



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
20 March 2019

Original: English

2019 session

26 July 2018–24 July 2019

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 2018

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 2018. The report includes highlights of the key activities of CEB in fostering a coherent approach to policy, management and operational matters so as to enhance United Nations system-wide coordination in support of intergovernmental mandates.

In 2018, CEB and its subsidiary bodies focused their efforts on a wide range of programmatic and management issues in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and strengthened the collective capacities of the United Nations system through joint actions. These included deepening the system-wide understanding of the contribution of technological innovation to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and the implications of such innovation; fostering the harmonization and mutual recognition of business practices; promoting enhanced collaboration on procurement; and addressing sexual harassment. Transparency and accountability remained key priorities for CEB. The report also highlights 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 also responds to the request by the General Assembly, in paragraph 4 (b) of its resolution [64/289](#) on system-wide coherence, to include appropriate information on the work of the Board in its annual overview report to the Economic and Social Council, which is also considered by the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

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

3. The General Assembly, in its resolution [73/269](#), took note of the annual overview report of CEB for 2017 ([E/2018/48](#)), as recommended by the Committee for Programme and Coordination in its report on the work of its fifty-eighth session (see [A/73/16](#), chap. III.A).

4. The present report includes highlights of the major activities carried out in 2018 under the auspices of CEB. As a coordinating body, CEB and its subsidiary mechanisms, the High-level Committee on Programmes and the High-level Committee on Management, foster policy and management coherence to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of United Nations system activities. The Board's activities conform to intergovernmental mandates and support the priorities of Member States.

5. With the assumption of his position in January 2017, the Secretary-General called for the revitalization of the United Nations system as the cornerstone of effective multilateralism and an instrument well adapted to confront global challenges and generate collective action. As part of the commitment of the Secretary-General to more effective delivery by the United Nations development system on the 2030 Agenda, the Board agreed (see [CEB/2017/2](#)) to take the United Nations Development Group – now known as the United Nations Sustainable Development Group – out of the CEB architecture and reconstitute it, with the Deputy Secretary-General as Chair. System-wide policy coherence and coordination on programmatic and management matters continued to be the responsibility of the High-level Committee on Programmes and the High-level Committee on Management, respectively.

6. The present report serves to illustrate how, throughout 2018, CEB and its subsidiary bodies focused their efforts on a wide range of programmatic and management issues in support of the global agenda. Such efforts included deepening the system-wide understanding of the implications of technological innovation and the contribution of such innovation to the attainment of the Goals; reaching a common position on drug policies; fostering the harmonization and mutual recognition of business practices; promoting enhanced collaboration on procurement; and addressing sexual harassment.

7. Transparency and accountability remained key priorities for CEB. In 2018, the Board continued its practice of actively engaging in substantive exchanges with Member States through formal and informal dialogues and further enhancing the information provided on its website (www.unsceb.org). The Board also continued to coordinate with other jointly financed bodies, in particular the International Civil Service Commission, the Joint Inspection Unit and the Board of Auditors.

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

8. In support of resolution 70/8, in which the General Assembly recognized the central role of CEB in ensuring coordinated United Nations system-wide support in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Board in 2018 focused much of its attention on strengthening system-wide policy and programmatic coordination and coherence to address risks and opportunities emanating from major global trends and emerging challenges. In this context, the Board gave particular consideration to the socioeconomic implications of new technologies and to innovation-driven opportunities for accelerating the achievement of the Goals.

9. The United Nations system has recently been grappling with the impact, both positive and negative, of scientific and technological innovation on sustainable development and human well-being, as highlighted in the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. In addition, the vital role of science, technology and innovation in facilitating efforts to address global challenges, including poverty eradication, food security, quality education and environmental protection, was recognized by the General Assembly in its resolution 72/242 on the impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The issue has also increasingly become the subject of debate among intergovernmental bodies, forums and mechanisms, including those outlined in General Assembly resolution 73/17. Mindful of the calls in those resolutions, CEB first took up the topic in 2017, considering the potential challenges, opportunities and social, economic and environmental implications of rapidly developing technologies and concluding that the United Nations system had an important role to play in supporting Member States, especially the least developed, in harnessing the benefits of new technologies while addressing their risks and minimizing their destabilizing effects.

10. Building on those deliberations, CEB, at its first regular session of 2018, engaged in an in-depth discussion on the impact of new and emerging technologies on sustainable development, focusing especially on their ability to contribute to the accelerated achievement of the Goals. While recognizing that technological innovation could potentially enable societies to advance rapidly towards sustainable development, the Board underlined that poor access to infrastructure, along with the widening digital divide, had posed major hurdles that have hindered developing countries in harnessing the benefits of new technologies. A holistic long-term vision for a future heavily influenced by technological innovations was needed in order to centre investment in people, especially young people, in order to prepare them for the realities of the future. As a platform for dialogue, the United Nations could help to steer the process of technological innovation towards the safeguarding of human progress, the promotion of people's well-being and the protection of human rights.

11. To further advance system-wide efforts, CEB tasked its High-level Committee on Programmes to deepen its analytical examinations, pursue joint actions on the impact of technological innovations on sustainable development and promote shared values for guiding the efforts of the United Nations system in the era of transformative change. A more systematic engagement with youth that built on existing initiatives was also identified as an important system-wide pursuit. That system-wide work on technological innovation is linked to and supports the Secretary-General's strategy on new technologies, which was launched in 2018.¹ The goal of the strategy is to

¹ www.un.org/en/newtechnologies/images/pdf/SGs-Strategy-on-New-Technologies.pdf.

elaborate how the United Nations system will support the use of new technologies to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and to align them with the values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the norms and standards of international law.

12. At its first and second regular sessions of 2018, and complementing its deliberations on emerging trends and the implications of new technologies for sustainable development, CEB, supported by the High-level Committee on Management, held in-depth discussions on the need for change within the United Nations system to enhance the capacities of system entities and improve the system's working methods in order to better support Member States in an evolving future. That was seen as essential in order for the United Nations system to more efficiently and effectively deliver on its mandates of serving programme countries and to scale up its collective effort to help meet the Goals.

13. Specifically, in its first regular session of 2018, CEB members, recognizing the imperative to integrate innovation within and across United Nations system entities, agreed to develop organization-specific plans to build capabilities to create a culture of innovation, including the promotion of partnerships that foster innovation. They also made a commitment to creating institutional structures or mechanisms to support innovation and to harness agents of change within their organizations. In order to facilitate those efforts, CEB called for the development of an innovation toolkit to provide leading practices and guidance to United Nations entities. The United Nations Innovation Network,² an informal, collaborative community of innovators across all staff grades, United Nations entities and duty stations was tasked with leading that process and continuing to support the Board by providing insights on innovation and support to specific actions.

14. At its second regular session of 2018, CEB members previewed the framework and proof of concept of an innovation toolkit due to be released in 2019. The framework featured a diagnostic self-assessment and select tools from modules on the five areas of innovation strategy, partnerships, architecture, culture and evaluation. CEB members acknowledged the potential of the framework to assist United Nations system organizations in becoming more able to foster and scale innovation and recognized the possibility that staff across the system would benefit from the best practices and lessons learned contained in the toolkit. The purpose of the toolkit is to complement and support broader institutional transformation that will enable the practice of innovating to become a central priority in all aspects of an organization's work.

15. The High-level Committee on Programmes, in follow-up to CEB directives and in support of the Secretary-General's strategy on new technologies, engaged in a series of in-depth analytical examinations of the impact of new technologies on the achievement of the Goals, with particular focus on the unique perspectives and needs of developing countries as an over-arching and cross-cutting consideration for that work. The effort was aimed at developing a shared understanding and common knowledge of the complex challenges posed by new technologies and their potential for advancing human progress and sustainable development. To that end, the Committee considered artificial intelligence and the future of food, work and education and learning.

16. The Committee's deliberations were enriched by a dialogue with the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth and members of Young United Nations, the informal network of 700 young staff from across the United Nations system. The dialogue

² www.uninnovation.network.

helped the Committee in considering the perspective of young people on issues that will significantly impact societies in the future.

17. In April 2018, at its thirty-fifth session, the High-level Committee on Programmes considered an analytical paper on the future of food, which had been prepared through an inter-agency consultative process under the leadership of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Recognizing the need for inclusive, equitable and sustainable rural transformation in order to implement the 2030 Agenda, the Committee noted the potential of new technologies to positively influence such transformation. At the same time, the Committee acknowledged that technology would be only one of several important dimensions shaping the future of food that needed to be addressed holistically. Other aspects discussed by the Committee included governance issues, demographic changes, social dynamics, population movements, conflict and environmental and climate factors. The Committee reaffirmed “leaving no one behind” as the guiding principle of the 2030 Agenda and underscored that the United Nations system was committed to promoting inclusive, equitable and sustainable food systems by effectively playing its convening, policy and advisory role in support of the efforts of Member States.

18. While advances in the area of artificial intelligence can potentially lead to a range of development-related benefits, they may also have the potential to disrupt societies in fundamental ways. At its thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth sessions, the High-level Committee on Programmes, recognizing the transformative power of artificial intelligence to serve as a force for good, underlined the need for significant investment in capacity-building in order to harness the transformative power of artificial intelligence in a manner that benefits those at risk of being left behind, especially in developing countries. Stressing the complex multidimensional nature of artificial intelligence, the Committee agreed to develop, under the leadership of the International Telecommunication Union, a United Nations system-wide strategic approach and road map to support developing countries in strengthening capacities to address the opportunities and risks posted by artificial intelligence, for consideration by the High-level Committee on Programmes at its thirty-seventh session, in April 2019.

19. When considering the societal impact of rapidly developing artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies, the changing jobs landscape and the need to transform educational systems accordingly are among the priority concerns. In its resolution [72/235](#), the General Assembly underscored that the future of work required adaptability and a life-cycle approach to education and learning.

20. Accordingly, at its thirty-sixth session, the Committee reviewed a draft strategy on the future of work, prepared under the leadership of the International Labour Organization, which outlined a joint vision, guiding principles and key elements of implementation. That coordinated initiative was aimed at bolstering the ability of the United Nations system to provide adequate policy guidance in response to new employment trends and to mitigate the impact of new technologies on jobs. The Committee noted that the strategy, through its equitable and inclusive promotion of decent jobs for all, had great potential to contribute to ensuring that no one was left behind, as called for in the 2030 Agenda. Given the rapid and uncertain nature of societal changes, it also underscored the need for lifelong learning, especially in the area of digital skills. The High-level Committee on Programmes is expected to finalize this work in the first half of 2019 in concomitance with the centenary initiative on the future of work of the International Labour Organization.³

³ See www.ilo.org/global/topics/future-of-work/lang--en/index.htm.

21. Complementing its exploration on the future of work, the High-level Committee on Programmes also addressed the issue of the future of education and learning. The Committee considered ways to support countries in making the best use of information and communication technologies and other innovative technologies for learning and for addressing data gaps in education. It also emphasized the use of technology to promote learning throughout life cycle; the importance of ensuring that Governments were well equipped to manage the risks of greater use of new technologies for learning; and the need to support Member States in their efforts to ensure that gains from new technologies were shared broadly.

22. A road map for a United Nations system-wide strategic approach for achieving inclusive, equitable and innovative education and learning for all was developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) through an inter-agency consultative process. The Committee agreed to prioritize the delivery of a limited number of critical interventions in areas where whole-of-system engagements and collective actions add value and complement activities and mechanisms already in place, including implementation of the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4. The High-level Committee on Programmes is expected to consider a finalized draft of the strategic approach at its thirty-seventh session.

23. Throughout those efforts to deepen the system-wide understanding of the implications of rapidly developing technologies on the achievement of the Goals, the High-level Committee on Programmes consistently stressed that a key responsibility of the United Nations system was to ensure that developing countries, in particularly the least developed, as well as the poorest and most vulnerable members of their societies, were not further disadvantaged and left behind by the application of new technologies. To orient and focus its ongoing workstreams appropriately, the Committee undertook an analysis, prepared by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, on the unique concerns, needs and challenges faced by developing countries, with a particular focus on the "bottom billion", and on ways to support their achievement of the Goals in a rapidly changing world.

24. The global drug problem was another issue that demanded the priority attention of CEB in 2018. The problem, which affects approximately 275 million people,⁴ presents a complex global challenge that is closely interlinked with sustainable development, peace and security and human rights concerns. Combating the problem is therefore integral to the attainment of the Goals. By adopting the outcome document of the 2016 special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, entitled "Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem" (resolution [S-30/1](#), annex), global leaders reaffirmed the need to address the key causes and consequences of the world drug problem in a coherent and coordinated manner. In response to the call of Member States to United Nations system entities to strengthen inter-agency coordination and enhance coherence at all levels with regard to the world drug problem (see [E/2017/28](#), Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution [60/1](#), annex), CEB addressed the issue in November 2018 in advance of the ministerial segment of the sixty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs held in March 2019 in Vienna.

25. CEB held deliberations on the topic of ensuring a common position among United Nations system entities to guide its support for the ministerial-level meeting, on the basis of a discussion paper prepared under the auspices of the High-level Committee on Programmes through a consultative process coordinated by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The paper provided an overview of the world

⁴ See *World Drug Report 2018* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18/XI.9).

drug problem and an analysis of key issues surrounding the related international policy discourse and proposed a common United Nations position for adoption by CEB (see [CEB/2018/2](#), annex I), which contained shared principles and commitments for action across the United Nations system, with a view to enhancing system-wide coordination and coherence in support of Member States' decisions.

26. According to the common position, the world drug problem is intertwined with many aspects of the 2030 Agenda. It reiterated the strong commitment of the United Nations system to supporting Member States in developing and implementing truly balanced, comprehensive, integrated, evidence-based, human rights-based, development-oriented and sustainable responses to the world drug problem within the framework of the three international drug control conventions and other relevant international instruments, including the outcome document of the 2016 special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, thereby supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

27. In adopting the common position at its second regular session of 2018, CEB underscored the strong commitment of the United Nations system to strengthening, through inter-agency coordination, its support for the implementation of the outcome document of the 2016 special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem. The common position also reflected a strong system-wide commitment to continue to harness synergies and strengthen inter-agency cooperation and collaboration, making the best use of expertise across all United Nations entities, with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime as the lead Secretariat department on the issue and with the Commission on Narcotic Drugs as the United Nations policymaking body with prime responsibility for drug-related matters.

28. In 2018, the Committee also took up a number of items that had previously appeared on its agenda. As mandated by the General Assembly⁵ since 2013, CEB has supported the coordination and implementation of system-wide follow-up to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, adopted at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, through regular reporting to its High-level Committee on Programmes. In accordance with the Political Declaration of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020,⁶ the Board has also since included in its agenda the issue of investment promotion regimes for the least developed countries, with a view to improving the overall effectiveness of United Nations system support for enhancing both the flow of foreign direct investment to the least developed countries and the ability of those countries to attract such investment.

29. At its thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth sessions, in March and September 2018, respectively, the High-level Committee on Programmes considered progress on those subjects, including on the activities of the Inter-Agency Technical Committee on investment promotion for the least developed countries, as reported by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. CEB took note of the reports and encouraged all relevant entities to collaborate closely with the inter-agency task force on graduation and smooth transition⁷ to extend support for graduation from the least

⁵ Pursuant to a number of General Assembly resolutions, including, most recently, resolution [73/242](#).

⁶ See General Assembly resolutions [70/294](#), para. 69, and [73/242](#), para. 21.

⁷ Established at the end of 2017 by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, in close partnership with several other United Nations entities.

developed country category and also to collaborate with and support the work of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, including by considering secondment of staff.

30. Moreover, in 2018, the High-level Committee on Programmes revisited the topic of sustainable urbanization. At its thirty-first session, in March 2016, the Committee had approved, and CEB had subsequently endorsed, the paper on urbanization and sustainable development prepared under the leadership of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat),⁸ as a system-wide input to and reaffirmation of the United Nations system's collective commitment to support the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), held in Quito in October 2016. In response to General Assembly resolution 72/226 on the implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conferences on Human Settlements and on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), in which the Assembly invited UN-Habitat, among other entities, to contribute to a United Nations system-wide strategy for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the Committee, at its thirty-sixth session, agreed to establish a time-bound task team, led by UN-Habitat, to pursue, on the basis of the 2016 paper, the development of a system-wide strategy, with a view to further enhancing and reinvigorating coordinated efforts while bearing in mind the relevant developments that have since taken place globally and within the United Nations system.

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

31. In 2018, the High-level Committee on Management continued its efforts to promote and coordinate reforms relating to administrative and management issues by advancing and accelerating management coordination and mutual recognition and harmonization of business practices. The work of the Committee is firmly anchored in mandates arising from General Assembly resolutions 67/226 and 71/243.

32. The fight against sexual harassment within the United Nations system organizations received priority attention by the Committee during the reporting period. In November 2017, in order to uphold a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment, strengthen victim-centred prevention and response efforts and foster a safe and inclusive working environment across the United Nations system, the CEB Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment was established under the leadership of the Chair of the High-level Committee on Management.

33. During 2018, the Task Force, which comprises senior officials from more than 40 United Nations entities, developed a uniform definition of sexual harassment, a set of common principles for a harmonized sexual harassment policy, a guide for managers on how to prevent and respond to sexual harassment in the workplace and a framework for establishing a system-wide sexual harassment screening database. At its first regular session of 2018, CEB held a special discussion on addressing sexual harassment within the organizations of the United Nations system. The Board approved all the above deliverables and issued its joint statement underlining that the United Nations must be a place where staff are valued and empowered to speak up and where sexual harassment is never tolerated.

34. In the second phase of its work, the Task Force produced the following additional joint outcomes: the development and adoption of a United Nations system

⁸ www.unsceb.org/CEBPublicFiles/Urbanization%20and%20Sustainable%20Development_a%20UN%20system%20input%20to%20the%20New%20Urban%20Agenda-ODS.pdf.

model policy on sexual harassment; the launch of the Clear Check sexual harassment screening database; expansion of the guidelines on the sexual harassment screening database to include provisions on pending allegations of sexual harassment; an assessment of the various hotlines and helplines put in place by United Nations system organizations and proposals for the development of a framework of hotlines and helplines according to best practice criteria; and the preparation of a draft model code of conduct and an implementation guide to prevent sexual harassment during, or related to, United Nations events. On 26 November 2018, the Task Force and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee also organized a joint meeting of investigatory bodies on protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. The Task Force will continue its work in 2019, with a particular focus on strengthening investigatory capacity and improving investigations of sexual harassment.

35. Responding to another direct mandate from CEB to mainstream innovation to improve business practices, the High-level Committee on Management during 2018 placed particular priority on supporting the realization of the Board's vision on innovation. At both its thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth sessions, as well as during a dedicated retreat, the Committee engaged in a series of discussions on integrating and mainstreaming business innovation within and across United Nations system organizations.

36. The Committee highlighted the strategic importance for the United Nations system of adapting and taking advantage of new working methods and technologies in order to deliver on its mandates in a period of fast-paced change. The objective of those discussions was to enable and foster innovation within management functions and throughout organizations by identifying a set of specific and scalable initiatives to be taken forward as part of the Committee's priorities in its strategic plan for the 2017–20 period. Those initiatives include the creation of innovation fairs and labs to provide a conducive environment for staff at all levels to innovate; the organization of a conference held on 26 November 2018 on the theme "The future of finance" to provide inspiration for further innovation within financial management functions in the United Nations system; and the adoption of Unite Ideas as the United Nations system-wide platform for soliciting crowdsourced proposals. In an effort to harness innovative thinking from all levels, the Committee welcomed representatives of Young United Nations and of the United Nations Innovation Network to participate in the sessions and to bring fresh perspectives to the Committee's deliberations.

37. In 2018, the Committee also made significant progress on other strategic priorities. Following discussions in the Committee and in the Business Innovations Group of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, and reflecting their strong commitment to advance global- and country-level change in business operations, the Secretary-General and 13 other Executive Heads⁹ signed a mutual recognition statement that commits their respective entities 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. The statement was a direct response to General Assembly resolution [71/243](#) and to the report of the Secretary-General on repositioning the United Nations development

⁹ To date, the statement has been signed by the Executive Heads of the World Food Programme (WFP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNESCO and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-WOMEN).

system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: our promise for dignity, prosperity and peace on a healthy planet (A/72/684–E/2018/7). In particular, it contained a recognition that the roll-out of the business operations strategy at the country level requires progress on the mutual recognition of policies and procedures by the entities of the United Nations development system. Implementation of the principles included in the statement will focus initially on the areas of finance, human resources, procurements, logistics, information and communication technologies and facility services.

38. In the area of human resources, the High-level Committee on Management, through its Human Resources Network, actively collaborated with the International Civil Service Commission on a number of review and reform efforts, including a comprehensive review of the post adjustment system and a review of the current methodology for determining compensation for locally recruited staff. The Human Resources Network of the High-level Committee on Management continued its internal exchange of experiences and practices and its dialogue with external partners on best practices and innovations in various areas of human resources management, including in-depth discussions with technology partners on possibilities for broader and targeted talent outreach, in particular to qualified female candidates. Another example of a dialogue with external partners was a joint partnership and innovation workshop held by technical experts of the Human Resources Network with the European Personnel Selection Office to distill lessons learned and identify potential for inter-agency collaboration in the areas of assessment and testing. In 2018, participating organizations in the Human Resources Network piloted a newly established global centre for joint human resources services, specifically for job classification and reference checking.¹⁰

39. In response to the strong and continued commitment of the Secretary-General to provide duty of care to United Nations personnel in all environments where the United Nations is present, and in response to the priority placed by the High-level Committee on Management to enact reforms to strengthen the capacity of the Organization to meet that goal while carrying out the mandates enshrined in the Charter, the Committee made progress in its work to expand duty of care beyond high-risk duty stations, including the development of measures affecting national staff; the development of a risk management framework for duty of care; and the expansion of psychosocial support to staff and implementation of measures for the new United Nations system mental health strategy.

40. The Finance and Budget Network of the High-level Committee on Management continued its work on the harmonization of banking contracts with the completion of common local banking agreements in an additional four countries¹¹ in 2018, resulting in an overall reduction of banking charges and operational risks.

41. The Finance and Budget Network increased its focus on innovative approaches to finance, recognizing the need for United Nations system organizations to collectively look at how innovation and automation can improve the way the United Nations system works in the area of finance. The conference on the theme “The future of finance” brought together several keynote speakers with diverse backgrounds and experience to offer insights into innovative advances in the area of finance and provide inspiration for opportunities for further innovation within the financial management functions in the United Nations system.

42. Pursuant to section IV of General Assembly resolution 71/272 B, the Working Group on After-Service Health Insurance of the High-level Committee on Management concluded its study of further options for increasing the efficiency and

¹⁰ See <http://onehr.webflow.io>.

¹¹ Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Madagascar, Myanmar and Serbia.

containing the costs of after-service health insurance by analysing commonalities and differences among United Nations system organizations with regard to the identification, funding and management of appropriate health plans and after-service health insurance funds and liabilities. The work included collective negotiations with health-care providers and third-party administrators; harmonization of the principles guiding after-service health insurance liability valuation; and analysing the appropriateness, practicability and financial effects of opportunities for enrolment in primary coverage under national health insurance schemes. The final report of the Working Group (A/73/662) was completed in December 2018.

43. In response to General Assembly resolutions 67/226 and 71/243, which requested the entities of the United Nations development system to explore further opportunities for collaborative procurement, the High-level Committee on Management continued its efforts to enhance mutual recognition and harmonization of business practices under the umbrella of the United Nations Global Marketplace, the common procurement portal that brings together United Nations procurement staff and the vendor community. As at October 2018, 29 United Nations organizations¹² maintained a vendor roster on the Global Marketplace and 16¹³ had, or planned to have, an enterprise resource planning system and/or e-procurement integration with the platform. The Procurement Network of the High-level Committee on Management also published updated harmonized procurement guidelines as part of the new *United Nations Procurement Practitioner's Handbook*. Several other initiatives were launched during 2018 and are still ongoing, such as collaborative procurement of information technology hardware, identification of high-value commodities for joint procurement and the development of a United Nations common methodology to calculate procurement savings.

44. The High-level Committee on Management also established a new cross-functional task force on risk management, which launched a system-wide risk management reference model to serve as a benchmarking tool and an implementation guide for United Nations organizations on advancing risk management, particularly in the context of greater delegation of authority.

45. At its thirty-first session, the Information and Communication Technology Network, recognizing the need to extend its focus towards a strategic and digital transformation of the United Nations system as a whole, unanimously adopted the motion to change its name to the Digital and Technology Network. In the light of that new direction, the Network established sub-groups to advance knowledge-sharing in three areas of strategic importance: technology innovation, business transformation and infrastructure transformation.

46. At its thirty-sixth session, the High-level Committee on Management adopted a set of personal data protection and privacy principles for the United Nations system organizations. The principles represent a first step towards ensuring a common

¹² Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank, Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, FAO, International Atomic Energy Agency, International Civil Aviation Organization, International Fund for Agricultural Development, ILO, International Trade Centre, ITU, International Maritime Organization, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Pan American Health Organization, Secretariat, UN-Women, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), UNOPS, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, WFP, WHO, World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and World Trade Organization (WTO).

¹³ FAO, International Fund for Agricultural Development, ILO, ITU, Pan American Health Organization, Secretariat, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNICEF, UNOPS, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, WFP (currently stand-alone, with potential future integration), WHO, WIPO, WMO and WTO.

framework for providing high-level protection of the right to privacy, including the privacy of personal data, for persons working for, related to or under the care of the United Nations system. The principles also pave the way for further actions with regard to the protection of privacy and personal data, including the development of appropriate privacy policies by individual organizations across the United Nations system.

47. The activities of the United Nations semantic interoperability framework for normative and parliamentary documents project continued during 2018. The project, co-led by the High-level Committee on Management, FAO and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, saw major achievements in the past year. Several organizations are internally pilot testing the conversion of documents into the Akoma Ntoso XML standard adopted by CEB in order to identify the efficiencies that it will bring to document management processes. In a joint effort with the United Nations Statistics Division and the United Nations Environment Programme, the High-level Committee on Management developed common digital identifiers for the Goals as a cornerstone for the future knowledge architecture of the United Nations system.

48. Pursuant to General Assembly resolutions [54/64](#), [69/250](#), [70/9](#) and [71/262](#), the CEB secretariat has worked in support of the deep personal commitment of the Secretary-General to fostering multilingualism throughout the United Nations system and in support of the efforts of the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management, in her capacity as Secretariat-wide Coordinator for Multilingualism, to promote a comprehensive and coordinated approach on multilingualism within the United Nations system, including through the collection and sharing of related policies and tools across United Nations entities and through reporting on that issue to the Economic and Social Council in the CEB annual overview reports.

49. With guidance and substantive input from the Secretariat-wide Coordinator, the CEB secretariat is currently developing a webpage on multilingualism, to be hosted on the CEB website, and a collaborative platform for the exchange of information on multilingualism among United Nations organizations. The CEB secretariat is also supporting the Coordinator in the creation of a community of practice of focal points for multilingualism.

IV. Sustaining compliance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards

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

51. The Task Force on Accounting Standards continues to focus on sustaining compliance with the Standards and the realization of their expected benefits, including greater comparability of financial reporting policies and practices across the United Nations system. In that connection, the Task Force continued its ongoing engagement in 2018 with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards

Board. The Board continues to update standards and issue guidance in response to changing user needs and environments. The Task Force continued monitoring the work of the Board, keeping updated on new pronouncements and upcoming projects and providing feedback to the Board on behalf of the United Nations system. In 2018, the Task Force reviewed consultation papers and exposure drafts issued by the Board in the areas of financial reporting for accounting for revenue and non-exchange transactions, leases, financial instruments and public sector measurements.

52. The Task Force held its face-to-face meeting in October 2018 and considered a range of issues. The meeting included interaction with the Chair and staff of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards Board regarding the consultation papers on accounting for revenue and non-exchange expenses. The meeting also included interaction with the Board of Auditors regarding key audit matters, risks, fraud, cyber risks, audit engagement letters, efficiency and effectiveness. Other areas covered in the Task Force meeting included the statement on internal control, the useful economic lives of assets and the measurement of liabilities for after-service health insurance. Those interactions are part of the mandate of the Task Force to facilitate dialogue among United Nations system organizations to ensure the consistent interpretation, application and sustainability of the Standards.

V. Improving transparency and accountability

53. In 2018, the CEB secretariat continued to improve the functionality and performance of its data management platform, a tool for internal use. For the first time, data collection exercises for both human resources and finance and budget networks were implemented on that automated platform. Considerable work was done during the year to optimize data validation controls for both exercises, which resulted in less human intervention and, ultimately, improved data quality.

54. As part of the efforts to improve the transparency and quality of system-wide data, a joint initiative between the High-level Committee on Management and the United Nations Sustainable Development Group on the United Nations “system-wide data cube” completed its work with the adoption of six United Nations standards for system-wide reporting of financial data. The new standards are effective as at 1 January 2019 and will enable reporting of financial flows related to the Goals by individual organizations and by the United Nations system as a whole. The new standards are aligned with the International Aid Transparency Initiative and with the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.¹⁴ The standards will be a valuable tool for informed decision-making at all managerial levels and for enhanced transparency. Their adoption is part of a multi-year road map towards more encompassing, disaggregated and Goals-compatible system-wide data.

¹⁴ In para. 80 of its resolution [71/243](#), the General Assembly called for “the publication of timely, reliable, verifiable and comparable system-wide and entity-level data”. In his report on repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: ensuring a better future for all ([A/72/124–E/2018/3](#)), the Secretary-General called for “the harmonization of data and reporting systems across entities so as to facilitate system-wide reporting, accountability and the visibility of collective results” (para. 46) and “system-wide enrolment into the International Aid Transparency Initiative” (para. 108).

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

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

56. The Human Resources Network of the High-level Committee on Management also continued its long history of participation in the sessions and working groups of the International Civil Service Commission and the meetings of the Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions. In addition to the collaborative work on reviewing the post adjustment system and the methodology for setting salaries for locally recruited staff, mentioned in section III above, the Human Resources Network, through its field group and participation in working groups, also closely collaborated with the Commission on matters such as the review of hardship classifications and other field-based entitlements.

57. In the current reporting period, the CEB secretariat and the Joint Inspection Unit continued their long-standing collaboration and dialogue, mainly through consultations during both the preparation of the terms of reference for reports and during the drafting of the reports themselves.

VII. Conclusions

58. Over the course of 2018, CEB systematically contributed to efforts by the United Nations system to serve as a driver of integration and coherence across a wide range of programmatic and management issues in support of intergovernmental mandates and priorities. As the multilateral system continued to face increasingly complex challenges, the United Nations system made efforts to support Member States by strengthening policy coherence and coordination in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda; improving on and innovating within the administrative and management functions of the United Nations system; and promoting system-wide preparation for and follow-up to United Nations conference and summits, ever mindful of the principles of the Charter and the well-being of the people it cares for.
