, through each of its entities, to support countries in their efforts to put in place policies and measures that would be conducive to raising national ambitions. Members underlined the importance of a just transition and international solidarity, and that more efforts were required to unlock adequate climate finance, which was key to climate justice. During the deliberations, the need to further strengthen cooperation and coordination across the United Nations system was emphasized. The Board requested the preparation, through the High-level Committee on Programmes, of coherent and strategic contributions to the twenty-ninth and thirtieth sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.[14]

D. Implementing the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2022–2031

24. In 2023, CEB and the High-level Committee on Programmes continued to support the coordination and follow-up of the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2022–2031 on a system-wide basis, as mandated by the General Assembly in 2022.[15] At its forty-sixth session, the Committee received a progress report prepared by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States that contained a summary of actions and recommendations related to the outcomes of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. In addition, the report provided an update on efforts by entities and inter-agency mechanisms of the United Nations system to support investment promotion regimes for the least developed countries, as mandated by the General Assembly in 2016,[16] and included recommendations for further work in this area. Lastly, the Committee was informed of recent actions and ongoing projects of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries across a range of thematic areas.

III. Governance and use of artificial intelligence and related frontier technologies for the common good

25. In 2023, the world experienced a profound technological shift as increasingly powerful artificial intelligence systems were deployed around the world, with

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[12] See https://unsceb.org/common-core-principles-un-system-wide-approach-climate-action.

[13] See https://unsceb.org/united-nations-system-strategic-approach-climate-change-action.

[14] In support of General Assembly resolution 78/153 on protection of global climate for present and future generations of humankind.

[15] In General Assembly resolution 76/258, para. 301.

[16] In General Assembly resolution 70/294 (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), para. 69.

transformative impacts on people and the planet, increasing both risks and opportunities for the United Nations system and the international community. In this context, a joint session of the High-level Committee on Programmes and the High-level Committee on Management was held in October 2023, dedicated to the use and governance of artificial intelligence and related frontier technologies. Subsequently, CEB took up the topic at its second regular session of 2023. The committees and the Board deliberated on the opportunities and risks presented by artificial intelligence and acknowledged the importance of addressing its missed use as well as its misuse.[17] Doing so would require capacity development support to ensure that artificial intelligence could benefit everyone while its risks were adequately mitigated. Inequalities in access and the risks and benefits of artificial intelligence within and between countries were especially of concern. Specific elements that were brought to the attention of attendees were data protection, management and governance in the light of the centrality of data in the development and deployment of artificial intelligence systems, as well as the ongoing challenges of discrimination, bias, lack of representation and access with regard to data sets. Artificial intelligence was also viewed within the broader context of rapidly evolving technologies, such as quantum computing and neurotechnology, that may also pose risks and opportunities for humanity.

26.   In discussions held during the joint session on the governance of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, members of the committees emphasized the importance of a values-based approach grounded in, inter alia, the Charter of the United Nations, international human rights instruments,[18] the 2030 Agenda and other normative frameworks. Members reflected on existing institutional models within the United Nations system that may provide lessons learned for the global governance of artificial intelligence, including agile, inclusive, interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder approaches that may be appropriate for rapidly evolving technologies such as artificial intelligence. The committees agreed to further deepen their understanding of the topic and requested that the Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence of the High-level Committee on Programmes develop an analytical paper on United Nations system models and frameworks related to the governance of artificial intelligence.

27.   Discussions on the use of artificial intelligence within the United Nations system were focused on the opportunities, challenges and capacities for safe and responsible artificial intelligence adoption. Noting that artificial intelligence technologies were already reshaping the way that organizations did business, members deliberated on key priorities for adopting artificial intelligence in United Nations system organizations, including building internal capacity, leveraging common partnerships with technology providers, encouraging experimentation and supporting multifunctional teams to bring together necessary skill sets. The committees agreed on the need to take joint steps, considering the speed with which the technology was evolving, and decided to establish a task force under the High-level Committee on Management to develop a system-wide normative and operational framework for the use of artificial intelligence in the United Nations system and to identify and promote mechanisms for pooling technical capacity and knowledge-sharing regarding artificial intelligence, including exploring the feasibility of developing a United Nations generative artificial intelligence platform.

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[17] See General Assembly resolution 77/320 on the impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

[18] See General Assembly resolution 78/213 on promotion and protection of human rights in the context of digital technologies.

IV. Innovating working methods of the United Nations system

28.   Building on the lessons learned during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the acceleration of the application of modern tools, techniques and skills throughout the United Nations system continued to reinforce the system's thinking and collaboration towards integrated responses in which risks are anticipated and addressed while strengthening the capacity of staff to address complex challenges and improving working methods.

A. Ensuring the reliability and timely availability of United Nations system data

29.   Throughout 2023, the CEB secretariat worked to expand United Nations system-wide statistics for increased transparency and accountability to all stakeholders, in full alignment with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for the development of the United Nations system,[19] in which the General Assembly called for the publication of timely, reliable, verifiable and comparable system-wide and entity-level data, definitions and classifications.

30.   The activities in this area are aligned with two key policies: the System-wide Road Map for Innovating United Nations Data and Statistics, developed by the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System through the High-level Committee on Programmes and endorsed by CEB in 2020, and the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere: With Insight, Impact and Integrity. This work also represents an important enabler of "Our Common Agenda", which includes data and analytics in the quintet of change towards a United Nations 2.0.

31.   With regard to the United Nations system's financial statistics, throughout 2023, the CEB secretariat made a larger volume of data accessible on the CEB website, with improved functionality for interactive data analysis. With regard to United Nations system human resources statistics, the CEB secretariat has provided extensive support to the Human Resources Network and its community of practice on human resources data and analytics, facilitating professional exchanges among human resources analytics functions and increasing the collective understanding of human resources metrics for system-wide reporting and benchmarking purposes. This important work is aimed at equipping decision makers with better and more comprehensive data, as evidenced by the increased availability of human resources data on the CEB website, now including gender targets and additional diversity, equity and inclusion-related human resources indicators. The CEB secretariat is continuing to engage with the secretariat of the International Civil Service Commission and relevant stakeholders in streamlining and utilizing system-wide human resources data, enhancing data-driven policymaking and preparing for the upcoming comprehensive review of the compensation and allowances systems.

32.   In 2023, the High-level Committee on Management continued a series of data dialogues with a focus on data management and governance, data and people for talent management, and creating and implementing common data-sharing agreements, as well as data protection, risk management and cybersecurity. A task team on data-sharing worked towards the development of a common data-sharing agreement to create a United Nations ecosystem for information-sharing and common decision-making. The task team will continue to explore avenues to ensure that United Nations

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[19] General Assembly resolution 75/233.

data remain a global public good while upholding the privileges and immunities of United Nations system organizations.

B. Strategic foresight

Managing risks strategically: working group on data and cyberrisk

33. The High-level Committee on Management held dialogues on value-based data management and analytics and, as an outcome of the dialogues, established a cross-functional working group on data and cyberrisk. Two separate workstreams were established under the working group in 2023, which developed: (a) a maturity model and a road map for cyberrisk and data risk readiness; and (b) a common approach to and a position on ransomware response. The first workstream was led by the Committee's Risk Management Forum, a multidisciplinary United Nations system-wide advisory body that produces guidance and common risk methodologies for the United Nations system and acts as a common platform on which entities can share documentation and best practices. The second stream was led by the Information Security Special Interest Group of the Digital and Technology Network.

Transition of the Strategic Foresight Network of the High-level Committee on Programmes

34. Since its formation, in 2019, the Strategic Foresight Network of the High-level Committee on Programmes, led by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), has promoted and supported foresight capacities and futures literacy across the United Nations system, as well as fostered cross-agency and system-wide collaboration in this field with a view to finding innovative solutions to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.[20] Notably, the Network has informed the Committee's analytical work, in particular the workstream on duties to the future (see paras. 6 and 7 above), within which it contributed to nurturing long-term planning and intergenerational thinking across the United Nations system. At its forty-fifth session, the Committee approved a proposal for the gradual transition of the Network to a new foresight community of practice, led by the United Nations Futures Lab[21] and coordinated by UNESCO, to support the broader effort to upgrade internal skills and expertise across innovation, data, digital, foresight and behavioural science expertise towards realizing a United Nations 2.0[22] that delivers stronger impact.

C. Driving behavioural change in the work culture of the system

35. Driving behavioural change in the work culture of the United Nations system is at the core of the work of the High-level Committee on Management to support the realization of the vision of the Secretary-General for a United Nations 2.0. The Committee is working towards creating a conducive workplace culture that fosters diversity, is anti-racist and has no tolerance for harassment or discrimination. The work has highlighted the fact that behavioural change is an element that organizations often only circle back to after working through structural and policy challenges. However, no technology can work, and no programme can be implemented, without a people-centric approach and explicit change management efforts. The Committee

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[20] See resolution 24, adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference at its forty-second session, on 20 November 2023, available at https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000388394.locale=en.

[21] See https://un-futureslab.org/.

[22] See https://www.un.org/two-zero/en.

therefore aims to make cultural change an integral element of transformational efforts and not a sequential one. This requires that culture- and behaviour-related angles be considered actively and treated professionally in all management processes.

United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy: system-wide challenges and best practices in its implementation

36. In 2023, the High-level Committee on Management addressed as priorities disability inclusion and accessibility within the United Nations, reflecting its commitment to the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy adopted by CEB.[23]

37. At its forty-fifth session, hosted in April 2023 by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the Committee held a dedicated discussion on the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, hosted by the President of the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Co-Chair of the 2025 Global Disability Summit, Prince Mired bin Raad bin Zaid of Jordan. During the session, several best practices were highlighted, including integrating disability inclusion into strategic plans and budgets with measurable indicators, establishing dedicated disability inclusion staff and teams, and engaging with organizations representing persons with disabilities to enhance collaboration and access to technical expertise. The increased employment of persons with disabilities within the United Nations system emerged as a pressing concern. While policies and procedures are being updated to address disability inclusion, the need for further guidance and common agreement in areas such as reasonable accommodation, self-identification by staff and hiring processes was highlighted as part of a more holistic, cross-functional approach to disability inclusion, with the overarching goals of making the United Nations system an employer of choice for persons with disabilities and fostering a more inclusive work environment for all.

Diversity, equity and inclusion

38. Reaffirming that the United Nations was founded on the principle of the dignity and worth of the human person, without distinction as to race, colour, or ethnic or national origin, in 2020, the Secretary-General launched a campaign of dialogue and action against racism. The High-level Committee on Management committed its full support to the work of the Secretary-General's Task Force on Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for All in the United Nations, recognizing that racism, exclusion and marginalization affect workforce morale, undermine commitment, hamper the delivery of mandates and go against human decency.

39. Acknowledging that system-wide efforts in this domain should be coordinated and monitored through a unified approach based on shared values and principles, the High-level Committee on Management agreed to advance diversity, equity and inclusion throughout the United Nations system workforce. Using the Secretary-General's strategic action plan for addressing racism and promoting dignity for all in the United Nations Secretariat[24] as a baseline for coordination and collaboration among the organizations, in 2022, the Committee established a multidisciplinary group of focal points on diversity, equity and inclusion. The group consists of diversity experts as well as representatives of the staff federations, leading in 2023 to the development of a comprehensive United Nations system glossary on diversity, equity and inclusion.[25] The glossary fosters a common understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion concepts and terminology, laying a solid common foundation for inclusive discussions and practices. Moreover, the Committee adopted a diversity,

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[23] CEB/2019/3.
[24] See https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/sap_final_report_0.pdf.
[25] Available at unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/DEI%20Glossary.pdf.

equity and inclusion vision and a set of guiding principles.[26] The principles provide a robust framework for shaping an inclusive work culture where every staff member feels valued and empowered.

Addressing sexual harassment

40.   In 2023, CEB continued to give priority attention to prevention of and response to sexual harassment in the United Nations system through its Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the United Nations System. Intending to further a safe, respectful and inclusive workplace, the Task Force concluded its third and last phase of work at the end of 2023. Initiatives were pursued along the four priority areas of work: (a) prevention and behavioural science; (b) victim engagement and support; (c) data and results; and (d) enhanced cooperation, outlined in the strategic vision of the Task Force.

41.   Following the approval of the document entitled "Advancing a common understanding of a victim-centred approach to sexual harassment within the organizations of the United Nations system", a United Nations system-wide training module on the rights and dignity of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment was launched in January 2023. Available to all United Nations system entities, the training has been delivered online and in person across the system, including through a network of trainers of trainers created for its dissemination. To further advance a victims' rights approach, the principles were shared and discussed with 500 gender focal points in the United Nations system. In June 2023, the United Nations system-wide knowledge hub on addressing sexual harassment was launched to further enhance cooperation and outreach efforts vis-à-vis Member States and partners. The hub contains material to prevent and respond to sexual harassment from entities across the United Nations system for the benefit of all interested audiences. The aggregated results of the annual system-wide survey on improved reporting on sexual harassment in the United Nations system were published in an effort to further transparency, and organizations continued to use the ClearCheck database, which enables the sharing of information among United Nations organizations on individuals with established allegations related to sexual misconduct.

42.   In November 2023, at its second regular session, CEB heard a presentation on the prevention of and response to sexual harassment in the United Nations system from the Chair of the CEB Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the United Nations System. The Board discussed the impact of the behaviour on victims and mandate delivery, and unequivocally recommitted to urgently preventing and responding to sexual harassment across the United Nations system and to addressing the remaining challenges both collectively and individually.

43.   To support a common United Nations system approach, the High-level Committee on Management decided at its forty-fifth session, and the Secretary-General subsequently endorsed, the establishment of the United Nations Executive Group to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Harassment in the UN System to succeed the CEB Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the United Nations System. The Committee approved its terms of reference at its forty-sixth session so that the Executive Group could take up its functions at the beginning of 2024.

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[26] Available at unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/DEI%20Vision%20and%20Principles.pdf.

*Occupational health and safety: United Nations System Mental Health and
Well-being Strategy for 2024 and beyond*

44.   In 2023, the Occupational Health and Safety Forum pursued its work to support the mainstreaming of occupational health and safety as a component of the organizations' obligations to their personnel in promoting and furthering the tools developed by the former Cross-Functional Inter-Agency Task Force on Duty of Care for personnel in high-risk environments and in ensuring holistic integration of occupational health and safety risk management, in particular at the country level.

45.   The accountability framework for resident coordinators and United Nations country teams on occupational health and safety matters, which was endorsed by the High-level Committee on Management in October 2022, was communicated to resident coordinators by the Development Cooperation Office in June 2023, together with a guide to facilitate its implementation at the country level. The guide provides an outline of several key activities that not only guide the resident coordinators' work in steering country-level occupational health and safety mechanisms but also allow for a standardized monitoring and evaluation capability.

46.   The Occupational Health and Safety Forum launched a global occupational health and safety repository in English and French in April 2023, which includes a document on capacity-building for United Nations occupational health and safety practitioners and managers. The repository lists training resources from awareness-raising to certification, specifying the target audience and the training methodology. Furthermore, the biennial occupational health and safety survey was issued in 2023, with 27 organizations responding. A detailed report on analysis of the results thereof will be provided to the Committee at its forty-seventh session, in April 2024.

47.   The Occupational Health and Safety Forum, in coordination with the Inter-Agency Security Management Network, discussed and identified options for suitable mechanisms for the system-wide governance of safety-related subjects and produced an options paper outlining proposals for the coordination of the system-wide occupational health and safety management system. The High-level Committee on Management, at its forty-sixth session, adopted in principle an inter-agency mechanism with occupational health and safety expertise, responsible for advice and policy and with limited decision-making authority, reviewing experience with the mechanism after three years of operating. The Forum was requested during the Committee's forty-seventh session to propose a cost-sharing arrangement for the occupational health and safety mechanism.

48.   At its forty-sixth session, the High-level Committee on Management endorsed the United Nations System Mental Health and Well-being Strategy for 2024 and beyond, prepared by the Implementation Board of the United Nations System Mental Health and Well-being Strategy. The strategy, guided by data derived from system-wide reporting using the mental health scorecard, the recent review of the Joint Inspection Unit, the World Health Organization guidelines on mental health at work and the World Health Organization/International Labour Organization policy brief on mental health at work, will continue to build on the benefits of a system-wide approach to mental health and well-being observed during the implementation of the United Nations System Mental Health and Well-being Strategy for 2018 to 2023. Along with the Strategy, the Committee approved the establishment of a secretariat to ensure continuity in delivery of and sustained support for implementation of system-wide strategy.

D. Innovation and digital transformation of United Nations system organizations

Operationalizing mutual recognition across the United Nations system

49. Following the launch in 2018 of the Mutual Recognition Statement by the High-level Committee on Management and the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, the Statement was signed by the Executive Heads of 23 organizations, led by the Secretary-General. The Statement formalized the joint commitment to applying the principle of mutual recognition, allowing an entity to use or rely on another entity's policies, procedures, system contracts and related operational mechanisms for the implementation of activities without the requirement of further evaluation checks or approvals, to the greatest extent practicable. The Statement is also a fundamental enabler of management reform, aimed at removing barriers to greater cooperation on shared services and facilitating the upstream collaboration of United Nations system organizations.

50. At its forty-fifth session, the High-level Committee on Management established a coordination group for the operationalization of mutual recognition to coordinate, along with the Committee's networks, the development and revision of management policies to address and evaluate bottlenecks in the application of the mutual recognition principle.

51. The coordination group organized briefings on the United Nations booking hub, mutual recognition of rosters, the United Nations Global Centre for Human Resources Services (OneHR) and United Nations fleet to further raise awareness of initiatives built on the mutual recognition principle. Furthermore, the group produced a guideline document on mutual recognition, a "Frequently Asked Questions" document, a set of examples of successful mutual recognition stories and a quiz to be used for awareness-raising activities.

United Nations Digital ID

52. The United Nations Digital ID is a flagship digital innovation initiative that was begun in 2020 as a staff-led winning idea of the Reimagine the United Nations Together challenge and was then launched in 2021 by the Task Force on the Future of the United Nations System Workforce of the High-level Committee on Management. It is intended to solve data fragmentation and transportability across United Nations organizations, with the potential to simplify and streamline processes and transactions across all business functions. At its core, the Digital ID would provide a unique identity for each member of United Nations personnel, from onboarding to retirement. In that regard, the Digital ID is a key enabler of the Secretary-General's United Nations 2.0 vision. Six sponsoring organizations are part of the first phase: the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, with the United Nations International Computing Centre as the technology solution provider. The aim is to scale the solution to other organizations at a later stage.

53. Following recruitment for the project team, in the course of 2023, pain points and critical user needs experienced by staff in navigating key career milestones, namely onboarding, inter-agency movements and separation, were examined. The first use case to be implemented – which is focused on pension, in particular on maintaining up-to-date human resources and financial information required for the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund to calculate the pension benefit and enable it to retrieve such information at any time – was selected. Delivering a solid product with the first use case will demonstrate the benefit of this innovation and enable new

use cases to be added, as well as encourage additional organizations to join. The delivery phase of the first use case began in March 2023, with the go-live expected to take place in April 2024.

Procurement and supply chain digitalization

54.   The Procurement Network of the High-level Committee on Management continued its efforts to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations system's supply chain, leveraging technology and digitalization. The Network is exploring the emergence of artificial intelligence and digitalization as transformative forces, as well as their potential to revolutionize procurement and supply chain functions, with a focus on the benefits that these technologies offer, the challenges that they pose and the role that the United Nations system could play in guiding this transformative journey. The High-level Committee on Management, at its forty-sixth session, recognized that procurement and supply chain activities were at the core of programmatic impact and service delivery excellence and, as such, had become integral elements of the digitalization journey of many organizations. The Procurement Network is committed to continuing its work to deliver robust, agile and end-to-end supply chain management enhanced by technology while ensuring impact in achieving collective global mandates on issues such as efficiency, sustainability and environmental, social and governance targets.

Leveraging digital technology

55.   The community of practice on digital transformation actively contributed to the agenda of the Digital and Technology Network of the High-level Committee on Management, reflecting the interests of both communities, helping to identify common ground and providing the opportunity to advance a number of topics, including business transformation, United Nations 2.0, balancing the risks and opportunities of generative artificial intelligence, the role of Chief Digital Officer and scaling and sustaining innovation. During discussions, digital transformation was considered to make fundamental changes in processes, culture and user experiences. Community discussions placed particular emphasis on the sharing of tools for measuring digital transformation and developing recommendations for fostering collaboration, innovation and governance in this space. In the future, further emphasis will be placed on identifying opportunities for the Network to support scale solutions, jointly develop digital and data capacity-building programmes, reuse or collectively develop guidance documents and provide online digital data training to staff. The Network also seeks to be involved in Internet Governance Forum activities, starting with the field of artificial intelligence as an initial step towards more strategic partnership building.

V.   Multilingualism: a core value of the United Nations

56.   The CEB secretariat continued to support, in its role as facilitator, the personal commitment of the Secretary-General and his Coordinator for Multilingualism, the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management, to fostering multilingualism throughout the United Nations system pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 54/64, 69/250, 70/9, 71/262, 72/19, 73/270, 74/252, 75/244, 76/237, 77/255 and 78/245.

57.   The CEB secretariat encouraged a coordinated approach to multilingualism across CEB member organizations. It translated select documents, such as "Advancing a Common Understanding of a Victim-centred Approach to Sexual

Harassment within the Organizations of the United Nations System",[27] into the six official languages of the United Nations to ensure the widest possible dissemination among United Nations staff. The CEB secretariat contributed to the follow-up to the Joint Inspection Unit review of the status of implementation of multilingualism across the United Nations system, providing technical background information on the system-wide dimensions of multilingualism.

58. The Human Resources Network continued to support the undertaking of a United Nations system language framework for language teaching, learning, assessment and certification in the six official languages of the United Nations. The Network created a dedicated community of practice on learning and development that may take up such discussions as needed.

VI. Coordination between the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and other jointly financed bodies

59. The Human Resources Network continued its long-established participation in the sessions and working groups of the International Civil Service Commission. In addition to its collaborative efforts towards implementing the new round of place-to-place surveys and the revision of the United Nations standards of conduct, the Network, through its Field Group, collaborated on all matters related to conditions of service in field locations. The Network also collaborated closely with the Commission on a range of emergency situations.

60. The secretariats of CEB and the Joint Inspection Unit continue to engage in dialogue that ensures a smooth report preparation process as the Unit maintains its focus on issues of a system-wide nature. In 2023, the CEB secretariat, often in consultation with the Human Resources Network and the Finance and Budget Network, provided comments on some draft reports being prepared by the Unit and responded to informal requests for information from Inspectors as well as Unit's secretariat staff on issues pertaining to ongoing and future reports.

VII. Sustaining compliance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards

61. In its resolution 60/283, the General Assembly approved the adoption of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) for presentation of the financial statements of the United Nations system. All 26 member organizations and 10 observer organizations of the United Nations system have adopted and implemented the Standards and continue to receive unqualified audit opinions, bearing testimony to the commitment and ability of the United Nations system to sustaining compliance with evolving Standards for improved quality of financial reporting, enhanced transparency and accountability.

62. The High-level Committee on Management established the Task Force on Accounting Standards to initially implement and then maintain compliance with IPSAS. It has continued its work to ensure ongoing compliance with new and existing Standards, and one of the aims of the Task Force is to promote greater comparability of financial reporting policies and practices across the United Nations system.

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[27] Available at unsceb.org/victim-centred-approach-sexual-harassment-united-nations.

63. The IPSAS Board continued to update standards and issue guidance in response to changing user needs and environments. Representatives of the Task Force on Accounting Standards attended the meetings of the Board throughout the year, keeping up to date on new pronouncements and upcoming projects and providing feedback to the Board on behalf of the United Nations system. All four quarterly meetings of 2023 were held in person, and the Task Force was able to participate in all of them.

64. The Task Force on Accounting Standards held its 2023 interim meeting virtually in May, at which updates were provided on IPSAS developments, followed by the sharing of experiences in relation to the financial statements. The Task Force held its annual in-person meeting in October. The four-day meeting reviewed, examined and considered in great detail draft guidance on new accounting standards for revenue and transfer expenses (IPSAS 47 and IPSAS 48). Representatives of the IPSAS Board participated in the meetings and shed light on, provided interpretations of and assisted in the clarification of technical issues and examples.

65. The meeting covered a range of other issues, including an update from and interaction with the staff of the IPSAS Board on the development of new standards for sustainability reporting and review of IPSAS 1: Presentation of financial statements, as well as other issues. The meeting involved interaction with the Board of Auditors on key audit observations, outcomes and emerging audit issues arising from its work. The Task Force continued various initiatives and collaborations whose aims were to encourage information-sharing and experience-sharing among United Nations system organizations to ensure the consistent interpretation, application and sustainability of the Standards in financial reporting.

VIII. Conclusion

66. In 2023, 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.

67. The Board sustained its commitment to strengthening policy coherence and coordination in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other intergovernmental agreements across all pillars of work of the United Nations. Moreover, it remained committed to improving and innovating the administrative and management functions of the United Nations system, always guided by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and consistently applying a people-centred approach.

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