Executive Board
Two hundred and nineteenth session

PARIS, 13 March 2024
Original: English

Item **5** of the provisional agenda

FOLLOW-UP TO DECISIONS AND RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND THE GENERAL CONFERENCE AT THEIR PREVIOUS SESSIONS

PART III

HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES

ADDENDUM

COMMENTS BY THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION OF UNESCO (ISAU)

SUMMARY

A.   Human Resources Strategy for 2023-2027

Pursuant to Item 9.2.7 of the UNESCO Human Resources Manual, the International Staff Association of UNESCO (ISAU) submits its comments on human resources issues (document 219 EX/5.III.A).

Introduction

1.   We are perplexed by the Administration's document reporting on the implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for 2023-2027 and presenting the long-awaited road map for the Strategy. It is indeed surprising, not to say incomprehensible, that the road map for the 2023–2027 Strategy contains so many structural flaws, affecting both the form and the substance of this fundamental document.

2.   The Strategy, as approved by the General Conference after having been presented to and amended by the Member States on several occasions, already included actions and indicators of success for each strategic aim and each key objective listed therein. These have been carefully examined by the staff associations and analysed and revised by the Member States. By reflecting the respective contributions of the Member States and the Administration, the Strategy adopted was a text of balance and consensus. In these conditions, the road map, called for by both ISAU and the Member States, should be a complementary document **providing details** of the implementation of the **actions and indicators adopted**, and **complementing** the Strategy by proposing a precise timeframe and a list of the entities responsible for implementing each measure (as was done, for example, for the Human Resources Management Strategy for 2017–2022). It must be said that the road map submitted to the Member States does not meet these requirements. More worryingly, a comparison of the actions and indicators in the adopted Strategy and those in the road map shows that the latter includes a large number of changes to what was approved by the General Conference. Finally, we are struck by the fact that these changes are not explicitly communicated to Member States, which runs counter to the most basic respect for transparency and accountability.

3.   We have drawn up the table in annex hereto detailing the changes made to the actions and indicators approved by the General Conference. Our comparative table shows very clearly that many indicators and actions have disappeared, even though they had been discussed by the Board and adopted by the General Conference. In so doing, the Administration is acting without regard for the risk it poses to the Organization in terms of the monitoring and evaluation of its policies. Since the Administration is having the Member States adopt two documents which apparently serve the same purpose but are not intended to achieve the same objectives, the question arises as to which document will be authoritative at the time of the assessments. We note in passing that while the body of the document draws attention to the road map provided in annex, the annex is actually entitled "Human Resources Strategy", opening the door to the possibility of suggesting that this document submitted to the Board could take the place of the Human Resources Strategy and thus override the document adopted by the Member States in November 2023.

4.   The Administration's approach will eventually undermine the Organization's governance and efficiency. The Organization's efficiency will be all the more affected if confusion reigns among staff. It should be remembered that the Division of Internal Oversight Services (IOS) had already reported that **"[a] minority of UNESCO staff and affiliate workforce were aware of the HRM Strategy"**, as only 40% of those outside the Bureau of Human Resources Management were aware of it. Clearly, this road map should have been presented, as we have repeatedly called for, when the Strategy was approved. This might have prevented two documents with contradictory elements from claiming to govern the same strategy.

5.   If certain actions and indicators have been omitted because they have already been implemented, we would like to stress that, even in such a case, we consider it essential to include them in the road map, if necessary with the appropriate timeframe ("2023"), so that the essential criteria of responsibility and accountability can be met.

6.   Explanations are needed from the Administration. For example, we do not understand why the following actions and indicators have been deleted despite their importance, or have been modified despite their initial precision and clarity:

- The action of updating the learning "policy" has been transformed into an update of the learning "strategy". Given that the Human Resources Manual includes a learning policy, updating the "strategy" in this area seems to us to be a more vague and less effective objective (Strategic Aim 1, Key Objective I);

- The development and implementation of an action plan to ensure geographical distribution have been replaced by the simple publication of statistics on Member State representation (Strategic Aim 2, Key Objective I);

- The action "identify and upscale on smarter, more agile ways of working" has been deleted (Strategic Aim 3, Key Objective I);[1]

- The action of "examining the feasibility of appointing "business partners" specializing in human resources for programme sectors" has been deleted (Strategic Aim 3, Key Objective II);

- The indicator "number of managers undertaking 360° assessment programme" has been replaced by an indicator relating to "regular 360° feedback exercises developed and implemented" (Strategic Aim 4, Key Objective II);[2]

- The action "[r]efine the Functional Mobility Programme" and the related indicator have been deleted (Strategic Aim 4, Key Objective III);

- The indicator "[d]ecrease in the number of staff having exceeded their Standard Duration of Assignment (SDA)" has been deleted (Strategic Aim 4, Key Objective III).

7. Generally speaking, it is regrettable to note that an analysis of the deleted and amended passages tends to show that, in relation to the Strategy adopted in November 2023, the road map is characterized by a number of pullbacks, including reduced opportunities for professional development, lower requirements for transparency and accountability, erosion of staff flexibility and support coupled with less investment in health and well-being.

Strategic Aim 1

8. HRM introduces Strategic Aim 1 by identifying what it considers to be the "priority" in this area, namely outreach activities, workforce planning, enhancing induction and on-boarding experiences, and promoting a culture of accountability and performance. We would like to make two comments on this point.

9. On the one hand, setting up efficient and **transparent recruitment** processes is perhaps one of the most crucial actions under Strategic Aim 1. The relevance and importance of recruitment processes were also highlighted by IOS when evaluating the previous human resources strategy. Unfortunately, HRM's failure to date to take any action in this area gives us little hope of improvement.

10. On the other hand, while HRM is right to emphasize the "culture of accountability and performance", we are entitled to wonder why it has chosen to replace highly relevant actions in the

---

[1] See, however, the Joint Inspection Unit report on flexible working arrangements (JIU/REP/2023/6) and the conclusions and recommendations contained therein. According to the Inspectors, **"[t]he emerging commitment to flexible working arrangements should be acknowledged in human resources management strategies"**.

[2] See, however, the United Nations System Mental Health and Well-being Strategy on the responsibility of supervisors for the mental health and well-being of their supervisees, and the inclusion of related criteria in the assessment of their performance: "[l]eadership assigns or assumes responsibility for key actions" and "[m]ental health and well-being is included as an assessment criterion for leaders' performance". Leaders' performance "[s]hould include recruitment criteria, performance planning, and inclusion in 360-degree assessments. Should be focused on the manager's behaviour in supporting good mental health and reducing psychosocial risks in the workplace".

Strategy approved by the General Conference with a vague action that leaves little prospect for change in this area. Thus, the actions "[a]ssess the performance of supervisors in people management" and "[e]quip supervisors to manage underperformance and conflicts" have been replaced by the action "enhance performance management framework in combination with learning and development opportunities". This wording is perplexing. The development of a performance management curriculum for supervisors, referred to in the document under review, is certainly welcome, but it is no substitute for an actual **assessment** of supervisors' performance in this area. ISAU therefore insists that 360° feedback (as envisaged under Strategic Aim 4) be implemented as an integral part of the current performance management policy.

11. In terms of geographical distribution, we welcome the efforts and concrete actions undertaken by HRM, which have led to a 31% increase in the number of applicants from non- or under-represented countries. Nevertheless, at the risk of being repetitive, we reiterate that the real indicator should be the number of **appointments** of candidates from such countries. We therefore hope to see an increase in the number of appointments, if not proportional, at least in line with the considerable increase in the number of applications from these countries.

Strategic Aim 2

12. We expect the introduction of a genuine **action plan** to implement the recommendations of the Executive Board's Working Group on Geographical Distribution. The development and implementation of such a plan was one of the indicators in the Strategy adopted by the Member States last November, and therefore represents a clear and precise commitment to them. We are at a loss to understand why this indicator does not appear in the road map and would appreciate an explanation from the Administration.

13. In anticipation of the plan, and in reviewing the information provided by HRM in the document under review, we wish to re-emphasize the importance of maintaining rigour and consistency in the presentation of data provided for the purposes of reporting to the governing bodies. For instance, the figure of 48% of geographical posts filled by candidates from non- or under-represented Member States is certainly commendable, but leaves some doubt as to the reality it represents. Indeed, in the Administration's last report on the subject (document 217/EX.4.IV.B), this same percentage represented the progress made **between January 2022 and July 2023**. While referring to our comments at the time on the importance of fixed reporting periods, we wonder about progress during the period from July to December 2023. Does the 48% figure cited by the Administration in this case include this period? Greater clarity would make it easier to monitor progress in this area.

14. With regard to the new Mid-Level Professionals Programme (MLPP), we note with satisfaction the increase in the number of posts identified under this heading and will be following the results of this programme with interest.

15. As for the revised internship policy, to which we have given our support and contribution, we express our great satisfaction that this revision has finally taken place and that interns will now be remunerated, as ISAU has long been calling for. This revised policy will also help to rebalance our geographical distribution.

Strategic Aim 3

16. ISAU supports the revision of the parental leave framework, whose proposed changes will have a positive impact on well-being, gender parity and work-life balance. However, we are wondering how HRM in particular and the Administration in general intend to resolve the problem of replacing staff exercising their right to this leave. In fact, the Administration had expressed concern about the budget needed to ensure their replacement and avoid the repercussions that such absences could have on the workload and mental health of colleagues (document 42 C/45).

17.   As far as the creation of regional Administrative Officer (AO) posts is concerned, we recognize the positive effect this initiative can have. We are, however, waiting to see the implementation of actions and indicators with a more global scope, including the development of specific **human resources mechanisms or plans** to support field operations, and the functional review of human resources.

18.   Despite these positive signals, we would like to highlight what is, in our opinion, a flagrant contradiction between the Administration's words and deeds. Indeed, while we read that efforts are being made "to further cultivate a flexible working environment", we note that, despite the objectives set out in the HR Strategy, the action "identify and upscale on smarter, more agile ways of working" has been removed. It is hard for us to see the "efforts" that the Administration claims to be making. In this respect, we expressly ask the Administration to take into account the conclusions of the recently published Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) report on flexible working arrangements (JIU/REP/2023/6) and to implement recommendations 1 to 6 therein (see Annex XII, p. 113 of the report).

19.   The JIU report highlighted several points that should serve as a reference for the Administration. When it comes to the maximum duration of teleworking allowed, we note, for example, that UNESCO, while perhaps not the last in terms of flexibility, is by no means one of the most progressive and flexible organizations. We therefore consider that increasing the number of authorized teleworking days to three per week could provide greater flexibility, as would the introduction of compressed work schedules, an option that is already available within several United Nations organizations.

20.   In addition, the JIU report states that, "[e]xcept for UNESCO, all the participatingorganizations allow teleworking **outside the duty station**"[3] (emphasis added). This data is particularly revealing of the fact that UNESCO is alone in the matter. An alignment with best practices is therefore necessary here. Suffice it to say that some organizations allow teleworking outside the duty station for up to ninety days a year.

21.   It should be stressed that, in terms of effectiveness and efficiency, the most decisive factors would be, in our view, staff motivation, the working environment, recognition for good performance, the possibility of career advancement and the mental health of staff members. Working arrangements not only have no negative impact on effectiveness and efficiency or, in other words, "productivity", they actually promote it. Indeed, it has been proven that flexibility in working arrangements is linked to the mental health and well-being of staff, and thus to the number of sick days and cases of service-incurred disability and, by extension, to the fulfillment of organizations' mandates.[4]

Strategic Aim 4

22.   While some of the Administration's welfare actions, such as improving certain Medical Benefits Fund (MBF) reimbursement rates, are satisfactory, other proposed measures raise questions. We read, for example, among the **new** indicators included in the road map, an indicator relating to the "number of short-term assignments (STAs) **facilitated** per biennium" (emphasis added). We ask the Administration to provide explanations for this addition, and we warn against "normalizing" the use of this type of contract and their subsequent increase. As regards career development, it should be

---

[3]   See paragraph 91 of the report.
[4]   See, in particular, the above-mentioned United Nations System Mental Health and Well-being Strategy: "the trend of declining mental health poses two main economic risks to the United Nations: the increasing cost of sick leave owing to mental health diagnoses and the increase in costs owing to disability pension claims" (p. 6); "many organizational factors influence the mental health of employees. They include poor communication and management practices, limited participation in decision-making, long or inflexible working hours and lack of team cohesion" (Annex I, p. 16).

noted that this is presented without any reference to the role of training and performance appraisal in the career development of staff members.

23.   On the subject of ethics, we take note of the report submitted by the Ethics Office to the Executive Board at this session (document 219 EX/19). The 78% increase in harassment allegations between 2022 and 2023 is alarming. Although part of this increase can be attributed to the Ethics Office's greater visibility and the encouragement – and courage – of staff members to report problems encountered in the workplace, we would nevertheless draw the Administration's attention to this almost exponential increase. We have ourselves noted a worrying rise in the number of complaints and feedback we receive in confidence from colleagues, and we are observing a deterioration in the working conditions within the Organization. This is in line with the findings of the United Nations System Mental Health and Well-being Strategy, according to which reported levels of symptoms corresponding to mental health conditions are higher at the United Nations (approximately 50%) than in the general population. In addition, successive staff well-being surveys have shown that the longer people work for the United Nations, the more likely they are to suffer from mental health problems. We therefore look forward to the action plan to be developed on the basis of the United Nations Strategy.

24.   HRM had informed us of its intention not to develop a separate well-being policy. As such, we draw its attention to the definition of the actions required under the United Nations Strategy, which will therefore need to include a coordinated and comprehensive set of strategies including programmes, policies, benefits, environmental support and use of resources designed to address the mental health and well-being needs of all staff.

25.   While respecting the definitions, directions and recommendations contained in the United Nations Strategy, HRM's action plan should take into account UNESCO's particular context, integrating well-being considerations into areas relating to recruitment, career development, flexible working arrangements and performance management, by revising the policies in question as necessary.

26.   A healthy working environment will also prevent litigation and appeals, which not only have an indisputable impact on staff well-being, but also have a significant financial cost that is detrimental to the organization. In this respect, we refer to the recent report published by the JIU on internal appeal mechanisms in United Nations organizations (JIU/REP/2023/2). In particular, the Inspectors recommended the introduction of the right of staff members to legal representation when filing an internal appeal against an administrative decision or disciplinary measure. As stressed by the Inspectors, as a matter of principle, it is not becoming of a justice system to deprive its stakeholders of the possibility of seeking competent representation of their legal interests, even less so given that they are required to bear the cost. ISAU calls for this JIU recommendation to be implemented as soon as possible.

27.   To conclude on a positive note, we would like to express our satisfaction at the significant increase in the number of cases handled by UNESCO's Appeals Board lately. To this end, we support the JIU's proposal to publish statistics on cases received and handled by the Appeals Board, a measure we believe is highly conducive to promoting transparency. Additional resources would also enable the Appeals Board to perform its role more effectively in the interests of the Organization.

ANNEX

Strategy adopted by the General Conference at its 42nd session		Road map submitted at the 219th session of the Board	
Strategic Aim 1 Key Objective I		Strategic Aim 1 Key Objective I	
Actions	**Indicators**	**Actions**	**Indicators**
- Systematic workforce planning with sectors; - Deliver an effective recruitment and outreach strategy; - **Establish in-house talent pools including leadership pools**; [*deleted*] - Develop 3 key/critical training programmes for upskilling the workforce; - Update learning **policy**; - Develop a **comprehensive induction and** on-boarding programme, **consistent across the Organization**; - Introduce improvements in an employee's career experience: applying at UNESCO, joining the Organization, when moving within UNESCO, and upon separation.	- **HR biennial plans per sector in place and updated on a regular basis**; - Increased number of qualified applicants **from non- and under-represented countries**; - **Leadership talent pool in place by end 2024**; [*deleted*] - 3 skills development programmes delivered by 2026; - Global staff survey satisfaction on fostering **a culture** of continuous learning opportunities; - **Induction & on-boarding programme/platform developed and implemented by 2025**; - Pulse surveys **for new staff and those transitioning to new posts** undertaken twice per year.	- Systematic Workforce Planning with Sectors; - Deliver an effective recruitment and outreach strategy; - Develop key training programmes for upskilling the workforce; - Update Learning **Strategy** ensuring it is fit-for-purpose; - Formalize a comprehensive induction framework; - Enhance staff career experience: on joining, moving within, and leaving the Organization	- **Workforce planning guidelines developed**; - Increased **proportion** of applicants meeting **all criteria**; - 3 skills development programmes delivered per biennium; - % of staff satisfied with quality/relevance of learning & development through global staff survey; - **% of new hires across the Organization (HQ & Field) participating in induction activities**; - % of staff reporting a positive experience in bi-annual pulse surveys.

Strategic Aim 1 Key Objective II		Strategic Aim 1 Key Objective II	
Actions	**Indicators**	**Actions**	**Indicators**
- Reinforce an accountability framework for HR management with clear expectations of leaders as managers and role models; - **Assess the performance of supervisors in people management with targeted development opportunities to address areas identified for improvement**; [*deleted*] - **Equip supervisors to manage underperformance and conflicts**; [*deleted*] - Establish mechanism/scheme to recognize high-performing teams.	- **Establish mechanism/scheme to encourage innovation and recognize high-performing teams as from 2025**; - **People management element to be incorporated in (Leadership) Development Programme by end 2023**; [*deleted*] - **Peer-exchange mechanisms with groups of managers established to support and foster good practices (e.g. provision of master classes) by end 2023**; [*deleted*] - **Performance rating distribution.** [*deleted*]	- Reinforce an accountability framework for HR management with clear expectations of leaders as managers and role models; - **Enhance performance management framework in combination with learning and development opportunities**; - Establish mechanism/scheme to recognize high-performing teams.	- **Revised accountability matrix in place and widely communicated to managers**; - % of managers trained in people management; % of staff satisfied by development objectives in global staff survey; - **Recognition Programme developed and implemented; No. of Teams recognized.**

Strategic Aim 2 Key Objective I		Strategic Aim 2 Key Objective I	
Actions	**Indicators**	**Actions**	**Indicators**
- Fully implement all measures outlined in the 41 C/Res.64; - **Ensure direct targeted outreach to increase the diversity of candidates from non- and under- represented Member States [diversity targets]**; [*deleted*]	- **Action plan on addressing geographical distribution developed and implemented taking into account the measures outlined in 41 C/Res.64**; [*deleted*] - **Increased applications through social media channels**; [*deleted*]	- Maintain full implementation of measures to improve geographical distribution within UNESCO [41 C/Res. 64]; - Formalize **career development programme** for Young Professionals to	- **% of Member States represented; % of staff recruited from non- and under-represented Member States**; - Programme developed and implemented.

Actions	Indicators	Actions	Indicators
- **Maximize the use of digital tools for better outreach;** [*deleted*] - **Establish formal talent pools of high potential candidates;** [*deleted*] - **Assess the implementation of the Mid-level Professional Programme (MLPP) pilot exercise and expand its implementation accordingly;** [*deleted*] - Address career development issues with regard to the Young Professionals Programme.	- **Talent pools in place and actively used for sourcing qualified candidates;** [*deleted*] - **Continued successful implementation of Mid-level Professional Programme (MLPP)**; [*deleted*] - Dedicated **coaching and mentoring programme** in place for Young Professionals (YPP) to motivate and encourage professional development.	motivate and encourage professional development.	

Strategic Aim 2 Key Objective II		Strategic Aim 2 Key Objective II	
Actions	**Indicators**	**Actions**	**Indicators**
- Develop an Action Plan on gender parity for all levels of staff; - Ensure inclusion by critically reviewing/updating policies, procedures and processes for institutional biases; - **Identify** and address barriers to effective participation/accessibility of targeted groups of staff in the work of UNESCO; - **Review, update, and mainstream the UNESCO**	- **Action Plan** on gender parity developed and implemented; - **Increased staff engagement and feedback (Global Staff Survey) in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) activities**; [*deleted*] - Diversity, equity and inclusion to be embedded in **key** policies and **processes** by end 2027; - Number of **managers** and personnel trained on unconscious bias **[new staff within 6 months of on-boarding]**;	- Develop an Action Plan on gender parity for all staff; - Review/update policies, procedures and processes for institutional biases; - Address barriers to effective participation/accessibility of targeted groups of staff; - **Enhance Internship Programme**.	- Gender parity achieved in all staff categories; % of women represented by category; - **No.** of policies mainstreamed with Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; - No. of **workshops** delivered on unconscious bias; % staff participation; - Revised Internships Policy issued.

Competency Framework, including the core values. [*deleted*]	- UNESCO Internship Programme updated by 2024; - **UNESCO Competency Framework revised to incorporate/strengthen DEI in the workplace by 2026.** [*deleted*]		

Strategic Aim 3 Key Objective I		Strategic Aim 3 Key Objective I	
Actions	**Indicators**	**Actions**	**Indicators**
- Develop a **transparent selection process** for emergency and post-crisis situations; - Develop a pilot programme for decentralization of HR expertise and processes as part of the implementation of UNESCO's field network reform; - Strengthen career development opportunities for National Professional staff; - **Review and update contractual frameworks for more flexibility and alignment with the present & future workforce**; [*deleted*] - **Identify and upscale on smarter, more agile ways of working**; [*deleted*]	- Specific mechanism/HR plans in place to support field operations **by end 2024**; - Mapping of HR processes and authorities to be delegated to the field by 2024; - Number of national staff **promoted to Int. Professional posts**; - **Flexible working arrangements evaluated and further developed by end 2025**; [*deleted*] - **Updated** HR policies on parental leave (maternity, paternity etc.) **in 2023**.	- Develop a framework for **rapid fielding** of personnel for emergency and crisis situations; - Review HR processes to support of the implementation of UNESCO's field network reform; - Strengthen career development opportunities for National Professional staff; - Implement measures to make UNESCO a more flexible and family-friendly Organization.	- Specific mechanism/HR plans in place to support emergency and crisis situations; - Core HR processes reviewed and table of delegated authorities issued; - No. of National Professional staff **utilising development opportunities**; - Parental leave framework developed and implemented.

Actions	Indicators	Actions	Indicators
- Implement measures to make UNESCO a more flexible and family-friendly Organization.			

Strategic Aim 3 Key Objective II		Strategic Aim 3 Key Objective II	
Actions	**Indicators**	**Actions**	**Indicators**
- Undertake functional review of HR functions **by end 2023**; - Align HR structures to business needs, **taking into account the field reform**; - **Explore designation of HR business partners in programme sectors;** [*deleted*] - Position HR partnerships (external expertise) to complement the workforce in implementing UNESCO's mandate.	- HRM structure/staffing readjusted ensuring it is fit-for-purpose and will facilitate implementation of HR Strategy (for 2024/2025); - **HRM staffing to allow for outposting of HR Int. posts (funds needed) to Regional Operational Platforms by 2026/2027**; [*deleted*] - **Number of sectors making shift to designate HR business partner model;** [*deleted*] - **Increased number** of personnel working under HR partnerships framework.	- Align HR structures to facilitate implementation of HR Strategy; - Undertake review of HR functions **in the context of the field reform**; - Position HR partnerships to complement the workforce in implementing UNESCO's mandate.	- HRM structure/staffing aligned and fit-for-purpose; % client satisfaction on HR services (pulse surveys); - **Set of decentralized HR functions & delegated HR authorities issued, consistent across the regions;** - No. of HR partnerships by Sector/priority areas.

Strategic Aim 3 Key Objective III		Strategic Aim 3 Key Objective III	
Actions	**Indicators**	**Actions**	**Indicators**
- Identify and implement digital solutions for HR processes in line with UNESCO's IT Strategy; - Develop SOPs for common procedures and processes to ensure consistent application of HR regulations;	- HR systems, applications and platforms harmonized by end 2027; - SOPs **for key processes developed by end 2027**; - **HR dashboards upgraded to facilitate access to key**	- Identify and implement digital solutions for HR processes in line with UNESCO's IT Strategy. - Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for common procedures and processes to ensure consistent application of HR regulations.	- HR Systems, applications and platforms harmonized for increased efficiency; - SOPs developed & finalized **for each paper-based workflow moved to system**.

-	**Increased communication of HR policies and processes using digital solutions.** [*deleted*]	**stakeholders on real-time progress.** [*deleted*]		

Strategic Aim 4 Key Objective I		Strategic Aim 4 Key Objective I	
Actions	Indicators	Actions	Indicators
- Develop and implement an employee wellbeing framework focusing on occupational health and safety and accountability including prevention measures to address key mental health risks; - **Progressive transition of Medical Service to an Occupational Health Service [monitoring the health of the workforce, preventing work-related illness in the workplace by encouraging safe working practices, and monitoring and supporting the management of sick leave].** [*deleted*]	- **Outcomes from wellbeing surveys including Global Staff Survey, and actions implemented;** - UNESCO's occupational health & safety policy developed by 2026; - **Measures to facilitate return to work after extended (sick or other) leave established;** [*deleted*] - **Reduction in sick/absenteeism rates.** [*deleted*]	- Develop and implement an employee well-being framework focusing on occupational health and safety and accountability including prevention measures to address key mental health risks.	- **Gap analysis and action plan for UN Mental Health Strategy completed and rolled out; UNESCO's occupational health & safety framework developed; No. of preventative campaigns to address key issues per biennium; % of absenteeism.**
Strategic Aim 4 Key Objective II		Strategic Aim 4 Key Objective II	
Actions	Indicators	Actions	Indicators
- Strengthen supervisors' management skills with a	- **Increased number** of supervisors participating in management training;	- Strengthen supervisors' management skills with a	- **% utilization** rate of learning resources for supervisors' skill development;

Actions (cont.)	Indicators	Actions (cont.)	Indicators
focus on managing remote/agile teams; - Expand 360-degree assessment **and feedback for managers and implement relevant training (e.g. conflict mgmt.) based on feedback (2023)**; - Proactive support to managers and personnel, as and when necessary [mediation, early prevention/ conflict management]; - **Develop Code of Conduct for UNESCO staff [Ethics Office: lead]. [*deleted*]**	- **Number of managers undertaking** 360° **assessment** programme; - Global Staff Survey feedback on staff-supervisor relations; - **Code of Conduct developed (2023) and proactively communicated. [*deleted*]**	focus on managing hybrid teams; - Implement 360° feedback for supervisors and **propose relevant development**; - Proactive support to managers and personnel, as necessary [mediation, early prevention/ conflict management].	- **Regular** 360° feedback **exercises** developed and implemented; - Global Staff Survey feedback on staff-supervisor relations; **% decrease in No. of contestations/appeals.**

Strategic Aim 4 Key Objective III		Strategic Aim 4 Key Objective III	
Actions	**Indicators**	**Actions**	**Indicators**
- **Training not just for the job you have but for the job you want!** - Develop an assessment **and development** process to ensure a **rapid and inclusive** identification of Heads of Field Offices, **with emphasis on people mgmt. skills**; - **Refine the Functional Mobility Programme based on lessons learned from the Pilot (2022/23); [*deleted*]**	- Assessment methodology **for identifcations of Heads of Field Offices** developed and implemented by 2025; - **Number of functional mobility moves per year; [*deleted*]** - **Decrease in the average time-in-post (all staff categories); [*deleted*]** - **Decrease in the number of staff having exceeded their Standard Duration of Assignment (SDA); [*deleted*]**	- **Enrich and optimize learning resources for individual personal development**; - Develop an assessment process to identify potential staff for OIC and Heads of Field Offices assignments; - Enhance the Geographical Mobility Programme vis-à-vis candidate experience/feedback; - **Effective mechanism in place for Short-Term Assignments (STA)**	- **N° of individual trainings undertaken; level of staff satisfaction through global staff survey;** - Assessment methodology developed; No. of internal staff assessed; - Level of staff satisfaction through global staff survey; **remedial actions identified for next cycle;** - **Formal mechanism in place; No. of STAs facilitated per biennium;**

- Further improve the Geographical Mobility; Programme vis-à-vis candidate experience/feedback (2023/2024); - Provide career development advice **and support service** to managers and employees; - Develop Career Development Plan for Junior Professional Officers (JPOs), Young Professionals (YPs) and National Professional Officers (NPOs).	- **Effective mechanism in place for Short-Term Assignment (STA) [including funding mechanism]**; - Global Staff Survey satisfaction with regard to staff morale and motivation; - Career Development plans for JPOs, YPs and NPOs developed and in place by 2nd semester 2024.	**[including funding mechanism]**; - Provide career development support to staff; - Develop Career Management **skill-building** opportunities for Junior Professional Officers (JPOs), Young Professionals (YPs) and National Professional Officers (NPOs).	- Level of satisfaction with support, **through individual feedback**; - Framework for comprehensive skills development established; No. of learning opportunities undertaken.

Executive Board
Two hundred and nineteenth session

Paris, 16 February 2024
Original: English

**FOLLOW-UP TO DECISIONS AND RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY
THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND THE GENERAL CONFERENCE
AT THEIR PREVIOUS SESSIONS**

PART III

HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES

SUMMARY

A. Human Resources Strategy for 2023-2027

Pursuant to 42 C/Resolution 65, this document reports on the implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for 2023-2027 and presents a roadmap, including measures, indicators and a timetable, for its implementation.

Decision required: paragraph 7.

Introduction

1. At its 42nd session, the General Conference endorsed the Human Resources (HR) Strategy for 2023-2027. As per 42 C/Resolution 65, this document provides a brief reporting on key HR activities already initiated in 2023 prior to the Strategy's endorsement in November 2023. The document also presents a roadmap (**Annex**), including measures, indicators and a timetable for the Strategy's implementation up to end 2027.

Progress report

2. This report describes the progress made in 2023 under the four strategic aims of the Strategy, all of which are interdependent on the other. Many of these activities will continue into 2024 and beyond. The roadmap also provides timelines for the various initiatives which will be adapted as necessary over the next four years, depending on available resources and emerging priorities.

AIM 1: ATTRACT AND RETAIN TALENT & EXPERTISE

3. Work is focused on increasing outreach activities to attract a large and diverse pool of qualified candidates, facilitating workforce planning with sectors, enhancing induction and on-boarding experience for new hires, and promoting a culture of accountability and performance.

- Outreach activities intensified with the establishment of talent pools, direct sourcing, webinars some with a focus on specific diversity targets, such as women in senior positions, social network campaigns for key positions, and career fairs/missions in specific regions to address non- and under representation. These efforts resulted in an increase of 31% of the number of applicants in 2023 from non- and under-represented countries compared to 2022.

- As a complement to existing induction sessions, an inclusive on-boarding initiative was launched to better understand the needs of newly recruited personnel and enhance onboarding practices.

- Bi-annual meetings were held with the programme and support sector ADGs to discuss HR staffing and planning in the context of the 42 C/5 programme and budget. Work in this area will continue in 2024 with the development of systematic workforce planning guidelines for sectors.

- A performance management curriculum was designed and developed for supervisors to guide, support, and enhance their skills to bring consistency in applying performance management within the Organization. Online training workshops linked to the curriculum were organized during 2023 with some 500 participants on the following topics:

  - Effective communication and feedback
  - Difficult conversations and conflict resolution
  - Managing your team for high performance
  - Time and priority management

  A similar curriculum was also made available to all staff to provide them with an understanding of the key role performance management plays in helping them improve their workplace skills and performance.

AIM 2: PROMOTE INCLUSION & DIVERSITY BY ACHIEVING IN PARTICULAR GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND GENDER BALANCE

4. In line with 41 C/Resolution 64 "*Recommendations of the Executive Board on geographical distribution*", the implementation of initiatives continued throughout 2023 to improve the geographical

representation of staff in the Secretariat [1], and achieve the 50% of external appointments to geographical posts.

- In this regard, 48% external appointments to geographical posts were from non- and under-represented Member States in 2022-2023. This has resulted in a decrease in the number of under-represented countries from 65 to 50 over the course of the last biennium.

- The 2024 Young Professionals Programme was launched in September 2023 with the identification of 10 P-1/P-2 posts located at Headquarters and the field. A series of information sessions were held for the concerned Permanent Delegations and National Commissions.

- A new Mid-level Professional Programme (MLPP) was launched in October 2023 with 11 P-3/P-4 level posts identified and advertised. An intensive social media campaign and webinars were also organized in collaboration with the sectors involved in the MLPP positions to attract the largest possible pool of qualified candidates before the closing dates.

  These ongoing Talent Programmes are expected to ensure progress towards the 85% target of represented Member States.

- Another initiative undertaken in support of creating a diverse, and inclusive organizational culture is the revision of the internship policy which incorporates input from a range of stakeholders (interns, managers, staff associations) and takes account of the JIU recommendations (JIU/REP/2018/1) and practices from other United Nations' organizations. The resulting policy introduces new provisions related to eligibility, leave entitlements, working conditions, responsibilities, and well-being of interns. The introduction of remote internships widens the potential for participation from candidates of diverse and multicultural backgrounds. A major enhancement is the introduction of a monthly living allowance applicable to all interns intended to contribute partially to their daily living expenses (e.g. meals, local transportation for in-person internships). The allowance will be a means to attract talented interns, including from non-and under-represented Member States. The new internship policy will apply from July 2024, to allow sectors and field offices to transition to allowance-based internships.

- UNESCO continues to participate in the initiatives of the United Nations Youth 2030 Task Team on Strengthening Internships, established in 2021. At the end of 2023, the Task Team published an exploratory review [2], which sought to assess the state of United Nations internships and identify best practices. Overall, UNESCO was ranked 5th out of the 29 United Nations entities participating, and as one of the best performing entities in 13 key areas. These include working conditions, recruitment and onboarding processes, performance evaluations, certificates of completion, recognition of internships as work experience and equal opportunities for candidates.

AIM 3: ADAPT FOR THE FUTURE

5.   As part of the ongoing efforts to further cultivate a flexible working environment which is able to adapt to future challenges and opportunities, increase efficiency and improve operations and performance:

- A new, improved parental leave framework will replace the current policies on maternity, paternity and adoption leave and special leave with pay for breastfeeding purposes. The parental leave policy establishes enhanced leave entitlements for staff members who become parents while in service with the Organization and provides measures to support them to achieve a balance between their professional and personal lives. The policy, which

---

[1]   As at 31 December 2023, 80% (154) Member States were represented.
[2]   www.unyouth2030.com

is expected to be issued in June 2024, is designed to enable staff members to share childcare responsibilities, foster gender parity and promote equal career development.

- Internal readjustments to the structure of the Bureau of Human Resources Management are being gradually introduced taking into account the establishment of three regional human resources officers in 2024 in support of the field network reorganization.

- In collaboration with PAX, BSP and the programme sectors and as part of the wider accountability matrix for the field network, HRM is reviewing the reporting lines of programme specialists to ensure consistency at the regional and global levels.

  Comprehensive HR IT systems' review and streamlining are planned for 2024 and will focus on achieving service delivery and reporting improvements through the digitalization of key processes in the HR services, learning and development and performance management function.

AIM 4: ATTAIN BETTER RESULTS AND IMPACT

6. Creating an engaging and healthy environment for all personnel is key to attaining results and impact. Work is focused on promoting a safe and healthy workplace, developing supervisory and managerial skills, upholding values and supporting career development and training for UNESCO personnel.

- UNESCO is represented on the UN-wide Mental Health and Well-being Strategy Implementation Board, the outcomes of which are expected to serve as a basis for UNESCO's action plan on mental health and well-being in the workplace for 2024 and beyond.

- The Occupational Health Service continues to monitor the health and well-being of personnel with a focus on preventative medicine. Several campaigns were organized throughout 2023 including ergonomics and health workshops for the International Day of Occupational Health, diet and nutritional advice during UNESCO's Sports Day, breast cancer screenings, and the influenza vaccination. The OHS staff continue to be trained in fields of occupational medicine (e.g. sleep improvement, managing fatigue, stress, diet and nutrition, ergonomics) to develop more diverse in-house expertise on workplace health.

- UNESCO's first Handbook for Ethical Conduct was developed under the auspices of the Ethics Office. The Handbook which was largely disseminated to UNESCO personnel is an important tool in reinforcing the Organization's ethical framework and organizational culture.

- A Working Group of the Medical Benefits Fund (MBF) Board completed a revision of the Medical Benefits Fund reimbursement rates. The group focused on streamlining the reimbursement process and improving some reimbursements, notably for promoting preventative measures by increasing the reimbursement rates such as vaccinations and screenings. These revised rates came into effect on 1 January 2024.

- Delivery of the People Management and Supervisory Skills workshop continued in 2023 with a further two cohorts, bringing the total number of staff who have participated to more than 200 since the programme was launched in 2021.

- A new management competency training programme has just been launched in 2024.

- Language classes enabled approximately 240 participants to learn one of the six official United Nations languages. HRM also coordinated with the Social and Human Sciences Sector (SHS), to deliver a project on strengthening knowledge of Arabic language and culture, supported by the Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al Saud Foundation. Seven field offices in Arabic-speaking duty stations benefited from locally organized language lessons tailored to their specific needs, while staff and members of Permanent Delegations at Headquarters also followed a beginners' programme. The language learning was complemented in the

latter part of 2023 with a series of online workshops in English and French on Arabic culture, including architecture, art, cinema and women in literature.

- Learning and development initiatives also included a series of events in the context of the International Day of Women in Multilateralism, a second iteration of the mentoring programme, including skill building sessions, curriculum vitae workshops and one-to-one career support, and a series of workshops on results-based management, mobilization of extrabudgetary funding, and soft skills for young professionals and junior professional officers. HRM facilitated two field office retreats, which provided opportunities to assess team strengths and identify concrete actions for further improvement.

- HRM will continue to develop and deliver corporate learning and development programmes in 2024/2025 on topics such as management development, mentoring, cross-cutting soft skills and career development. With regard to sector-specific training needs, HRM will work closely with the sector focal points to advise on the selection, design and evaluation of learning and development initiatives, and identify learning and development synergies between sectors.

Proposed draft decision

7.   In light of the above, the Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1.   Recalling 42 C/Resolution 65,

2.   Having examined document 219 EX/5.III.A,

3.   Takes note of the progress achieved in the implementation of Human Resources Strategy for 2023-2027;

4.   Also takes note of the road map contained in the annex to document 219 EX/5.III.A;

5.   Requests the Director-General to present to it at its 220th session an update on progress achieved in the implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for 2023-2027.

ANNEX

HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR 2023-2027

AIM 1: ATTRACT AND RETAIN TALENT & EXPERTISE

Key Objectives	Actions/Measures	Indicators	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
1. Develop a talented & qualified workforce that can deliver the UNESCO mandate effectively	Systematic Workforce Planning with Sectors	Workforce Planning guidelines developed		↔			
		N° of biennial HR plans in place		↔	↔	↔	↔
	Deliver an effective recruitment and outreach strategy	Increased proportion of applicants meeting all criteria	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔
	Develop key training programmes for upskilling the workforce	3 skills development programmes delivered per biennium	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔
	Update Learning Strategy ensuring it is fit-for-purpose	% of staff satisfied with quality/relevance of learning & development through global staff survey			↔	↔	↔
	Formalize a comprehensive induction framework	% of new hires across the Organization (HQ & Field) participating in induction activities	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔
	Enhance staff career experience: on joining, moving within, and leaving the Organization	% of staff reporting a positive experience in bi-annual pulse surveys	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔
2. Promote an organizational culture of accountability	Reinforce an accountability framework for HR management with clear expectations of leaders as managers and role models	Revised accountability matrix in place and widely communicated to managers	↔	↔			
	Enhance performance management framework in combination with learning and development opportunities	% of managers trained in people management; % of staff satisfied by development objectives in global staff survey	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔
	Establish mechanism/scheme to recognize high-performing teams	Recognition Programme developed and implemented; N° of Teams recognized		↔	↔	↔	↔

AIM 2: PROMOTE INCLUSION & DIVERSITY BY ACHIEVING IN PARTICULAR GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION & GENDER BALANCE

Key Objectives	Actions/Measures	Indicators	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
1. Identify & address challenges to achieving equitable geographical distribution	Maintain full implementation of measures to improve geographical distribution within UNESCO [41 C/Res.64]	% of Member States represented; % of staff recruited from non- and under-represented Member States	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔
	Formalize career development programme for Young Professionals to motivate and encourage professional development	Programme developed and implemented		↔	↔		
2. Foster an organizational culture that respects and enables inclusion, equity and diversity	Develop an Action Plan on gender parity for all staff	Gender parity achieved in all staff categories; % of women represented by category		↔	↔	↔	↔
	Review/update policies, procedures and processes for institutional biases;	N° of policies mainstreamed with Diversity, Equity and Inclusion		↔	↔	↔	↔
	Address barriers to effective participation/accessibility of targeted groups of staff	N° of workshops delivered on unconscious bias; % staff participation	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔
	Enhance Internship Programme	Revised Internships Policy issued	↔	↔			

AIM 3: ADAPT FOR THE FUTURE

Key Objectives	Actions/Measures	Indicators	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
1. Improve the agility & flexibility of the Organization	Develop a framework for rapid fielding of personnel for emergency and crisis situations	Specific mechanism/HR plans in place to support emergency and crisis situations		←———	———→		
	Review HR processes to support the implementation of UNESCO's field network reform	Core HR processes reviewed and table of delegated authorities issued		←———	———→		
	Strengthen career development opportunities for National Professional staff	N° of National Professional staff utilising development opportunities		←———	———	———	———→
	Implement measures to make UNESCO a more flexible and family-friendly Organization	Parental leave framework developed and implemented	←———	———→			
2. Strong HR Structures & Partnerships to better assist managers and personnel to improve performance and operations	Align HR structures to facilitate implementation of HR Strategy	HRM structure/staffing aligned and fit-for-purpose; % client satisfaction on HR services (pulse surveys)	←———	———	———→		
	Undertake review of HR functions in the context of the field reform	Set of decentralized HR functions & delegated HR authorities issued, consistent across the regions		←———	———	———	———→
	Position HR partnerships to complement the workforce in implementing UNESCO's mandate	N° of HR patnerships by Sector/priority areas	←———	———	———	———	———→
3. Enhanced HR Systems to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of HR processes	Identify and implement digital solutions for HR processes in line with UNESCO's IT Strategy	HR Systems, applications and platforms harmonized for increased efficiency	←———	———	———	———	———→
	Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for common procedures and processes to ensure consistent application of HR regulations	SOPs developed & finalized for each paper-based workflow moved to system		←———	———	———	———→

AIM 4: ATTAIN BETTER RESULTS & IMPACT

Key Objectives	Actions/Measures	Indicators	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
1. Safe and Healthy work environment	Develop and implement an employee well-being framework focusing on occupational health and safety and accountability including prevention measures to address key mental health risks	Gap analysis and action plan for UN Mental Health Strategy completed and rolled out; UNESCO's occupational health & safety framework developed; N° of preventative campaigns to address key issues per biennium; % of absenteeism	←———	——— / ←———	———	———→ / ———→	———→
2. Positive and constructive staff-supervisor relationships	Strengthen supervisors' management skills with a focus on managing hybrid teams	% utilization rate of learning resources for supervisors' skill development	←———	———	———	———	———→
	Implement 360° feedback for supervisors and propose relevant development	Regular 360° feedback exercises developed and implemented	←———	———	———	———	———→
	Proactive support to managers and personnel, as necessary [mediation, early prevention/ conflict management]	Global Staff Survey feedback on staff-supervisor relations; % decrease in N° of contestations/appeals	←———	———	———	———	———→
3. Support career development	Enrich and optimize learning resources for individual personal development	N° of individual trainings undertaken ; level of staff satisfaction through global staff survey	←———	———	———	———	———→
	Develop an assessment process to identify potential staff for OIC and Heads of Field Offices assignments	Assessment methodology developed; N° of internal staff assessed		←———	———	———	———→
	Enhance the Geographical Mobility Programme vis-à-vis candidate experience/feedback	Level of staff satisfaction through global staff survey; remedial actions identified for next cycle	←———	———→			
	Effective mechanism in place for Short-Term Assignments (STA) [including funding mechanism]	Formal mechanism in place; N° of STA's facilitated per biennium	←———	———	———→		
	Provide career development support to staff	Level of satisfaction with support, through individual feedback	←———	———	———	———	———→
	Develop Career Management skill-building opportunities for Junior Professional Officers (JPOs), Young Professionals (YPs) and National Professional Officers (NPOs)	Framework for comprehensive skills development established; N° of learning opportunities undertaken	←———	———	———→		