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Human Resources Management

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FC 173

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Committee is presented with major achievements in human resources management at FAO, for information.

GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

- Members of the Finance Committee are invited to take note of major achievements of Human resources management

Draft Advice

- **The Committee welcomed the major achievements in human resources management at FAO during the reporting period.**

Major Achievements

1. Following on the request of Finance Committee Members in previous sessions, major improvements in the area of human resources policy and management are provided over the last reporting period. FAO continues to follow a human resources vision based on four main drivers: (i) recruitment and development of the highest calibre of employees; (ii) alignment of HR management to the strategic and programmatic needs of the Organization; (iii) reflection of FAO's nature as a United Nations system specialized agency; and (iv) increased efficiency in HR processes and procedures. This document reports achievements according to these drivers.

Recruitment and development of highest calibre employees

a) Recruitment of Professional Staff

2. FAO continues to increase its efforts in recruiting the best talents in the most effective way, with due regard to geographic and gender balance. In particular, the Organization has focused on attracting a wider range of candidates using targeted campaigns via social media and by advertising vacancy announcements in professional networks.

3. The recruitment activities of the Organization aim to identify and select the most suitable candidates available globally, ensuring that they possess the FAO's core and leadership competencies and qualifications. This ensures that new recruits support the work of the Organization, reinforce its technical capacity and its ability to deliver on its programmes. In terms of the academic background of candidates and their language skills, data on the profiles of appointed candidates is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Academic qualifications and language skills of appointed candidates in 2016, 2017 and 2018

	2016		2017		2018 (October)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Candidates with PhD	71	30%	42	33%	54	30%
Candidates with 2 Masters	55	23%	25	20%	35	20%
Candidates with 3 or more languages (level C and B)	39	16%	23	18%	52	29%
<i>Total number of appointments</i>	239		129		180	

4. The revised Professional Staff Selection Committees (PSSCs) for the recruitment of professional staff, introduced in 2015, led to more transparency, more direct involvement of recruiting units, and faster recruitment times, as the centralized PSSC without participation of hiring units and with members nominated centrally by the Staff Representatives Bodies was replaced with 11 decentralized (one per department or region) PSSCs, where hiring managers participate directly, along with a representative of OHR and a member elected by staff of the same department, under a Chairperson from the same department.

5. The overall duration of the selection process corresponds to the time between the closure of the Vacancy Announcement and the appointment decision. The Organization is currently monitoring the overall data, as the various phases of the recruitment process are managed by different tools, some in iRecruitment and most via email. Beginning next year, the Organization will start monitoring all the different phases of the recruitment process using the additional functionalities of the new recruitment platform available in 2019. This will allow the Organization to identify potential bottlenecks and areas for improvement.

6. Pre-approved rosters of candidates are one of the ways organizations can use to enhance the timeliness and efficiency of the recruitment process. The JIU assessed the use of rosters in 2012 and suggested that “Rosters/pools of pre-assessed candidates are established in line with organizational needs for recruitment for specific categories of posts and occupational groups, as appropriate, to expedite the selection process.”¹

7. The Professional Employment Roster refers to a list of candidates who were assessed as qualified and found suitable for a specific position by the interview committee, but who were not selected for that position. The Roster allows the Organization to retain the candidates that have already successfully passed through the standard competitive selection process, maintaining a pipeline of talents that could be hired subsequently, saving time and resources. The hiring offices may recommend using the Roster to fill a vacant post instead of issuing a vacancy announcement and repeating the selection process.

8. FAO intensified use of the Roster from 2016 as an instrument to support the recruitment efforts of the Organization in that period. In 2017, following consultation with the Staff Representative Bodies, the Organization included a clear definition of the Roster, its purpose and operation, in the revised version of the Guidelines for the Professional Staff Recruitment. The percentage of PWB posts filled with the use of the professional roster increased from 4% in 2015 to 38% in 2016 and 51% in 2017.

b) Associate Professional Officers Programme

9. The Organization continues to collaborate with member countries through the Associate Professional Officer (APO) Programme to offer a structured learning experience to nationals from different countries through exposure to international cooperation activities, while enabling them to apply their technical specialization under the supervision of an experienced FAO staff member.

10. Although the number of donor partners slightly decreased in 2018, from 15 to 14, from January to October 2018, the Organization recruited 17 APOs, 54% more than 2017. Currently, FAO is in the process of recruiting 8 APOs funded by the China Scholarship Council and two funded by Germany.

Table 2 APO Programme trends in 2016, 2017 and 2018

	Number of donor partners	Number of APOs on board
2016	15	43
2017	15	43
2018	14	54(projected)

11. The Organization is reviewing the APO Programme to improve its global impact. In particular, FAO is working to launch a Global Call of Proposals for positions covering the main priority areas of the Organization. The aim is to attract qualified Associate Professional Officers specialized in the most requested technical areas, exposing them to FAO's main programmes and projects and increasing the technical capacity of the Organization in different duty stations.

¹ JIU/REP/2012/4 - Staff recruitment in United Nations system organizations: a comparative analysis and benchmarking framework. This entails that: (a) Rosters/pools of assessed candidates who have been recommended for either a specific vacancy or a generic job opening, but not yet selected; (b) Roster managers ensure that the expectations of hiring managers are met in terms of availability of candidates and length of time that candidates remain on the roster; (c) Relevant roster databases are up-to-date and user friendly; and (d) Periodic evaluation of roster/pool systems is undertaken and results fed back into the process

c) Junior Professional Officers Programme

12. The Junior Professional Officer Programme (JPP) is a centrally coordinated and structured programme involving a streamlined recruitment process, which enables the Organization to recruit young, motivated and talented professionals on a fixed-term basis and benefit from their competencies and knowledge from the duration of the assignment. The JPP is an active mechanism to recruit professionals at P-1 level, mainly designed to attract female professionals and young candidates from non- and under-represented countries.

13. The programme assists FAO in rejuvenating its workforce through the establishment of a pipeline of young professionals suitable for future employment. Their highly-technical profiles could contribute to FAO's mandate in specific areas of expertise. The Organization has tailored the JPP mainly to train the selected professionals, build up their competencies and, at the end of the assignment, to retain the professionals who have demonstrated the highest capabilities within the Organization. The JPP also aims to support the Organization to foster gender parity and geographical balance amongst its professional staff.

14. With the purpose to align the recruitment of Junior Professional Officers to the needs of Organization, a call for Expression of Interest for JPO positions was issued in April 2018. The aim of the Call was to enrich the JPP roster with qualified candidates, mainly in the following priority areas:

- Agroecology
- Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR)
- Climate Change
- Food Security and Nutrition
- One Health

15. The Call for Expression of Interest for JPO successfully attracted a wide-range of candidates: 1753 applications, 781 from male candidates and 972 from female candidates. The Organization identified the most suitable applicants who were interviewed. At the end of the selection processes, 38 qualified candidates were included in the pipeline of young professionals. Among them, there are 28 female and 10 male candidates, from non and under-represented countries. Their profiles include different areas of specialization.

16. In September 2018, four young professionals were appointed to the JPO vacant positions, strengthening the technical capacity of the regions where they were assigned to. In particular, in Asia, the Organization recruited two junior experts in One Health and anti-microbial resistance (AMR). In Latin America the priority was given to the area of agroecology and, in Africa to reinforce the area of food security and nutrition.

17. Thanks to the pipeline, the Organization will be able to fill the other JPO positions, as soon as they become vacant, with highly-qualified candidates, saving time and resources.

d) General Service recruitment

18. The Organization continues to follow a new approach for the recruitment of General Service (GS) staff by opening up the previous "closed shop" where all recruitment of GS staff was done exclusively using internal candidates and without any possibility for external candidates to apply. From 2015, the recruitment of General Service positions in headquarters and Regional Offices is carried out through Global Calls. This allows FAO to recruit the best possible candidates, with diverse backgrounds, from a global marketplace, fit for a UN-system international organization like FAO.

19. Through Global Calls, the Organization receives applications from internal and external candidates that are screened against the minimum requirements for GS positions. External applicants are also required to pass online examinations to demonstrate their office and language skills. At the end of this phase, the GS roster contains only candidates qualified for GS positions and it is consulted

by the General Service Selection Committee (GSSC) to identify candidates to be interviewed for a specific position. Thanks to the use of the GS Roster, the Organization reduced the time to fill GS positions, performing all screening and testing activities at the beginning of the process and allowing hiring managers to begin interviews immediately once a GSSC has been established. The revised procedures have not only resulted in a much quicker selection process and considerably reduced recruitment time, but also in greater transparency and competition, leading to greater diversity and appointment of highly qualified candidates.

20. In the 2018 Global Call at headquarters, the Organization received 61% of applications from external applicants and, after the screening phase, the GS Roster of qualified candidates included 42% of external candidates. In the 2018 GS Roster, 79 nationalities are represented proving the successful outcome of the approach in increasing the geographic diversification in the GS recruitment.

21. From January to October 2018, a total of 29 candidates were appointed to General Service positions at headquarters, of which 11 (40% of the total) were filled with external candidates. Of the 11 candidates hired externally, five are from Italy, and one each from Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Tunisia, Tajikistan, Spain and Uruguay.

Table 3 Data on General Service Roster in Rome from 2015

	Number of countries represented in roster	Number of internal candidates appointed	Number of external candidates appointed	Number of nationalities of external candidates appointed
2015	57	13	2	2
2016	73	25	11	6
2017	68	15	5	3
2018	79	17	10	6

e) Rejuvenation of the workforce

22. As mentioned above, efforts are underway to ensure the recruitment of candidates with strong potential for the Junior Professional Officers (JPOs) Programme and the Associate Professional Officers (APOs) Programme. Additional endeavours are necessary to ensure a high retention of JPOs and APOs, which are considered satisfactory based on their performance assessments.

23. In addition to these programmes, the Organization identifies, as needed, qualified professional staff at P-1 level, to join departments and regional offices in different technical areas. These new young professionals contribute to the rejuvenation of the workforce and the revitalization of FAO's technical knowledge.

24. In parallel, the policy on the employment of UN retirees was strengthened to ensure that the employment of retirees would be used as an exceptional temporary measure, based on specific and reasonable needs normally linked to knowledge transfer for new staff. The policy foresees that the employment of former staff members at grade D-1 or above requires approval by the Director-General. The changes implemented avoid that the employment of retirees cause an adverse impact on the rejuvenation of the workforce and on the renewal of leadership roles.

f) National Professional Officers

25. The Organization is capitalizing on the knowledge and experience of Assistant FAO Representatives, some of which have been appointed as FAO Representatives (FAORs) in other countries as a result, thus enabling the use of this expertise in favour of other countries and providing means to support South-South Cooperation. This approach is designing a career path for the NPOs that have demonstrated high levels of performance and a deep understanding of the work of the Organization.

26. The Organization began exploring this approach in 2016, with two appointments of former NPOs as FAORs and one appointment in 2017. Following the positive outcome, in 2018, FAO implemented this approach in a more structured way, selecting four former NPOs as FAORs in different regions.

g) Geographic Mobility Programme

27. The Geographic Mobility Programme is a corporate initiative underpinning FAO's elemental nature as an international development organization and it is one of the main initiatives in adapting FAO programmes and projects to a constantly changing global environment. As reported in the JIU report on Staff Mobility in the United Nations, "there is also a consensus that mobility of staff is essential to creating a more versatile, multi-skilled and experienced international civil service capable of fulfilling both the requirements of Headquarters programmes as well as the complex mandates of field activities, thus helping the Organization to increase its flexibility and responsiveness."²

28. In recent years, the Organization increased its efforts to reinforce and consolidate the Programme. The corporate Geographic Staff Mobility Policy foresees a yearly mobility exercise that has taken place, annually, since 2014. Prior to that date, geographic mobility cases were voluntary, low in number, and ad hoc in nature, and there was no coherent policy in this regard. In 2014, the policy introduced mandatory geographic staff mobility, reflecting the international nature of FAO, and with the aim of oxygenating the Organization. In 2017, this policy was further refined following internal discussion and consultation with the Staff Representative Bodies.

29. To ensure that the Organization has an adaptable, global, multi-skilled and versatile workforce, the Geographic Mobility Programme has a target of 75 mobility transfers per biennium.

30. Since 2014, the number of mobility transfers increased from 22 in 2014, to 34 in 2015 and now to 62 expected in 2018, as shown in table 4. From the biennium 2014-15 to the 2016-17, there was a substantial increase of effective mobility transfers, from 56 to 92. It should be noted that the number of mobility transfers approved was 104 in 2016-17 and some were not implemented due to operational and individual reasons prompted by staff.

Table 4 Number of effective mobility transfers per year

Year	Number of mobility transfers
2014	22
2015	34
2016	43
2017	49
2018	37 (transferred as of October)

31. Since 2014, 115 staff moved from Headquarters to Decentralized Offices enhancing the technical capacity of the Organization in the field and supporting FAO programmes and projects at the local level. As for the different areas of expertise, Table 5 shows the number of staff involved in the Programme per technical area.

² JIU/REP/2006/7 - Staff Mobility in the United Nations

Table 5 Mobility transfers per technical area since 2014

Technical department	Number of transfers
AG	27
DDN/CB	11
DDP (including TC, DPS and SP teams)	33
ES	32
FI	17
FO	11
APEX offices	20
DDO (including OSD, CIO, CS)	32

32. The mobility transfers between headquarters and Regional Offices are allowing the Organization to share knowledge and to become truly “One FAO”. During 2016-18, the total number of staff transferred to RAF was 19, against 14 leaving RAF to other duty stations. These numbers are 22 incoming - 7 outgoing for REU, 17 - 8 for RLC, 5 - 5 for RNE, and 23 - 9 for RAP.

33. The Geographic Mobility Programme is also an opportunity for staff members to increase their career opportunities and reinforce their professional development. Since 2014, 12 staff members involved in the Programme were promoted to higher level positions.

34. Thanks to the Geographic Mobility Programme, staff members located in hardship locations have an opportunity to be relocated, reducing service times in B, C, D and E duty stations. Since 2014, seven staff members were transferred from a hardship location to other duty stations.

35. The Organization participates also in the UN System Dual Career and Staff Mobility Plan, to support staff members and their families undertaking mobile assignments. Moreover, the Organization has already adopted many of the measures proposed in the recently approved Enabling Environment Guidelines for UN System about geographic mobility. These measures allow staff members with families to plan moves in respect of school terms and improve the impact of the spouse employment policy.

36. The Geographic Mobility Programme was recently reviewed thanks to feedback received from accountable managers (ADGs, ADG/RRs and DDGs), to identify improvements and additional measures that could support the Programme in the coming years. These findings have been incorporated into the 2019 Programme.

h) Professional Vacancy status

37. The Organization continues to consider it essential that a certain degree of flexibility in the vacancy rate for professional positions is maintained in order that the implementation of the Programme of Work and Budget 2018-19 can be adapted in a dynamic manner to new circumstances and emerging priorities.

38. It is important to note that, while maintaining flexibility in professional vacancy rates, the Organization continues to pay careful attention to ensure that sensitive, critical and essential positions are filled.

39. The Organization is also committed to maintaining a stable vacancy rate of less than 15% not only at corporate level, but also in each department and regional office. These targets are met, through an effective workforce planning which takes into account forecasted vacancies due to retirement of incumbents or resignations/transfers.

40. As at 25 October 2018, the total corporate vacancy rate is 15.0%, in HQ is 14.1% and in the Decentralized Offices is 16.6%. Annex I includes the status of the vacancy rate per department. As 34

selection processes are currently on-going and many of them are in the final phase of the process, the Organization expects to decrease the vacancy rate to 14.3% by the end of November 2018.

i) Strengthening of language services

41. The Organization increased efforts to fill all vacant positions in the language services. As of October 2018, the Organization hired one Russian Translator P-4 and two Chinese Translators P-3. Selection processes for a French Translator P-4 and a Senior Interpreter P-5 are ongoing and by the end of the year also these positions will be filled, completing the full staffing of the language services.

42. In line with the efforts to fully represent all UN languages in the work of the Organization, FAO is also taking steps so that vacancy announcements are available in all languages in the new recruitment platform. The priority is given to vacancy announcements for local positions to facilitate their dissemination. In a second phase, the Organization will implement the timely translation and publication for the other vacancy announcements.

j) Internship, Volunteer and Fellow Programmes

43. The FAO Global Internship, Volunteers and Fellows (IVF) Programme was revamped in July 2017. It intends to:

- diversify the participation, especially from the global South and from the non-/under-represented member countries;
- leverage this Programme as an inclusive platform to promote youth engagements to support the Organization's work to realize a world without hunger and malnutrition;
- and support local and regional capacity building by promoting assignments in decentralized offices.

44. Since the Programme's relaunch, 354 youth from 90 countries were assigned to 66 duty stations in 2017. In 2018 (as at 1 October 2018), 321 participants have been newly recruited from 79 countries. 67% are female, and the average age is 27 years old. Out of 321 participants, 60 are from non-/under-represented member countries. 35% of the assignments are in decentralized offices. Increasing numbers of high-performers are retained by the Organization as youth talents to be nurtured.

45. With a view to making the Programme more inclusive, 20 indigenous youth were recruited as interns in 2017-2018 under a special initiative, 55% of which were assigned to decentralized offices. A new joint initiative with IFAD, NGOs and academia is being established to create more opportunities for indigenous youth, especially women.

46. Externally-sponsored internship, volunteers and fellows opportunities are rapidly growing: 30 new partnerships agreements with universities, governments, NGOs, UNV and the private sector have been formalized in 2017-2018.

Alignment of HR management to the strategic and programmatic needs of the Organization

a) Capacity development and targeted learning strategy

47. The Organization is implementing a learning strategy based on clear identification of staff learning needs and appropriate selection of training modalities.

48. To address these learning needs, FAO is focusing its capacity building efforts on five main areas:

- Administrative training, strengthened following audit recommendations, to reinforce the knowledge of FAO's internal systems and procedures and improve the operational capacity of staff in carrying out their duties, particularly in decentralized offices;
- Results-based management (RBM), covering training related to RBM, management for results and strategic framework;
- Technical training, to maintain the technical competencies of staff and refresh their knowledge based on current trends;
- Language training, to improve the multilingual capacities of staff in the FAO languages; and
- Personal Development, this includes courses to improve soft skills and practical guides on career development.

49. Over the last months, and following internal audit recommendations, the Organization has focused its efforts on the identification, development and delivery of specific training to strengthen the use of functionalities in GRMS, deepen understanding of governance related areas such as internal control and fraud and corruption, and raise awareness on the prevention of harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority.

50. The Organization is also reviewing the delivery of language courses to trainings to all employees, ensuring the promotion of multilingualism in the work environment. The Organization also continues to offer a series of online language courses targeted to staff based in duty stations with limited access to language training.

51. As for the selection of appropriate training modalities, the Organization is following an approach that prioritizes the use of e-learning courses and partnerships with academia. The Organization plans to develop a new blended learning course, Agroecology for Accomplishing FAO's Key Objectives, in partnership with academia. This approach will allow the Organization to benefit from the collaboration of experts in this learning area.

52. As shown in table 6, the Organization is reinforcing the offers of online training, promoting the use of this cost effective modality and reversing the trends in the attendance of in house and online training. In 2015, considering the overall courses attended, staff selected only 29% of online training; in 2017, 58% of courses selected were delivered online. The online modality allows the Organization to reach all employees in the various duty stations and to avoid replicating costs each year for the same course.

53. Compared to 2017, in 2018 there was a substantial increase of online training, from 4.687 sessions to 13.837, in part also due to the fact that the Organization recently introduced two mandatory online trainings on the prevention of harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority and gender equality. As a direct consequence, the increase of online training was counterbalanced by a decrease of requests for in house courses, from 3.396 to 2.025.

Table 6 Training per area and modality attended by staff in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 (up to October)

		2015		2016		2017		2018	
		P	GS	P	GS	P	GS	P	GS
Online	Admin/RBM/Technical training	743	683	1337	1160	2026	1114	6652	5156
	Language Course	-	-	38	7	19	0	32	10
	Self-development course	386	558	767	983	675	853	867	1120
In house	Admin/RBM/Technical training	1567	1134	1453	648	942	703	564	164
	Language Course	707	534	465	527	585	507	539	529
	Self-development	1385	510	425	379	330	329	141	88

54. The Organization is also developing training in the emerging priority areas to support the FAO staff increasing their technical knowledge and competencies, following the requests arising from stakeholders and the international arena.

55. As for consultants, the Organization is now introducing the online Quality Assessment Report, through the new recruiting platform. This tool will enable the Organization to better structure the performance assessment of consultants and to link this exercise to a targeted learning strategy.

56. The Organization will carry out an analysis of Quality Assessment Reports to identify common learning needs and to develop training and learning opportunities targeted to improve capacities of consultants. The aims are to reinforce their deliverables and to provide them with additional options for career progression.

b) Post management

57. The Organization continues increasing efforts to pursue administrative efficiency, through the introduction of innovative business processes and a more intensive use of the new technology. This approach led the Organization to review also the staffing structure, and from 2010, there was a substantial change in the balance between General Service and Professional staff (called "G/P ratio"), moving from 1.3 General Service staff per Professional staff in 2010, to 0.9 in 2018, thanks to improve in information technology and simplification of processes, with a reduction in the cost of administration.

Table 7 G/P Staff Ratio: Staff on PWB Positions by location and trend by year³

	31-Dec								01-Oct-18
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
All locations	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.1	1	0.9	0.9
Headquarters	1	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7
DOs	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.1

³ Only staff on continuing or fixed-term appointments on posts budgeted in the PWB are included in this report

58. Another important number in the post structure of the Organization is the Grade Point Average (GPA), which measures the "average grade" for professional staff. As part of the efforts to recruit more young professionals, there has been a constant trend to reclassifying part of the senior Professional posts becoming vacant to a more junior level, as recommended by the JIU⁴, and as a result the GPA for professional PWB positions have evolved from 3.9 in 2012 to 3.7 in 2018.

Reflection of FAO's nature as a UN system specialized agency

a) Implement measures and track progress in achieving corporate geographic representation targets

59. In taking decisions on recruitment, the Organisation has always followed the criterion of merit to ensure the selection of the best qualified candidates; at the same time, in line with guidance provided by the Governing Bodies, continues to give due attention to ensure an equitable geographic representation of member countries. In appointing the staff, and subject to the paramount importance of securing the highest standards of efficiency and of technical competence, the Organization gives priority to recruiting personnel on as wide a geographical basis as is possible, making particular efforts to recruit candidates from non- and under-represented countries.

60. Thanks to its constant efforts, the Organization reduced to a considerable extent the number of non-, under- and over-represented countries in the Secretariat, thus increasing the number of equitably-represented countries. Following the completion of the new recruitments⁵, the percentage of non-represented countries is 8.8%, of under-represented countries is 3.6%, and of equitably represented countries 86.1%.

61. To provide the Committee with more detailed data, the Organization prepared the document Action Plan for the achievement of equitable geographic distribution and gender parity of FAO staff (FC 173/10). It illustrates the institutional framework, the main trends and the measures identified by the Organization to achieve equitable geographic distribution and gender parity of FAO staff.

b) Improved gender representation

62. FAO recognizes that achieving equal gender representation amongst the workforce is a fundamental goal and a necessary condition for the achievement of UN objectives. The Organization bases its efforts to achieve the gender parity of staff on the principles of transparency and merit in staff recruitment and promotion, working to remove systemic and cultural barriers that perpetuate inequalities in gender representation and to improve policies and practices which contribute to an inclusive workplace and address harassment and discrimination based on gender.

63. The Organization made efforts in the latest year toward the gender parity in the workforce. Female staff accounted for 36% in professional positions at the beginning of 2012. In October 2018, thanks to recruitment outreach efforts to professional institutions and universities within selected countries, this figure rose to 43%. Female staff in senior positions accounted for 20% at the beginning of 2012 and now they encumber 26% of senior positions.

64. The Organization elaborated a specific strategy to achieve gender parity, illustrated in the document Action Plan for the achievement of equitable geographic distribution and gender parity of FAO staff (FC 173/10). Given FAO's nature as a UN system specialized agency, it supports the development of a customized action plan which is informed by the Organization's specific context and challenges, thus pursuing recommendations outlined in the UN System-Wide Gender Parity Strategy

⁴ JIU/REP/2007/4 - Age structure of human resources in the organizations of the United Nations system

⁵ This refers to appointments already finalized with signed Terms of Employment, but with entry on duty date after 25 October 2018.

through its relevant pathway. On the basis of the action plan, FAO gender parity at professional level should be achieved by 2022, and for senior positions by 2024.

c) Promotion of multilingualism

65. In the context of selection and appointment procedures, the language skills of candidates, internal and external, are closely considered.

66. In addition, the revised selection procedures for consultants, subscribers to Personal Services Agreements and short-term professional staff have introduced a more rigorous control on the language level requested. All applicants are requested to provide evidence of their language skills to be considered qualified for assignments in FAO.

67. To support the need of employees to obtain valid certifications of their language skills, the Organization has strengthened the resources involved in the language examination sessions to manage the increase of the number of attendees. As shown in Table 8, in 2017 there was an increase of 190% in the number of attendees compared to 2016.

Table 8: Data on FAO language examinations

	Number of language examinations sessions	Number of attendees	Number of successful candidates
2016	6	584	338
2017	6	1696	1223
2018 (Jan to October)	4	1074	768

68. The role of Member States is also crucial for adopting a clear position on multilingualism, expressed through their participation in the legislative bodies of the different United Nations system organizations, and for supporting its implementation by endorsing all the necessary measures to achieve it, for example by developing national capacities to promote language professional curricula up to the standards required by international organizations.

Increased efficiency in human resources (HR) processes and procedures

a) Implementation of the new recruiting platform

69. From October 2017, all Vacancy Announcements and related selection processes for General Service staff, National Officers, National Project Personnel (NPPs), Consultants, PSA, Interns, Volunteers, and Fellows are managed through the new recruiting platform (Taleo). As shown in Table 9, as of 1 October 2018 there are a total of 1007 vacancy announcements posted in Taleo.

Table 9: Number of vacancy announcements posted in Taleo per category as of 1 October 2018

Category of requisition	Number of requisitions
CST	544
PSA	210
NPP	171
Internship	12
Volunteer	12
Fellowship	2
Total NSHR	951
NPO	37
GS	19
Total Staff	56
Grand Total	1007

70. All departments in Headquarters and all decentralized offices, including country offices, are using the new recruitment platform for the issuance of vacancy announcements and selection processes. Before, in particular at country level, vacancy announcements were issued in different non-corporate websites, without including standard format and information. Now, all country offices are following the same process to issue job opening and candidates can refer to a single FAO platform to find out all announcements. The new approach allows the Organization to improve outreach efforts and to present the Organization as ‘One FAO’ to potential candidates.

71. On 1 October 2018, the second phase of Taleo successfully went live, presenting different developments. In particular, the Organization introduced new features to enhance efficiency of the HR processes through an improved reporting and monitoring capability.

72. The new recruiting platform allows the Organization to track and report on every single step of the selection process, from the submission of the application to the on-boarding and (eventually) off-boarding. This improved reporting tool enable the Organization to calculate the overall time to fill and to accurately identify the possible bottlenecks. In this way, the Organization would be able to introduce adjustment measures better targeted and tailored, to reduce the potential delays in a timely manner.

73. FAO introduced also the online Quality Assessment Report (QAR) for consultants, to better monitor on this important step and create a database easily accessible for HR purposes. In particular, the Organization will consult the QARs to elaborate a targeted learning strategy for consultants.

b) Performance management

74. In April 2018, the Organization performed a review of the Performance Evaluation and Management System (PEMS) to identify potential improvements to better align the system with the requirements of the Organization. The review focused on a quality analysis of the implementation of PEMS in 2016 and 2017. One of the main elements analysed was the effectiveness of the work plans, as they link the technical skills of staff to specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound tasks and outputs. The review showed that the process to elaborate the work plans effectively allows the Organization to assess the technical skills of staff based on their outputs.

75. The Organization launched also a survey aimed at obtaining feedback from staff. The PEMS survey was designed in collaboration with the Staff Representative Bodies and distributed in March 2018 to 2683 eligible staff members. Survey results showed that over 60% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed with the benefits of the PEMS process, and that the current PEMS policy clearly defines the process, roles, responsibilities and rating scale.

76. Based on the results from the quality review and the PEMS survey, an action plan has been established and activities to further improve PEMS will be implemented starting with the 2019 PEMS cycle. This includes additional training for staff and managers, establishing a fixed annual timeline for the three PEMS phases, enhancing the multi-rater process, and reinforcing key information related to the PEMS policy and process through regular communication to staff and PEMS focal points.

77. The Organization is also elaborating a rewards and recognition programme to introduce rewarding measures related to outstanding performance. The Organization is liaising with other UN agencies to collect the relevant benchmarks and evaluate the different approaches.

c) Review of the FAO Manual

78. The Organization has continued its efforts to update HR policies and the FAO Manual, to align them to the recent trends and corporate needs.

79. One of the main recent adjustments is related to the rental subsidy policy, to guarantee a consistent application and avoid that staff with the same family conditions in the same duty station receive different rental subsidy. FAO introduced a robust methodology to calculate the rental subsidy, based on three elements: ICSC survey on average rates, markets rates and rental subsidy approved for staff in the same duty station with same family conditions. Following the recommendation of the internal auditors, the Organization implemented also a more coherent control mechanism to provide reasonable rental subsidy levels. At the same time, FAO, IFAD and WFP jointly prepared a proposal for revised maximum rental levels in Rome and submitted it to SRBs of the three organizations. The savings resulting from the new rental subsidies controls are estimated to be US 950.000 per biennium.

80. The Manual Section regarding Compensation for Death, Injury or Illness was also subject of a review and updating process according to the UN Secretary-General's Bulletin ST/SGB/2018/1 entitled "Rules governing compensation in the event of death, injury or illness attributable to the performance of official duties on behalf of the United Nations". The revised Manual Section was prepared jointly with WFP to ensure the same treatment to FAO and WFP employees, and also incorporated recommendations of the internal auditors. The updated version clarifies the scope of applicability, standardizes the terminology and the steps for submitting and considering a claim, for aligning FAO's and WFP's procedures with the rest of organizations of the UN system.

d) HR data

81. Further to the recommendation of the 170th session of the Finance Committee and as noted in the 159th session of the Council, the Organization introduced a standardized reporting format of list of nationals, which is now consistent with the practices of other RBAs. In addition to the name, grade and duty station for each staff and non-staff human resources categories which were already available in the previous format, the current format includes information on gender and job titles.

82. The previous format, which only had staff and non-staff human resource categories, was revised to have further sub-categorizations of Professional and Above, National Professional Officers and General Services for staff category, and that of COF.REG, PSA and other non-staff categories for non-staff human resources for ease of reference. The new list of nationals also includes the visual graphs of distribution of the population by respective categories, of gender representation of the population including all categories and of the nationals by duty station for the professional and above categories.

e) Senior recruitment

83. In 2017, the Organization reviewed the procedures for the selection of candidates for D-1 and above-level positions with the aim to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the process. The interview panel includes the DDG or ADG of the department concerned, as appropriate, an HR representative and a senior expert external to the Organization. In the specific case of positions for the

Secretary of Article XIV bodies, the interview panel includes two representatives of Members designated by the bodies, in line with the decision of the FAO Council.

84. The practice to submit single reports for each of the panel members was enhanced, and now in addition panel members should prepare a common interview report, justifying their assessment of the candidates and presenting the outcomes of their discussion.

85. An important feature of the selection process is the assessment of managerial abilities of candidates by an external company, by means of the Virtual Assessment Review. The VAR consists of a series of online tests and personality questionnaire, combined with a solid competency based interview against FAO leadership competencies and senior profile. The VAR report is one of the elements taken into account during the recruitment process to ensure that future appointees possess the required managerial and leadership competencies for the position.

f) Pre-employment check procedures

86. The Organization is increasing its efforts to harmonize pre-employment check procedures for all employment category and in all duty stations, with the emphasis in applying standardized and compatible approach. Reference checks allow the Organization to receive a feedback from current and previous supervisors on professional strengths and areas of improvement, ability to collaborate with managers, teamwork and leadership skills, disciplinary or related employee-relation issues. Therefore, the Organization avoids negligent hiring due to prior history of abuse, longstanding conflicts, or critical misconduct that may be revealed during a reference check.

87. The Organization recently introduced a revised procedure for reference checks related to professional positions, improving communication with candidates and the collection of standard feedback from other employers. This revised flow also streamlines processing time needed for this essential step in the selection process.

88. The Organization works towards combining reference checks in a database on candidates that would be critical and sensitive in nature. The database will prevent from contacting the same referees or requesting the same PEMS reports from candidates, thus, minimizing the time for the pre-employment check. Moving forward to the compatible and standardized approach, the Organization seeks creative approaches in collaborating with other UN Agencies in database reference check services with a high level of competence, accuracy, and in a cost-effective manner.

g) Application of innovative approaches and technologies in HR management

89. The Organization is a member of the UN Innovation Network (UNIN) with the aim to liaise and collaborate with other UN agencies focusing on innovative approaches and technologies as well as challenges in developing innovative ideas, processes and products in the UN.

90. Human resources management is one of the main area that can benefit from innovative approaches and technologies and the Organization is exploring how they could contribute to transform and improve internal processes and systems, fostering a culture of innovation and facilitating project innovation and change management.

91. FAO is developing a free mobile application dedicated to candidates, FAO Jobs. The application not only will contain the FAO vacancy announcements, but will also guide candidates on how to submit an application and to prepare for an interview. The Organization is elaborating ad hoc informative material to be included in the application, to support candidates during the entire selection process and provide them will all the information needed. FAO Jobs will allow users to share the vacancy announcements through different channels, supporting the outreach efforts of the Organization and expanding its use of networking approaches. The Organization is also evaluating the possibility to use gamification techniques through the application, to improve the candidate experience.

92. In this regard, the Organization is exploring the possibility to work with an external provider to include a chatbot in the employment website. A chatbot is a software application designed to mimic human conversational abilities and to easily share information with users. Similar to virtual personal assistants, such as Siri and Google Now, a chatbot uses AI technology such as natural language processing to understand a person's messages and know how to respond. The chatbot will help users to find information in the employment website and to better understand FAO selection procedures. Thanks to the chatbot, candidates will find instant replies to their questions, ameliorating their candidate experience, and reducing the amount of email requests received by the Organization for information already available on the website.

93. In addition, the Organization contributed to the creation of the free mobile application for Allianz services, to facilitate the access of staff members to their services. The app allows staff members to save time and benefit from different functionalities. To submit a claim, for example, it is sufficient to complete a short form and take a photo of an invoice. The application can also find hospitals near to the user and the integration with Google Maps app provides "turn-by-turn" directions. The app is available in different languages and supports users in finding local equivalents of brand-named medicines and to translate common ailments into one of 17 languages available.

94. During the implementation of the new recruitment platform, the Organization had the opportunity to assess current HR procedures to identify possible improvements to be introduced with the use of the new technology. For example, FAO is now focused to introduce a more structured monitoring of the various phases of the recruitment processes to identify bottlenecks and solutions on time; the innovative reporting functionalities of the new platform will facilitate this approach.

95. The Organization aims also to improve the candidate experience, recognising the increased importance of this element in attracting global talent. The new technology will allow the Organization to better manage communication with applicants, to provide replies and to collect information from them in a timely manner.

96. To reinforce the effectiveness and efficiency of the recruitment processes, the Organization is evaluating the possibility to extend the use of asynchronous video interviews, as an additional method to evaluate technical and language skills of candidates. This functionality would be integrated to the new platform, to facilitate its use across the Organization.

97. The Organization is also focused to implement an effective workforce plan, applying an holistic approach with the aim to integrate in the strategy all the employment categories and taking into consideration all corporate goals and needs. Thanks to this new approach the Organization will be able to continue increasing its technical capacity creating a more diverse and balanced work environment.

Challenges

98. While human resources management continues to improve in the Organization, a number of areas for intervention have been identified and require attention and efforts to keep moving towards achieving a modern organization with sound human resources management practices.

99. One priority is the efficient implementation of the additional features of the new recruitment platform. In the coming months, the Organization will further reinforce internal knowledge sharing and will concentrate efforts into the implementation of recruitment procedures of professional positions in the new tool.

100. The Organization is resolute to continue implementing the outreach activities to attract target audiences, such as female applicants and candidates from non- and under-represented countries. Particular efforts will also be dedicated to attract highly specialized profiles, to support the Organization in strengthening both its programme delivery and technical capacity.

101. The Organization is committed to strengthening its collaboration with other UN agencies and will continue to maintain its presence in the UN HR Network to create synergies and to benefit from best practices and successful trends, with the objective to explore their application to FAO's needs and practices.

102. Another key priority is workforce planning. Following JIU recommendations⁶, the Organization continues its intensive efforts on the recruitment through workforce planning which takes into account forecasted vacancies due to retirement of incumbents or resignations/transfers. This involves the systematic reassessment of the continued need for the vacated posts, their re-profiling and, where appropriate, reclassification of posts at a lower grade (in addition to the transfer of positions from administrative to technical areas). To date, this process has produced, and will continue to produce, savings for the Organization and its Members, besides an increased technical capacity.

103. To improve the effectiveness of the workforce plan, the Organization is finalizing an Integrated Workforce Management Plan to be rolled out in December 2018. It initially covers the current PWB period towards the end of 2019. The Plan emphasizes a holistic approach, encompassing all types of personnel at both the headquarters and decentralized offices, totalling 11,896 as at 1 October 2018. The ultimate goal of the Plan is to better connect the workforce to the Organization's results delivery by getting the right person to the right job at the right time.

⁶ JIU/REP/2016/2, Succession Planning in the United Nations System Organizations

Annex I

Table 1 Professional Vacancy Rate as of 25 October 2018

DEPARTMENT/UNIT	POSTS PWB 2018-19	TOT POSTS OCCUPIED	TOT VACANT POSTS	VACANCY RATE %
ODG	9	5	4	44.4%
LEG	19	17	2	10.5%
OCC	44	38	6	13.6%
OED	8	7	1	12.5%
OHR	17	16	1	5.9%
OIG	18	18	0	0.0%
OSP	21	19	2	9.5%
JPOs	25	25	0	0.0%
DDO	7	6	1	14.3%
CIO	43	35	8	18.6%
OSD	10	9	1	10.0%
CS	92	77	15	16.3%
DDN	3	2	1	33.3%
AG	100	88	12	12.0%
CB	40	38	2	5.0%
ES	159	136	23	14.5%
FI	72	60	12	16.7%
FO	44	37	7	15.9%
DDP	47	40	7	14.9%
TC	92	74	18	19.6%
TOTAL HQ	870	747	123	14.1%
RAF	73	62	11	15.1%
RAP	59	48	11	18.6%
REU	31	28	3	9.7%
RLC	49	37	12	24.5%

RNE	38	33	5	13.2%
LOs	9	8	1	11.1%
TOTAL DOs (no FAOR)	259	216	43	16.6%
TOT (no FAOR)	1129	963	166	14.7%
FAORs	64	51	13	20.3%
TOTAL DOs	323	267	56	17.3%
TOTAL	1193	1014	179	15.0%