



BUSINESS INNOVATIONS GROUP | BIG

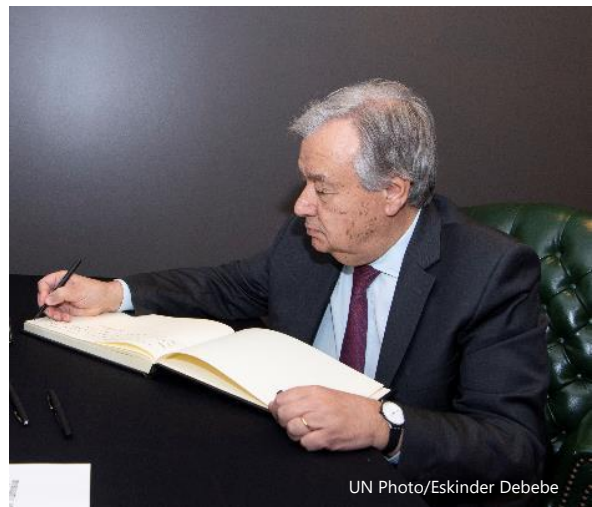
Advancing Common Business Operations

MUTUAL RECOGNITION FACTSHEET | April 2025

The UN Reform context of Mutual Recognition

In his [December 2017 report \(A/72/684\)](#), and in line with calls from Member States, the United Nations Secretary-General set a number of ambitious targets to reform the UN System. – The Business Innovations Strategic Results Group (BIG) has been tasked with delivering and building on the proposals envisioned to maximize programmatic gains through **efficient and high-quality back-office operations**.

In July 2018, the BIG established a designated inter-agency Project Team to design and pilot methodologies to deliver on six of the **Secretary-General's targets**, including that of ***Mutual Recognition, i.e. "operating with the mutual recognition of best practices regarding policies and procedures"***.



The principle of Mutual Recognition

Mutual recognition allows a UN corporate entity to use or rely on another entity's policies, procedures, system contracts and related operational mechanisms for the implementation of activities without further evaluation, checks or approvals being required.

The Benefits of Mutual Recognition

Mutual Recognition increases the agility of operations in developing partnerships and working together towards the overall UN mission. It does so by removing bureaucratic barriers to such active collaboration and reducing administrative burdens.

Commitment to Mutual Recognition

In December 2017, the Secretary-General requested all entities to accelerate the efforts on the mutual recognition of policies and procedures.

The Statement had been signed by the Secretary-General on behalf of the UN Secretariat as well as 23 other heads of entities: FAO, ILO, IOM, ITU, UN Women, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNRWA, WFP, WHO, IFAD, ITC, UNIDO, UN-Habitat, ICAO, WMO and UNFCCC.

The joint statement and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) can be found on the Chief Executives' Board website at:
<https://unsceb.org/mutual-recognition>

All United Nations organizations are encouraged to adopt the statement to maximize the impact and benefits of this initiative.

Implementing Mutual Recognition

Mutual recognition is being implemented by signatory entities in various ways, including through establishing **policy instructions and guidelines** at headquarters, which can then be applied at regional or country levels.

These measures identify **business practices ‘pre-approved’ by the executive leadership** for mutual recognition. Heads of office at regional or country level are thereby authorized to use the policy or procedure of partner UN entities to reach objectives faster and more efficiently.

For business practices not included in such instructions or guidelines, prospective cases where Mutual Recognition could apply **may be submitted to headquarters for approval** on a case-by-case basis.

Signatory entities are also encouraged to convene **practical workshops** to explore opportunities to increase inter-agency work, to nominate **mutual recognition ‘champions’** at every level to build a **body of knowledge** about the use of these principles, and to **replicate successful examples** of partnerships in practice.

Mutual Recognition in practice

- **‘UN system cooperation-based procurement’ in UNHCR**

On 9 August 2019, the High Commissioner endorsed the application of mutual recognition in simplifying submissions made for and processing of “UN system cooperation-based procurement”¹.

As a result, if the relevant procurement function determines that the simplified submission is in accordance with the Agency’s rules, then it shall be approved and the relevant contracts committee merely notified, “without further evaluation, checks or approvals”.

- **‘Humanitarian Booking Hub’**

Started in 2016 as an internal service, the digital platform expanded as an inter-agency provisioning of 580 UN drivers, 285 UNHAS flights, 240 UN guesthouses, 100 UNDSS-listed hotels, 46 UN health clinics and 30 UN staff counsellors for the whole humanitarian community in more than 50 countries.

Four UN agencies are using the Hub as part of their global back-office, with 850 focal points daily connecting with the Hub to manage their local services. UN partners have mutually recognized WFP policies and procedures, which has thus resulted in a faster adoption of the same common provision service agreement, with easier internal checks and approvals.

- **‘Freight forwarding services’**

In 2016, UNICEF led a collaborative tender that resulted in global third party logistics and freight forwarding services contracts. Contracts were established from July 2017 for periods of up to seven years.

Today, the outcome of the UNICEF-led tender, through mutual recognition, benefits 12 UN entities; these entities implement separate contracts based on the tender outcome, established under UNICEF’s policies and procedures.

¹ Administrative Instruction on the Rules and Procedures of UNHCR Committees on Contracts at Headquarters and in the Field. (UNHCR/AI/2018/5/Rev.1)

