



Summary of Conclusions of the 36th Session of the Human Resources Network

**Part 1: Closed session
23 – 25 January 2018
UN Volunteers, Bonn**

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Adoption of the Agenda

i. Opening of the session and adoption of the agenda

1. The Human Resources Network held its 36th session from 23-25 January 2018, hosted by UN Volunteers in Bonn. The meeting was co-chaired by Ms. Martha Helena Lopez, Assistant Secretary-General, Human Resources, UN Headquarters, Ms. Eva Mennel, Director, Human Resources, UNICEF and Mr. Mark Levin, Director, Human Resources, ILO.
2. The agenda was adopted as reflected in the table of contents.
3. The list of participating organizations and their representatives at the meeting is provided in Annex 1.
4. The meeting was opened with a welcome from Mr. Toily Kurbanov, the Deputy Executive Coordinator, Management Services, of the UN Volunteers programme.

ii. Draft Budget on Local Surveys

a) 2018 – 2019 Budget

5. The UN Secretariat presented to the HR Network the proposal for the revised budget, established based on feedback received from other organizations. In contrast to the previous budget proposal the revised budget excludes local support costs.
6. The overall budget proposal included benefits derived from a suggested relocation of selected positions from Bangkok, Thailand to Bonn, Germany. The benefits are expressed and include but are not restricted to: lower time zone lags, decreased costs for travel and improved working relationships and communication.
7. During the discussion, some organizations pointed out the need for a revision of the cost sharing formula in the coming biennia. This should encompass adequate consideration of end-to-end costs including in-kind contributions in field duty stations. Several Network members supported the initiatives for budget containment and reduction, in particular through relocation of selected positions to Bonn, Germany.
8. *Decision: The HR Network thanked the UN Secretariat for the work on the revised budget proposal, taking into account feedback from other organizations. The HR Network endorsed the budget proposal and requested the CEB Secretariat to forward it to the F&B Network for approval. The HR Network thanked all organizations providing support to salary survey activities, in particular UNDP, and acknowledged that the full process cost will need to be taken into account in future budgets. The HR Network supported the initiative of the UN Secretariat to contain and reduce overall cost of operation by moving selected positions to Bonn, Germany.*

b) Review of the Salary Survey methodology

9. The UN Secretariat presented an overview of the topic. While a periodic review of the survey methodology was part of the ongoing operation, it was highlighted that such a comprehensive review would also be a key component of phase 2 of the ICSC Comprehensive Compensation Review scheduled to start later this year. A number of challenges had surfaced in recent years from an operational perspective, leading to increasing challenges in conducting surveys as originally planned and to increased total cost of operation.

10. It was agreed during the discussion that the survey methodology needs careful but comprehensive review, and that operational costs should figure prominently in such review as a design element. It is currently expected that the ICSC would start a review of the methodology in the summer of 2018, aimed at completion during 2019. Given the importance of the topic, several participants suggested more in-depth technical preparatory work by the HR Network.
11. *Decision: The HR Network highlighted the need to include the total cost of operation as a design factor in the upcoming ICSC Review of the Salary Survey methodology for locally recruited staff. It agreed to create a preparatory working (focus) group to research the issues surrounding the existing salary survey methodologies and formulate recommendations to the ICSC on how to best address those issues. The HR Network accepted the offer of the UN Secretariat to prepare a draft of the Terms of References and requested the CEB Secretariat to support in the creation of the Working Group.*

c) Bangkok Salary Survey and Scales

12. *Decision: The HR Network was informed by the UN Secretariat that the last comprehensive salary survey found that the retained comparator employers' salaries were lower than the General Service salaries of the secondary scale by 13.2% whereas the comparators' salaries for the National Officer salaries were higher by 10.0%. The HR Network noted the importance to be compliant with the methodology and proceed with the tertiary salary scale for the General Service, while recognizing that this was not a desirable situation.*

iii. Upcoming Post Adjustment discussions – preparation, coordination and positioning of HR Network (Co-Chairs)

13. The Network Co-Chair introduced the discussion on how best to prepare for the upcoming discussions in ACPAQ on Post adjustment matters. The ICSC Executive Secretary provided an overview of the current status of the methodology review which was undertaken with the support of an independent consultant.
14. During the discussion, a number of organizations highlighted their concerns regarding potential legal risks and staff dissatisfaction, resulting from the implementation of the unified salary scale and the related adjustment of the spouse allowance for staff that are no longer eligible for its receipt. The recent UNDT judgements on the subject could potentially have far-reaching implications for all UN system organizations. This was seen as an illustration of the potential legal risks applicable also in other areas under ICSC purview. The UN Secretariat pointed to the possibility of appealing these judgements within a 60-day timeline and committed to report back to the Network as soon as the UN Secretariat had decided on its next steps on the matter.
15. On a more general note, participating organizations expressed concern regarding the lack of communication and involvement of key stakeholders in the present review of the Post Adjustment methodology by the consultant. It was highlighted that no organization so far has been approached for input or views, and that a pure desk review was not seen as adequate to address the current critical situation. Concern was raised about the lack of clarity of the concrete impact of ICSC decisions on Post Adjustment only few days prior to payroll run, which was seen as insufficient to adequately inform staff with proper notice.
16. In general, the current working relationship between organizations and the ICSC was not considered as sufficiently constructive. The Network Co-Chairs reported that they had taken the initiative to meet with ICSC leadership including the newly elected Vice-Chairman in order to initiate a regular discussion on how to collaboratively identify issues of mutual concern and enhance planning and collaboration going forward. In this context, field-based organizations offered support for newly elected Commissioners to provide them with exposure to deep field experiences in order to better appreciate HR realities and requirements in such UN operations.

Other organizations pointed to the need to intensify and coordinate collective communication and outreach to Member States.

17. *Decision: The HR Network thanked the ICSC Executive Secretary for her briefing, and confirmed its intent to collaborate with the ICSC in a constructive relationship, in order to ensure smooth advancement of the management reform agenda of the SG and Executive Heads of Specialized Agencies. The HR Network requested its Co-Chairs with support from the CEB Secretariat to reach out to ICSC leadership to comprehensively discuss future collaboration and main reform contributions in the coming year, and to closely liaise with the HLCM Chair and Vice-Chair on this matter as well as with Staff representatives. It was also highlighted that an efficient functioning of the ICSC as a trusted authoritative body mindful of practical management challenges including legal risks and implications on staff-management relations is vital for the cohesion and success of the UN Common System. Furthermore, the recent judgements issued by UNDT were noted, and highlights the significant potential administrative and cost implications. In the Network's view, the judgements are a vital illustration that legal risks, in particular associated with the implementation of the results of the current cost-of-living surveys, are real and need to be actively managed and form an essential part of the current review of the methodology. Where warranted to significantly reduce legal implementation risks, suggested methodology amendments should be applied to the results of the current round of surveys. The HR Network highlighted that the post adjustment methodology should not be designed or implemented with a view to favour one duty station over the other, while expressing concern about the potential negative implications of the recent methodology changes in particular in field duty stations.*

iv. UNDP-UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities

18. UN Volunteers presented the initiative of the UNDP-UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities and its progress. The objectives of the talent programme are an increasing inclusion of persons with disabilities into the workforce of the development sector while building a talent pipeline of highly qualified professionals with disabilities who can contribute to the attainment of the SDGs at national and global levels.
19. The presentation touched upon the different professional experiences, types of assignments and the dedicated support initiatives of the programme. Furthermore, the operational framework as well as the importance of partnerships for a successful and sustainable future of the programme were elaborated on. In the subsequent discussions, a number of organizations welcomed the initiative.
20. *Decision: The HR Network thanked UN Volunteers and UNDP for the presentation, stressing the importance of the programme to spearhead diversity and inclusion from the angle of providing opportunities for disabled people to engage with the United Nations system; and encouraged its member organizations to actively partner with UN Volunteers to expand the programme and align the efforts with other ongoing diversity and inclusion initiatives.*

v. The era of talent intelligence (LinkedIn) – For Knowledge Sharing

21. UN Volunteers and LinkedIn jointly provided a presentation on LinkedIn data insights into the UN ecosystem. The presentation gave a vital overview of the societal, organizational and individual impact as well as LinkedIn's mission and vision. In this context the economic and skills-related information gathered on LinkedIn was elaborated on, to express the functioning and value add of the network for organizations. The company's research and insight possibilities were explained including the respective impact for both employees and employers, and possibilities for enhanced partnerships were explored in the following discussion.

22. The presentation also provided an overview of the UN specific data and employer branding strength of selected Network organizations.

23. *Decision: The HR Network thanked LinkedIn and UN Volunteers for the presentation and expressed an interest in learning more about possible opportunities to tap into talent, employee and job data pertaining to employees and organizations of the UN system. The HR Network would welcome to receive further information in this regard.*

vi. The feedback-driven enterprise (PulseShift) – for Knowledge Sharing

24. The Managing Director of PulseShift GmbH presented an approach and solutions for data-driven transformation management. Given the intensity and further acceleration of change initiatives in organizations, data from various sources in order to better target, structure and communicate such change initiatives. Experience was shared with regard to the set-up of such data-driven transformation initiatives and the related advantages. Given many change initiatives are conducted in an environment of increasing uncertainty and volatility, constant feedback and measurement of results and perceptions will enable efficient project resource spending and allows for timely adjustment of change approaches when needed.

25. *Decision: The HR Network thanked PulseShift for the insightful presentation and discussion.*

vii. Progress Update from HRN WG on Performance Management

26. The Co-Chairs of the Working Group (WFP and UNOPS), presented a progress update and recalled the principle goals of the group, extending from initial normative focus to creating a community for exchange and knowledge sharing and the identification of areas of “added value” to HR practitioners and leadership.

27. Previous deliverables covered an overview of the performance management practices in 2016 and the identification of a good practices in the following focus areas: ensuring consistency of evaluations and ratings, links of performance management with other HR elements, management of underperformance, recognition and rewards, and arbitration and dispute management. The Group has also taken out a comparison of policies among agencies in regards to management of underperformance which was presented in further details. The Working Group’s online resource centre was recently expanded to also include resources on staff engagement.

28. Going forward, results of recent self-assessments identified the following three high priorities across organizations: effective PM culture fostering continuous dialogue, leadership commitment and accountability for PM. Furthermore, a number of organizations were studying, piloting or expanding multi-rater feedback including 360 feedbacks, the majority with a link to learning and development programmes.

29. *Decision: the HR Network thanked the Working Group, and in particular its chairs (WFP and UNOPS) for the significant progress achieved, including the expansion of the work to share experience on staff engagement. It requested the group to continue and intensify its work, in particular around the following topics and questions:*

- *How to best contribute to HR process streamlining in support of the management reform agenda of Network organizations?*
- *How to best introduce multi-rater feedback, including 360 feedbacks?*
- *How to integrate Performance Management efforts with related HR topics such as Staff Engagement or Diversity & Inclusion.*
- *How to strengthen, assess and support (people) management accountability?*
- *How to practically organize mutual support among organizations that are in the midst of HR transformations, including capturing lessons learnt?*

30. *The HR Network saw the work of the Working Group as a model to be expanded to other HR areas, in particular to Recruitment and Talent Outreach, and requested the CEB Secretariat to expedite the formation of such sub-Network structures. Furthermore, it recommended to provide an update on the results of the Working Group to HLCM, as an illustration of the practical support the Network provides to advance management reform and collaboration initiatives.*

viii. Case Study: Revision and enhancement of Performance Management at UNICEF

31. The representative of UNICEF provided an overview of the recent initiatives to enhance Performance Management in the organization. One element during the initiative was a Policy revision, in order to ensure that step increments are firmly related to adequate work performance. Also, the revised policy aims to ensure that contractual decisions are guided/ informed by performance assessments, and performance improvement plans are thoroughly implemented. With effect from January 2018, differentiation meetings have been introduced globally, to ensure the full spectrum of ratings is applied in a globally consistent manner.

32. Another area of focus is to accelerate and further professionalize the performance management process by expediting the rebuttal process and ensuring neutrality of the evaluation through the introduction of an external review panel. Dedicated case management support was established in 2016 to empower and support managers to identify and address underperformance of staff members when needed.

33. As part of the strategy a global PM workshop program has been implemented and rolled out globally with 169 workshops in 54 countries up to date. This communication and training effort is further complemented by an online repository of blended PM resources accessible to staff globally including videos, e-learning and FAQs, as well as through Webinar outreach to the HR community and advocacy with HR Business Partners in HQ and field locations, and other measures.

34. Future plans for UNICEF include 1.) the assessment of lessons learned during the 2017 performance cycle, 2.) the introduction of a recognition and reward programme, and 3.) system based enhancements.

35. *Decision: The HR Network thanked UNICEF for the insightful presentation and discussion.*

ix. External input: Best practices and current developments in Performance Management (CEB/Gartner)

36. CEB/Gartner presented tools, tactics, and best practices to support performance management. This included an overview of current change efforts in the Performance Management arena, including the need for more direct impact to organizational performance enhancement, a discussion around trends to remove ratings. The latter however, in many cases rather led to overall performance declines.

37. Recent survey results suggest that organizations should therefore look to improve their performance management strategies around the following three pillars: 1.) Ongoing Conversations which includes to hold managers and employees accountable for ongoing feedback and to encourage informal, not just formal conversations about performance. 2.) Forward-looking reviews covering to provide a framework for assessing potential performance and to help managers communicate to drive future action and 3.) Peer Feedback to capture how employees add value to others' work, and to foster a culture of feedback. These pillars were presented in more detail and actionable steps.

38. *Decision: The HR Network thanked CEB/Gartner for the insightful presentation and discussion.*

x. Progress update on initiative for Joint Job classification and Reference Checking

39. The Representative of the UN Secretariat opened the discussion on this agenda item by stressing the appreciation for the progress made on implementation of the new service centre in Bonn, Germany, focussing on the identified administrative tasks. The centre was an example for a collective and collegial effort to consolidate and streamline efforts of specific service lines for several UN System agencies; thus contributing to the SG's efforts for management reform in Human Resources. It was noted that the intention would not be to replace individual agencies' Service Centres but rather to be complementary.
40. UNDP, in presenting the initiative, led through some key figures regarding the implementation efforts of the centre. Since the initial implementation in 2017, the FTE rates and cost ratios have been reduced significantly; the centre aims to be self-sustaining. Best practice aims include but are not limited to further standardisation of HR practices, establishing an access to a common database, becoming a more attractive employer, enhanced talent sourcing and candidate pools. The approach to enhance IT support around the serviced HR processes will lead to compelling benefits.
41. During the discussion, several details around the Infrastructural and legal underpinnings of establishing a common database for reference checks were elaborated on. It was highlighted that the implementation of the service centre's activities included collaboration with the legal advisors of the participating organizations. To date, modular reference checks would cover education credentials verification, checking working experiences and/or criminal background. The SOP for this interdisciplinary basic check has recently seen completion.
42. It is stressed that the more organizations will join the service centre in Bonn, Germany, the lower the operating costs will be, which would lead to a positive effect for all organizations involved.
43. *Decision: The HR Network thanked the organizations involved in the Working Group for the remarkable work achieved, highlighting the value of the initiative for inter-agency collaboration on HR matters and invited organizations that are willing to join the initiative to indicate such interest as soon as practical, in order to plan phased implementation and refine the overall business case, in order to ensure financial sustainability. The HR Network also noted the potential of the centre to accommodate additional services in the future.*

xi. Presentation of Draft Proposal of HRN Field Group on Entitlements in family duty stations not conducive for family life

44. The Chair of the HRN Field Group, presented a draft proposal of the HRN Field Group on entitlements in family duty stations that are not conducive for family life. The field-based organizations had raised the matter those duty stations with hardship classification of D or E within the context of the review of the hardship classification methodology at the eighty-fifth session of the ICSC in 2017. Due to the inadequate housing, education, health facilities and with high levels of isolation, internationally recruited staff are prevented to bring their family members to the duty stations, despite an acceptable security situation. The families face additional costs associated for a dual household. The aforementioned conditions lead to the situation that country teams experience difficulty in attracting and/ or retaining staff members.
45. It was recalled that the additional negative factors such as health and isolation in these hardship duty stations were noted by the Commission in 2017. In this regard it is to be analysed whether the non-family service allowances may be granted in cases where staff members are assigned to hardship duty stations (E or D) and decide not to bring along their families. The Commission concluded that the organizations should work on a proposal addressing the issue alongside other duty of care initiatives and report back to the Commission.

46. The proposal for the choice to be taken by the staff member, as per the presented draft proposal:

- introduces the concept of flexibility for duty stations with a high degree of hardship conditions (D and E) in security, health, living conditions, isolation and education and do not have family restrictions;
- will allow the organizations to pay the non-family service allowance to staff members with dependents even in clearly defined circumstances when assigned to family duty stations;
- The non-family service allowance would apply only to cases where the family is not installed in the duty station, staff having the choice to install or not to install the family.
- Applicable duty stations could be identified through the established tripartite process that reviews conditions of life and work in field duty stations and recommends hardship classification with approval by the ICSC Chairman.

47. In the subsequent discussion, organizations supported the proposal and requested the Field Group, with support from the CEB Secretariat, to finalize the respective Conference Room Paper for the upcoming ICSC session.

48. *Decision: The HR Network thanked the Field Group for its work in preparing the proposal, and concurs with the draft suggestion. Additionally, it requested all organizations to provide the relevant data to the CEB Secretariat in order to conclude the financial modelling the different options; and requested the Field Group to finalise the paper within 2 weeks in order to ensure submission for the discussion at the upcoming ICSC session.*

xii. Coordination / Preparation for upcoming ICSC WG on Pensionable Remuneration

49. The ICSC Executive Secretary introduced the topic by highlighting the importance of the discussions at hand. The current Pensionable Remuneration Scales needs revision following the implementation of the revised compensation package with a unified salary scale. Other focus areas for the upcoming working group include the revision of grossing up factors, discussions on how to handle the increased mandatory age of separation, and implications of the revised salary and PR scales on the Pensionable Remuneration of ungraded officials.

50. During the discussion, the issue of acquired rights was stressed. All present organizations cautioned against any deterioration of staff benefits. They also highlighted that long-term sustainability of the Pension Fund was a key consideration and should not be compromised.

51. Following the working group meeting in January, the results will be deliberated at the March 2018 ICSC session, followed by further in-depth examination in collaboration with the Pension Fund. A final decision is expected to be taken in summer 2018 by ICSC and the UNJSPF Pension Board, to prepare for a GA decision in fall 2018.

52. *Decision: The HR Network confirmed it will be jointly represented by the UN Secretariat, WHO, UNICEF, UNHCR, supported by CEB Secretariat and that HR Directors stand ready to provide further guidance during the time of the Working Group; it stressed the importance of pension benefits for overall employer attractiveness of the UN system organizations, in particular with a view of the recently implemented changes in the compensation package for international staff. This will require maintaining current benefits levels with regard to pension entitlements. The HR Network highlighted the existing legal risks through recent UNDT judgements and does therefore not support any change to base Pensionable Remuneration only on the unified salary scale at this point; and it attributes utmost importance to ensuring that no suggested solution will negatively impact the sustainability of the Pension Fund.*

xiii. Update on HLCM Task Force on Duty of Care in high-risk duty stations

53. The Chair of the Taskforce (UNHCR, provided a status update and introduction to the topic. Based on HLCM decisions taken in fall 2017, further work was currently finalized in order to conclude the current project phase during the upcoming HLCM meeting in April 2018.
54. The Taskforce initially focussed on high-risk duty stations, with the understanding that many of the approaches, tools and actions could later be deployed to all other duty stations as well.
55. The Task Force's objective is to apply a risk management approach combined with a proactive approach aiming to ensure that duty of care will be incorporated in the organizations' enterprise risk management frameworks.
56. Currently, 13 deliverables are identified which span across the pre deployment, during deployment and post deployment phases. The HR Network is asked for further input and contribution regarding the pre deployment package for staff. The responsibility of the organizations to inform and manage staff expectations regarding the specific situation in difficult duty stations was seen as important. Also, as local line managers play a key role in combining mandate delivery with ensuring adequate duty of care, specific training and support for those job roles are called for.
57. Another work stream of the taskforce is suggesting minimum requirements for the living and work environment standards in the field. A duty station-specific health risk analysis is currently piloted, to derive specific action plans to ensure access to essential medical services in the field. In addition, an implementation plan for the Mental Health Strategy is currently under development. Appropriate bandwidth requirements to ensure access to tele-health and communication with family is another work stream in the taskforce.
58. Further HR involvement will be needed in discussions about how to handle situations when staff cannot take stressful or dangerous situations any longer, and on tackling various insurance-related aspects. Some aspects of benefits and entitlements for locally recruited staff are also under discussion and need to be linked to ongoing review processes in the ICSC context. The clear target is to avoid any undue transfer of risk from internationally recruited staff to local staff in challenging duty stations.
59. IOM as the lead for the subgroup on pre-deployment packages and managerial training shared the status of this work stream. A generic pre deployment package with information common to all agencies is currently under development. The document can then be adapted by agencies according to their individual requirements; e.g. adaption to differences in rules or guidelines and changes to organizational identity. Furthermore, an exemplary country guide on Afghanistan is being drafted which can function as a template for all high-risk duty stations, in close consultation with other partners such as UNDSS, medical and counselling staff and the RC office. An external consultant funded by IOM and UNDP supported the process. The proposed package will be presented to HLCM for endorsement.
60. Given recent staffing changes and the associated workload, IOM and UNDP as the current lead organizations for this work stream invited other organizations to take over the further developments.
61. In the subsequent discussion, it was emphasized that the topic received the attention of the SG and roll-out to other duty stations is expected. A significant focus should be on providing adequate duty of care to locally recruited staff. The current budgetary situation required mainstreaming of the outcome of the taskforce to contain any additional workload. The Staff College offered support on the training-related components, e.g. for special pre-deployment training as synergies with topics of safety and security are identified. Further discussion points included residential security measures for locally recruited staff, and insurance provisions for health insurance coverage and appendix D claims processing. Wherever budgetary implications exist, those should be highlighted and action risks should be properly logged in corporate risk registers. It was highlighted that many of the proposed actions are under the purview of Executive Heads and do not require ICSC endorsement. This included for instance the expansion of flexible workplace arrangement and

compressed working hours for local staff, and some reasonable expansion of eligibility for medical evacuation and medical travel for local staff.

62. *Decision: The HR Network thanked the Taskforce, in particular UNHCR and UNICEF, for the efforts so far, stressing the importance of ensuring duty of care, not only for high risk duty stations, within UN System organizations. It recognized the need for further intensive support of the work of the Taskforce in the coming weeks. Furthermore, it requested the Co-Chairs and the CEB Secretariat to coordinate the calls for additional concrete contributions, in cooperation with other stakeholders in the Taskforce. The Network recognized the need for (i) another organization/s to take over from IOM and UNDP in April 2018 the lead for Phase 2 of Recommendations 1 and 2 – development of a pre-deployment package, specifically the development of additional country-specific information and e-learning materials; and to secure some additional funding to continue the ongoing engagement of a consultant to support with this work. Given increasing funding constraints, the HR Network pointed out the need to clearly highlight cost implications of recommendations and decisions. Network members are invited to increase their contributions, in particular with regard to recommendations 3/11 (training and support mechanisms for managers in high-risk environments) and recommendation 10 (recommendations on staff that can no longer serve in high-risk duty stations). It supported enhancing duty of care provided to locally recruited staff, recommending a focus on safety-, security- and health-related aspects of duty of care.*

xiv. Overview of Key SG Reform initiatives, and on the Taskforce to Prevent Sexual Harassment

63. The Network welcomed Ms. Jan Beagle, Under Secretary General for Management in the UN Secretariat and Chair of HLCM, for a briefing on the latest report of the SG on his management reform priorities and targets.

64. The reforms aim at fostering decentralization and delegation of authority to the adequate management level. The implementation of Umoja has been successful and will see continuous advancement and stabilization over the next months. The proposed changes in the budgeting procedure, have been approved by the General Assembly and are advancing well. The budget cycle changes from a biannual to an annual cycle which allows for greater flexibility.

65. On HR, adequate delegation of authority is seen as a tool to accelerate processes. Greater mobility, including enhanced inter-agency mobility, should be supported.

66. More broadly, future focus areas for senior management will include the implications of artificial intelligence, the enhancement of workplace solutions and the better use of data, including real-time data, for decision preparation. The HR Network was encouraged to continue and accelerate its path on closer inter-agency collaboration, noting that many priority topics under discussion at HLCM are of increasing cross-functional nature. Hence, closer collaboration with other HLCM Networks will be needed in the near future.

67. *Decision: The HR Network thanked USG Beagle for making herself available for the discussions with the HR community and confirmed its commitment to support management reform initiatives of the SG and Executive Heads of other agencies, in a spirit of even greater collaboration among the HR community. This will ensure experiences from change initiatives are shared and resources are more efficiently spent, while respecting the mandates of each member organization. The HR Network looked forward to a continued dialogue with HLCM on the practical aspects of implementing reform initiatives.*

68. Subsequently, the Network discussed the current work on preventing sexual harassment, which was identified as a priority action. Participants highlighted the moral obligation of UN organizations to demonstrate a zero tolerance approach and associated reputational damage should this not be fully the case. Focus action should be on prevention, which required a culture change, training and sensitization efforts and a careful review of existing policies and procedures with the view to ensure a system-wide approach. It was suggested that current and future HR Directors should collectively sign a pledge to address any form of harassment, including sexual harassment, in the workplace.
69. The HLCM taskforce on the matter was seen as a role model for interdisciplinary collaboration, as it included legal, managerial and communication competence in addition to human resources professionals. The HLCM Chair emphasized that the work of the Task Force receives the highest level of management attention and is at the forefront of the proactive approach to ensure that this devastating issue receives every support necessary. While being mindful of the complexities in the discussion, the need for fast and tangible results was stressed, supported by Executive Heads of UN System organizations.
70. All HR directors committed to support the Task Force. The current focus of the Task Force lies in the compilation of robust data required to draw a clear picture of the status quo. Secondly, the area of prevention will be a key pillar of the adequate response of the current situation. An environment of open communication shall be created in which people feel comfortable to step forward. This also calls for awareness what appropriate behaviour is in this regards. Initiatives will go beyond mandatory training and also cover solutions to provide support to victims and having the sufficient investigation capacities and quality in place. Furthermore, a fast response and quick solutions include an initiative to provide initial help through potential establishment of a hotline and relying on experiences from others in this regard.
71. Overall, the organizations will depend on effective and swift investigations and the right framework to deal with this topic adequately. The discussion highlighted that topics like culture change, prevention from retaliation, a trusted and confidential environment for victim support and guaranteeing fast but effective due process in investigation are key challenges that need to be addressed, as needed to be the current perception of under-reporting.
72. The HLCM Chair concluded by stressing again the importance of the matter, calling for active collaboration with and within the HR community of those topics. She highlighted the connection between the topics of gender parity, duty of care and whistle blowing for international and national staff alike.
73. *Decision: The HR Network confirmed the utmost importance of the work of the taskforce, requiring close collaboration between the HR, Legal and Communication functions of each organization. It also confirmed its commitment for active engagement in the taskforce, as well as for signing a UN System-wide compact by the HR Directors.*
The HR Network requested the CEB Secretariat to coordinate the formulation of a pledge expressing the commitment to the prevention of sexual harassment, for signature by all current and future HR Directors.

xv. Implementation of SG Gender Parity Strategy

74. The HR Network welcomed USG Ms. Ana Maria Menendez, Special Advisor to the SG, for a briefing on implementation aspects of the system-wide gender parity strategy. She thanked the HR Directors for their efforts and cooperation on this topic, stressing that this is one of the SG's priority areas. She reported that, for the first time, gender parity was reached in the UN Secretariats' Senior Management Group. The main challenge was seen in ensuring parity at all levels across the UN System. It is critical that each entity designs their own implementation plan and puts it forward for a fruitful discussion and mutual experience sharing.

75. In the subsequent discussion, the UN Secretariat provided an overview of the actions taken, including a methodology for target setting, enhanced monitoring, leadership and accountability, recruitment and retention, mission settings, senior appointments and creating an enabling environment. Full parity is aimed for by 2028. In a first phase, annual targets are defined for international Secretariat staff in fixed-term, continuing and permanent appointments. In a second phase, close consideration will be given to locally recruited staff. Senior Managers' Compacts are seen as a tool to assign accountability for meeting the targets.
76. Further efforts to strengthen comprehensive reporting on gender targets, and to embed gender aspects more closely into Performance Management are underway. In the area of recruitment, temporary special measures are elaborated, combined with special training and mentoring provisions and targeted outreach to suitable female candidates.
77. Further in the discussion, organizations pointed out that targets need to be realistic within the given contractual and demographic environment. Others pointed to the need to look comprehensively to diversity rather than isolating gender aspects from them. It was highlighted that outreach for qualified senior women should be targeted outside the UN System, given that inter-agency transfer may improve target achievement for one organization but not for the system as a whole.
78. It was highlighted that the drive for gender parity should not be perceived as being directed against men, noting that some legal action had been taken against specific administrative decisions in the context of gender parity. The nature of the vacant positions need to be considered, and targets differentiated in order to be realistic. Overall, working conditions in the UN were found to be attractive to women, though some adjustments may be advisable, for instance with regard to flexible work arrangements or parental leave. Organizations confirmed that further experience exchange will be helpful on good practices, in particular given the increasingly budgetary environments.
79. *Decision: The HR Network thanked USG Menendez for making herself available for discussions with the HR Network on the topic and confirmed its dedication to work closely together in order to advance the gender parity agenda at the ambitious speed as requested by the UN Secretary General, with a pragmatic approach.*
The HR Network requested the CEB Secretariat to follow up on the requested submission of Gender Strategies of each organization, along with specific targets as appropriate in each organization. Based on this information, OHRM and the CEB Secretariat will present a proposal for pragmatic and meaningful monitoring of these targets, and engage with the HR Community, in close collaboration with UN Women, to enhance experience sharing.
The Network members welcomed the initiative of the UN System Staff College to commission a study on successes in using Change Management approaches in UN Agencies to advance the diversity, inclusion and gender agenda, and expressed interest in further discussions on this matter and agreed to include progress monitoring and implementation aspects of the gender parity strategy as a standing item in upcoming HR Network meetings.

xvi. Wrap-up and closure: summary of next steps

80. *Decision: The HR Network agreed that its next meeting should take place immediately prior to and in the same location as the summer ICSC session 2018.*

List of participants

Name	Organization
Martha Helena Lopez	UN Secretariat
Chhaya Kapilashrami	UN Secretariat
Fernando Servan	FAO
Mark Levin	ILO
Margarete Sobral	CTBTO
Vincent Smith	ICAO
Loud-Hein Jordans	ICJ
Regina Pawlik	ICSC
Pierre Moreau-Péron	IFAD
Francesca Maselli	IFAD
Greet De Leeuw	IOM
Alison Holmes	IOM
Eric Dalhen	ITU
Paolo Bernasconi	OPCW
Eoghan Hennessy	OPCW
Andrzej Antoszkiewicz	OSCE
Niels Lohmann	UN Volunteers
Naoual Driouich	UN Volunteers
Roger Salla Ntounga	UNAIDS
Cristiana Baroglio	UNAIDS
Henrietta De Beer	UNDP
Annick Grisar	UNESCO
James Bradley	UNFCCC
Ovais Sarmad	UNFCCC
Arturo Pagan	UNFPA
Sarah Rose	UNFPA
Terry Morel	UNHCR
Julia Schtivelman-Watt	UNHCR
Michelle Wong	UNICEF
Eva Mennel	UNICEF
Konstantin Ivanov	UNIDO
Victoria Campbell	UNOPS
Tina Friis Hansen	UNOPS
Nadine Kaddoura	UNRWA
Antonino Brusa	UNRWA
Claire Messina	UNSSC
Fiona Bourdin Farrell	UNWOMEN

Filiz Aktas	UNWTO
Louise Razafy	UPU
John Aylieff	WFP
Aitor Maguna	WFP
Andrew Patterson	WFP
Cornelia Moussa	WIPO
Therese Dayer	WIPO
Fiona Brazil	WMO
Pieter Kraakman	CEB Secretariat
Michael Rosetz	CEB Secretariat
Ole Emmrich	CEB Secretariat
Michele Schwarz	CFC

Summary of Conclusions of the 36th Session of the Human Resources Network

**Part 2 (Open session)
16 March 2018
UN Secretariat, New York**

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Adoption of the Agenda (Open session)

xvii. Opening of the session and adoption of the agenda

81. The Human Resources Network held the open session of its 36th meeting on 16 March 2018, hosted by the UN Secretariat in New York. The meeting was co-chaired by Ms. Martha Helena Lopez, Assistant Secretary-General, Human Resources, UN Headquarters, Ms. Eva Mennel, Director, Human Resources, UNICEF, Mr. Mark Levin, Director, Human Resources, ILO.
82. The agenda was adopted as reflected in the table of contents. It was recalled that the main purpose of the open session was to prepare for the upcoming ICSC session. A representative of staff representatives requested that the current difficult situation in a number of duty stations including industrial action and increases of legal challenges should be discussed in the Network.
83. The list of participating organisations and their representatives at the meeting is provided in Annex 1.

xviii. ICSC preparation: Noblemaire study

84. The ICSC representative presented the ICSC report on the Noblemaire study. It was stated that the ICSC Secretariat undertakes such survey to establish a reference point for salaries in the national civil service sectors every five years. The paper presented entailed the results of phase one out of three phases conducted in the overall survey. It was emphasised that phase one only represented an approximation in the process to identify the national civil service with the highest pay level. ICSC explained the narrowing down process and related steps of the phase one as well as factors considered such as the different geographical regions, available employee compensation data and individual governments. The respective methodology on the Noblemaire study was referred to in the paper.
85. After having applied the different steps the survey led to three comparators out of the original 180. The commission will be asked whether to continue with phase two as a next step. In addition, the ICSC Secretariat proposed the option to undertake a new reference check with other international organisations.
86. In the subsequent discussion, organizations supported the suggested reference checks. With regard to the magnitude of job matching, it was clarified that 95.000 jobs were matched over all grades and the final job population covered 50.000 jobs. Furthermore, it was clarified that a 12 months' average exchange rate had been applied in order to calculate the salary equivalencies. It was further observed that Singapore and Switzerland had been part of the final examination in the previous survey. However, the two cities were not included this time, according to ICSC for reasons of comparability and size.
87. *Decision: The HR Network thanked the ICSC Secretariat for the work taken out. Furthermore, the HR Network reiterated the Noblemaire principle and reinforced its application. The HR Network supported further discussion and the entering of a phase two of the study. Additionally, the HR Network strongly favoured a reference check with other international organisations.*

xix. ICSC preparation: Pensionable Remuneration

88. ICSC further reported back on the outcome of the tripartite working group on Pensionable Remuneration.
89. The working group met from 29 January to 2 February 2018 in Madrid. The considerations of the working group included the alignment with unified salary scales, grossing-up factors, common scale of staff assessment and ungraded officials. ICSC stated that the working group's recommendations and conclusions were defined with the objective of protecting the current levels of pensionable remuneration. Participants of the working group had discussed the need to maintain current levels of pensionable remuneration, should there be any unintended loss or decrease in pensionable remuneration levels. Furthermore, representatives from the organisations had commented on the operational costs of any transitional arrangements and stated that their agreement with the recommendations of the working group was premised on the assumption that there would be no negative consequence for staff in the General Service category in particular. The working group invited the Commission to review the recommendations and conclusions.
90. In the subsequent discussion, organizations welcomed the work of the working group and concurred with its findings.
91. *Decision: The HR Network thanked the ICSC Secretariat as well as the working group for the work, and agreed with the progress made thus far. The HR Network requested that further analysis should be conducted to assess the impact on the Pension Fund. Additionally, the HR Network reiterated the aspect of acquired rights, and stressed the importance of thorough analysis of this crucial aspect to be given sufficient time and full consideration of the respective costs. The HR Network highlighted the criticality of a detailed communication plan for this item.*

xx. Review of Local Salary Survey methodology

92. The HR Network Co-Chair observed that the HR Network decided to establish a focus group at its last HR Network meeting in Bonn to prepare for a review of the local salary survey methodology. Among other factors, the total cost of operation should be included as a design factor in the upcoming ICSC review. The focus group aimed at a thorough research of the issues surrounding the existing methodologies and to formulate recommendations to the ICSC Secretariat on how to best address the identified issues from the HR Network side to advance the topic.
93. The UN representative reported on the progress of the focus group which had developed and adopted terms of references, a work plan, two out of three phases (identification phase and structural issues and subjects to the HR network phase) and conducted weekly meetings thus far. The planning for a third phase covering the design of a salary/ remuneration setting process was underway. The work would be complemented by a fourth (conclusion) phase including a limited modelling where possible using existing data. The focus group aimed to present a final report in spring 2018.
94. The subsequent discussion centered around the opportunities and limitations of using external data and current challenges with the methodology in place. Some discussion took place whether or not the Flemming principle as such should be examined or not.
95. ICSC welcomed the work as useful input to the broader discussions that are foreseen to take place. It was mentioned that Staff Federations also identify a number of challenges and possible solutions through surveys of Local Salary Survey Committee representatives.
96. *Decision: The HR Network thanked the focus group for the work done, and supported its continued activities in preparation of the summer ICSC session. Furthermore, the HR Network recognised the need for further analysis and improvement of the data collection process due to the identified shortcomings by organisations of the current methodology.*

xxi. ICSC preparation: Family duty stations in D and E locations

97. The Chair of the Field Group presented the joint proposal which was refined following its first draft presentation and discussion at the closed HR Network meeting in January 2018. The field-based organisations had raised the matter concerning duty stations with hardship classification of D or E within the context of the review of the hardship classification methodology at the eighty-fifth session of the ICSC in 2017. Due to the inadequate housing, education, health facilities and with high levels of isolation, internationally recruited staff were prevented to bring their family members to the duty stations. The proposal aimed at introducing some flexibility for staff members by paying the non-family service allowance in such cases, in the event that a staff member does not install dependants at the duty station.
98. In the subsequent discussion, organizations highlighted the need for transparency on the financial implications, though noting that they are not substantial. It was also highlighted that this topic enjoys support from the Executive levels of the organizations concerned. Organizations have a moral and legal obligation under duty of care to inform their staff members best and to avoid providing misleading information about the family suitability of duty stations. Situations where staff live in containers in duty stations which are labelled as family duty stations where it is clearly impossible for families to live in containers should be avoided. The proposal was also seen as enhancing attempts to improve equal gender representation in difficult duty stations.
99. *Decision: The HR Network thanked for the work taken out and appreciated the value of the work to the UN system especially regarding gender aspects and from a duty of care perspective. Furthermore, the HR Network expected the field organisations to complement and illustrate the challenges and suggestions during the upcoming ICSC session.*

xxii. ICSC preparation: Implementation of revised Hardship classification

100. The ICSC representative recalled that this topic had been discussed during the last ICSC session in 2017, and methodology amendments were agreed on a pilot basis. The – overall positive – experience with the first time application of the revised methodology during the periodic review of conditions in the African duty stations in December 2017 was presented. The analysis suggested positive impacts as less need for adjustments was identified.
101. In the discussion, organizations appreciated the work undertaken and supported the conclusion that implementation of the new methodology has led to improvements. However, more robust response rates for the questionnaires, in particular with regard to health-related information, remained an open action point in this respect. The health risk assessments currently piloted could support the information gathering on this matter. Lastly, the matter of air pollution was flagged as an area of growing concern.
102. *Decisions: The HR Network appreciated the work progress and dialogue. Furthermore, the HR Network looked forward to improvements on the questionnaire, and confirm its commitment to liaise with the medical directors in order to expedite the health risk assessments to the degree possible. Adequate and comprehensive hardship assessments were also seen as an important underpinning of efforts to improve gender balance in field duty stations.*

xxiii. ICSC preparation: Revision of HR Framework

103. The ICSC representative briefly presented a proposed amendment to the HR Framework. The proposed new component and respective update of the online tool would incorporate the aspect of diversity&inclusion.
104. *Decision: The HR Network welcomed the amendment, stressing in this context the importance of preventing and eliminating all forms of harassment, as stated by the Secretary General.*

xxiv. ICSC preparation: Post Adjustment matters

105. The ICSC representative reported from the recently concluded ACPAQ session which was well attended by organizations and staff. The recommendations brought forward in the external consultant's report were thoroughly discussed and the majority was supported. This work will be presented at the upcoming ICSC session, where a discussion on a way forward for a comprehensive review of the methodology would take place. One particular point highlighted in the representative was the challenge in using ECP data. Experience gathered has shown that this topic required further improvement and analysis, as identified by the consultant.
106. In the discussion, organisations pointed out that the review by the consultant and the discussion at ACPAQ had only been a forward-looking exercise for future amendments, while there were still a number of pending disagreements on the recent survey round that remained unresolved. There are a number of legal concerns which should also be addressed during the upcoming session. It was questioned why the ACPAQ seemed to restrict itself to technical questions, not addressing legal, operational and managerial aspects that had – at least partially – been discussed in this forum in the past. Reference was made to the upcoming announced industrial action taking place in Geneva. The ICSC representative pointed out that mitigating measures in the revised operational rules were in effect more advantageous than the previous ones, however this would be true only in the first year of implementation. He also indicated that ICSC had, in the meantime, procured additional external data for plausibility checks, following the concerns raised by organizations at the last ICSC session. It was highlighted that the consultant's findings had a lot of overlap with the observations made by organizations' statisticians last year.
107. It was clarified that the short version of the ACPAQ report for ICSC had been published on 14 March 2018 and the longer version was expected to be published in the beginning of the calendar week 13.
108. *Decision: The HR Network thanked the ICSC Secretariat for the report regarding the ACPAQ meeting. It was re-emphasized that recent positions, as expressed at the last ICSC session and the recent ACPAQ meeting, continued to be valid. The Network expressed concern with the current situation, highlighting the urgent need to comprehensively address the managerial and legal aspects as requested in September 2017. The Network highlighted the need to be attentive to the additional financial and resource implications imposed on organizations by the recent ICSC decisions through potential costs of litigation and increased workload for legal teams.*

xxv. Update on Pension Fund matters

109. The representative of the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund gave an overview of the current priorities of the Fund, as well as progress made in the attempt to enhance customer service. A new service facility was recently established in Valencia, Spain. The representative shared the view of the Fund on the review of Pensionable Remuneration Scales, and indicated the main discussions in the upcoming Pension Board in summer. It was highlighted that the General Assembly has requested OIOS to conduct an audit on the Fund governance, the results of which were expected to be ready later this year.
110. Organizations acknowledged the progress made on improving customer service. They suggested to initiate a more comprehensive discussion about how pension provisions could foster mobility in and out of the UN system and thus be used as a strategic HR tool.
111. *Decision: The HR Network thanked the Pension Fund Secretariat for the update and committed to further active collaboration and engagement at the Fund's Pension Board.*

xxvi. Gender Parity Strategy: UNSSC Care Study and Guidelines for enabling environment

112. The HR Network welcomed the representatives of UN Women and of UN-LOCK for an open discussion around good practices around enabling environment for women to attain gender parity, as well as on how to best use change management approaches in organizational efforts to foster diversity from a variety of angles. Organizations engaged in a rich experience exchange on a broad range of HR topics that could be used to foster gender parity.
113. *Decision: The HR Network thanked UN-LOCK for the presentation of the Change Management case study, and indicated its interest to participate in planned workshops to further explore the results. The Network also thanked UN Women for its presentation and discussion, stressing the need for close collaboration to establish good practice guidelines for organizations to create an enabling environment for gender parity. The Network agreed to continue this discussion at the next HR Network meeting.*

xxvii. AOB, including a briefing on the improvements to enhance technical accessibility of UN Careers portal and Inspira for persons with disabilities

114. The UN Secretariat presented an initiative to enhance accessibility to the UN Careers Portal. Through a contract with a system provider that is open to the entire UN System, comprehensive accessibility features have been included on a large number of UN career websites, and successfully rolled out. The tool was easy to use and provided a pragmatic opportunity to advance a diversity & inclusion agenda. Organizations commended the UN Secretariat for its achievements, and expressed interest in further exchange on the matter.
115. *Decision: The HR Network confirmed its interest in further experience sharing and collaboration on the matter and other Diversity & Inclusion matters.*

List of participants

Name	Organization
Martha Helena Lopez	UN-OHRM
Matthew Sanidas	UN-OHRM
Maxim Golovinov	UN-OHRM
Geraldine Gourves-Fromigue	UN-OHRM
Robert K. Smith	UN-OHRM
Katharina Margetts	UN-DFS
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Kamini Balram	ICAO
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Patrick Cronin	WHO
Paul De la Croix	PAHO
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Sarah Rose	UNFPA
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