



CEB

UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination

MUTUAL RECOGNITION GUIDELINES

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INTRODUCTION

Mutual Recognition is a principle that allows UN entities to use or rely on another entity’s policies, procedures, systems, contracts and related operational mechanisms for the implementation of activities without further unnecessary duplicative evaluations, checks or approvals being required.

Mutual Recognition essentially entails UN organizations’ Executive Management granting their offices a structured framework to access and use other UN organizations’ policies, procedures and assets. This allows UN organizations to cooperate and benefit from already established UN footprints with minimum delay and transaction costs, avoiding duplication of activities and efforts.

BENEFITS

Mutual Recognition aims to increase the agility of operations by removing barriers to collaboration in the form of differences in policy and procedural frameworks that are not material to the objectives and proper carrying out of the activities in question. Benefits include:

- Simplify and foster inter-entity service delivery.
- Enable deeper collaboration and integration between UN entities worldwide, and at regional and country level.
- Function as a critical enabler for the creation of common business operations, common back offices, common premises, and a network of global shared services and as an essential enabler to implement the UN efficiency agenda.
- Allow entities to use the optimal contracts, processes and services of other signatory UN entities (assuming third party consent).
- Increase efficiency, including reduced costs, reduced labor time and/or quality enhancement, by avoiding the duplication of activities.
- Facilitate the implementation of coherent KPIs across countries and regions for inter-agency resource optimization.

However, it should be noted that the use of the Mutual Recognition principle is not intended to circumvent a UN system Organization's regulatory framework.

MUTUAL RECOGNITION STATEMENT

In Resolution 71/243, the UN General Assembly called for entities within the UN Development System to “operate according to the principle of Mutual Recognition of best practices in terms of policies and procedures, with the aim of facilitating active collaboration across agencies and reducing transaction costs for Governments and collaborating agencies.”.

In addition, in December 2017, the Secretary-General requested all entities to accelerate the efforts on the Mutual Recognition of policies and procedures.

A [Mutual Recognition Statement](#) has been signed by the Secretary-General on behalf of the UN Secretariat as well as by 22 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 and WMO. Other UN entities are encouraged and expected to participate by signing the Statement, the provisions of which would take immediate effect.

The Statement represents a broad consensus on adopting common or shared services, without requiring a review of the provider's policies and procedures. Signatories to the Statement commit to apply, to the greatest extent practicable, the principles of mutual recognition in respect of the administration and implementation of their entity's activities.

Through the Statement, participating United Nation entities recognize the following principles:

- Maintain sound financial management and internal control systems to ensure that funds are used for the purposes intended with due attention to considerations of efficiency and effectiveness;
- Subject their financial and administrative management systems to internal and external auditing arrangements in line with internationally accepted standards;
- Reaffirm their commitment to the single-audit principle;
- Ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to significantly mitigate the risk of fraud and corruption and to address allegations and proven instances of fraud and corruption;
- Undertake appropriate measures, including capacity strengthening, to mitigate risks posed by any weakness identified in their financial and administrative management systems and arrangements.

In accordance with the Statement, a signatory organization is committed to implementing mutual recognition in the following specific areas in the context of Business Operations Strategies (BOS) at the country level and the initiatives of the Business Innovation Group (BIG):

1. Administration and Facilities Management;
2. Finance;
3. Human resources;
4. Information and communication technology;
5. Logistics;
6. Procurement.

The initial focus is to facilitate these processes in corporate services, which are also referred to as Common Service Lines (CSL) under BOS. Each signatory organization can implement mutual recognition principles in additional areas and settings.

In addition, although not specifically mentioned in the statement, it is noted that the practice of Mutual Recognition should be in line with the following Human Resources principles:

- Ensure that Mutual Recognition actions take into account the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion principles adopted by the UN.
- Any framework or initiatives under the mutual recognition need to reflect and be available within the HR regulatory framework of the Organization.

It is also noted that the specific areas listed in the Statement were not meant to be exhaustive, and additional areas can be considered beyond the initial focus.

PROCESSES: “How do I consider Mutual Recognition...?”

PROCUREMENT:

To apply the Mutual Recognition principle to the greatest extent practicable, cooperation

should not be subject to undue procedural hurdles. Cooperation can be applied regardless of the type of commercial sourcing process (competitive bidding or direct negotiation), with or without review by a Review Committee of a UN Organization, based on the UN Secretariat Entity's delegation of authority framework and relevant thresholds.

On the other hand, the use of cooperation should not be deemed as the default sourcing solution: it should be used wisely, and the justification process should be consistent with UN system Organizations' regulations and rules and procurement principles, including obtaining Best Value for Money.

In line with the procurement principles of transparency and accountability, and in order to facilitate internal and external audits of UN operations, every procurement action that relies on cooperation with a UN Organization shall be documented and kept on file (hard copy or electronic), in line with the documentation guidelines followed for procurement actions conducted internally.

There are three primary cases/processes of procurement cooperation and Mutual Recognition in UN Organizations:

1. Carrying out common procurement actions together (commonly called "joint procurement" or "lead agency agreements")
2. Entering into a contract relying on a procurement decision of a UN Organization (commonly and informally referred to as "piggybacking")
3. Requesting a UN Organization to carry out procurement activities on behalf of another UN system Organization.

For the UN Secretariat, the Supply Chain Operational Guidance (SCOG-SR5) document on "SR5: Acquire Through Cooperation with United Nations Organizations" includes a detailed overview of the above processes. The document is referenced in the Resources section and could be leveraged by other Organizations and adapted to their own context.

[Contact for the lead of the HLCM Procurement Network's Harmonisation Working Group \(that is dealing with mutual recognition\):](#)

[Ms. Katinka Rosenbom](#)

[Email: krosenbom@unicef.org](mailto:krosenbom@unicef.org)

United Nations Global Marketplace (UNGM)

The [United Nations Global Marketplace \(UNGM\)](#) is the official procurement portal of the United Nations System, connecting suppliers to the UN marketplace. Within the UNGM operation, several ongoing initiatives are designed to aid UN agencies in realizing Mutual Recognition. First and foremost, the UNGM provides UN agencies with a facility for sharing long-term agreements (LTAs). The year 2023 saw the most significant number of LTAs shared on an annual basis since the availability of the functionality in 2005.

To facilitate the sharing of LTAs, the UNGM has made available an Application Programming Interface (API) that automates the sharing of LTAs from the Agency's system to the UNGM. Both WIPO and ILO have implemented this API. Further, the Harmonization Working Group of the HLCM Procurement Network has initiated a project in collaboration with UNGM to enhance automation and streamline the uploading (sharing) process of LTAs onto the UNGM, as well as to capture greater granularity of data of the use of shared LTAs. This project is currently under implementation.

UNGM's functionality for supplier performance flagging and rating functionality was enhanced, enabling agencies to rate and share supplier performance and flag suppliers that fail to meet performance standards.

In 2023, the UNGM secretariat embarked upon a large-scale stakeholder outreach programme to ascertain the future requirements of platform users. The approach has identified many initiatives that will form the basis of UNGM's development strategy to support collaboration amongst UN agencies to further the concept of Mutual Recognition. UNGM's vision is "to be the catalyst for sustainable development by offering a unique digital collaborative workspace that translates UN goals into action, and cultivating connections between the global business community, and the UN System and affiliated organizations."

Contact :

Ms. Bérénice Bessiere, Director, Procurement and Travel, WIPO, and Chair, UNGM

Email: berenice.bessiere@wipo.int

HUMAN RESOURCES:

OneHR Centre: Job Classification and Background Verification

The [United Nations Global Centre for Human Resources Services \(OneHR Centre\)](#) is an inter-agency operation established by the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) to streamline, harmonize and modernize defined human resources processes across the United Nations system. The United Nations Secretariat is responsible for the OneHR Centre's operational management.

With respect to its **job classification services**, the OneHR Centre notes the potential significant impact of Mutual Recognition on costs and harmonization, as all common system organizations are required to use the same job classification standards; however, none are currently able – due to internal policies – to rely on classifications conducted in other organizations.

- All the posts in the common system are classified in accordance with the ICSC Master Standards to ensure equal pay for equal work (with respect to the complexity of the duties and responsibilities associated with the post).
- The OneHR Centre's classification specialists present the client organizations with the appropriate grade for their posts based on the Terms of Reference (ToR) submitted.

- The use of the OneHR Centre for **job classification** enhances harmonization, eliminates the potential for bias, and should enable organizations to use classified ToRs from other organizations, which would further enhance harmonization and reduce the overall cost of job classification.

With respect to its **background verifications**, the OneHR Centre relies on Mutual Recognition in that information obtained is stored and re-used when staff members transfer to other organizations. With the OneHR Centre in operation since 2018, the use of stored information has started to increase as previously 'cleared candidates' for which information was stored are starting to transfer to other organizations.

- The organizations of the UN system are all required – by our Member States – to conduct comprehensive background checks of their personnel.
- The OneHR Centre conducts these checks for client organizations and stores the information for future use.
- The full background check encompasses four elements:
 - (i) Professional and criminal misconduct checks (public and non-public databases)
 - (ii) Verification of academic credentials (directly from the institution)
 - (iii) Verification of current/former employments
 - (iv) Verification of qualitative suitability (through supervisors/peers)

Contact:

Mr. Bart Willemsen

Chief, Compensation & Classification Section and OneHR Centre

Office of Human Resources

Email: bart.willemsen@un.org

Mandatory Learning Programme

As of April 2024, thirteen UN agencies, funds and programmes (AFPs) have joined the UN Secretariat in the Mutual Recognition process of mandatory learning programmes (UNICEF, UNDP, UNV, UNFPA, WHO, UNHCR, WFP, UNFCCC, FAO, ITC, IFAD, UNAIDS and OPCW). The first version of the overview of mutually recognized certificates of completed mandatory learning programmes with the AFPs was finalized and is available via a Business Intelligence (BI) dashboard. During this exercise, the mandatory learning programmes of the UN Secretariat were compared with those provided by AFPs to their newly recruited staff. Based on this comparison and subsequent discussions, OHR of the UN Secretariat and AFPs have identified from two to five equivalent mandatory learning programmes in each AFP and summarized them in a separate master list and an interactive dashboard, which is now being used as the main reference and planning tool for this exercise.

OHR has drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) template to conclude agreements with participating AFPs on Mutual Recognition of equivalent mandatory learning programmes.

Contact:

Mr. Hong Kwon

Chief, Strategic Talent Management Service

Global Strategy and Policy Division

Office of Human Resources

Email: kwon@un.org

United Nations Mutual Recognition of Rosters (UNMRR)

The United Nations Mutual Recognition of Rosters (UNMRR) is a Mutual Recognition-based initiative supported by a technology solution provided by the UN Secretariat.

As of April 2024, one UN Organization was looking at making the first selections under this initiative. Thirteen (13) positions were included in the rosters:

- P-2 Associate Human Resources Officer (excluding the applicable YPP rosters)
- P-3 Data Analyst
- P-3 Data Scientist
- P-3 Finance and Budget Officer
- P-3 Human Resources Officer
- P-3 Investigator
- P-3 Legal Officer
- P-3 Procurement Officer
- P-3 Security Coordination Officer
- P-4 Finance and Budget Officer
- P-4 Human Resources Officer
- P-4 Procurement Officer
- P-4 Security Coordination Officer

Contact:

Mr. Hong Kwon

Chief, Strategic Talent Management Service

Global Strategy and Policy Division

Office of Human Resources

Email: kwon@un.org

UN BOOKING HUB

The [UN Booking Hub](#) significant scale up within the UN system would not have been possible without the Mutual Recognition principle support. Now it represents the largest UN Global Shared Service for inter-agency collaboration on field service provisioning, with currently 18 UN Organizations using it to provide services to 1.5 million humanitarian customers per year with 1,650 service points in 116 countries.

The Service Level Agreement to join the Global shared Service is the same one for all entities providing a specific service (i.e. accommodation, mobility, clinics, etc.) and Mutual Recognition was adopted by all partners to speed up and simplify internal review of the legal clauses and service provision shortening the time to adoption of the common solution.

This has allowed UN partners to benefit from efficiency gains from service automation and reduced costs in faster way and has prevented duplications of efforts from multiple local solutions which were trying to solve digital transformation tactically rather than strategically enabling broader collaboration. In 2023, it is estimated that efficiency gains recorded USD 11.5 million for all organizations using the common solution.

Contact:

Ms. Alessandra Bianchini

Email: alessandra.bianchini@wfp.org

UN FLEET

Mutual recognition is a critical enabler for UN organizations to use the services of [UN FLEET](#). As of February 2024, UN FLEET has 410 confirmed orders and vehicles on lease in 58 countries and has signed Service Agreements with 13 entities [including UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, ILO, FAO, WFP, UNHCR, IOM, IFAD and four Secretariat entities (UNON, OCHA, UN Verification Mission in Colombia, the UNRCO in UAE)]. Throughout its first operational year (2023), UN FLEET increased its annual target from 250 to 400 vehicles to accommodate the faster growth than initially planned. The increasing utilization of UN FLEET's services across a broader spectrum of agencies and geographic regions signifies a collective acknowledgment of the benefits of Mutual Recognition within the UN system.

Contact:

Mr. Phil Jones

Email: phil.jones@unfleet.org

UN Web Buy Plus

Mutual Recognition is the core principle that enables the use of [UN Web Buy Plus](#). Participating entities recognize the UNOPS procurement process as sufficient for them to use and sign the UN Web BuyPlus Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as a first step. The initiative is

therefore a procurement efficiency enabler for the UN system, avoiding duplication of procurement efforts.

Contact:

Mr. Raad Gilyana

Email: raady@unops.org.

OPPORTUNITIES

Below is a number of functional areas of possible opportunities for Mutual Recognition:

Administration and facilities management

- Global service level agreement on the provision of Asset Disposal Services
- Centralized vehicle pool management
- Mobility and carpooling services digital management
- Accommodation digital management
- Medical services digital management
- Vehicle maintenance and services
- Sharing office or accommodation premises and services (security, cleaning, etc.)
- Travel services (hotel agreements, rates, etc.)
- Insurance (property/office, fleet, air assets, equipment, cash, malicious acts against UN personnel, cargo, liabilities, etc.)
- Conference Services (including Translation and Interpretation)
- Event organisation and management services
- Asset management services
- Protocol services

Finance

- Accounting, submission and tracking of VAT reimbursement
- Global Master Banking agreements (incl. money transfers) (already available)
- HACT micro-assessments and assurance activities
- Agreements related to the exchange of foreign currencies
- Payroll services
- Accounts payable services

Human Resources

- Recruitment and common rosters
- Staff secondment or loans, inter-agency transfers (outside the scope of existing inter-agency transfer agreements)
- UN medical and counseling facilities, doctors' rosters
- Training courses and certifications
- Job profiles, job descriptions and classification;

- UN Language Proficiency Exam services

Information and Communications Technology

- Telecommunications and Networking (satellite, mobile or fixed telephone, internet service providers, network in common premises, etc.)
- IT support (in common premises)
- IT system back-up/recovery centers
- Global ticketing/help desk systems
- Printing and scanning
- Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)
- New emerging technologies, Artificial Intelligence WBG/UN Guidelines and Blockchain WFP Building Blocks Platform
- Business Analytics and data Visualization Tools
- Cloud infrastructures and solutions
- Long-Term Agreements (LTAs) for the provision of IT Consultancy (technical and functional), security and Infrastructure assets and Services
- Data providers, including GIS data platforms
- Software solutions particularly those developed on Open Source frameworks

Logistics

- Warehouse and inventory management
- Third party freight forwarding
- Common service for customs clearance
- In country distribution and transportation
- Fuel management

Procurement

- Long-Term Agreements (LTAs)
 - Vehicle purchases and leasing
 - Contracts with airlines
 - Auction Services
 - E-catalogue and online ordering tool for LTA sharing and commonly procured items (see also UNGM and UN Web Buy Plus)
- Vendor roster and management, including vendor's sanctions and registration.
- Bid evaluation committee reviewing services
- Leveraging economies of scales, provided in the terms and conditions of another entity's contract (for example through accessing volume discounts by combining purchase volumes etc.)
- Leveraging policies for Innovation and specific new emerging technologies areas

- Leveraging Legal and Contractual Clauses for Software Services (Data Protection (security and privacy) IPs, Liability, Compliance and Auditing, Dispute Resolutions, Contract Length and Termination)

AWARENESS RAISING ACTIVITIES

To support raising awareness of the mutual recognition principle in an interactive manner during meetings and gatherings of groups of staff, a quiz that can be administered through online platforms such as Slido in the context of an in-person, hybrid or virtual meeting was created. The quiz can be provided in a form of an instructor-led or self-paced questionnaire.

The quiz was first administered live to approximately 80 heads of administration/missions' support/executive officers of UN Secretariat entities in an in-person conference in July 2023. The quiz was followed by brainstorming sessions in breakout rooms on how to address mutual recognition challenges and how to raise awareness of the potential and opportunities of operationalizing mutual recognition. The quiz was also administered in different contexts, including in inter-agency settings, in FAO, in ICAO (experimenting the self-paced approach). It was also used in March 2024 in the context of an "Innovation Day" dialogue attended by 175 participants from different UN Organizations, with varied profiles. Additional entities are planning similar awareness activities with the support of colleagues from the Community of Knowledge and Practice and the Mutual Recognition Champions Network.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

A document containing Frequently Asked Questions was developed based on input from CG participants to serve as resource material for briefing sessions or self-learning and self-exploration of applying the mutual recognition principle in concrete situations.

EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL MUTUAL RECOGNITION STORIES

A document providing examples of successful implementations of the mutual recognition principle is available. It illustrates concrete means to operationalize Mutual Recognition across support pillars to help UN system staff grasp the extent to which the Mutual Recognition Principle has been and could be leveraged in support of mandate delivery.

RESOURCES

If you have any questions about MR and how to apply MR in your context, please utilize the following resources:

<https://www.ungm.org>

<https://onehr.un.org>

<https://unbooking.org>

<https://unfleet.org/>

<https://unwebbuyplus.org/>

<https://unsceb.org/mutual-recognition>

[https://www.ungm.org/Shared/KnowledgeCenter/Pages/HLCMPN MAIN](https://www.ungm.org/Shared/KnowledgeCenter/Pages/HLCMPN_MAIN)
[| Policy Portal \(un.org\)](#)

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

[Add acronyms as needed]

BIG - Business Innovation Group

BOS – Business Operations Strategy

CBO – Common Back Office

CO – Country Office

CP – Common Premises

CRC – Contract Review Committee

CSL – Common Service Line (under BOS)

FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

GSS – Global Shared Services (UN System)

GSSC – Global Shared Service Centre (in UNICEF)

HACT - Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers

ICAO – International Civil Aviation Organization

ICSC – International Civil Service Commission

IFAD – International Fund for Agricultural Development

ILO – International Labour Organization

IOM – International Organization for Migration

ITC – International Trade Centre

ITU – International Telecommunications Union

LTA – Long-Term Agreement

MOU - Memorandum of Understanding

MR – Mutual recognition

OMT – Operations Management Team

SG – Secretary General

SLA – Interagency Service Level Agreement

TOR – Terms of Reference

UNAIDS – United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS

UNCT – UN Country Team

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund

UN-Habitat - United Nations Human Settlements Programme

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

UNIDO – United Nations Industrial Development Organization

UNOPS – United Nations Office for Project Services

UNRWA – United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

UNSDG – United Nations Sustainable Development Group

UNWOMEN – United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

WFP – World Food Programme

WHO – World Health Organization

WMO – World Meteorological Organization