Staff recruitment in United Nations system organizations: a comparative analysis and benchmarking framework

Overview

Prepared by

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Geneva 2012

United Nations

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ABBREVIATIONS

CEB	United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FHRM	Framework for Human Resources Management
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICSC	International Civil Service Commission
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IPMA-HR	International Public Management Association for Human Resources
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations system
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNLB	United Nations Logistics Base
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOG	United Nations Office at Geneva
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNOV	United Nations Office at Vienna
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization of the United Nations
UPU	Universal Postal Union
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

I. INTRODUCTION

1.   As part of its programme of work for 2011, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) conducted a review of staff recruitment in United Nations system organizations. The topic was proposed by the United Nations Secretariat and endorsed by several other participating organizations.

2.   In 2000, the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) adopted a Framework for Human Resources Management (FHRM) which identified the diverse but interrelated elements of human resources management in the common system. Employment is one of six components of this framework, with "recruitment" as a sub-component. ICSC defines recruitment as "the system of attracting, assessing and selecting candidates external to the organization, in order to fill vacancies." "Recruitment" is distinct from "placement," which commonly refers to the filling of vacancies internally.

3.   It is often stated that the staff is the most important asset of any organization. The quality of human resources management, in general, and of the recruitment process, in particular, has a direct impact on the overall performance and success of the organization. To quote from the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR), "it is not enough to get the right people on the bus and the wrong people off, but the right people must also be in the right seats." Indeed, "the right people with the appropriate skill set and experience required for the job enable quality service delivery."[1]

4.   Staff recruitment is therefore a critical activity for all organizations; it involves not only the human resources department, but also increasingly line managers. The time and resources invested in the recruitment process are significant, but the costs of hiring the wrong people are even more significant, from low productivity and time spent resolving performance issues to the cost of further recruitment.[2]

5.   In the United Nations system, staff recruitment is an issue of persistent concern to Member States, as expressed in various resolutions of the General Assembly and by the governing bodies of other organizations in the system. In a recent resolution on human resources management, the General Assembly revisited several recruitment issues, including:
- The need for workforce planning;
- Equal treatment of candidates with equivalent educational backgrounds;
- Persistently high vacancy rates, in particular in field missions, and the high turnover of staff, especially in difficult duty stations;
- The paramount importance of speeding up the recruitment and staffing process;
- Full compliance of administrative instructions on human resources with the relevant resolutions;
- Need to increase awareness of job opportunities in the Organization, including through more extensive outreach;
- Need to respect the equality of each of the two working languages of the Secretariat, and the use of additional working languages in specific duty stations. [3]

6.   Against this background, the objective of this review is to assess, in the context of the diverse organizational needs of the United Nations system organizations, issues of efficiency, transparency and fairness in the recruitment process, bearing in mind principles such as geographical representation, gender balance and equality of official working languages. The review addresses recruitment rules, policies and procedures across the United Nations system organizations, focusing on external recruitment leading to

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[1] International Public Management Association for Human Resources, *Recruiting and staffing in the Public Sector. Results from IPMA-HR Research Series*, (Summer 2007), p. 3.
[2] See http://www.ransonassociates.co.uk/hrprocesses.htm.
[3] General Assembly resolution 65/247, paras. 11-26.

appointments of one year or more. It delivers a comparative analysis that identifies commonalities and differences, as well as good practices.

Methodology

7.   The review covered 34 United Nations organizations/offices. In accordance with the internal standards and guidelines of JIU and its internal working procedures, the methodology followed in preparing this report included a preliminary review, questionnaires, interviews and an in-depth analysis. Detailed questionnaires were sent to 34 organizations/offices, and interviews were conducted with officers from 27 organizations/offices as well as with staff representatives from 12 organizations/offices in New York, Geneva, Vienna, Rome and Paris. The review team also visited the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Kuwait base of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and interviewed human resources management (HRM) officers and staff representatives. A video-conference was held with HRM officials at the United Nations Logistics Base (UNLB) see (annex I).

8.   An online survey was sent to more than 1,200 members of assessment panels and standing appointment/review bodies at 23 United Nations system organizations to gather their opinions on the efficiency, transparency and fairness of recruitment at their organizations. The response rate was 33.6 per cent (see annexes I and II). In addition, the organizations were requested to provide relevant statistics, which have been included in the report, where available. However, obtaining data that would allow reliable comparisons across time and between organizations was problematic due to the diverse methods of data collection and different reporting modalities. Detailed information on the results of the review by organization is presented in the various annexes.[4]

9.   Based on their research and findings, the Inspectors have identified good practices and recommended a set of benchmarks to be used by the organizations as standard criteria for management practices, recruitment work processes and measuring progress.

10.   The review has been issued in four parts, namely three notes on the existing institutional framework for recruitment at United Nations system organizations (JIU/NOTE/2012/1); recruitment processes and practices in the United Nations system organizations and a reflection on harmonizing recruitment business practices (JIU/NOTE/2012/2); gender balance and geographical distribution in recruitment (JIU/NOTE/2012/3) and this overview report that brings together the main findings, recommendations and proposed benchmarks (JIU/REP/2012/4). The Inspectors emphasize that this overview report should be read and considered in conjunction with the three notes and acted on accordingly by the legislative organs, secretariats and United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).

11.   Comments on the draft report and notes were sought from participating organizations and have been taken into account in finalizing the report and notes. In accordance with article 11.2 of the JIU statute, the report and notes have been finalized following consultation among the Inspectors so as to test their conclusions and recommendations against the collective wisdom of the Unit.

12.   To facilitate the handling of the report and notes and the implementation of the recommendations and the monitoring thereof, Annex IV contains a table indicating whether the report and notes have been submitted to the organizations concerned for action or for information. The table identifies the recommendations that are relevant for each organization, specifying whether they require a decision by the legislative or governing body of the organization or action by the executive head of the organization.

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[4]   The review did not cover outsourcing recruitment processes, on-boarding or reference checks.

13.   The Inspectors wish to express their appreciation to all who assisted them in the preparation of this review, particularly those who participated in the interviews and so willingly shared their knowledge and expertise.

II. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The institutional framework

14.   The fundamental values and principles of the organizations, as stated in the United Nations Charter and equivalent constitutions, provide the ethical foundation for a strong institutional framework for recruitment. They are also elaborated in the staff regulations and rules of the organizations. However, the Inspectors found that other important principles, such as competitiveness in the recruitment process and minimum language requirements, are not included in the staff regulations of some organizations.

15.   The Inspectors also found variations in other components of the institutional framework among the organizations, including human resources management strategies and recruitment policies and procedures, which could be more fully developed in many cases. Workforce planning is an imperative for the four main funds and programmes, but less common in the smaller agencies.

16.   Competency frameworks are widely used for staff recruitment and some are being updated to reflect changing realities. This provides an opportunity for a more harmonized approach to competency profiles and indicators and facilitates inter-agency mobility. There should also be consistent assessment of competencies using different assessment methods; the Inspectors noted some discrepancies. Furthermore, training in competency-based interviewing should be a fundamental requirement for all assessment panel members, but this is very far from the case.

17.   In the context of results-based management, the Inspectors note that responsibility for the recruitment process and selection decisions has been increasingly delegated to the managers concerned, with less direct involvement of human resources management (HRM) officers. The Inspectors are of the opinion that HRM should play an active role in enhancing transparency, safeguarding impartiality, as well as countering the perceptions of unfairness that were highlighted in the JIU survey. Greater participation of staff representatives would also help to add legitimacy to the process. The Inspectors also found that executive heads retain considerable discretionary authority with regard to appointments, particularly at the most senior levels, which can undermine the transparency and competitiveness of the overall recruitment process.

18.   In most of the organizations, accountability systems are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure due process; they need to be strengthened, including through the development of recruitment targets and indicators, mechanisms to monitor compliance, regular reporting of results to the legislative bodies and public dissemination of the information on the organizations' websites. The recruitment process in all the organizations should be subject to regular scrutiny by the internal and external oversight bodies.

The recruitment process

19.   The Inspectors found that recruitment processes in all the organizations require substantial enhancements if they are to deliver selection decisions that secure the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity in the staff of the United Nations system organizations, including:

- Efficient vacancy management through workforce planning;

- Consistent use of standardized job classifications, including minimum requirements for qualifications, work experience and languages;

- Strict time limits for vacancy postings;

- More effective assessment methods, used in combination, including standardized oral and written tests and competency-based interviews;

- Use of assessment centres for all senior management recruitment;

- Rating and ranking of candidates and documentation of decisions;

- Thorough reference checking;

- Development of effective e-recruitment systems to automate and speed up processes and facilitate monitoring and reporting.

20.   The recruitment process is complex and takes a long time to complete (see annex III). This continues to be a major problem in all the organizations, with significant bottlenecks identified at various points that require targeted action. Rosters of pre-approved candidates seem to offer some potential for speedier recruitment, but may be more suited to specific situations such as emergencies. Close monitoring of recruitment time against targets by HRM departments and effective accountability mechanisms are key to improving the situation.

Harmonization of recruitment business practices

21.   The International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) has a key role to play in facilitating the harmonization of recruitment business practices among United Nations system organizations. In particular, the ICSC classification system for posts in the professional and higher categories should be updated to remove discrepancies and reflect new realities in work practices. Common minimum education, work experience and language requirements should be applied across all the organizations in support of system-wide coherence and the "One United Nations" goal.

22.   The Human Resources network of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination High-level Committee on Management (CEB/HLCM) is actively involved in some recruitment harmonization initiatives in the context of the "Delivering as One" concept, including a pilot project to harmonize vacancy advertisement and selection at country level for some categories of staff. The Inspectors consider these initiatives an encouraging step towards greater harmonization efforts in the future.

Gender balance

23.   Most of the United Nations system organizations have made commitments towards achieving gender parity in their secretariats, particularly at the professional level and above, and in some organizations, this goal is a mandated, time-bound requirement of the legislative bodies. The Inspectors found, however, that gender parity has not been achieved in most cases, even where mandated, although there have been proportional increases in female professional employment in recent years, largely reflecting gains at the junior grades.

24.   Reasons given for the persistent gender imbalance in recruitment include the low number of female applicants, particularly for highly specialized jobs and field-based jobs, and the limited opportunities for external recruitment. These problems should be addressed with more effective recruitment and gender

strategies and policies, including annual targets to move progressively towards gender parity, indicators to measure progress and regular reporting to the legislative bodies.

Geographical distribution

25.   Many organizations apply a system of desirable ranges with the aim of achieving equitable geographical distribution in the staffing of their secretariats, the most sophisticated being a weighted calculation for each Member State, based on membership, financial contribution and population factors. The Inspectors found that other systems, based on regions or donor/programme countries, have been less satisfactory.

26.   In most organizations, geographical distribution continues to be limited to regular budget posts at the professional level and above, which fails to take account of the considerable changes in the composition of the secretariats in recent years, including changes in funding modalities. Geographical distribution therefore only applies to a small proportion of total posts (for example, only 11.28 per cent of all posts are subject to geographical distribution at the United Nations Secretariat), which is contrary to the intent and spirit of the United Nations Charter. The Inspectors are of the opinion that geographical distribution should apply to all posts established for one year or more at the professional level and above. Furthermore, measures to achieve equitable geographical distribution should be embedded in recruitment strategies, policies and practices.

III.   RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSED TO LEGISLATIVE BODIES OR EXECUTIVE HEADS

Recommendation 1

The legislative bodies of United Nations system organizations should direct executive heads to be guided by the 15 recruitment benchmarks proposed in this review when hiring external candidates to fixed-term positions of one year or more (JIU/REP/2012/4, para. 27).

Recommendation 2

Executive heads of United Nations system organizations should report periodically to the legislative bodies on the authority delegated for recruitment, the accountability mechanisms set up in relation to such delegated authority, and their results, in line with benchmark 4 (JIU/NOTE/2012/1, paras. 16-42).

Recommendation 3

Executive heads of United Nations system organizations that have not yet done so should reduce the posting time for vacancies to no more than 30 days and seek the approval of the legislative bodies as appropriate (JIU/NOTE/2012/2, paras. 4-23).

Recommendation 4

CEB/HLCM should continue to pursue initiatives for harmonizing business practices in recruitment and should extend the scope of its activities in this area (JIU/NOTE/2012/2, paras. 115-121).

IV. BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK

27.   The Inspectors recommend the following set of 15 benchmarks, comprising the institutional framework for recruitment at United Nations system organizations, the recruitment process and gender balance and geographical distribution. The Inspectors encourage the United Nations system organizations to use them as the standard criteria for recruitment and for measuring progress.

Institutional framework for recruitment (JIU/NOTE/2012/1)

Charter of the United Nations and staff regulations and rules (paras. 4-5)

Benchmark 1

The Charter of the United Nations and equivalent constitutions of all other United Nations system organizations, the staff regulations and rules of each organization and pertinent legislative bodies' resolutions provide the general framework for conducting recruitment at each organization. Recruitment fully respects the fundamental principles enshrined therein.

This requires that:

(a)   The staff regulations and rules include the general framework and principles as per (b) to (h) below;

(b)   The recruitment process identifies and selects staff who demonstrate the highest standards of efficiency, competency and integrity;

(c)   Selection decisions are transparent and free of bias or discrimination of any kind;

(d)   Selection is made on a competitive basis for all positions irrespective of category, grade or level. Selection decisions are based on pre-approved minimum requirements and evaluation criteria, and are transparent and well documented. Managers are held accountable for those decisions;

(e)   Staff at the professional level and above are recruited on as wide a geographical basis as possible. Preference is given at the time of selection to candidates from countries which are unrepresented or underrepresented, provided that qualifications and competencies are equal;

(f)   Due consideration is given at the time of selection to the need for achieving gender parity, particularly for positions at the professional level and above;

(g)   Full regard is given to the qualifications and experience of persons already in service, without prejudice to the recruitment of new talent; and

(h)   Due consideration is given to knowledge of at least two working languages, particularly for positions at the professional level and above, and to knowledge of additional working languages in specific duty station, as mandated.

Human resources management frameworks (paras. 6-10)

<table><tr><td>**Benchmark 2**

Human resources management frameworks provide strategic direction for managing and developing human resources at each organization in line with organizational needs and challenges, and steer recruitment practices that are efficient and effective in attracting and selecting competent candidates with the diverse profiles needed.</td></tr></table>

Human resources management (HRM) frameworks:

(a)   Set out strategic goals for human resources management in line with organizational needs;

(b)   Determine priorities in the context of available resources and tools;

(c)   Include specific targets, indicators and timelines; and

(d)   Clearly identify those with responsibility for the implementation of the formulated goals.

Recruitment policies and procedures (paras. 11-15)

<table><tr><td>**Benchmark 3**

Detailed written procedures are in place to guide and document each step of the recruitment process. These procedures are duly disseminated among hiring managers, and are consistently applied and effectively implemented, with due regard to transparency and timeliness throughout. These procedures are periodically reviewed and revised as appropriate, in consultation with all concerned parties.</td></tr></table>

See benchmarks 8 to 12 in document JIU/NOTE/2012/2.

Delegation of authority and accountability (paras. 16-42)

<table><tr><td>**Benchmark 4**

Accountability permeates every action in the recruitment process.</td></tr></table>

To this end, executive heads:

(a)   Provide appropriate levels of delegation of authority, and clear division of responsibilities and accountability for each step of the recruitment process, including making recommendations and final decisions;

(b)   Ensure due process and fair competition in all recruitments, including senior-level positions;

(c)   Restrict discretionary authority in recruitment to the minimum necessary and ensure that the reasons for exceptions are duly justified and documented and reported to the relevant legislative bodies;

(d)   Establish recruitment targets and indicators; monitor compliance with established targets/indicators at the organizational and departmental level and ensure that hiring managers are accountable for meeting those targets/indicators; conduct a periodic review of delegation of authority in line with results achieved;

(e)   Set accountability measures for failure to comply with established policies and procedures, including through performance appraisals and/or disciplinary actions, as appropriate;

(f)   Publish online annual recruitment statistics, including targets and results, as well as periodic reports on the implementation of the organization's HRM/recruitment strategy to the legislative bodies; and

(g)   Commission regular management audits/evaluations of the recruitment process and ensure adequate follow-up of the implementation of their recommendations.

Workforce planning (paras. 43-47)

Benchmark 5

Workforce planning is instituted in line with organizational needs.

Effective workforce planning:

(a)   Takes account of the volume, mobility and turnover of staff, as well as resources and capacity available and the needs of organization;

(b)   Drives all major recruitment decisions and processes, including the determination of appropriate ratios between external and internal vacancies posted and between external and internal candidates selected; and

(c)   Ensures compliance with these ratios is closely monitored and regularly reviewed.

Competency frameworks (paras. 48-55)

Benchmark 6

The use of competencies in recruitment is required for all positions. Competency frameworks are designed and implemented to ensure that each selected candidate possesses the required skills, attributes and behaviours, and is the best fit for the position.

In order to do so, competency frameworks:

(a)   Provide a mapping of the behaviours valued, recognized and rewarded by the organization;

(b)   Reflect the organization's structure and priorities and are consistent with those of other United Nations system organizations so as to harmonize practices, facilitate inter-agency mobility and broaden the overall talent base;

(c)   Drive the recruitment process from the beginning (job opening) to the end (selection decision);

(d)   Include behavioural competencies and technical competencies, as well as appropriate managerial competencies;

(e)   Provide a definition for each competency and indicators to measure behaviours;

(f)   Define competencies by type of job/occupational categories and grade;

(g)   Limit the number of competencies to less than 12 per job/occupational category, and classify them in clusters;

(h)   Define three to four levels of competency mastery to reflect progression and increased level of responsibilities or expertise corresponding to a specific post within the hierarchical structure of the organization;

(i)   Require that assessment of competencies is carried out through a combination of assessment methods, including interviews, written tests and reference checks;

(j)   Are revisited periodically and updated/modified in line with changing needs;

(k)   Are part of organizational training plans; and

(l)   Are publicly disseminated.

Training (paras. 56-58)

Benchmark 7

Training is developed for recruitment policies, procedures and practices, including competency-based interviewing and other assessment techniques, and is mandatory for human resources officers, hiring managers and members of ad hoc assessment panels and standing appointment/review bodies.

This requires that:

(a)   Training programmes are developed and conducted by professional human resources trainers;

(b)   Training programmes cover all aspects of recruitment assessment, including competency-based interviewing and other techniques, as appropriate; and

(c)   Training is mandatory for all those who have responsibilities for the recruitment process and must be undertaken prior to taking up those responsibilities.

The recruitment process (JIU/NOTE/2012/2)

Job opening, vacancy posting and pre-screening (paras. 4-29)

Benchmark 8

The job opening, vacancy posting and pre-screening phase of the recruitment process is governed by written procedures and guidelines that follow good practices in respect of standard job descriptions, profiles and vacancy announcements, and adheres to strict timelines.

This phase entails:

(a)   Workforce planning undertaken beforehand to determine which positions will be opened, when and how, and to define the ratio of external recruitment to internal placement or promotion;

(b)   All vacant posts are advertised, including senior-level posts. The recruitment process is initiated at least six months in advance in the case of known vacancies such as retirement, newly created posts or posts subject to rotation, but in any case, no later than the month in which the post becomes vacant;

(c)   All posts are classified in accordance with ICSC standards and a specific or generic job description or job profile is made available. The relevant job description is reviewed and updated as required. For new posts, a classified job description or generic job profile is created;

(d)   Standard or generic vacancy announcements are used for certain categories and levels of posts;

(e)   Vacancy announcements include evaluation criteria, minimum requirements for education/qualifications and skills, related work experience, languages, competencies, as well as the assessment method to be used;

(f)   Vacancy announcements are translated into the relevant working languages of the respective organization and the language of the duty station, as mandated;

(g)   All vacancy announcements are posted online and disseminated by other media as required, including specialized media and technical boards for specialized jobs;

(h)   Vacancy announcements are posted for a period not exceeding one month; and

(i)   Applications are pre-screened with regard to minimum eligibility requirements.

Education, work experience and language requirements (paras. 30-47)

Benchmark 9

The minimum educational qualifications, work experience and language requirements for professional and general services staff at all United Nations system organizations are harmonized to support inter-agency mobility and the One-United Nations goal.

This requires that:

(a)   The same level of educational qualification is applied (equivalent to a bachelor's or master's degree). A first degree may be required for entry-level positions and an advanced degree for higher-level and senior positions; a doctorate may be required for certain highly qualified positions at specialized agencies and IAEA;

(b)   The degree must be from an officially recognized university or institution and is subject to equivalence and validation for consistency at the pre-screening stage in reference to the World Higher Education Database published by IAU/UNESCO Information Centre on Higher Education on a yearly basis and available on CD ROM;

(c)   Minimum educational qualifications are linked to the number of years of work experience for posts at the professional level and above; no work experience is required for P1 entry-level posts;

(d)   Secondary school certification or equivalent and an equal number of years of work experience is required for each grade of the general services category system-wide; and

(e)   Due consideration is given to knowledge of at least two working languages for posts at the professional level and above (very good knowledge of one is required, and working knowledge of another), including the language of the duty station, as mandated. This language knowledge is particularly important for senior officers and human resources staff who should lead by example.

Shortlisting, assessment and selection (paras. 48-85)

Benchmark 10

The phase of the recruitment process from shortlisting to assessment and selection is governed by written procedures and guidelines that follow good practices in respect of shortlisting, interviewing, testing, rating and ranking, selection and review, with due regard for transparency and timeliness throughout.

To achieve this:

(a)   Detailed written procedures are in place and human resources officers, hiring managers and panel members receive thorough training;

(b)   The hiring manager evaluates each pre-screened application against the requirements of the post as stated in the vacancy announcement, using pre-approved evaluation criteria and ratings;

(c)   A shortlist of at least three candidates is drawn up, reviewed and approved by the assessment/selection panel or appointment board. Shortlisted candidates are subject to an in-depth assessment of their qualifications, experience, competencies, language skills and other skills through mandatory interviews, oral/written tests and other assessment methods, as appropriate;

(d)   In line with delegation of authority for recruitment, ad hoc interview, assessment and selection panels are set up for each vacancy or group of vacancies, including for high-level positions, to interview and evaluate candidates and draw up a list of recommended candidates;

(e)   Interview, assessment and selection panels comprise at least three individuals all trained in competency-based interviewing techniques. Both genders are represented and one member of the panel is from outside the hiring office. Human resources representatives participate in, at least, an advisory capacity;

(f) Standard oral/written tests are administered to candidates for professional and higher positions by job category and grade; clerical or other specialized tests are administered for general services support positions and specific positions in finance, information technology or other. Language tests are administered to test the level of proficiency in the required language(s). These tests are designed and conducted by human resources officers and hiring managers;

(g) Candidates for managerial positions are evaluated using multiple assessment techniques, preferably at an assessment centre;

(h) The effectiveness of the various assessment methods used is periodically evaluated and the results fed back into the process;

(i) Previous performance appraisals are reviewed and reference checks conducted systematically regardless of positions and grades;

(j) Review bodies verify that the shortlisting, assessment and recommendation process has followed rules and procedures, and provide advice on whether the recommendations meet the requirements of the post and the evaluation criteria. Human resources officers and staff are represented in these bodies;

(k) Written records are kept of the reasons for selecting or rejecting each candidate at both the short-listing stage and the final selection stage;

(l) Targets and indicators are set up with the objective of enhancing the quality of the recruitment process, including those that measure the effectiveness of ad hoc assessment panels and standing bodies; compliance is regularly monitored; and

(m) Those who manage and take the final decision in the recruitment process are held accountable for the outcome and for any resulting valid claims.

Rosters/pools (paras. 86-93)

Benchmark 11

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.

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.

Electronic recruitment processes (paras. 94-99)

Benchmark 12

Efficient and cost effective electronic recruitment systems are developed to fully automate recruitment processes and improve transparency.

This requires that:

(a)   Recruitment processes are standardized and duly documented throughout the organization;

(b)   E-recruitment systems are developed to meet client specifications and are user-friendly;

(c)   E-recruitment systems are thoroughly tested before rollout;

(d)   E-recruitment systems are comprehensive, including standard/generic job profiles, issue of vacancy announcements, pre-screening of applicants, pre-approved evaluation criteria for assessing candidates, systematic recording of assessments, tracking of status, approval process, offers of appointment and follow-up;

(e)   The system provides comprehensive data collection for monitoring and reporting; and

(f)   The efficiency and cost effectiveness of the e-recruitment system is periodically evaluated.

Timeliness of the recruitment process (paras. 100-106)

Benchmark 13

Recruitment time from vacancy posting to selection decision does not exceed 120 days.

This entails that:

(a)   Each stage of the recruitment process from vacancy posting to selection decision is assigned a maximum length;

(b)   Batch recruitment and rosters are used, as appropriate, to facilitate the timeliness of the process;

(c)   Effective e-recruitment systems are developed to speed up the process and track delays; and

(d)   Monitoring systems and accountability mechanisms are in place.

Gender balance and geographical distribution (JIU/NOTE/2012/3)

Gender balance in recruitment (paras. 3-38)

Benchmark 14

The principle of 50/50 gender balance is embedded in the organizational culture, staff regulations and recruitment strategies, policies, guidelines, procedures and practices, bearing in mind that the paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity.

This entails that:

      (a)   The principle of 50/50 gender balance is laid down in the staff regulations, and recruitment strategies, policies and procedures;

      (b)   The 50/50 gender balance is applied to all posts at the professional level and above;

      (c)   Progressive annual or biennial gender targets and indicators are set for meeting the overall 50/50 target at the organizational and department levels, especially at the senior management level;

      (d)   Targets/indicators are set to recruit a higher proportion of female staff from unrepresented and underrepresented countries;

      (e)   Information on gender balance is made available to hiring managers at the time of the selection decision and taken into account in the decision-making process. Review bodies check compliance with it;

      (f)   Hiring managers document at the time of selection why no qualified female candidate could be identified, particularly at departments where an imbalance exists;

      (g)   Women are represented in the composition of interview/assessment and selection panels and review bodies. Exception reports are required for non-compliance;

      (h)   Compliance with gender targets is monitored and those with delegated authority for recruitment, including hiring managers and heads of departments, are held accountable for results, including as part of their annual performance appraisal;

      (i)   Periodic compliance reports are made available to legislative bodies and the public at large through the website of the organizations;

      (j)   Training on cultural diversity and gender is embedded in competency-based training for competency-based interviewing; and

      (k)   Gender sensitivity is included among the organizational behavioural competencies to be assessed in the recruitment process, particularly for managers.

Geographical distribution in recruitment (paras. 39-83)

> **Benchmark 15**
>
> **The principle of equitable geographical distribution is embedded in the organizational culture, staff regulations and recruitment strategies, policies, guidelines, procedures and practices, bearing in mind that the paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity.**

This entails that:

(a)   The principle of equitable geographical distribution is laid down in the staff regulations and recruitment strategies, policies, guidelines and procedures;

(b)   The determination of equitable geographical distribution is not solely based on the criterion of member States' contributions;

(c)   All posts at the professional level and above established for one year or more are subject to equitable geographical distribution;

(d)   Targets/indicators are set to improve the proportion of staff from unrepresented and underrepresented countries;

(e)   Information on unrepresented, underrepresented and overrepresented countries is made available to hiring managers at the time of selection decision and taken into account in the decision-making process. The representation status of the country of each recommended candidate is indicated. Exception reports are required to hire candidates from overrepresented countries. Review bodies check compliance with this requirement of the benchmark;

(f)   Every effort is made to attract and recruit highly competent candidates from all countries of the world, including through special recruitment campaigns;

(g)   Compliance with equitable geographical distribution targets is monitored and hiring managers are made accountable for results, including as part of their annual performance appraisal; and

(h)   Compliance reports are submitted regularly to legislative bodies and the public at large through the website of the organizations.

Annex I
Participation of organizations/entities in the preparation of this report

		Interviews		Questionnaire	
		HRM officials	**Staff representatives**	**Sent**	**Responded**
United Nations system organizations and offices	**FAO**	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	IAEA	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	ICAO	No	No	Yes	Yes
	IFAD	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	ILO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	IMO	No	No	Yes	Yes
	ITU	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	OCHA	Yes	No	Yes	No
	UNAIDS	No	No	Yes	Yes
	UNAMA	Yes	No	Yes	No
	UNAMI	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	UNLB	Yes	No	No	No
	UNCTAD	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
	UNDP	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
	UNEP	No	No	Yes	Yes
	UNESCO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	UNFPA	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
	UN-HABITAT	No	No	Yes	No
	UNHCR	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	UNRWA	No	No	Yes	Yes
	UNICEF	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	UNIDO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	UN	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
	UNOG	Yes	No	Yes	No
	UNODC/ UNOV	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
	OHCHR	Yes	No	Yes	No
	UNOPS	No	No	Yes	Yes
	UN Women	Yes	No	Yes	No
	UNWTO	No	No	Yes	Yes
	UPU	No	No	Yes	Yes
	WFP	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
	WHO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	WIPO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	WMO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other	**CEB HR Network**	Yes	N/A	No	No
	ICSC	Yes	N/A	No	No
	OECD	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Annex II
JIU online survey on recruitment in the United Nations system

An online survey was sent to 1,219 members of ad hoc assessment panels and standing appointment and review bodies at the 23 United Nations system organizations which had provided a mailing list of potential participants. The survey contained 22 multiple-choice questions and one open-ended question. The questions covered various aspects of the recruitment process, and sought opinions about the efficiency, effectiveness, fairness and transparency of the recruitment process, selection decision, rules and procedures applied, gender balance, geographical distribution and language diversity, functioning of the panels and bodies, and training received by the members to fulfil their roles in the recruitment process. The survey complemented the results of the interviews conducted by the review team and gave the actual actors in the recruitment process a chance to voice their opinions anonymously.

The overall participation rate was illustrative and statistically representative of the population surveyed, as shown by the tables below.

Overall participation in the survey

	Recipients	Respondents	Participation rate (*per cent*)
Total	1 219	409	33.6

Respondents were asked to indicate their role on the panels and/or bodies. The table below shows the distribution of respondents by role.

Survey participation by group

	No. of respondents	(*per cent*)
Hiring manager/post holding office head/ supervisor/manager from another office	138	33.7
Staff from the hiring office or another office	122	29.8
Staff representative (staff council/association member or elected by staff at large for specific panel)	101	24.7
Head of Human Resources/Human Resources officer	43	10.5
Gender representative	5	1.2

The responses to the survey were filtered by groups of participants with a view to identifying different perceptions of the various issues. Cross-reference by organization also permitted some comparisons, although the results should be interpreted with caution given the low number of respondents from some organizations and the high number from the United Nations Secretariat. Findings based on the analysis of aggregated and filtered data have been included in the notes accompanying the report.

In conclusion, the survey asked the respondents to make suggestions for improvements to the recruitment process at their organizations. More than 300 comments/suggestions were provided and the main issues raised are summarized in annex V of the note on the recruitment process (JIU/NOTE/2012/2).

Annex III
Steps in the recruitment process

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┌──────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────┐
│ HRM*             │───────▶│ HRM              │
│ Workforce        │        │ Job opening      │
│ planning         │        │ request          │
└──────────────────┘        └──────────────────┘
        │                           │
        │                           ▼
        │                   ┌──────────────────┐
        │                   │ HRM              │
        │                   │ Job opening      │
        │                   │ approval         │
        │                   └──────────────────┘
        ▼
┌──────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────┐
│ HRM              │◀───────│ HRM              │
│ VA published     │        │ VA edited/       │
│                  │        │ translated       │
└──────────────────┘        └──────────────────┘
        │
        ▼
┌──────────────────┐
│ HRM/HM           │
│ Applicants pre-  │
│ screened for     │
│ eligibility      │
└──────────────────┘
        │
        ▼
┌──────────────────┐
│ HM/HRM           │
│ Candidates       │
│ shortlisted per  │
│ requirements     │
└──────────────────┘
        │                   ┌──────────────────┐
        ▼                   │ HM/(HRM)/AP      │
┌──────────────────┐        │ Test             │
│ Candidates       │        ├──────────────────┤
│ assessed by AP   │────────│ HM/(HRM)/AP      │
│                  │        │ Interview        │
└──────────────────┘        ├──────────────────┤
        │                   │ HM/(HRM)/AP      │
        │                   │ Assessment       │
        │                   │ centre           │
        ▼                   └──────────────────┘
┌──────────────────┐
│ HM               │
│ List of          │
│ recommended      │
│ candidates       │
└──────────────────┘
   ┆    │
   ▼    ▼                   ┌──────────────────┐
┌──────────────────┐        │ HRM              │
│ HRM              │┈┈▶     └──────────────────┘
│ Reference checks ││               │
│                  │◀┈┈┐           ▼
└──────────────────┘   ┌──────────────────┐
                       │ Central review   │◀──────
                       │ bodies           │
                       └──────────────────┘
                              │
         ◀────────────────────┴────────────────────▶
┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐    ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐
│ HRM      │ │ SG/HO/   │    │ DH/EH    │ │ HRM      │
│ Communi- │ │ HRM      │    │ Selection│─│ Roster   │
│ cation of│ │ Appoint- │    │          │ │          │
│ results/ │ │ ment     │    │          │ │          │
│ On       │ │          │    │          │ │          │
│ boarding │ │          │    │          │ │          │
└──────────┘ └──────────┘    └──────────┘ └──────────┘
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* AP: assessment panel; HM: hiring manager/line manager/post holding office; HO: head of office; HRM: human resources management; DH: department/division head; EH: executive head

Annex IV

Overview of action to be taken by participating organizations on JIU recommendations

JIU/REP/2012/4

		Intended impact		United Nations, funds and programmes															Specialized agencies and IAEA											
			CEB	United Nations*	UNCTAD	UNODC/UNOV	UNEP	UN-HABITAT	UNHCR	UNRWA	UNDP	UNFPA	UNICEF	UNAIDS	UN WOMEN	UNOPS	WFP	ILO	FAO	UNESCO	ICAO	WHO	UPU	ITU	WMO	IMO	WIPO	UNIDO	UNWTO	IAEA
Report	For action		☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒
	For information		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recommendation 1	a			L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
Recommendation 2	a			E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Recommendation 3	g			E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Recommendation 4	c		E																											

Legend: **L:** Recommendation for decision by legislative organ   **E:** Recommendation for action by executive head
▨: Recommendation does not require action by this organization

Intended impact: **a:** enhanced accountability   **b:** dissemination of best practices   **c:** enhanced coordination/cooperation   **d:** enhanced controls and compliance
e: enhanced effectiveness   **f:** significant financial savings   **g:** enhanced efficiency   **o:** other

* United Nations Secretariat, covering all entities listed in ST/SGB/2002/11, other than UNCTAD, UNODC, UNEP, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR and UNRWA.