



Chief Executives Board for Coordination

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Report of the High-level Committee on Management on its intersessional meeting on the review of the United Nations security management system

(24 November 2025, virtual)



I. Review of the United Nations security management system

1. The Chair of the High-level Committee on Management (HLCM), Catherine Pollard, opened the meeting, recalling that at the fiftieth session of HLCM, held on 30 September and 1 October 2025, the independent expert leading the review of the United Nations security management system, Mourad Wahba, had presented a report on the review. The steering committee guiding the review was chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, Gilles Michaud, and was composed of HLCM representatives from the International Monetary Fund, the International Organization for Migration, 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 (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

2. The objective of the review was to develop realistic and implementable recommendations to address shortcomings or amplify strengths identified at the structural, governance, decision-making, normative or operational levels, or at any other applicable level.

3. The report included proposals on regional hubs, resource pooling and digital transformation and highlighted the need for reform in the light of budget constraints and for alignment with the UN80 Initiative. It also included a series of priority recommendations that were summarized in an implementation plan for priority “no-regret” investments.

4. At the fiftieth session, HLCM members had called for further work in the area of governance, as well as on financial and workforce requirements and intergovernmental implications.

5. A series of assessments had subsequently been conducted by the Human Resources Network, the Finance and Budget Network and the Inter-Agency Security Management Network. The steering committee had prepared a framing paper to guide HLCM reflections and considerations.

6. The HLCM Chair thanked the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security for having led the ambitious undertaking and the independent expert for completing the review in a very short time frame and for engaging in an extremely consultative process. She asked the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security to introduce the discussion and to highlight the key elements from the assessment conducted by the Inter-Agency Security Management Network.

7. The Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security expressed his appreciation to HLCM members for their engagement in the important discussion. He acknowledged the sustained work of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network, which had met weekly over the previous two months, and recognized the contributions of the Human Resources Network and the Finance and Budget Network, which had been tasked in early October 2025 to carry out specific analyses and submit assessments.

8. He noted that in its framing paper, the Inter-Agency Security Management Network had distinguished between areas of consensus and areas where views diverged. The Network had reached consensus in the following four areas:

(a) The assessment of strengths, shortcomings, opportunities and systemic challenges across the United Nations security management system identified in the report from the independent expert;

(b) Support for “no-regret” investments (category 1), namely, measures that would strengthen the security management system at present and in the future,

including by establishing an emergency security fund; developing a universal price list for security services; addressing outstanding issues related to the integrated security workforce supporting special political and peacekeeping missions; and strengthening the role of national security officers;

(c) Acknowledgment that several recommendations were already being implemented (category 2). The Inter-Agency Security Management Network had sought only acknowledgment by HLCM;

(d) Recognition that additional “no-regret” investments and several governance models¹ required further analysis as their operational, financial and human resources implications should be fully understood before any decisions were made.

9. Where consensus was not reached, the disagreements related directly or indirectly to governance of the security management system. Some members of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network expressed concern that establishing a new governance structure could exclude smaller entities within the security management system and lead to greater centralization of decision-making. Others were more open to change.

10. Another area of divergence was linked to the nature of the relationship between the United Nations security management system and the Department of Safety and Security. Several members of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network supported the signing of a service-level agreement, while others, including the Department of Safety and Security, did not believe one was currently necessary.

11. The Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security noted that it was important to situate the review of the security management system in its broader context. In 2025 – 20 years after the establishment of the Department of Safety and Security and the United Nations security management system – the United Nations was facing an increasing number of high-risk and very high-risk operating environments, and levels of unpredictability continued to rise. At the same time, the funds contributed to many agencies were decreasing, which had resulted in reduced programme activities. Paradoxically, reduced programming could lead to greater insecurity for the United Nations.

12. The key point in his remarks was that security could not be scaled down in the same way or at the same speed as programmatic activities. Security needs did not diminish proportionally. Unprecedented budgetary pressures, increased scrutiny from Member States and growing risk required enhanced cohesion and efficiency in the functioning of the security system, rather than fragmentation of the security architecture. Therefore, the reforms under way were aimed at reducing fragmentation and reinforcing unity of purpose, and the same principle should guide the evolution of the approach to security management.

13. The Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security noted that from the perspective of the Department of Safety and Security, model 1, complemented by the proposed “no-regret” investments, was the preferred option. Moving rapidly towards model 4 without fully understanding its implications or assessing related costs could create instability at a moment when the United Nations system was already under considerable strain.

14. For that reason, the Department of Safety and Security believed that such a shift would be premature, especially as several improvements were already under way, such as: enhanced training for designated officials; strengthened accountability for

¹ The four models considered during the review are described in [CEB/2025/5](#), para. 37.

the Principal/Chief/Security Adviser and designated officials; the establishment of multi-country offices to support regionalization; and the recent launch of an appeal that would include the establishment of the recommended emergency fund.

15. The Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security concluded by underscoring the importance of governance and trust. As a recurring issue identified in the review was the need to improve trust between the Department of Safety and Security and some organizations within the United Nations security management system, the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security fully supported the recommendation to establish a governance mechanism composed of members at the Assistant Secretary-General level to provide clearer strategic guidance as well as regular, structured engagement to inform decision-making.

16. Participants welcomed the comprehensive documentation prepared for the meeting, including the analyses from the Finance and Budget Network, the Human Resources Network and the Inter-Agency Security Management Network, and commended the highly consultative process through which they had been generated. The clarity provided by the Inter-Agency Security Management Network through its categorizing of recommendations into “no-regret” investments (categories 1 and 2) and issues requiring further study was highlighted as an important step forward.

A. Immediate priorities and “no-regret” measures

17. There was broad agreement that organizations should move rapidly to implement model 1, accompanied by the “no-regret” investments identified under categories 1 and 2. Those measures were seen as urgent responses to pressing security and budgetary realities across the system. Many organizations emphasized the need for an action plan to guide timely implementation.

18. Several participants underscored the need to ensure that resource projections and staffing assumptions were aligned with the current fiscal constraints, noting especially the limits of appeals-based funding and the likelihood of reduced budgets going forward.

B. Governance considerations

19. There was widespread recognition of the need to strengthen strategic guidance and oversight.

20. Many organizations stressed that the Inter-Agency Security Management Network should remain the central technical body for system-wide security management, with its role clarified rather than diluted. Some saw value in a strategic senior-level group that could provide high-level guidance, particularly on complex or high-risk situations, provided it did not duplicate structures, undermine the Inter-Agency Security Management Network or erode trust. Several organizations suggested that such a body should be activated only when needed rather than on a permanent basis.

21. Many organizations highlighted the importance of preserving decentralized decision-making authority at the country level, particularly in high-risk or fast-moving contexts. Participants emphasized that governance reforms must avoid centralizing operational decisions in ways that compromised agility or undermined the designated official system.

22. A note of caution was broadly expressed against creating additional governance layers. Several organizations advocated exploring an interim, high-level mechanism

for issues that could not be resolved between the Inter-Agency Security Management Network, the Finance and Budget Network and the Human Resources Network, while further analytical work on long-term governance arrangements continued.

C. Service-level agreements and a universal price list

23. Several participants supported the development of service-level agreements as a means of increasing transparency, predictability and trust in service delivery by the Department of Safety and Security. Many saw such agreements as essential for clarifying mutual expectations and ensuring equitable treatment across agencies, including smaller entities and those with distinct operational profiles. Some also viewed such agreements as a way to address long-standing tensions around budgetary contributions and value for money.

24. The establishment of a universal price list was widely supported, often in connection with service-level agreements, although some participants emphasized that it must be developed with clear governance, financial modelling and the involvement of the Finance and Budget Network. A number of organizations stressed that the price list must allow flexibility, particularly for institutions outside the core United Nations governance framework that required differentiated arrangements.

D. Emergency security fund

25. Many participants supported establishing an emergency security fund, recognizing its importance in responding to urgent security needs. However, several organizations requested clear governance arrangements, definitions of expenditure authority and assurances of transparency before they could endorse contributing to it. Some noted the need to understand how such a fund would relate to existing financing mechanisms, including jointly financed activities and existing trust funds.

E. Longer-term structural models

26. While model 1 was almost unanimously endorsed as the immediate path forward, several organizations expressed openness to considering model 4 (or similar future structural adjustments) once detailed analysis became available. Many emphasized the need for further financial, operational and human resource-related modelling, including a deeper understanding of the implications for staffing, cost distribution and field operations. It was noted that the time constraints of the review had limited the depth of consultation with end users, which would need to be remedied before a structural shift could be adopted.

F. Field capacity, expertise and predictability

27. Participants highlighted the persistent challenges related to capacity, skills, mobility and professional development within the security workforce. Several emphasized that improvements in training or processes would have a limited effect unless staffing models addressed those systemic issues.

28. Multiple speakers underscored the need for clearer, more predictable service delivery by the Department of Safety and Security, especially for agencies with a substantial field presence or unique risk profiles. Co-location of the regional structures of the Department of Safety and Security with other United Nations regional hubs was encouraged to support operational coherence.

G. Financial transparency and sustainability

29. It was noted that decisions about security management must be grounded in a realistic assessment of what the system could afford, particularly with shrinking budgets. Some participants called for more detailed information from the Department of Safety and Security on funding sources – differentiating the services to be financed from the programme budget, jointly financed activities or extrabudgetary funds and those that could be shifted to the universal price list – to allow for more informed decision-making.

H. Principles to guide the way forward

30. Across the interventions, several guiding principles consistently emerged:

- (a) Duty of care must remain central;
- (b) Decentralized operational decision-making must be safeguarded;
- (c) Efficiency and alignment with broader United Nations reforms, including United Nations 2.0 and the UN80 Initiative, should inform changes;
- (d) Operational relevance and field perspectives must shape future governance and structural solutions;
- (e) Technical rigour, trust and transparency were essential to maintaining confidence in the system.

I. Next steps

31. There was strong support for the development of an action plan for the implementation of the recommendations regarding model 1 and investments under categories 1 and 2, as well as for continuing analytical work on governance models, financial implications and structural options such as model 4. Participants reiterated their commitment to a collaborative, phased and evidence-based approach that strengthened the United Nations security management system while respecting the diverse mandates and governance frameworks of its member organizations.

32. The Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security thanked colleagues for their comments and suggestions and offered some proposals on the way forward.

33. First, he noted that nothing in the review of the security management system or in the recommended implementation of model 1 and the “no-regret” investments under category 1 was intended to alter the decentralized nature of decision-making within the existing accountability framework for the security management system. The authority of designated officials and security management teams at the country level remained fully intact. The proposals did not change that framework, nor did they diminish country-driven decision-making.

34. Second, on the issue of service-level agreements and the universal price list, it was important to remember that significant groundwork had already been completed. Over the previous two years, through the Inter-Agency Security Management Network, a results-based framework, or “results chain,” had been developed that identified:

- (a) Services to be provided by the Department of Safety and Security
- (b) Services to be delivered by agency security professionals;
- (c) Services delivered jointly.

35. The framework would provide a solid foundation should HLCM decide to move forward with service-level agreements.

36. The Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security then underscored that, should entities be able to select certain services and decline others, it would become increasingly difficult to operationalize the Department's mandate. Linking that approach to a universal price list would further complicate the system by creating difficult questions around which entities were responsible for delivering or paying for the various services. Such an approach could introduce more complexity than clarity.

37. Third, on governance, the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security emphasized the value of having a steering committee. In fulfilling his responsibility to the Secretary-General for system-wide security, access to colleagues who understood programme demands, operational realities, budget constraints and human resources issues had been extremely beneficial, far beyond the type of support a purely technical forum would provide. A steering committee would not be intended to replace or weaken the essential technical role of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network.

38. The Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security indicated his diverging opinion relating to the recommendation concerning the Executive Group on Security, which, in his view, should remain a body that was convened exclusively in crisis situations to support urgent operational decisions, such as "go/no-go" determinations and related considerations. It was an indispensable ad hoc mechanism and must remain unchanged.

39. Separately, however, he saw value in establishing a body to advise on system-wide management issues that more broadly affected the Department of Safety and Security and the United Nations security management system. He suggested tasking the current steering committee with exploring the details of such an arrangement and taking into account representation from smaller entities to ensure that their concerns were fully considered.

40. The Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security clarified that the proposed emergency security fund should be funded from extrabudgetary resources to assist when there was an emergency requiring the deployment of extra capacity and capabilities. He stressed the need to have clear governance for such a fund.

41. On that subject, the Controller noted that the Central Emergency Response Fund of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs had been created primarily to enable swift action in situations that were very similar to security scenarios and that, for it to work, a corresponding standing governance mechanism was needed to make rapid decisions on operational and financial responses.

42. Lastly, the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security addressed the issue of organizational independence. He stressed the importance of being extremely cautious about introducing additional forms of independence within a system that relied fundamentally on collective security risk management. Independent action by an agency in high-risk environments – making unilateral decisions without coordination – could, and had, increase the risk for all other organizations operating in the same context.

43. While the Executive Heads of each entity retained the authority to make decisions regarding the risks to their own personnel, those decisions must reflect the reality that the United Nations operated as an interdependent system, and unilateral action by a single entity could compromise the safety of others. In the professional assessment of the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, the existing level of organizational independence was appropriate; increasing it would introduce

significant risk. A cohesive, unified approach to security remained the safest and most responsible way forward for the entire system.

44. In her concluding remarks, the HLCM Chair noted the broad agreement to proceed with model 1 as the immediate way forward. While model 4 could represent a desirable end state in the longer term, considerably more financial, operational and structural analysis would be required before HLCM could responsibly consider transitioning to that model.

45. The Chair stressed that the General Assembly, in establishing the United Nations security management system, had strongly reaffirmed the accountability of the Department of Safety and Security and the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security for leading a centrally managed security system, while simultaneously empowering decentralized decision-making at the country level. That remained a core principle and was aligned with the reforms as part of the UN80 Initiative and with the expectations of Member States.

46. She further underlined the concerns raised regarding opt-in/opt-out arrangements. While the Committee should pursue clarity around the services provided and consider, in due course, how service-level agreements might support transparency, such action was fundamentally different from allowing agencies to selectively opt in or out of the security management system. When security risks materialized on the ground, organizations could not make unilateral decisions that diverged from the system-wide security posture. If any entity felt strongly that it required operational independence in that domain, it may need to reconsider its participation in the security management system as individualized flexibility could not be at the expense of collective security.

47. Reaffirming the importance of maintaining a strong and operationally effective Inter-Agency Security Management Network, the Chair noted that the current environment required a broader strategic, programmatic and political lens. While that was precisely the role of HLCM, the Committee was not positioned to convene on an ad hoc basis whenever advice was needed, nor could it substitute for crisis-specific mechanisms such as the Executive Group on Security. Strengthening governance therefore should not be seen as adding layers, but rather as bridging the gap between operational security management and the overarching leadership responsibilities of the Department of Safety and Security.

48. The Chair further noted that service-level agreements could play a useful role in increasing transparency around expected services. However, the Committee must remain vigilant to avoid any implication that agencies could select alternative providers, which would undermine the coherence of the system.

J. Conclusions

49. The High-level Committee on Management:

(a) **Expressed its appreciation for the work undertaken by the independent expert, the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security and the steering committee in completing the review;**

(b) **Agreed to proceed with model 1 as the immediate way forward and to complete all necessary further financial, operational and structural analysis on model 4, as the possible end state in the longer term;**

(c) **Supported implementing the “no-regret” investments under category 1, many of which were already under way;**

- (d) Asked the Department of Safety and Security to develop an action plan for the implementation of model 1 and the category 1 recommendations, in consultation with entities of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network;
- (e) Agreed to transition the current steering committee into a security governance group and to revisit its composition so as to ensure more balanced representation that adequately reflected the diversity of the United Nations system, and to that end, tasked the existing steering committee for the review of the United Nations security management system to develop terms of reference before the end of 2025, including with respect to the scope of responsibilities, reporting lines to HLCM and relationships with the Inter-Agency Security Management Network and other relevant inter-agency mechanisms, and to submit the terms of reference to HLCM for review and approval;
- (f) Agreed that the effectiveness and utility of the new forum would be reviewed 12 months following its establishment, which was planned for early 2026;
- (g) Tasked the Department of Safety and Security, in parallel with the work on the universal price list as part of the implementation of category 1 measures, to initiate consultations with the rest of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network, in coordination with the Finance and Budget Network, on the development of service-level agreements that would address the requirements, constraints and interests of all concerned entities as part of a collective security management system;
- (h) Stressed that all such new measures were intended to strengthen the United Nations system security architecture, on which organizations depended as they operated in an increasingly unpredictable world. The goal was to have a more coherent, strategically grounded and collectively supported United Nations security management system that ensured the safety of all personnel while remaining aligned with the UN80 Initiative and the expectations of Member States.

II. Progress with far-reaching efficiency initiatives

50. The HLCM Chair provided the Committee with a briefing on progress made with far-reaching efficiency initiatives.

51. She noted that the recent session of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) had marked a significant milestone with the finalization of the UN80 Initiative action plan.

52. In parallel, HLCM had released the external communications package on far-reaching efficiency initiatives. The initiatives were well placed to drive implementation in many areas of the UN80 Initiative, which was aligned with HLCM priority areas of work, all the more so since they had already gone through a process of ideation, prioritization and project planning, involving top experts in the respective fields from across the United Nations system and engaging the most relevant expert-level forums available.

53. Those developments had heightened expectations and placed increased pressure on HLCM entities to demonstrate that their efforts were coherent, impactful and aligned with the broader reform agenda.

54. The Chair had been asked to co-lead work package 14 on the unified services road map, with the Co-Chairs of the Business Innovations Group and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme.

55. Work package 14 was composed of five actions and aimed at streamlining support services to ensure that United Nations organizations leveraged economies of scale and a nimble approach to operations. The goal was to avoid creating additional complexity or duplication and to leverage work package 14 in order to achieve coherence and collective ownership of existing initiatives, including the far-reaching efficiency initiatives proposed by HLCM and the efforts of the Business Innovations Group in relation to global shared services.

56. The Chair underscored that HLCM initiatives would proceed with the same set-up, governance and processes as agreed by the Committee, within the established coalitions of the willing. The HLCM Chair and Vice-Chair and the HLCM secretariat would be responsible for coordination with the UN80 Initiative work packages. Consideration would be given to arranging additional virtual sessions between November 2025 and April 2026 to update the Committee on progress made.

57. The Chair briefly outlined the actions under work package 14, among which actions 63 and 65 were closely linked. Action 63 was to prepare a unified services road map based on existing reform commitments and two models, whereby some services would be provided by consolidated entities and others through marketplaces of providers. Action 65 was to conduct a feasibility assessment for shared services to enable the integration of basic information and communications technology services, as well as of the payroll, human resources, finance and enterprise resource planning systems. Those two actions should therefore be addressed together.

58. In doing so, HLCM and the Business Innovations Group would adopt a coherent approach that built on work already under way in HLCM through the far-reaching efficiency initiatives and in the Business Innovations Group through the global shared services portfolio. While far-reaching efficiency initiatives were advancing through coalitions of the willing, the Business Innovations Group had already made notable progress with support from the United Nations Advisory Alliance. The aim was to deliver a unified road map to integrate those processes as a shared responsibility, establishing a joint working-level team with representatives from the secretariats of both HLCM and the Business Innovations Group. The joint team would frame the road map and ensure that the feasibility assessment was the first step in that process. The Co-Chairs of the Business Innovations Group, as well as the HLCM Chair and Vice-Chair, would lead such action.

59. Action 64, on integrating supply chains, taking the new humanitarian compact as the concrete starting point, was well aligned with the far-reaching efficiency initiative on a coordinated United Nations supply chain (referred to as S2), which was being conducted under the auspices of the Supply Chain Network of HLCM. It was led by the co-leads on the coordinated supply chain, namely the United Nations Secretariat, WFP and UNICEF. Work under action 64 would be closely linked to action 17 in work package 2 of the UN80 Initiative action plan, on the new humanitarian compact, with the involvement of the reconfigured Supply Chain Network since all supply chain activities were best channelled through the Supply Chain Network, in which the relevant expertise resided.

60. Action 66, on accelerating the move towards a unified service backbone at the country level and eliminating costly duplication on the ground, fell within the remit of the Business Innovations Group as it related to work already under way on common country back offices and other projects at the country level. The Co-Chairs of the Business Innovations Group would therefore lead that action.

61. Finally, action 67, on harmonizing most indirect and programme support costs, was connected to action 66 and was contingent on progress in scaling shared services,

especially at the country level. The Business Innovations Group would therefore be best suited to lead action 67.

62. Direct involvement by HLCM in implementing work package 14 would extend to action 63 on preparing the unified services road map and to action 65 on the feasibility assessment for shared services. Overall, the Committee's guiding principles would be collective responsibility, coherence and efficiency, avoiding duplication, leveraging existing mechanisms and initiatives rather than creating new ones, and working together effectively to meet expectations.

63. The Co-Chairs of the Business Innovations Group, along with the representative of WFP, who was one of the co-leads of work package 14, welcomed the leadership of the HLCM Chair on guiding the way forward and stressed the importance of avoiding duplication and leveraging existing mechanisms.

Annex

Work Package #14: Unified services roadmap

Package Lead Chair HLCM; Co-Chairs BIG, ED WFP						Actions	5
WS	#	Indicative Action (A)	Para	Proposed Lead(s)	Working Level	Proposed Milestone 1	Proposed Milestone Final
WS3	63	Prepare a Unified Services Roadmap, based on existing reform commitments and two models: some services will be provided by consolidated entities, and others through marketplaces of providers	p. 83	HLCM Chair/Vice-Chair/ BIG Co-Chairs			
WS3	64	Integrate supply chains, taking the New Humanitarian Compact as the concrete starting point	p. 84	USG DOS; ED WFP; ED UNICEF;			
WS3	65	Conduct assessment for integration of basic information and communication technology services, as well as payroll, human resources, finance, and enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems	p. 84	HLCM Chair/ BIG Co-Chairs			
WS3	66	Accelerate the move toward a unified service backbone at country level; eliminate costly duplication on the ground	p. 85	BIG Co-Chairs			
WS3	67	Harmonize most indirect and programme support costs	p. 86	BIG Co-Chairs			

Abbreviations: BIG, Business Innovations Group; DOS, Department of Operational Support; ED, Executive Director; HLCM, High-level Committee on Management; UNICEF, United Nations Children's Fund; USG, Under-Secretary-General; WFP, World Food Programme.