



General Assembly

Distr.: General
30 July 2025

Original: English

Eightieth session

Item 144 of the provisional agenda*

Joint Inspection Unit

Review of the implementation of the principle of mutual recognition within the United Nations system

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly his comments and those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled “Review of the implementation of the principle of mutual recognition within the United Nations system” ([JIU/REP/2024/4](#)).

* [A/80/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled “Review of the implementation of the principle of mutual recognition within the United Nations system” (JIU/REP/2024/4)¹ contains a review, from a system-wide perspective, of the status of and progress made in the implementation of the principle of mutual recognition and the adequacy and effectiveness of related policies and practices. It further identifies the challenges, lessons learned and good practices relating to the implementation of the principle of mutual recognition within the United Nations system.

II. General comments

2. Organizations welcome the report and find it to be relevant, timely and informative with regard to the status of the implementation of the principle of mutual recognition. They further note that procurement has emerged as a leading example of success in the implementation of mutual recognition within the United Nations system and that it could serve as an example for other areas.

3. Organizations note that the operationalization of the principle of mutual recognition will continue to require concerted efforts. Greater appreciation for the regulatory, administrative and operational differences between organizations would be required to foster mutual recognition across the system. Services provided by lead entities are not necessarily efficient, and effort must be invested to ensure that efficiencies are achievable for all participants. In addition to sharing services, increased effort would be required to ensure that services and products sourced from a common provider are competitive and offer efficiency or cost savings.

4. Overall, organizations are supportive of the findings of the review and of the recommendations contained therein, while calling attention to annex VI to the report, which provides an overview of actions to be taken by each organization on the Unit’s recommendations.

III. Comments on specific recommendations

Recommendation 1

The executive heads of United Nations system organizations who have not yet signed the Mutual Recognition Statement should do so by the end of 2026 in order to enhance operational efficiency and foster collaboration within the United Nations system.

5. Not all organizations support the recommendation to sign the Mutual Recognition Statement prior to a thorough analysis of its potential impact and benefits; support would be contingent on the outcome of such an assessment demonstrating sufficient organizational value.

¹ Circulated to the General Assembly under the symbol [A/80/263](#).

Recommendation 2

The executive heads of United Nations system organizations, through the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, should, by the end of 2025, task the Community of Practice on Mutual Recognition and the network of mutual recognition champions with coordinating system-wide efforts to operationalize mutual recognition and developing comprehensive operational guidelines to guide the signatory organizations in the operationalization of the principle. The guidelines should be aimed at increasing the operationalization of mutual recognition in relation to the organizations' current baseline activities.

6. Some organizations express partial support for the spirit of the recommendation and affirm their intention to continue aligning with the decisions of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its subsidiary mechanisms. While recognizing the value of improved coordination and guidance, they underscore the importance of maintaining flexibility and clarity around roles, enforcement and accountability when operationalizing mutual recognition.

7. Several organizations note that existing structures, i.e. the Community of Practice on Mutual Recognition and its network of champions, already provide a useful platform for peer consultation, knowledge exchange and collaboration. They caution, however, that these informal groups were not designed nor resourced to assume a formal system-wide coordination role.

8. A number of entities question the added value of developing additional comprehensive operational guidelines, noting that current guidance,² such as harmonized procurement manuals or prior frameworks, already supports mutual recognition efforts. Some emphasize that further system-wide guidelines may have limited utility due to the varying internal rules, delegation structures and enterprise systems of each organization. In this regard, it is suggested that each entity should retain responsibility for developing internal operational guidelines consistent with its regulatory and operational frameworks.

9. Others propose practical alternatives to enhance coordination. These include leveraging existing inter-agency mechanisms – for instance, by arranging periodic discussions across relevant networks to track progress and issuing annual updates to High-level Committee on Management and the Business Innovations Group of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. This approach would build on existing structures, promote coherence and avoid the need for additional resources, thereby aligning with current fiscal constraints.

10. Some organizations suggest that an effective path forward could involve developing a common minimum standard or umbrella memorandum of understanding through the Legal Network.³ Such an approach could enable flexible technical agreements or service-level arrangements at the country level, offering practical guidance for local managers without requiring repeated central-level intervention.

Recommendation 3

The executive heads of United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2029, take every opportunity to revise existing policies and regulations and explicitly embed the principle of mutual recognition into their regulatory frameworks in order to reinforce its importance for aligning inter-agency gaps and facilitate its wider implementation across the United Nations system.

² See <https://unsceb.org/mutual-recognition>.

³ Informal network of the Legal Advisers of the specialized agencies and the related and other organizations of the United Nations system.

11. Organizations generally support this recommendation. Some note that the principle of mutual recognition is already embedded in their policy frameworks and operational practices, particularly in areas such as procurement, human resources, administration and financial management. They consider the recommendation as either having been implemented or being progressively integrated into internal regulations and systems.

12. Embedding the principle more explicitly during the revision of policies and regulations will reinforce its importance, align inter-agency gaps and facilitate its wider implementation across the United Nations system. This approach is also viewed as helpful in providing clarity and reassurance to staff responsible for implementation, as organizations adapt their internal policies accordingly.

13. Other organizations underscore their support for the recommendation, while noting that implementation may depend on internal review cycles, organizational priorities or compatibility with existing mandates and legal frameworks. These organizations emphasize the importance of maintaining flexibility, especially for specialized agencies, and caution against introducing regulatory changes that may not align with their specific governance or compliance obligations. Some suggest that embedding mutual recognition in a meaningful and operationally effective manner may require clearer system-wide guidance and a common understanding of its practical implications.

14. A few organizations express partial support, contingent on considerations such as the feasibility of the proposed timeline, the need for inter-agency policy development or the necessity of adapting mutual recognition to unique legal and regulatory contexts. They caution that, in the absence of alignment across entities, there may be interpretive inconsistencies that could hinder implementation.

15. The revision of the United Nations regulatory framework does not rest solely with the Secretary-General, as key instruments such as the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations require the approval of the General Assembly for any amendments.

Recommendation 4

The Secretary-General should, by the end of 2026, request the resident coordinators to assume a lead advocacy role and to periodically report progress on the operationalization of mutual recognition at the country level, in line with the guidelines of the networks of the High-level Committee on Management, taking into consideration that mutual recognition is a key enabler of common business operations.

16. Organizations note that this recommendation is addressed to the Secretary-General.

17. The Secretariat confirms that resident coordinators already have this role with respect to the business operations strategy, common premises and common back offices and other country-based cooperations, under the guidance of the Business Innovations Group, supported by the Development Coordination Office as its secretariat.

Recommendation 5

The legislative organs and governing bodies of United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2026, request the executive heads of signatory organizations to the Mutual Recognition Statement who have not yet done so to include the efficiency gains resulting from the implementation of the principle of mutual recognition in their regular reporting in order to ensure proper monitoring and oversight.

18. Organizations note that that this recommendation is addressed to the legislative organs and governing bodies.

19. Several organizations support the principle of improved oversight and already report on operational efficiencies through existing frameworks (e.g. annual reports, business operations strategy or Executive Board reporting). They note, however, that efficiency gains stemming specifically from mutual recognition are not always isolated or identified, as mutual recognition typically acts as an enabler within broader initiatives.

20. Some find that attributing efficiency gains directly to mutual recognition may be methodologically complex and resource-intensive. They underscore the need for standardized approaches and caution against fragmented reporting that may overlap with existing mechanisms. Some suggest aligning any future efforts with current system-wide reporting structures to promote coherence.

21. Others emphasize that any decision to introduce new reporting requirements ultimately rests with legislative bodies and highlight the importance of flexibility to account for organizational mandates, existing practices and levels of mutual recognition implementation.
