



Chief Executives Board for Coordination

26 November 2018

Report of the High-level Committee on Programmes at its thirty-sixth session

(IFAD Headquarters, Rome, Italy, 9 and 10 October 2018)

Introduction

1. The High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) held its 36th session at the headquarters of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in Rome, Italy, on 9 and 10 October 2018. The agenda of the meeting and the list of participants are contained in annexes I and II.
2. In welcoming the Committee, the IFAD Vice-President, Ms. Cornelia Richter, expressed special appreciation for HLCP's efforts to leverage the transformative power of technological innovation in support of realizing sustainable development for all. She pointed out that for all the opportunities technologies offered, there remained numerous challenges and open questions concerning their socio-economic implications. Ms. Richter underscored that this demanded frank dialogue from diverse points of view on a wide range of policy issues. In this regard, she considered as essential the Committee's work to pursue a coordinated system-wide approach that was rights-based, people-centred, and participatory, with due regard to leaving no-one behind, including through closing the gap between rural and urban opportunities.
3. In outlining the agenda for the 36th session, the Chair of the Committee, Mr. Guy Ryder, Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), recalled that CEB, in deliberating on the impact of disruptive technologies at its first regular session of 2018, had emphasized that: technological advancement was inter-linked with other global trends, such as growing inequality, demographic changes, and governance challenges; a holistic, long-term vision for a future heavily influenced by technologies and other developments was thus needed; the risk of widening inequality across and within countries had to be mitigated and the digital divide closed; and the United Nations system had an important role in promoting an inclusive, equitable and human rights-based approach to addressing transformative changes. The Board had further stressed that any strategy aimed at addressing the implications of new technologies had to centre on investing in people, especially young people, and to concentrate its efforts on supporting developing countries in adapting to the new realities.
4. As tasked by CEB, the Committee's current session would advance efforts to pursue whole-of-system engagement on the implications of frontier technologies in support of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; promote universal norms and shared values to guide the UN system's efforts in an era of transformative changes; and, to that end, carry out additional deep-dive analyses to further build system-wide knowledge and capacity in key "frontier" issues. The Chair further noted that these efforts by the Committee were contributing to the Secretary-General's recently-launched strategy on new technologies by helping to strengthen the UN system's internal knowledge and capacity. An exploratory discussion on strategic foresight and futures thinking would also stimulate the Committee's consideration of new ways of supporting the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, the Committee would also contribute a discussion paper in support of the Board's upcoming deliberations on drug policy.

Building System-wide Knowledge/Capacity through “Deep-Dive” Analyses

I. Impact of Frontier Technologies on Developing Countries

5. The Chair recalled CEB’s guidance emphasizing the need for the UN system to ensure that developing countries - especially the least developed and the most vulnerable within them - were not further disadvantaged in an era of rapid and disruptive technological advancements. Further to the decision taken at its 35th session and on the basis of the analysis contributed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), HLCP engaged in in-depth examinations of the impact of new technologies on developing countries, as an overarching and cross-cutting “thought input” to its ongoing “frontier issues” workstreams. The purpose was to inject them with unique perspectives and requirements of developing countries, especially the “bottom billion,” as a necessary compass to inform and orient system-wide approaches being development under these workstream.
6. Mr. Paul Akiwumi (UNCTAD) presented the analytical paper, underscoring that new technologies: i) offer unprecedented opportunities to address social, economic and environmental challenges faced by developing countries; ii) open great opportunities for developing countries to leapfrog – bypassing stages of technology during the development process - and improv the efficiency of development interventions; iii) could pose, however, serious challenges in terms of jobs, inequality and ethical concerns; and iv) risk widening inequality within and between countries and leaving the poorest and most vulnerable further behind. To seize the opportunities and address the risks, it was essential to support developing countries in pursuing policies that build digital infrastructure and skills and promote innovations. The paper recommended areas which, from the perspectives of developing countries, required greater emphasis in HLCP’s ongoing workstreams, as well as issues which could merit deeper examinations by the Committee in the future. Finally, the Committee was encouraged to engage more actively in supporting the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) as a key forum to address the development dimension of science, technology and innovation (STI).
7. In the ensuing discussion, the Committee expressed appreciation for the high quality of the analysis and its strong relevance to HLCP’s ongoing work. Members recognized the great opportunities for new technologies to offer solutions to challenges faced by the “bottom billion,” and urged the Committee’s ongoing work on AI capacity-building to integrate a strong focus on this aspect. Members also strongly supported the paper’s recommendations to prioritize innovative solutions in areas most directly relevant to developing countries, especially the poorest, e.g., by using technologies to incentivize youth engagement in agriculture. At the same time, members echoed the concern raised in the paper about serious risk of deepening inequality within and between countries and stressed the need to better understand the linkage between disruptive technologies and inequality, with social justice and protection as the connecting perspective. In this regard, active advocacy by the UN system against widening inequality was noted as necessary. Risks related to biotechnology and genetic editing were also highlighted as a critical issue in need of greater examination.
8. The Committee supported the need to further reflect on the issue of governance and on how the application of new technologies could be promoted in support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the country level, particularly as a new generation of UNDAFs was being pursued. There was convergence of views on the need to support the capacity for research, development, and sharing of data and to enable developing countries to determine what their needs are. Some members underscored the importance for the Committee’s efforts at the global and policy level to aim for and result concretely in action and impact on the ground. In this regard, members stressed the importance of channelling HLCP’s analysis into operational efforts through, inter-alia, sharing of best practices across the system and

enhancing engagement with the CSTD and the STI Forum to contribute to country-level assessments.

9. In the area of data governance and norms, members voiced ethical and human rights concerns linked to data control and sovereignty. In this regard, they discussed a role the UN system could play to foster local-level capacity development that would enable developing countries to forge appropriate national policies while more effectively participating in global-level rules-setting. Also raised was the importance of data quality assurance frameworks to account for issues like transparency, representativeness, and inclusiveness, as well as the need to deepen the analysis around data sovereignty, building on the Board's work on big data in 2015. Furthermore, concerns were expressed that the dependence on platforms controlled by a small number of countries and firms would undermine governments' ability to have full control over data, particularly biodata, resulting in loosened protection of their citizens.
10. Bearing in mind the future uncertainty over the traditional export-led development pathway, the UN system's approach to globalization, more broadly, was noted as in need of consideration. Members called for collective efforts towards "course correction" measures aimed at ending seclusion and reorienting globalization, including human mobility also in the new equation. Foresight approach was mentioned as a possibly useful way to facilitate this.
11. Harnessing the expertise in academia and the private sector, as well as traditional knowledge, was underscored as crucial, with the importance noted of ensuring a coherent UN system approach to the private sector. Also stressed was the need for investing in social innovation, incentivize the shift to a more inclusive development of new technologies, and, in this regard, prioritize innovative technologies targeting vulnerable groups such as children and youth, disabled, women, refugees, and migrants.

Conclusion

12. **The Committee supported the analysis and recommendations provided in the paper and requested that each ongoing workstream duly integrate them as an overarching guiding perspective. The Committee also requested the HLCP Secretariat to take this discussion into account in planning the Committee's future analytical work.**

Promoting System-wide Action on Frontier Challenges in Support of the Sustainable Development Goals

II. Artificial Intelligence - Capacity Development for Developing Countries

13. In introducing the agenda item, the Chair recalled that HLCP, in its previous discussions, had recognized the transformative power of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to promote a range of development benefits and serve as a force for good, while also acknowledging its potential to disrupt societies and pose serious ethical and human rights challenges. He further recalled that HLCP had agreed to pursue UN system-wide engagement, through a three-step approach, to scale up AI capacity-building support for developing countries to help harness AI's potential and mitigate its risks in support of sustainable development. ITU had been requested to lead a consultative process among HLCP members to develop such a system-wide approach.
14. Mr. Preetam Maloor (ITU) presented the draft "UN system-wide strategic approach and roadmap for supporting capacity development on artificial intelligence" for the Committee's consideration, prepared in consultation with interested UN agencies and with inputs from the Harvard University's Berkman Klein Centre for Internet and Society. Building on the Committee's earlier guidance, the draft elaborated on the guiding principles on AI capacity-building and a framework of key goals and motivations, and proposed a roadmap for action

outlining commitments and measures to support AI capacity-building for developing countries in the context of achieving the SDGs. Mr. Maloor, in particular, sought the Committee's guidance on an appropriate scope and depth for the roadmap, as well as on the possibility to engage more systematically with outside expertise, including academia and other leading thinkers on AI, as input to HLCP's internal process.

15. In the ensuing discussion, the Committee expressed support for the progress made and affirmed agreement with the shared principles guiding this system-wide effort. With regard to the roadmap for action, members recalled this initiative's intended objective to support AI capacity-building for developing countries and urged a more prioritized and bottom-up approach, guided by and respecting this agreed scope. Some of the proposed measures were seen either as aimed inwardly at building internal capacity within the UN system or as too technical or potentially duplicative with other ongoing efforts, and, thus, considered outside the mandated scope or focus on cross-system coordination and collaboration.
16. Specifically, the Committee suggested that the roadmap for action be prioritized by focusing more directly on AI capacity-building for developing countries, around specific priority needs such as the digital divide, infrastructure, AI governance, and human rights, with a distinct focus on reaching the bottom billion. Members also underscored that the roadmap needed to be better synergized with HLCP's other workstreams (i.e., future of work and future of learning) and integrate the recommendations favourably reviewed during the earlier discussion from the lens of developing countries. Also stressed was the importance to complement – and avoid duplicating – other ongoing efforts within the UN system, including the Secretary-General's Strategy on New Technologies; ITU's AI for Good UN Partners meetings and compendium of AI activities; or those under inter-governmental processes and platforms.
17. There was strong support for the Committee to pursue dialogue and engagement with outside expertise, including academia, the private sector and civil society, as inputs to its internal coordination process. This workstream, given the nature of its topic, was seen as especially suitable for benefitting from outside views and expertise prior to completing the strategic approach. The importance of framing such engagement by a focus on respecting the principles of due diligence and a human rights lens was noted.
18. In conclusion, the Chair noted the Committee's agreement with the guiding principles and the overall framework, and stressed the need to streamline and prioritize the roadmap for action on the basis on the Committee's comments. The Chair also underscored the importance of ensuring synergy with the other workstreams and of integrating the recommendations from the perspectives of developing countries, especially, the bottom billion, which were positively received by the Committee during the earlier agenda item.

Conclusion

19. **The Committee re-affirmed the three-step approach for supporting AI capacity-building for developing countries and approved the shared guiding principles and the system-wide framework. It requested ITU, in cooperation with interested agencies and taking into account the comments made, to finalize the roadmap for system-wide actions and present the full draft of the strategic approach for HLCP's consideration at its 37th session, bearing in mind the need for prioritization, complementarity, and clearer focus on the bottom billion and leaving no-one behind. HLCP also supported engagement with outside expertise as valuable input to the internal coordination process.**

III. Future of Work

20. In introducing the agenda item, the Chair noted that much progress had been made towards developing a system-wide strategy since it was first taken up by the Committee at its 34th session. Given that the analysis, vision and guiding principles presented in the draft strategy reflected the Committee's previous feedback, the Chair directed the current discussion to concentrate on the key elements of implementation and modalities for action and follow-up.
21. Mr. Sangheon Lee (ILO) presented the current draft, soliciting feedback on practical actions to facilitate strong and effective joint work and collaboration across the system within the areas outlined (research and knowledge-sharing; implementation, monitoring and measuring impact; new technologies and innovation within the United Nations system; education and training systems and life-long learning; policy development and technical assistance; norms and standards; and multi-stakeholder partnerships and initiatives to promote a fairer future of work). He invited members' views on mechanisms to monitor, evaluate and adjust the strategy; on achieving a high level of visibility for the strategy; aligning it with related initiatives on artificial intelligence and education for greater coherence and synergies; and using partnerships to maximize the strategy's impact. At the next HCLP session, the full-fledged strategy, incorporating the Committee's current round of input and guidance, would be presented for approval in principle, pending the outcome of the June 2019 ILO Centenary Conference.
22. The Committee was supportive of the proposed implementation and follow-up elements, with many members highlighting workstreams to which their organizations were interested in contributing. It was agreed that the strategy should be ambitious and assert United Nations values and norms as basic rights. Recalling the earlier discussion on the "bottom billion," members observed that the initiative had a great potential to promote equality within and between countries and ensure that no one is left behind.
23. It was felt that the strategy would benefit from reflecting a stronger social perspective, for example by better addressing the evolution of society with the changing world of work, the relationship between jobs and human dignity, and social inclusion. A healthier and safer future of work could also be expressly targeted, for example by promoting the review of outdated systems for health and safety governance. It was noted that the future world of work also required a re-examination of informality. In that vein, the strategy should take a stronger stance on defining acceptable parameters for new forms of work and ensuring adequate social protection, rather than treating precarious or unprotected forms of work as inevitable.
24. Given technologies' disruptive yet transformative impacts, the need for lifelong learning, especially for digital skills, was underscored. In view of demographic trends, while the strategy's focus on providing life skills and economic opportunities for youth was well appreciated, members called for stronger emphasis on addressing the needs of aging workers and providing a more universal approach to social protection for young and old alike. In this context, the Committee reiterated the numerous interlinkages and complementarities between this initiative and the system-wide strategic approach on education and learning for all.
25. Members emphasized the need for the strategy to be actionable and results-oriented, with an overarching timeline for operationalization within which individual UN entities could plan their respective contributions. The importance of finding traction and delivering impact at the country level was underscored, with suggestions made to ensure that the initiative be reflected in UNDAFs, engage the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) to help support the integrated operationalization of the strategy, provide guidance to UN Country Teams to contribute to its practical implementation, and mobilize national-level multi-stakeholder debates and action. Many of the policy issues identified within the strategy were transboundary in nature, and therefore it was stressed that the regional dimension of the implementation could be strengthened.

26. On partnerships, it was seen as important that the strategy more prominently identify organized labour as a key actor and also aim to stimulate partnerships between the labour and health sectors. Broader coalitions – beyond governments, employers and workers – would need to be mobilized for the initiative to succeed.
27. With regard to promoting the visibility of the strategy, members suggested to link the initiative to broader global policy events that would generate global communication impacts, in particular the ILO Centenary Conference and the 2019 High-level Political Forum, which was due to review SDG 8 on decent work.

Conclusion

28. **The Committee requested ILO to continue to work with interested agencies to deliver a full draft of the system-wide strategy, reflecting HLCP’s deliberations, at its 37th session.**

IV. Future of Learning and Education

29. The Chair recalled that HLCP, while considering the implications of disruptive technologies at its 35th session, had recognized the criticality of education and life-long learning in preparing current and future generations for the rapidly changing societies. The Committee had agreed that the UN system had an important role in promoting an inclusive and equitable approach to addressing opportunities and risks facing the future of education and learning and that HLCP could contribute through the development of a system-wide approach, with a strong focus on the most vulnerable and marginalised and on leaving no-one behind.
30. The Committee had now before it, for its review, a proposed roadmap, prepared through an 18-entity task group under the co-leadership of UNESCO and UNICEF. HLCP was invited to provide guidance on the suggested focus, approach and next steps towards the development of a system-wide strategic approach, to be presented for its consideration at the 37th session. Given the close linkages with HLCP’s workstreams on artificial intelligence and the future of work, the Committee was encouraged to ensure due coordination and synergies.
31. In presenting the proposed roadmap, Ms. Jo Bourne (UNICEF) and Mr. Sobhi Tawil (UNESCO) described the aim of this initiative as providing a holistic system-wide approach to support Member States in delivering inclusive, equitable and innovative education and learning for all to prepare their citizens to adapt to future realities and demands. The proposal called for a light-touch approach that prioritized delivering a limited number of critical interventions in areas where whole-of-system engagements and collective actions added value and complemented activities and mechanisms already in place, including the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of SDG4. Accordingly, the proposal foresaw five core themes: i) synergistic use of innovation and technologies; ii) continuous learning through the lifecycle; iii) equity, empowerment and support for learning by the most marginalised; iv) partnerships, co-ordination and optimisation in financing and resource mobilisation; and v) skills acquisition and activation.
32. In the ensuing discussion, HLCP expressed broad support for the proposed roadmap, conveying their appreciation, in particular, for a strategically-prioritized light-touch approach that complemented existing frameworks and mechanisms. Noting the strong relevance of education and learning to a range of development outcomes, an integrated and inter-sectoral approach, anchored in the 2030 Agenda, was highlighted as important. In this context, members highlighted the linkage between education, health, and women’s empowerment. The centrality of education for the girl child, including comprehensive sexual health education, was also noted. Members observed that a growing trend towards privatization of education posed a

particular challenge to the fulfilment of the right to education and the responsibility of the State to meet its obligations. Access to life-long learning, including e-learning, was considered a useful tool for overcoming the rural-urban divide and contributing to sustainable rural development for marginalized rural populations.

33. Broad support was expressed for the five core themes that constituted the central elements of the proposed action framework, while some suggested the possibility of further simplification, including by streamlining the priority areas. While appreciating that education served broad purposes, many members highlighted the critical linkage between education and learning and work, urging maximum coordination and synergy between the two workstreams. Also stressed was the transformational power of technology and, thus, the need to build digital skills and literacy. Furthermore, the importance of ensuring operational relevance and impact on the ground was noted, including by linking this approach to the UNDAF process at country level.
34. In conclusion, the Chair confirmed the Committee's strong support for the strategically-focused light-touch approach as proposed. He requested UNESCO and UNICEF to continue to co-lead the work, taking into consideration the feedback and suggestions provided, to prepare a full draft of the strategic approach, for the Committee's consideration at its 37th session.

Conclusion

35. **HLCP approved the proposed roadmap for a UN system-wide strategic approach for achieving inclusive, equitable and innovative education and learning for all, and requested UNESCO and UNICEF to co-lead the process to develop, taking into account the comments made, a full-fledged draft for the Committee's consideration at the 37th session.**

Contributing System-wide Analysis for Upcoming CEB Deliberation

V. Drug Policy

36. The Chair introduced the agenda item, placed at the request of the CEB Chair for the Committee to contribute an analytical input to the Board's upcoming deliberations in the second regular session of 2018. Noting that drug problem affected hundreds of millions of people worldwide, the Chair underscored its complex multi-faceted nature, with significant implications across the SDGs and different pillars of UN mandate, thus requiring broader cross-sector and cross-pillar engagement and coherent system-wide perspectives.
37. In 2009, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) adopted the Political Declaration and Plan of Action setting 2019 as the target date for states to "eliminate or reduce significantly and measurably" illicit drug supply and demand, the diversion and trafficking of precursors, and money laundering. In 2016, the General Assembly held a special session (UNGASS) to review the progress and adopted an outcome document. To ensure effective and coherent UN support to the comprehensive implementation of these commitments, the Secretary-General placed this issue on the agenda of his Executive Committee in April 2017, tasking UNODC, together with relevant entities, to take concrete steps to improve coordination.
38. In view of a ministerial segment to be convened by the CND during its 62nd session in March 2019, the CEB Chair decided to include 'drug policy' on the Board's agenda in order to ensure that the UN system had a common position. Bearing in mind the efforts already ongoing within the framework of the Secretary-General's Executive Committee, the role of HLCP was to support CEB's deliberations by contributing a discussion input from broader inter-agency and systems perspectives. The Committee had now before it a draft paper, prepared through a consultative process coordinated by UNODC, providing an overview of the world drug problem and a balanced analysis of key issues surrounding the international policy discourse.

39. In introducing the draft paper, Mr. Jean-Luc Lemahieu and Ms. Chloe Carpentier (UNODC) underscored the complexity of the issue in the highly politicized and polarized policy environments. The international drug control regime, through its complementary and reinforcing norms, standards, and institutions, presented the overarching global consensus and provided the overall framework for international cooperation. The presenters informed that despite divergent views on specific aspects of such framework, member states remained focused on the implementation of agreed commitments within existing institutions. The paper before the Committee sought to provide an overview of relevant developments in international policy discourse in order to inform CEB's forthcoming discussion. It proposed a basis for a common position, building on UN system key messages prepared in 2017, and put forward a concrete suggestion for system-wide data collection efforts to support and promote an evidence-based implementation of international commitments.
40. In ensuing discussion, the Committee underscored the importance of a coherent UN system position, expressing overall support for building it on the 2017 joint messages. As an overarching perspective, members re-affirmed the UN system's commitment to supporting the norms and policies agreed by member states – including the UNGASS outcome as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and international human rights standards. The Committee, to that end, underscored the importance of ensuring collaboration and coordination across the system in promoting comprehensive, balanced, integrated, evidence and rights-based, and development-oriented responses to the world drug problem. In light of this convergence of view, the Committee strongly recommended that section IV of the current draft be revised to ensure that the paper accurately reflected the UN system's shared commitment.
41. While the discussion paper was considered very educational for providing highly detailed information on policy issues and ongoing efforts, the Committee strongly recommended that a much shorter, more streamlined, and less technical paper, while still providing sufficient substance at the strategic level, would be more appropriate for CEB's purposes.
42. Several members underscored that the discussion paper needed to be more strongly anchored in the 2030 Agenda, through which health and human rights related goals and targets should and could be better highlighted and integrated across the document. Members, in particular, stressed that issues related to human rights, public health, harm reduction, alternative development, and social justice needed to be better articulated and more clearly reflected, as well as the link between the world drug problem and political instability in some regions and countries. The need to ensure a more balanced tone and coverage in outlining these issues and varying perspectives was also underscored.
43. The Chair, while recalling HLCP's task as providing CEB with a discussion input rather than definitive consensus, noted with appreciation that the Committee had shown overall support for the proposed UN common position as a basis for the Board's consideration. The Committee strongly felt that the current draft needed to be streamlined to be suitable for a principal-level meeting, without losing the necessary substance at the strategic level. The Chair recapitulated the Committee's recommendations that the paper be more deeply anchored in the SDGs, in particular to better integrate human rights and health related targets, and recognize the linkages, in some circumstance, between drug-related measures and political instability. The Committee had expressed a clear preference for revising section VI of the current draft to more accurately reflect the UN system's shared commitment to the agreed global norms and standards and to pursuing coherent system-wide support to a truly balanced and comprehensive approach guided by the agreed framework of policies in drug control, sustainable development, human rights, and other relevant areas.

Conclusion

44. **HLCP requested UNODC, in consultation with the task group, to finalize the discussion paper, taking duly into account the comments made by the Committee, for onward submission to CEB at its second regular session for 2018.**

Scoping Discussion

VI. Strategic Foresight: toward a shared vision for supporting the Sustainable Development Goals in an uncertain future

45. The Chair invited the Committee to engage in a retreat-style, exploratory discussion, supported by a facilitator, Mr. Arndt Husar, on the concept and application of strategic foresight. Guided by the orientation paper with discussion questions, its aim was to enhance members' collective understanding of strategic foresight; consider its merits, relevance, and feasibility for HLCP's ongoing and future work in system-wide policy coordination and programmatic coherence; and explore a possible HLCP role in enhancing foresight capacities in the UN system.
46. The facilitator provided an overview of how foresight presented an opportunity to move from an exploratory or deductive approach to understanding future potential (i.e., observing historic and current events to anticipate "projected" or "probable" futures) to an inductive or anticipatory approach that permitted moving beyond preconceptions of what was possible. The aim was to empower decision-makers to navigate toward the preferred future – in the case of the United Nations, the world envisioned in the 2030 Agenda. Given that the path to 2030 was not linear and that development efforts would likely be disrupted along the way, agility and flexibility would be needed to tackle challenges as they arose, and those who incorporated foresight techniques in their working methods would be better prepared and more resilient in the face of uncertainty and disruption. Noting that there were a range of foresight methodologies available, the facilitator introduced a number of techniques¹ and applications² based on the example of the UNDP Empowered Futures Initiative, a programme that aimed to provide developing country governments and other stakeholders with capacities and tools to shape and realize their own futures. In addition, a number of current UN system activities employing futures thinking were noted, pointing to a potential rationale for promoting synergies among them and pursuing system-wide engagement on foresight.
47. To illustrate how foresight techniques were already being applied in a UN system context, Mr. Klaus Tilmes (World Bank Group) shared his experience in integrating foresight into and across the World Bank's practices and capacities to make better sense of emerging technologies and their accompanying disruptions. With the support and sponsorship of the Bank President, he and his small team pursued this effort holistically, addressing internal, global and country-level perspectives. They engaged both staff and outside experts in examining the issues and opportunities, identified the Bank's core corporate contributions in the context of the fast-changing environment, and established a variety of mechanisms – including a "disruptive technology network," two labs on artificial intelligence and blockchain, and pilot programmes with private sector partners – to reorient the organization to better navigate the pathway of disruption. Mr. Tilmes reported that, in nine months, the Bank's management and Board had

¹ **Scanning:** exploring the external environment to better understand the nature and pace of change and identify opportunities and challenges; **Visioning:** a participatory method for identifying, developing and enriching a compelling, preferred future scenario; **Backcasting:** working backward from the future to understand and explore alternative future paths; **Wind-tunnelling:** stress-testing goals and objectives against different future scenarios. (For detail: (<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/capacity-building/global-centre-for-public-service-excellence/ForesightManual2018.html>))

² **Visionary foresight:** helps create empowering narratives in a rapidly transforming world; **Strategic foresight:** identifies strategic opportunities in the emerging future to achieve visions such as the SDGs; **Adaptive foresight:** strengthens the resilience of policies and planning; **Creative foresight:** innovates public services design and delivery.

affirmed the critical nature of this effort, future awareness had risen among Bank staff, and organizational mindsets had begun shifting. He concluded that the UN system, with its shared agenda and wealth of entity-specific insights, would benefit from a broader and collaborative use of foresight, through which it could speak with one voice and with a shared language.

48. Presenting a second case study, Mr. Riel Miller (UNESCO) addressed the broad value in promoting futures literacy: the capacity to imagine the future and use it in today's planning and decision-making. The UNESCO Futures Literacy Laboratories had been established to provide a wide range of actors with the capacity to address their most pressing issues by "using the future" – identifying their goals and applying their imagination to meet these aspirations in tangible form. As with foresight, there were different techniques and methodologies, many of which were easy to learn to apply. In the era of disruption and change, Mr. Miller stressed the timeliness of developing a futures literacy capability within UN system organizations in order to improve support to beneficiaries. Once better able to understand the way the future could be used, then the more possible it would be to change the conditions of change.
49. In the ensuing interactive discussion, members responded positively to the presentations and were enthusiastic with the prospect of applying these practices within their organizations as well as in the context of HLCP's joint efforts. They appreciated the significant relevance of strategic foresight for UN system efforts, seeing the potential for mainstreaming its use across a wide range of application areas. The Committee strongly affirmed that strategic foresight was well aligned with its mandate and role as a think tank for the system, and that it was important to lead by example in approaching its work through the lens of the future. Integrating foresight approaches in its policy and strategy development toolbox would expand HLCP's ability to engage system-wide with possible futures and improve its anticipatory capacity.
50. Members identified a variety of benefits for HLCP (and by extension CEB) of engaging with foresight. Of great relevance in this inter-agency context, it would provide the ability to interact with futures across silos/practices/organizations, bringing in expertise from unusual quarters and challenging existing assumptions. It would allow for the identification of pathways that might permit a more agile and flexible navigation towards the "desired future," which also enabled a deeper engagement with and detailing of that 2030 future. Recognizing that futures could not be fully predicted, using foresight would also demonstrate that the Committee had based its recommendations not only on statistical analysis of historical or concurrent data (which nevertheless remained valuable inputs), but also leveraged sense-making processes by exploring alternative futures and improving UN system futures literacy capabilities. Perhaps most importantly, embracing this practice would demonstrate thought-leadership through true system-wide engagement on over-the-horizon challenges.
51. A variety of potential areas of engagement around these strategic techniques were proposed. Foremost, members supported integrating foresight approaches in HLCP's work to become more anticipatory. The Committee could commission studies or conduct exercises on key emerging issues to identify policy pathways and facilitate engagement. Undertaking a pilot on applying strategic foresight could demonstrate its relevance for the Committee's core work on policy and programme coordination, as well as its ability to identify emerging issues that could influence the Committee's agenda. One possibility was to apply it to ongoing analysis on the future of work, learning and education, and artificial intelligence, though caution was expressed to avoid stalling work that was nearing finalization. Proposals for new thematic options to examine through a futures lens included ageing, climate change, urbanization (possibly with a specific angle on sustainable consumption and production) and green economy/green jobs. Possible merit in collaborating with other existing inter-agency bodies such as the UN Strategic Planning Network was also mentioned.
52. More broadly, HLCP and its members could raise awareness of and advocate for futures thinking, specifically to take a longer-term view of sustainable development (beyond 2030)

and appeal for bold leadership in pursuit of the “desired future” scenario. It was suggested that the ECOSOC High-level Segment could present an opportunity to showcase some of the UN system work on foresight and demonstrate its value to Member States. The need to press for more cohesive strategic planning processes at country-level was also mentioned, for example, through UNDAF guidance on applying foresight and making foresight tools and knowledge (including outside expertise) available to country teams and learning from UNCT experiences.

53. Members saw strong demand for a practical initiative to promote inter-agency information-sharing on the fragmented foresight practices, products, and capacities currently in use across the UN system through some form of a knowledge hub. Merit was seen in establishing an experience-sharing network for practitioners that were already active across the system and to gradually build and enhance internal collaboration and cross-fertilization. An HLCP-hosted community of practice (CoP) on strategic foresight could not only enable members to share experience and exchange lessons learned and enhance the quality of their respective work, but could also serve as a resource pool for organizations to enable the wider adoption and deployment of foresight approaches across the system in support of sustainable development. It could also serve as a collective interface to engage and collaborate with external experts such as in non-UN international organizations or academia. Members felt that HLCP would benefit from hosting a CoP as it could provide useful inputs into the Committee’s ongoing analytical and strategy development work and, as appropriate, its support to CEB.
54. To broaden capabilities beyond the existing community of practitioners, it was proposed that the Committee could promote capacity development among UN system entities and help initiate a shared facility to promote the coherent and systematic application of strategic foresight throughout the system through, for example, combining tools and developing joint toolkits. The ILO International Training Centre, with its existing foresight capacities, and the UN System Staff College were mentioned as mechanisms that could potentially be leveraged for that purpose.
55. It was suggested that HCLP could sponsor work to develop methodologies that helped overcome blind spots and blockages to seeing opportunities, threats and risks due to assumptions and restrictive political orthodoxies. It could also promote the joining up of sources and synthesis of information on specific contexts to better detect weak signals or flag disruptions that would otherwise not get attention. Furthermore, the Committee could support joint creation of foresight products for use by UN system organizations, Member States and the general public to help guide work towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.
56. Throughout the session, members highlighted recent work in their organizations, ranging in maturity and complexity. In this sharing of experiences, a number of success factors were identified, the most prominent of which were: senior-level buy-in to back the initiative, provide visibility and engage with the outputs; proper scoping, design and a sound evidence base to inform the foresight process; engagement with multi-disciplinary stakeholders to challenge dominant assumptions and add new perspectives during scanning exercises; communications and engagement with wider internal stakeholders (beyond those directly engaged in strategic planning and policy development); creating foresight products that were actionable today; and a mainstreaming of futures literacy in the organization.
57. In closing the scoping discussion, the Chair took note of the strong and enthusiastic support voiced by the Committee to engage with alternative futures and to deploy foresight approaches in its work. He saw this effort as having the potential to serve as a vector for change in the UN system, and stressed the need to widely propagate the use of foresight throughout UN organizations, including at country level. The Chair observed that promoting, coordinating, and pursuing concrete and targeted engagement with strategic foresight on a system-wide basis offered a promising opportunity for the Committee to further embody its expected role as a think tank for the system.

58. The Chair concluded that, based on the Committee's views, two main streams of action could be pursued to realize this considerable potential: first, foresight approaches could be applied to a pilot topic on the Committee's agenda as a way to familiarize members with the key concepts and methodologies and test and demonstrate their concrete relevance to HLCP's work in promoting system-wide policy coordination and programmatic coherence; and second, the Committee could explore ways to promote experience-sharing and capacity-building across the system in an effort to promote and support critical mass and a network of futures-literate organizations and individuals within the UN system.

Conclusion

59. **The Committee decided to: (i) pursue a pilot foresight exercise on an appropriate challenge/topic (to be selected) to explore and assess the practicality of integrating foresight approaches in HLCP's work with a view to enhancing its agenda-setting, deliberations, and products; and (ii) explore options to promote and support foresight capacities across the UN system and foster cross-agency and system-wide collaboration on foresight.**

Progress Reviews and Other Matters

VII. Progress Reviews: Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020; UN-Water; UN-Energy; and UN-Oceans

60. Further to their electronic reviews and endorsements in advance of the session, the Committee took note of the progress report on the ongoing effort to mainstream the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (IPoA) into the work programmes of UN system organizations, submitted by the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS); as well as of the progress reports of UN-Water, UN-Energy and UN-Oceans.

VIII. Other Matters

A) Dates and location of the thirty-seventh session of the Committee

61. The Chair proposed the dates of 8 and 9 April 2019 for the Committee's 37th session, to be held at United Nations headquarters in New York.

Conclusion

62. **The Committee approved the dates and location of its 37th session: 8 and 9 April 2019 at United Nations headquarters in New York.**

B) Progress Update: Shared Framework for Action on Equality and Non-Discrimination

63. The Chair recalled the HLCP process, co-led by OHCHR and UN-Women, to develop the Shared United Nations System Framework for Action on Equality and Non-discrimination, which had been endorsed by the Board in 2016. He noted that the Framework mandated the Committee to periodically review progress and impact at the strategic and global policy level

to strengthen coordination and coherence and identify gaps, while country-level implementation was being pursued through the UNSDG.

64. The progress report on the Framework highlighted that, despite significant achievements, more needed to be done, for example with respect to economic inequalities; social protection systems; and social/environmental or human rights impact assessments. Stressing the imperative to leave no one behind, the Committee supported the recommendation by the co-leads that equality and non-discrimination be placed on the agenda of a future HLCP session to facilitate a more robust review to galvanize action to close the gaps identified.

Conclusion

65. **The Committee decided to undertake a fuller review of the progress and gaps in implementing the Framework for Action on Equality and Non-discrimination at its 37th session.**

C) Progress Update: Urbanization and Sustainable Development

66. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the proposal to revitalize the UN system's efforts in support of the New Urban Agenda, building on the policy paper developed by HLCP in 2016 as input to the Habitat III conference. Mr. Christopher Williams (UN-Habitat) provided the background and rationale for this proposal, recalling the recent inter-governmental decisions and the request made by the Senior Management Group. The Committee responded favourably to the proposal to establish a time-bound task team, led by UN-Habitat, to prepare, with the 2016 paper as the basis, a draft system-wide strategy, for its consideration at the 37th session.

Conclusion

67. **The Committee approved the proposal to develop, building on its earlier analytical work and in alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other relevant global agreements, a system-wide strategy for sustainable urban development and requested UN-Habitat to lead a time-bound consultation process to prepare a draft for the Committee's consideration at the 37th session.**

Annex I

Agenda

Building System-wide Knowledge/Capacity through “Deep-Dive” Analyses

- I. Impact of Frontier Technologies on Developing Countries

Promoting System-wide Action on Frontier Challenges in Support of the Sustainable Development Goals

- II. Artificial Intelligence - Capacity Development for Developing Countries
- III. Future of Work
- IV. Future of Learning and Education

Contributing System-wide Analysis for Upcoming CEB Deliberation

- V. Drug Policy

“Scoping” Discussion

- VI. Strategic Foresight: toward a shared vision for supporting the SDGs in an uncertain future

Information Topics & Any Other Business

- VII. Progress Review on Standing Items
 - A) Istanbul Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries
 - B) UN-Water, UN-Energy, and UN-Oceans
- VIII. Other Matters
 - A) Dates and Location of HLCP 37th session
 - B) Progress Update: Shared Framework for Action on Equality and Non-Discrimination
 - C) Progress Update: Urbanization and Sustainable Development

Annex II

List of Participants

Chair: **Mr. Guy Ryder** (ILO)
Secretary: **Ms. Kayoko Gotoh**

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Name</u>
United Nations	
DESA	Ms. Marion Barthelemy
UN-OCHA	Mr. Hansjoerg Strohmeyer
OHCHR	Mr. Craig Mokhiber
RECs	Mr. Amr Nour
UNFCCC	Mr. Daniele Violetti
Global Pulse	Mr. Robert Kirkpatrick
ILO	Mr. Andre Bogui
	Mr. Shengjie Li
	Ms. Dorothea Schmidt-Klau
	Mr. Sangheon Lee
FAO	Ms. Beth Crawford
	Mr. James Azevedo Gorgen
	Ms. Cristina Petracchi
UNESCO	Ms. Marie-Ange Theobald
	Ms. Clare Stark
	Mr. Sobhi Tawil
	Mr. Riel Miller
ICAO	Ms. Latifa Hadbi
WHO	Dr. Shambhu Acharya
	Ms. Ivana Milovanovic
	Dr. Ivan Ivanov
WBG	Mr. Jos Verbeek
	Mr. Klaus Tilmes
UPU	Mr. Abdellatif Meskine
ITU	Mr. Preetam Maloor
	Mr. Mario Castro Grande
IMO	Mr. Arsenio Dominguez

IFAD	Ms. Cornelia Richter, Vice President Ms. Charlotte Salford Mr. Ashwani Muthoo Mr. Shantanu Mathur Mr. Torben Nilsson
UNIDO	Ms. Tsung Ping Chung
UNWTO	Ms. Zoritsa Urosevic
IAEA	Mr. Nuno Luzio
IOM	Mr. Ashraf El Nour
UNCTAD	Mr. Paul Akiwumi Mr. Clovis Freire
UNDP	Ms. Maria Luisa Silva
UNEP	Ms. Maaïke Jansen
UNHCR	Mr. Andrew Harper
UNICEF	Ms. Jo Bourne Mr. David Matern Ms. Lidia Tutarinova Mr. Tim Unwin
UNFPA	Mr. Ramiz Alakbarov Mr. Alexander Pak
WFP	Mr. Jean-Pierre de Margerie
UNODC	Ms. Gillian Murray Mr. Jean-Luc Lemahieu Ms. Doris Resch Ms. Chloe Carpentier
UN-HABITAT	Mr. Christopher Williams
UNU	Mr. James Cockayne
UNAIDS	Mr. Tim Martineau
CTBTO	Mr. Patrick Grenard
CEB Secretariat	Ms. Simona Petrova Ms. Federica Pietracci Ms. Xenia von Lilien Ms. Cheryl Stafford Ms. Marije van den Berg Mr. Arndt Husar (facilitator)