



**United Nations**

# **Flexible working arrangements in United Nations system organizations**

**Report of the Joint Inspection Unit**

**Prepared by Victor Moraru**



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*Executive summary***Flexible working arrangements in United Nations system organizations****Introduction and review objectives**

For the purposes of the present review, flexible working arrangements are voluntary adjustments to the normal working hours and/or locations, agreed between personnel and their managers in accordance with the organizations' staff regulations and rules and relevant internal policies.

By virtue of their voluntary character, flexible working arrangements are initiated by personnel. They are fully recognized within the United Nations system and have been adopted by the organizations as a tool to better balance the professional and personal lives of their personnel.

The present review was included in the 2022 programme of work of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). It was initiated in response to successive requests from participating organizations that had experienced the specific reality of mandatory alternate working arrangements during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and were interested in learning how that experience could be used to enhance flexible working arrangements and support new ways of working.

The objectives of the review are to provide an assessment and comparative analysis of current flexible working arrangement policies and practices in the United Nations system organizations, with a view to exploring areas for further improvement, identifying good practices and lessons learned, and enhancing system-wide coherence. The review is aimed at informing the legislative organs, governing bodies and executive heads of JIU participating organizations about the status, utilization and implementation of such policies and practices in the United Nations system. The review comprises four assessment areas: (a) status of flexible working arrangement policies and practices in the JIU participating organizations; (b) utilization and implementation of flexible working arrangement policies and practices; (c) impacts and operational opportunities of flexible working arrangements for the organizations and their personnel; and (d) lessons learned and good practices.

**Main findings and conclusions****Organizations should include a generic definition of flexible working arrangements in their policy guidance to clearly establish the scope of the policies and differentiate these arrangements from other forms of flexible work**

The review found that few existing policies contain generic definitions of flexible working arrangements and that there is a lack of uniformity among the definitions used regarding the meaning of flexible working arrangements. As a result, differing sets of work arrangements are included in the policy documents on flexible working arrangements, some of which are not acknowledged or classified as such by all the participating organizations and some of which do not even constitute flexible working arrangements, such as various forms of part-time employment. The definition of flexible work in the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work further blurred the distinction between flexible working arrangements and flexible work, as did the increased use across the United Nations system of other terms closely associated with the concept of flexible working arrangements, such as the various forms of work introduced as "new ways of working". The inadequate terminology and lack of a generic definition may affect the design and coherence of flexible working arrangement policies and can lead to differences that are not necessarily related to the

business model or size of an organization. Organizations should ensure that a generic definition of flexible working arrangements is included in their policy guidance in order to clearly establish the scope of the policy and differentiate these arrangements from other forms of flexible work (Recommendation 1). Furthermore, system-wide coherence in the area of flexible working arrangements would benefit greatly from additional efforts within the framework of the High-level Committee on Management of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) to agree on a common definition of flexible work that is distinguishable from the definition of flexible working arrangements and ensure that a harmonized set of common terms and definitions are agreed upon and used consistently in the flexible working arrangement policy documents of participating organizations, as advocated in the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work.

**Organizations should gauge the impacts of the assumed benefits and unintended consequences of flexible working arrangements in order to ensure that they meet the best interests of both personnel and organizations**

The United Nations system organizations share the basic assumptions about the benefits of flexible working arrangements and increasingly acknowledge the unintended consequences of some flexible working arrangement options, notably teleworking. There is little evidence that the assumptions about benefits, as reflected in the organizational policies, were the result of systematic assessments or hard evidence. The same applies for assumptions relating to the impacts on individual and organizational productivity; there is a lack of methods to assess such impacts. As organizations look towards the longer term, they will need to develop methods to measure the impact of the assumed benefits and unintended consequences of flexible working arrangement options, notably prolonged teleworking modalities, and ensure that the arrangements in place work for both the organizations and the personnel (Recommendation 2).

**The emerging commitment to flexible working arrangements should be acknowledged in human resources management strategies**

Flexible working arrangements have been increasingly considered in the human resources management strategies of the organizations. While more than one third of the participating organizations have included references to flexible working arrangements in their strategies, albeit in a general manner, and more intend to do so in the future, this may not be sufficient to make flexible working arrangements a strategic management tool that could also underpin the new ways of working, as stipulated in many recently updated policy documents. Organizations should integrate, at the earliest opportunity, flexible working arrangement considerations in their human resources management strategies or equivalents, in order to ensure a strategic approach to flexible working arrangements (Recommendation 3). The implementation of flexible working arrangements as part of an organization's human resources strategy should be monitored, assessed and continuously updated based on lessons learned and good practices.

**Reporting on flexible working arrangements should be optimized for strategic decision-making**

Fewer than half of the participating organizations submit information relating to flexible working arrangements to their legislative organs and governing bodies. Such reporting is neither an established practice nor an explicit requirement in many of the organizations. Reporting practices vary across organizations and the information reported is often general in nature and intended to complement submissions under work-life balance and other related topics. Concrete and quantifiable data and statistics on the use of flexible working arrangements and information on the implications of teleworking on the organizations and their personnel, including the capacity to assist legislative bodies in their work, are usually missing. Organizations should ensure that decision-making on flexible working arrangements management is data driven and evidence based (Recommendation 4).

### **Policy guidance on flexible working arrangements should be enhanced**

Compared with 2012, when the first JIU report on flexible working arrangements was issued, flexible working arrangement policies have become more flexible, with the introduction of new options, notably teleworking modalities. Nonetheless, while progress has been made, more could be done to further enhance the scope and content of policy guidance, including clarification on concepts introduced therein. The review identified a set of key elements that could support a comprehensive policy design to enable effective management and operational implementation of flexible working arrangements. The recommended key policy components, in addition to highlighting the high-level principles specified in the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work, propose elements such as better alignment and complementarity with other related internal policies, provision of clear, detailed and comprehensive descriptions of the flexible working arrangement options, inclusion of definitions for individual options and associated modalities, and provisions on eligibility and flexibility for implementation in different operational environments. It was found, inter alia, that most organizations do not refer to or link the definition of the concept of “duty station area” to that of “commuting distance” and that many organizations use ambiguous and/or impractical definitions for “commuting distance”. The organizations that have not yet done so should ensure that the term “commuting distance” is defined in a quantifiable way in their flexible working arrangement policy guidance, for both headquarters and field duty stations, in order to ensure full compliance with the exigencies of service provision (Recommendation 5). Policy implementation would further benefit from the development of additional guidance on other operational provisions, including personal compelling circumstances.

### **Organizations should make the flexible working arrangement approval process more transparent, accountable and user-friendly**

The “permissibility to request” is a key foundational principle of the concept of flexible working arrangements. If such permissibility did not exist, no flexible working arrangement policy could have materialized. There is a high level of informality in the flexible working arrangement approval process. The practice of dissuading staff from submitting a written request online and instead handling requests offline can distort the perception of compliance with policy provisions. One effective way to make the approval mechanism more transparent and accountable is to eliminate the informal element from the approval process and operationalize the “permissibility to request” principle by advocating the need for a formal request as a first step in the approval process. Furthermore, organizations should avoid using unnecessary tiered approval processes for standard flexible working arrangement requests and strive to further simplify the related request forms.

### **Organizations should enhance data-collection and analysis systems and tools in order to support data-driven and effective management of flexible working arrangements**

A fit-for-purpose data-collection system, adequate tools and related analytical capacities are critical for effectively measuring the impact of flexible working arrangements on the organizations and their personnel, as well as for the effective management of these arrangements, including for monitoring and accountability purposes. Two thirds of the participating organizations collect limited data related to the use of flexible working arrangements. In addition, most of the organizations do not have adequate capacity to regularly collect anonymized data, disaggregated by gender and other relevant dimensions, and to monitor and evaluate the implementation of flexible working arrangement policies and other related internal policies. Furthermore, the organizations’ analytical and reporting capacities are less than optimal. Enhancements are required to make the data-collection system and tools fit for purpose. Organizations should review their data-collection and analysis system and tools relating to flexible working arrangements and upgrade them as necessary, in order to support data-driven and effective management of flexible working arrangements (Recommendation 6).

### **Proactive inter-agency cooperation is key to promoting system-wide coherence concerning the implementation of flexible working arrangements, notably teleworking**

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, few attempts had been made to deal directly with flexible working arrangements on a system-wide basis. The United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work is the first system-wide document that covers flexible working arrangements. The Model Policy describes various flexible work options, sets out several high-level principles and provides a harmonized framework for United Nations system organizations to build on and operationalize. However, the Model Policy remains silent on certain important operational aspects, including determination of the maximum duration of teleworking outside the duty station, its use beyond the maximum duration and the associated impacts on remuneration, benefits and entitlements. The lack of consistent guidance or best practice models has resulted in the organizations having to pioneer their own approaches and management. A more proactive posture could be initiated within the CEB framework to consider system-wide harmonized criteria for determining the maximum duration of teleworking outside the duty station and for adjusting entitlements and benefits should such teleworking be allowed beyond the established maximum duration to accommodate personal compelling circumstances, including submitting corresponding proposals to the General Assembly (Recommendations 7 and 8). Close consultation with the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) when developing and endorsing such criteria would further ensure their compliance with ICSC principles, as well their uniform and consistent implementation within the current common system framework.

### **Maximizing the benefits of the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work through voluntary periodic reporting on implementation**

The Model Policy is aimed at better balancing benefits to the organization and to the individual staff member. It provides a framework that is expected to be applied in the specific context of the mandates and operational requirements of each organization. However, monitoring is an essential part of the implementation of any policy and a periodic analysis of implementation outcomes should be undertaken. Voluntary periodic reporting on the implementation of the Model Policy and sharing experiences, challenges, achievements and innovative good practices on issues regarding flexible working arrangements, flexible work and new ways of working could be beneficial for United Nations system organizations, inter-agency cooperation and system-wide coherence. Furthermore, voluntary periodic reporting directly to the CEB High-level Committee on Management can provide an additional layer of transparency and could maximize the benefits of the Model Policy across the United Nations system (Recommendation 9).

### **Mainstreaming flexible working arrangements and the new ways of working in the “new normal”**

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a “new normal” whose contours and content are being shaped by ongoing strategizing efforts across the United Nations system and by various initiatives undertaken currently by participating organizations in order to transform the United Nations workplace and workforce. The purpose of these developments is blurred by the concepts and human resources approaches that have been introduced by many organizations, but which have not been sufficiently explained or precisely defined. Often, the concept of flexible working arrangements is used to describe flexible working practices that sometimes cover hybrid working models and remote work, which are not at all related to flexible working arrangements. Looking towards the future of work and how the workplace might be set up, it is important to have a clear understanding of what “new ways of working” are. Within the United Nations context, new ways of working should be understood as work practices blending virtual and physical attendance, and synchronous and asynchronous communications, supported by information and communications technology (ICT) and based on exigencies of service, intended to increase the flexibility, autonomy, work performance and work-life harmony of personnel, as well as to optimize the organization’s functional



flexibility in accordance with its changing needs, as part of a broader transformation of the workplace, workforce and organization.

New ways of flexible working may require further regulation. Participating organizations should explore and consider the benefits of adopting a stand-alone policy on hybrid working or including the core elements of such a policy in an ad hoc policy on flexible work. Furthermore, organizations should clearly define the new ways of working and describe their role and their relationship with enhanced flexible working arrangements as part of a broader vision set forth in their human resources strategies and other similar documents.

## **Recommendations**

The present report contains nine recommendations, of which one is addressed to the legislative organs and governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations, one to the General Assembly, two to the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of CEB, and five to the executive heads of the organizations. The formal recommendations are complemented by 40 informal recommendations, which are summarized in annex XI. All the recommendations appear in boldface in the present report.

### **Recommendation 1**

**The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations who have not yet done so should ensure, at the earliest opportunity or in the context of established internal policy review processes, that a generic definition of flexible working arrangements is included in their organization's policy guidance, in order to clearly establish the scope of the policy and differentiate the arrangements from other forms of flexible work.**

### **Recommendation 2**

**The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should develop, by the end of 2026, methods to measure the impact of the assumed benefits and the unintended consequences of flexible working arrangements, including the effects of prolonged teleworking modalities, to ensure that the arrangements in place are in the best interests of the personnel and the organization.**

### **Recommendation 3**

**The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should integrate flexible working arrangement considerations into the next iteration of their organization's human resources management strategy, in order to ensure a strategic approach to flexible working arrangements.**

### **Recommendation 4**

**The legislative organs and governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should request, by the end of 2025, that the executive heads provide, as part of reporting on human resources management, periodic updates on the implementation of flexible working arrangements and teleworking policies, including statistical data, disaggregated by gender and other relevant dimensions, with a view to ensuring data-driven and evidence-based decision-making on flexible working arrangements management.**

### **Recommendation 5**

**The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations who have not yet done so should ensure, by 2025, that a quantifiable definition of "commuting distance" is included in their organization's policy guidance on flexible working arrangements,**

for headquarters and field duty stations, in order to improve compliance with the exigencies of service provision. The executive heads should ensure that the commuting distance for field duty stations is established and reviewed, as appropriate, in close cooperation with all United Nations system entities physically present at the country level, under the auspices of the resident coordinators.

#### **Recommendation 6**

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations who have not yet done so should review, by 2025, the management systems and tools related to data collection and analysis of flexible working arrangements and ensure that they are upgraded as necessary and fit for purpose, in order to support data-driven and effective management of flexible working arrangements.

#### **Recommendation 7**

The Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, should request the Human Resources Network of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination to establish a working group to develop, by the end of 2026, harmonized criteria for determining the maximum duration of teleworking outside the duty station and for adjusting the entitlements and benefits should such teleworking be used beyond the established maximum duration, with a view to achieving system-wide coherence.

#### **Recommendation 8**

The General Assembly should consider, by its eighty-second session, the Secretary-General's proposals regarding harmonized criteria, within the current United Nations common system framework, for determining the maximum duration of teleworking outside the duty station and for adjusting the entitlements and benefits should such teleworking be used beyond the established maximum duration.

#### **Recommendation 9**

The Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination, should request the High-level Committee on Management of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination to consider requesting the participating organizations to present, starting in 2026, voluntary periodic reports, ideally on a triennial basis, on the implementation of the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work, in order to maximize its benefits and promote system-wide coherence, including through sharing related experiences, challenges, achievements and innovative good practices.

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

CEB	United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination
ERP	enterprise resource planning
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICSC	International Civil Service Commission
ICT	information and communications technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMO	International Maritime Organization
ITC	International Trade Centre
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
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
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization
UPU	Universal Postal Union
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization



# I. Introduction

## A. Context

1. **Programme of work 2022.** The present review was included in the programme of work of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) for 2022.<sup>1</sup> The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic obliged the United Nations system organizations to operate under alternate working arrangements and to expand the use of flexible working arrangements in order to maintain business continuity and deliver on their mandated activities. Against this backdrop and with reference to emerging lessons that could be applied in the future, JIU participating organizations suggested that a review be undertaken of the current status of policies and practices relating to flexible working arrangements across the United Nations system. The topic was last covered by JIU in 2012.<sup>2</sup>

2. **Demand for flexible working arrangements in participating organizations was part of a global trend.** Flexible working arrangements have their roots in the private sector and have found value in the public sector. The concept of flexible working arrangements is not new to the United Nations system. Parts of the United Nations system had already started to offer flexible working hours in the 1970s.<sup>3</sup> The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was the first United Nations system organization to introduce a generic policy<sup>4</sup> on flexible working arrangements, in 1999, while the United Nations Secretariat issued its generic flexible working arrangement policy in January 2003,<sup>5</sup> offering four options: (a) staggered working hours; (b) compressed work schedule (10 working days in 9); (c) scheduled break for external learning activities; and (d) work away from the office (telecommuting). Since then, the General Assembly has encouraged the use of flexible working arrangements in the United Nations Secretariat and has specifically requested the Secretary-General to “enhance the understanding and implementation of the principles of work-life balance and a flexible workforce across the Secretariat” and foster an understanding of the benefits of more flexible working arrangements.<sup>6</sup> Although generic policies on flexible working arrangements were introduced over time in most of the participating organizations, with heightened awareness about the potential benefits of these arrangements, their implementation remained a challenge.

3. **Workplace flexibility was not sufficiently enabled in 2012.** More than a decade ago, the first JIU review of flexible working arrangements in the United Nations system found that the implementation of such arrangements was not embedded in the organizational culture and that their use was generally low. The 2012 review concluded that flexible working arrangements were implemented within a traditional management control culture owing, in part, to the lack of trust. Recommendations<sup>7</sup> were made to the executive heads of the organizations to discontinue the use of clocking systems for monitoring flexible working arrangements, eliminate the practice of allowing large groups of staff to automatically accrue credit hours in excess of normal working hours per week in exchange for extra days off, and institute training courses for managers on how to manage employees using flexible working arrangements in a results-based organization. In addition, recommendations<sup>8</sup> were made to United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) to agree, through its High-level Committee on Management and its Human Resources Network, on one term and one definition for flexibility with regard to hours of work, and one term and one definition for flexibility with regard to place of work, and to promulgate a policy for each. The present

<sup>1</sup> A/76/34, annex VII.

<sup>2</sup> JIU/NOTE/2012/4.

<sup>3</sup> ST/AI/408.

<sup>4</sup> UNDP memorandum to all staff on our work and life programme (UNDP/ADM/99/71), November 1999.

<sup>5</sup> ST/SGB/2003/4.

<sup>6</sup> General Assembly resolutions 65/247, para. 47, and 67/255, paras. 30 and 31.

<sup>7</sup> JIU/NOTE/2012/4, recommendations 1, 2 and 3.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., recommendations 4 and 5.

review includes references to the findings and conclusions of the 2012 review, as appropriate. At that time, only two entities, UNDP and the United Nations Secretariat, had issued generic policies on flexible working arrangements. The situation has since evolved; today, most of the participating organizations have adopted generic policies and guidelines on flexible working arrangements.

4. **The COVID-19 pandemic made flexible working arrangements, in particular teleworking, a system-wide priority topic.** In the context of the global novel coronavirus emergency and the immediate need for the United Nations system organizations to adapt their ways of working, the CEB High-level Committee on Management mandated the Task Force on the Future of the United Nations Workforce to consider “new ways of working” with the aim of proposing elements to foster an enabling culture and a positive employee experience from multiple perspectives, including leadership, people management, flexible work arrangements, transparency and work culture.<sup>9</sup> In that context, workstream 2 of the Task Force was tasked with, inter alia, developing a model United Nations system framework for flexible working on the basis of the United Nations system remote working common principles laid out in the Task Force’s interim report of August 2020.<sup>10</sup> In October 2021, the CEB High-level Committee endorsed the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work,<sup>11</sup> one of the key elements identified by the Task Force for fostering an enabling organizational culture and a positive employee experience. The Task Force also considered other angles, including the potential of enhanced use of communications and collaboration technology, as well as the conditions for valuing the individual productivity of staff. The Model Policy provides practical guidance with the aim of balancing the operational needs and organizational productivity considerations of the United Nations system organizations and the individual needs and preferences of staff, in order to enhance engagement and individual productivity. To some extent, this development can also be associated with the drive to shift the culture of the United Nations system towards focusing more on results rather than processes, valuing innovation, providing greater transparency and enhanced accountability.<sup>12</sup> The Model Policy is also aimed at promoting work-life harmony<sup>13</sup> for United Nations personnel and complements the mandates of the United Nations System Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy<sup>14</sup> and the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy,<sup>15</sup> among others.

5. **The COVID-19 pandemic experience and lessons learned accelerated the reassessment of flexible working arrangements.** According to various documents issued by CEB and many participating organizations, the massive deployment of teleworking as a crisis response measure amounted to a paradigm shift in the way in which work is carried out. The greater use of flexible working arrangements as well as the acceptance and implementation of new ways of working are increasingly perceived as essential features of the “new normal”. The present review takes into account the developments that have shaped the new ways of working and the impact they have had on the concept of flexible working arrangements, and their operationalization in the United Nations system organizations.

<sup>9</sup> CEB, Conclusions of the High-level Committee on Management at its fortieth session (CEB/2020/5), sect. II; and CEB, “Future of work”, available at <https://unsceb.org/topics/future-work>.

<sup>10</sup> CEB, Interim report of the CEB Task Force on the Future of the United Nations System Workforce (CEB/2020/HLCM/13), August 2020.

<sup>11</sup> CEB, United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work (CEB/2021/HLCM/10/Add.1), September 2021.

<sup>12</sup> See A/72/492.

<sup>13</sup> The term “harmony” is deemed more appropriate than work-life “balance” because it highlights how personal and professional lives must be integrated in a manner that is aligned with employees’ values.

<sup>14</sup> See <https://unsceb.org/un-mental-health-and-well-being-strategy>.

<sup>15</sup> CEB/2019/1/Add.6.



## B. Objectives and scope

### Objectives

6. The objectives of the present review are to provide an assessment and comparative analysis of the policies and practices relating to flexible working arrangements that are currently being applied in the United Nations system organizations, with a view to exploring areas for further improvement, identifying good practices and lessons learned, and enhancing system-wide coherence. The review is aimed at informing the legislative organs, governing bodies and executive heads of JIU participating organizations about the status, utilization and implementation of policies and practices relating to flexible working arrangements in the United Nations system. The review covers four assessment areas: (a) the status of flexible working arrangement policies and practices in JIU participating organizations; (b) utilization and implementation of flexible working arrangement policies and practices; (c) impacts and operational opportunities of flexible working arrangements for the organizations and the personnel; and (d) lessons learned and good practices.

### Scope

7. The review was carried out on a system-wide basis and included all JIU participating organizations, namely the United Nations Secretariat, its departments and offices, United Nations funds and programmes, other United Nations bodies and entities, United Nations specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Field offices and peacekeeping operations were factored into the data collection and analysis by including relevant aspects of their specific conditions in the JIU organizational questionnaire, as well as by seeking the views and suggestions of managers and human resources professionals in field duty stations through interviews and a supplementary survey. The report is focused on flexible working arrangements. Data and comments on other components of flexibility, in particular work not considered flexible working arrangements (such as part-time work, part-time employment and related variations), were collected and covered in general terms, but an in-depth assessment was not within the scope of this review.

## C. Methodology and limitations

8. In accordance with JIU internal standards and working procedures, a range of qualitative and quantitative data-collection methods from different sources were used to ensure the consistency, validity and reliability of the findings. Information used in the preparation of the present report was current as of 20 August 2023. Information received after that date has been integrated as appropriate.

9. **Desk review of relevant documents and literature.** A comprehensive review was conducted of relevant policy, strategy and management documents submitted by the participating organizations and documentation produced by the Task Force on the Future of the United Nations Workforce related to the development of the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work. The analysis of the reports concerning the future of the United Nations workforce and related aspects issued by the CEB High-level Committee on Management and in particular the Human Resources Network provided further insight into the inter-agency cooperation. Relevant documents produced by other international organizations, private- and public-sector institutions and extensively researched academic literature pertaining to workplace flexibility and new ways of work were also studied.

10. **Organizational questionnaire.** A questionnaire requesting qualitative and quantitative information and supporting documentation was sent to all 28 JIU participating organizations. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) communicated that they were aligned with the flexible working arrangement policy framework of the United Nations Secretariat, and therefore did not fully participate in this process. Since data were provided only on certain issues covered by the questionnaire, they are not always featured in the aggregated figures in the present report. The questionnaire

contained 75 qualitative questions (on content-related/descriptive data) about flexible working arrangements and related aspects, and five questions requesting quantitative data. It was divided into five parts: (a) policy framework for flexible working arrangements; (b) utilization and implementation of flexible working arrangements; (c) impacts and operational opportunities of flexible working arrangements for the organization and workforce; (d) inter-agency cooperation and coordination relating to flexible working arrangements; and (e) impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on flexible working arrangements practices and implementation.

11. **Supplementary survey.** A supplementary exploratory survey<sup>16</sup> was sent to line managers, supervisors and first reporting officers to seek their views on and perceptions of management issues relating to flexible working arrangements in their respective organizations. In order to limit the impact on the work of the JIU participating organizations, the survey was circulated to a limited, but representative and meaningful sample (between 2 and 30 per cent of total managerial population, depending on the number of personnel/managers in the entities concerned). The response rate varied significantly among organizations, ranging from 19 to 86 per cent, and not all organizations provided pertinent information. In total 1,074 responses were received from 25 JIU participating organizations. The limitations of the sampling approach were taken into consideration in the analysis of the responses.

12. **Interviews.** Drawing on the responses to the organizational questionnaire, between August 2022 and February 2023, 60 formal face-to-face and online interviews were conducted with 134 officials (50 per cent women, 50 per cent men) from all 28 JIU participating organizations, as well with experts from the International Fund for Agricultural Development. The multidisciplinary dimension of the subject matter was reflected in the functions of the interviewees, who included: (a) executive managers; (b) human resources management officers; (c) administrative officers; (d) medical and health professionals; and (e) staff representatives. Co-Chairs of workstream 2 of the Task Force on the Future of the United Nations Workforce and members of the CEB Human Resource Network were also interviewed. Slightly more than half (56 per cent) of the interviewees worked in large-sized organizations, 26 per cent in medium-sized organizations and 18 per cent in small-sized organizations.<sup>17</sup>

13. **Limitations.** There were delays in responses from stakeholders at every stage of the review process, including with regard to data collection on the use of flexible working arrangements before, during and immediately after the pandemic. Data were not systematically collected in some organizations or were shared partially by others, as available. More than half of the interviews had to be conducted remotely, which affected access to some interlocutors and adversely affected their willingness to share sensitive information that may have been obtained through in-person interactions.

14. **Confidentiality.** Information and views obtained from the interviews were treated with the usual respect for confidentiality. The report primarily reflects aggregated responses; the sources of quotations used for illustrative purposes have not been cited.

15. **Acknowledgments.** The Inspector expresses his appreciation to everyone who assisted in the preparation of the report, in particular those who provided valuable responses to the questionnaires and participated in the interviews and so willingly shared their knowledge and expertise. For quality assurance purposes, an internal peer review was conducted to solicit comments from all JIU Inspectors on the draft report, which was subsequently circulated to the organizations concerned for substantive comments on the findings, conclusions and recommendations, as well as for correction of any factual errors.

16. **Structure of the report.** The present report provides a snapshot of flexible working arrangements in the United Nations system (chap. II), outlines the impact and effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the organizational approach to flexible working arrangements

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<sup>16</sup> The survey was intended to gather insights on a less-explored topic; no statistical representation of the results were sought.

<sup>17</sup> The size of the participating organizations was determined on the basis of an analysis of the revenue and number of personnel (see JIU/NOTE/2022/1/Rev.1, para. 91 and table 1).

(chap. III) and reviews the design and elements of flexible working arrangement policies, highlighting areas for further improvement (chap. IV). Chapters V and VI are focused on the key drivers and enablers of flexible working arrangements and how the positive impacts of these arrangements could be optimized. Chapter VII contains suggestions on further enhancing inter-agency cooperation, and chapter VIII covers flexible working arrangements and new ways of working.

17. **Recommendations.** The report contains nine formal recommendations, of which one is addressed to the legislative organs and governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations, one to the General Assembly, two to the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of CEB, and five to the executive heads of the organizations. The formal recommendations are complemented by 40 informal recommendations (see annex XI). All recommendations appear in bold throughout the text. To facilitate the handling of the present report and the implementation of its recommendations and the monitoring thereof, annex XII contains a table indicating whether the recommendations are submitted to the organizations concerned for action or for information, and specifying whether they require action by the organization's legislative organ and/or governing body, or by the executive head.

## II. Snapshot of flexible working arrangements in the United Nations system

### A. Definitions and terms pertaining to flexible working arrangements and flexible work: some issues affecting the design of flexible working arrangement policies

18. **Many approaches used to define flexibility.** The private and the public sectors, including international organizations, their member States, staff unions and employees, may attach very different connotations to the terms flexibility, flexible workplace, flexible work and flexible working arrangements. Among the many approaches to the definition of flexibility, two categories of definitions are discernible in human resources management literature: those with an employer orientation and those with an employee orientation. Considered from an employer-centred perspective, flexibility enables an organization to adapt its workforce to changes in the working environment. From an employee-centred perspective, flexibility enables an employee and/or groups of employees to choose when, where, for how long and for which employer to work. Table 1 shows some attempts to define flexibility.

Table 1

#### Employer- and employee-centred approaches to defining flexibility

<i>Employer-centred perspective</i>	<i>Employee-centred perspective</i>
<p>“A tool to be deployed by the organization to pair its changing needs that assumes the existence of three types of flexibility:</p> <p>Numerical flexibility allows the organization to adjust labour input to contextual factors, through outsourcing and non-standard employment contracts (e.g., short-fixed term contracts, temporary staff supplied, etc.).</p> <p>Functional flexibility underscores the ability of the organization to allocate employees to different activities and tasks, and to redistribute them in order to adapt to changing conditions. It implies blurring labour functional boundaries to meet business needs.</p> <p>Financial flexibility should support the former types of flexibility and refers to an organization’s ability to adjust employment costs to internal labour market factors, external conditions and business performance”.<sup>a</sup></p> <p>“An employer’s ability to recruit or dispose of employees as needed, allocate work and responsibilities efficiently, define working hours to match business requirements, and modify labour costs to adapt to market needs”.<sup>b</sup></p>	<p>“The ability of workers to make choices influencing when, where and for how long they engage in work-related tasks”.<sup>c</sup></p> <p>“An employment arrangement that allows employees to work when, where, for how long and for how long they want”.<sup>d</sup></p> <p>“Flexible working practices denote working without rigid boundaries around working spaces, schedules and contracts”.<sup>e</sup></p>

Source: Prepared by JIU.

<sup>a</sup> John Atkinson, “Manpower strategies for flexible organisations”, *Personnel Management*, vol. 16, No. 8 (August 1984).

<sup>b</sup> Peter A. Reilly, “Balancing flexibility: meeting the interests of employer and employee”, *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, vol. 7, No. 1 (1998).

<sup>c</sup> Edward J. Hill and others, “Defining and conceptualizing workplace flexibility”, *Community Work and Family* (May 2008).

<sup>d</sup> Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, Flexible working practices factsheet (21 July 2023). Available at [www.cipd.org/en/knowledge/factsheets/flexible-working-factsheet/](http://www.cipd.org/en/knowledge/factsheets/flexible-working-factsheet/).

<sup>e</sup> Lebene Richmond Soga and others, “Unmasking the other face of flexible working practices: a systematic literature review”, *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 142 (2022).

19. **The concept of flexibility tends to become ambiguous when it is considered from different angles.** Flexibility may be considered from either the organization/employer's or from the employee's perspective. Flexibility may be something expected of the organization or of the employee; or it may be described as something that is for the organization or for the employee.

20. **Definition of flexible working arrangements.** The 2012 review found that there was no uniformity across the United Nations system for a definition of flexible working arrangements nor an interpretation of what they were, and stressed the need for a common definition of flexible working arrangements. Although flexible working arrangements were primarily designed to enable flexibility in hours of work and place of work with a view to promoting a better work-life balance, and agreeing on one definition for each type of flexibility may have been the intention of the recommendation made by the Inspector in 2012,<sup>18</sup> that can no longer be viewed as an imperative. The United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work gives prominence to a single, more inclusive definition, albeit one in which the original term "flexible working arrangements" has been replaced by "flexible work": According to the model policy, "flexible work entails voluntary adjustments to the normal working hours and/or locations, agreed between ... personnel and their managers in accordance with the organizations' Staff Regulations and Rules and relevant internal policies."<sup>19</sup> The Inspector responsible for the present report is of the opinion that, in the context of the United Nations system, this definition best describes the concept of "flexible working arrangements", as was originally spelled out in the 2020 draft of the model policy, which was initially proposed to CEB for consideration and endorsement by workstream 2 of the Task Force on the Future of the United Nations Workforce.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the present report uses that generic definition to refer to flexible working arrangements.

21. **Flexible work and flexible working arrangements are similar but different.** Both flexible work and flexible working arrangements are considered as sets of practices allowing choices to employees. Their commonality lies in the fact that they relate not only to employee flexibility, but also to flexibility of working conditions. While flexible work also concerns the flexibility of the contractual modalities, flexible working arrangements do not have implications for the contractual status of an employee.

22. **Flexible work refers to the ability to adapt employee contracts.** In its narrow interpretation, flexible work refers to the ability to adapt employee contracts with the organization to allow greater adjustability to changing circumstances.<sup>21</sup> Hence, flexible work relates to the contractual status of employment (such as part-time employment, part-time work and other reduced work schedules related to a contractual modality) and can be considered flexible if deviating from a norm of permanent full-time employment.<sup>22</sup>

23. **Flexible work arrangements are organizational practices** that help employees to decide when and where work is performed, as stated in the definition provided in the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work. They aim at flexibility within the job and its related working conditions. Flexible working arrangements imply, first and foremost, full-time employment and full benefits.

24. **The notion of "flexible work" is broader than the United Nations concept of "flexible working arrangements".** "Flexible work" exhorts extensive possibilities - reconfiguring work to suit the employer and the employee. According to one recent definition "flexible working refers to an employment arrangement that allows employees to work when, where, for how long, and for how long they want".<sup>23</sup> This expanded understanding of flexible

<sup>18</sup> JIU/NOTE/2012/4, para. 20 and recommendation 4.

<sup>19</sup> CEB/2021/HLCM/10/Add.1, para. 1.

<sup>20</sup> See CEB, Task Force on the Future of United Nations Workforce, Draft United Nations system model policy on flexible working arrangements (December 2020), para. 1.

<sup>21</sup> P. Daniel Wright and Kurt M. Bretthauer, "Strategies for addressing the nursing shortage: coordinated decision making and workforce flexibility", *Decision Sciences*, vol. 41, No. 2 (May 2010).

<sup>22</sup> Kelly Wilson, Michelle Brown and Christina Cregan, "Job quality and flexible practices: an investigation of employee perceptions", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 19, No. 3 (March 2008).

<sup>23</sup> See definition at Shiftbase, [www.shiftbase.com/glossary/flexible-working](http://www.shiftbase.com/glossary/flexible-working).

work is not embraced by JIU participating organizations which are still scanning the horizons of flexibility to achieve a mix of flexible working options and scenarios (“new ways of working”) that best suit their respective business models and that is supported by senior managers, personnel and member States. By virtue of their voluntary nature, as provided for in the United Nations policy documents, flexible working arrangements cannot be associated with reduced work schedules under a contractual modality or possible future “agile” contractual modalities based on full-time remote work, which are, primarily, legal arrangements. For the same reason, flexible working arrangements, including the teleworking option (a subcategory of remote work) should not be confused with other work practices and hybrid models (that are supported by information and communications technology (ICT)), which are referred to as “new ways of working” and which are also intended to increase the flexibility, work performance, autonomy and well-being of personnel in the delivery of daily work. The Inspector underscores that there are significant definitional differences between these notions and concepts. At the same time, while different, they are all related and belong fundamentally to the flexible work universe. Table 2 illustrates both the commonality and some differences of various flexible work forms.

Table 2

**Flexible work universe in the United Nations system**

<i>Flexible working arrangements</i>	<i>Reduced work schedules</i>	<i>New ways of working</i>
Flexible working hours Staggered working hours ( <i>a subset of flexible work hours</i> ) Compressed work schedule Teleworking at the duty station Teleworking outside the duty station Time off for study ( <i>not a flexible working arrangement for many participating organizations</i> )	Part-time employment Part-time work Job-sharing Phased retirement Other reduced work schedules ( <i>depending on organization</i> )	Hybrid working models Working models based on higher flexibility
<i>Implications for United Nations personnel</i>		
Voluntary working arrangements initiated by United Nations personnel do not require adjustments to their contractual status or conditions of service <sup>a</sup>	Work arrangements initiated by United Nations personnel may require adjustments to their contractual status on a temporary or semi-permanent basis over the course of their career lifecycle	Contractual agreements or conditions of service may or may not require adjustments, depending on the nature of the working model

Source: Prepared by JIU (2023).

<sup>a</sup> Except for teleworking outside the duty station, when, in some cases, adjustments to benefits and entitlements may be necessary.

25. **There is no set definition of flexible work.** Despite the definition provided in the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work, there is no set definition of flexible work in the United Nations system. The Inspector believes that a system-wide definition of flexible work, encompassing all forms of flexible working, should be agreed. **The CEB High-level Committee on Management, through the Human Resources Network, should consider re-establishing the initial definition of flexible working arrangements that was proposed by workstream 2 of the Task Force on the Future of the United Nations Workforce in December 2020,<sup>24</sup> and reconsider and agree, at the earliest opportunity, on a common definition of flexible work that is distinguishable from the definition of flexible working arrangements.**

26. **Differing sets of flexible working arrangements in organizational policies.** While common definitions remain elusive, there has been no shortage of attempts within the United

<sup>24</sup> CEB, Task Force on the Future of United Nations Workforce, Draft United Nations system model policy on flexible working arrangements (December 2020), para 1.

Nations system organizations to identify the specific types of working modalities that could be considered flexible working arrangements. The policies contain differing sets of flexible working arrangements. Except for a core set of flexible working arrangements (flexible working hours/staggered working hours, compressed work schedule and teleworking/telecommuting), other working arrangements are not acknowledged or classified as flexible working arrangements by all the organizations. For instance, 17 organizations<sup>25</sup> do not consider time off for study purposes as a flexible working arrangement, a standpoint that is mirrored in the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) provides study leave for external studies as a separate leave entitlement and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) provides career development leave that is registered as special leave with full pay.

27. **Explaining what flexible working arrangements are and are not.** The meanings of terms associated with flexible working arrangements have not been universally or always well understood by the personnel of the organizations.<sup>26</sup> It was noted in the 2012 review of flexible working arrangements that a plethora of terms were used to describe a same flexible working arrangement and that, based on their responses to the open-ended survey, most staff did not know what terms were used to describe the various flexible working arrangements.<sup>27</sup> Highlighting the differences between what flexible working arrangements are and what they are not was another way of explaining the nature of flexible working arrangements. Many policy documents contain provisions explaining how flexible working arrangements are different from alternative working arrangements,<sup>28</sup> alternate working arrangements,<sup>29</sup> leave, time off, part-time work, etc.

28. **Blurred distinction between flexible working arrangements and flexible work generates ambiguities that affect the subject matter of the policies.** Few policies contain generic definitions of flexible working arrangements. The review of policies on flexible working arrangements revealed that the participating organizations either promulgated and implemented generic policies covering a blend of flexible working options or stand-alone policies each covering one flexible working option. Sometimes, a combination of generic and stand-alone policies co-existed and were implemented in the same organization. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, most policies did not include focused generic definitions of flexible working arrangements and, typically, a description was provided through stated policy objectives, and/or general provisions and guiding principles. Only three pre-pandemic policies contained such definitions<sup>30</sup> and, out of 15 recently revised or newly issued flexible working arrangement policies, only seven include focused generic definitions of flexible working arrangements.<sup>31</sup> The Inspector is of the view that the lack of a common and exact or precise generic definition of flexible working arrangements could be the reason for the

<sup>25</sup> The 17 organizations are the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), IAEA, International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Universal Postal Union (UPU), the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

<sup>26</sup> For instance, flexible working arrangements are often confused with alternate working arrangements. See CEB, Review of the 2024 proposed budgets of the ICSC, JIU, CEB Secretariat, IPSAS Task Force, and United Nations Security Management System: conclusions of the Finance and Budget Network (CEB/2023/HLCM/FB/1), March 2023, para. 40.

<sup>27</sup> JIU/NOTE/2012/4, paras. 86 and 87.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations, Compendium of policies on alternative working arrangements (FICSA/C/72/HRM/2/Rev.1), February 2019; also International Fund for Agricultural Development, Human resources implementing procedures, chap. 4 (Working hours, leave and alternative work arrangements).

<sup>29</sup> Flexible working arrangements are to be distinguished from alternate working arrangements, which may be mandated by the organization in the context of business continuity in line with the applicable policies.

<sup>30</sup> Namely, those of ITC, UNHCR and the United Nations Secretariat.

<sup>31</sup> Those are ILO, UNFPA, UNIDO, UNWTO, UPU, WHO and WIPO.

differing sets of work arrangements in the flexible working arrangement policy documents of JIU participating organizations (see annex II). The consistent lack of a generic definition and/or a precise definition of what constitutes flexible working arrangements in the policy documents may be an indication of the hesitancy on the part of many organizations to embrace a rigorous approach to flexible working arrangements and to workplace flexibility in general, especially in the current fast-changing and competitive environment.

29. Implementation of the following recommendation is expected to enhance the effectiveness of flexible working arrangement policies in the United Nations system organizations.

#### **Recommendation 1**

**The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations who have not yet done so should ensure, at the earliest opportunity or in the context of established internal policy review processes, that a generic definition of flexible working arrangements is included in their organization's policy guidance, in order to clearly establish the scope of the policy and differentiate the arrangements from other forms of flexible work.**

#### **Many policies include work modalities that are not flexible working arrangements**

30. **Reduced work schedules related to a contractual modality are not flexible working arrangements.** While some work modalities provide flexibility that benefit the employee's work-life integration and harmony, they are not flexible working arrangements, which, for the purposes of this review, implies full-time employment and full benefits. The Inspector is of the view that flexibility in the number of hours worked that is related to a specific contractual modality does not constitute a flexible working arrangement. Indeed, all the variations relating to number of hours worked (e.g. part-time work, job-sharing, phased retirement) are essentially forms of part-time employment that involve different compensation and benefits packages, including health insurance and leave entitlements. Flexible working arrangements are not intended to reduce or increase the number of hours worked; they simply allow for the work schedule and/or location to be changed so that work is performed at the time and/or location that is mutually convenient to the staff member and the organization, without compromising normal business processes. This has also been underscored in the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work, which states that "flexible work is ... different from part-time work, which refers to an overall reduced number of hours worked, or the percentage of working hours on the basis of which the compensation (including salaries, benefits and allowances) would be determined as opposed to full-time employment."<sup>32</sup> Currently, the policy documents of 14 organizations provide for reduced work schedules offering flexibility in time, but which are not flexible working arrangements (see table 3). **The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations who have not yet done so are strongly encouraged to remove from their organizational policies the provisions for reduced work schedules related to contractual modalities, in the context of the next established internal policy review process. The executive heads are also strongly encouraged to ensure that those forms of part-time employment, which offer flexibility in terms of time but do not constitute flexible working arrangements, are covered in the appropriate internal regulatory documents and/or policies and not in the policy guidance on flexible working arrangements.**

<sup>32</sup> CEB/2021/HLCM/10/Add.1, para. 5.



Table 3

**Contractual modalities that are not flexible working arrangements**

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Reduced work schedules</i>
FAO	Part-time employment, job-sharing, phased retirement
IAEA	Part-time work
IMO	Part-time work
ITC <sup>a</sup>	Part-time work
UNHCR	Part-time work, job-sharing, phased retirement
UNODC	Part-time work (50 and 80 per cent)
UNDP	Part-time work
UNICEF	Temporary part-time employment, job-sharing, special emergency time off
UNOPS	Part-time work, job-sharing
UN-Women	Part-time work
WFP	Part-time employment, job-sharing
WHO	Part-time work
WIPO	Part-time work
WMO	Part-time work

Source: Prepared by JIU (2023).

<sup>a</sup> According to the information provided by ITC, part-time employment is not considered a flexible working arrangement. Its policy entitled “Work/life balance” is broader in scope, and part-time work is an option for work-life balance.

**Inadequate terminology prevents system-wide coherence**

31. **Different terms are used to describe identical flexible working arrangement options.** Flexible working hours, staggered working hours, flexible work schedule, flexitime and variable day schedule are all terms that are used by participating organizations to describe essentially identical arrangements relating to time – a peculiarity that was noted in the 2012 JIU review.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, a variety of terms (e.g. flexible working, flexible teleworking, telecommuting, remote work, formal remote work, remote work with annual leave, working away from the office, work from home, informal working from home) are used to describe sometimes identical and sometimes different scenarios or arrangements relating to personnel’s locations of work away from their offices or duty stations. While these terms are frequently used, sometimes interchangeably, no clear arguments have been provided by the officials interviewed as to why their organizations prefer one term over another in their policy documents. This situation is particularly well illustrated by the confusion about the exact meaning of the terms telecommuting and teleworking. Analysis of external literature and United Nations policy documents revealed the existence of a variety of definitions which, generally, would associate teleworking with a work modality that uses ICTs to bring work to the employees, while telecommuting is viewed as, *inter alia*, a work arrangement in which employees work away from the main office (at an alternative work site or at home at their official duty station) for a set number of days a week performing their assigned work during paid work hours. The common denominator of the terms teleworking and telecommuting is the transition from “in-person supervision to remote managing, from face-to-face communication to telecommunication-related communication, from on-site working to off-site or multiple-site work, and, in the case of groups, from side-by-side collaboration to virtual teamwork”.<sup>34</sup> Many organizations that were using these terms interchangeably (except the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR),<sup>35</sup> which differentiated between teleworking and telecommuting) favoured in their pre-pandemic policies the term “telecommuting”, understood simply as “work away from the office”, while the arrangement itself was often seen through the lens of business continuity and in the broad context of work-life balance as a primary tool to accommodate staff facing compelling or extraordinary personal circumstances. The interchangeable use of the two terms across the

<sup>33</sup> JIU/NOTE/2012/4, executive summary and para. 86.

<sup>34</sup> Nancy B. Kurland and Diane E. Bailey, “Telework: the advantages and challenges of working here, there, anywhere, and anytime”, *Organizational Dynamics*, vol. 28, No. 2 (1999).

<sup>35</sup> See UNHCR Policy on flexible working arrangements, July 2010.

United Nations system has been noted in the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work;<sup>36</sup> however, for the purpose of that document, the CEB High-level Committee on Management favoured the use of the term “telework”. It seems that telework, with its more nuanced understanding, resonates better with the concept of “new ways of working”, which may have been the rationale for its choice. In an analogous way, and in alignment with the Model Policy, the term “teleworking” is used in the present report. Outside the United Nations system, the “new ways of working” are increasingly understood or defined as “a type of work organization that is characterized by temporal and spatial flexibility, often combined with extensive use of ICTs and performance-based management”.<sup>37</sup>

**32. Lack of standardized terms and definitions.** The inadequate terminology and “constructive ambiguities” in definitions may lead to differences in organizational policies that are not necessarily related to the business model or the size of an organization. The lack of standardized terms and definitions also results in “functional illiteracy” in relation to accessing and assessing approaches and policy solutions related to flexible working arrangements on the part of participating organizations, their personnel and member States. As a consequence, the possibility of gauging the usage and impact of flexible working arrangements, comparing statistics across the system and/or promoting system-wide harmonization is hindered. An analysis of the terms and definitions used in various reiterations of flexible working arrangements policy documents indicated that, since 2012, through cross-fertilization and learning activities, limited fortuitous progress has been made towards terminological harmonization in this area and there is still no uniformity across the United Nations system. The Inspector believes that there should be a common approach to naming and defining flexible working arrangements and that the organizations should cooperatively interact with a view to ensuring that a harmonized set of common terms and definitions are agreed upon and used, as advocated in the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work. **The CEB High-level Committee on Management, through the Human Resources Network, should consider and agree, at the earliest opportunity, upon the use of a common/standardized term and definition for each flexible working arrangement, and promote the inclusion and utilization thereof in the policy guidance of the participating organizations.**

## **B. Growing need for flexible working arrangements in the United Nations system**

**33. Growing need for workplace flexibility.** Flexible working arrangements have been a popular topic whose benefits have been advocated by both the private and the public sectors, including multilateral organizations such as the European Union,<sup>38</sup> the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)<sup>39</sup> and the United Nations. For instance, since the late 1990s, the European Union has noted specifically in its employment reports that flexibility has to address the needs of both employees and employers.<sup>40</sup> The need for workplace flexibility has been gaining support within the United Nations system as a way of addressing employees’ work-life balance and meeting employers’ requirements of increased productivity. Flexible working arrangements were initially viewed as a part of the larger context of work-life balance, and acknowledged within United Nations system as a subset of work-life balance policies. In the 1970s, some United Nations system organizations (e.g. IAEA, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), UNHCR, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)) had already started to embed flexibility, at least in relation to time (e.g. flexible working hours and staggered hours), as an employee-oriented

<sup>36</sup> CEB/2021/HLCM/10/Add.1, p. 6, footnote 3.

<sup>37</sup> Hylco H. Nijp and others, “Effects of new ways of working on work hours and work location, health and job-related outcomes”, *Chronobiology International*, vol. 33, No. 6 (May 2016).

<sup>38</sup> Janneke Plantenga and Chantal Remery, *Flexible Working Time Arrangements and Gender Equality: A Comparative Review of 30 European Countries* (Brussels, European Commission, 2010).

<sup>39</sup> Tor Eriksson, “Flexicurity and the economic crisis 2008-2009: evidence from Denmark”, OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Paper No. 139 (Paris, OECD, 2011).

<sup>40</sup> Commission of the European Community, Joint employment report 1998 (Brussels, 1998).

practice for improved work-life balance in their relevant policy documents. Increased awareness of the need for better work-life balance for employees prompted most of the United Nations system organizations to introduce flexible working arrangement policies, including generic policies offering increased flexibility in hours and place of work.

**34. Perceived benefits and challenges of flexible working arrangements in the United Nations system.** The desk review of United Nations documents, including surveys, policies and guidelines relating to flexible working arrangements, and the interviews with United Nations personnel highlighted both the perceived benefits and the perceived challenges of flexible working arrangements, notably teleworking.

**35. Key benefits.** The United Nations system organizations share the same basic assumptions about the desirable characteristics (perceived benefits) of flexible working arrangements, notably teleworking (see table 4).

Table 4

**Key benefits of flexible working arrangements (notably teleworking) for United Nations organizations and personnel**

<i>United Nations organizations</i>	<i>United Nations personnel</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Improved motivation, commitment and productivity on the part of personnel;</li> <li>(b) Strengthened results-based management by prioritizing performance over physical presence;</li> <li>(c) Reduced risks of absenteeism;</li> <li>(d) Improved gender equality among personnel;</li> <li>(e) Increased attraction and retention of a talented and diverse workforce, including personnel with disabilities;</li> <li>(f) Enhanced business continuity and organizational resilience;</li> <li>(h) Decreased operating costs;</li> <li>(g) Reduced environmental impact and carbon footprint.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Improved balance between professional and personal commitments;</li> <li>(b) Improved psychological and physical well-being;</li> <li>(c) Increased work autonomy;</li> <li>(d) Increased job satisfaction and engagement;</li> <li>(e) Improved technological abilities;</li> <li>(f) Improved professional development through scheduled breaks for external learning activities;</li> <li>(h) Improved performance and productivity;</li> <li>(g) Reduced costs in transport and commuting time.</li> </ul>

*Source:* Prepared by JIU, based on documents relating to flexible working arrangements issued by various United Nations organizations, as well on responses to the JIU questionnaire.

**36. Assumed benefits are not measured.** The responses to the JIU questionnaire and the interviews with personnel in 29 United Nations system organizations<sup>41</sup> indicated that most officials recognized the benefits of flexible working arrangements for both the organizations and their personnel. According to the officials interviewed, enabling flexibility and assisting personnel with integrating their work and personal lives have been shown to be beneficial for organizations and employees. However, there was little evidence that the assumptions made were the result of conducted measurements or that dedicated methods were in place to measure the actual impact of flexible working arrangements on the perceived benefits. One human resources official stated that they did not have the tools to isolate the clear lineage between flexible working arrangements and benefits, and that there were no related statistics; however, feedback from managers, staff and the staff council, received at the working level and during various meetings (including townhall meetings), seemed to confirm the benefits of flexible working arrangements. Another official pointed out that the utilization of flexible working arrangements was negligible and that the employee surveys were not focused on the topic; hence, it was not possible to establish valid correlations. While one organization (World Food Programme (WFP)) claimed that some of the assumptions about benefits, notably increased productivity, had been confirmed (in its Technology Division), others noted that data on benefits had yet to be collected and studied.

<sup>41</sup> Those were the 28 JIU participating organizations and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, a non-participating organization.

37. **Key challenges.** The desk review of external literature on human resources management and economics revealed that there was no consensus on the outcomes of workplace flexibility by both employers and employees, and that there are downsides and unintended negative consequences regarding the concept of flexible working arrangements. Following the rapid growth in teleworking in the digital era, some studies have specifically focused on the pitfalls of flexible working practices and their implications for organizations, managers, and employees.<sup>42</sup> The officials interviewed, in particular those in small-sized and/or field-focused organizations, also stressed the challenges associated with flexible working arrangements, mainly the teleworking modalities that were experienced involuntarily during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some put forward arguments against expanding work flexibility in their organizations. The key perceived challenges of flexible working arrangements (notably teleworking) are summarized in table 5.

Table 5

**Key challenges of flexible working arrangements (notably teleworking) for United Nations organizations and personnel**

<i>United Nations organizations</i>	<i>United Nations personnel</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Not all functions can be performed offsite;</li> <li>(b) Limited flexibility for field contexts owing to the expectations of physical presence by the host Government, beneficiaries and external partners, as well as duty station-specific realities and needs;</li> <li>(c) Division among different work modalities, in particularly headquarters/field and remote/in-person;</li> <li>(d) Issues relating to communication and connectivity; erosion of cohesion in organizations; negative effects on team working;</li> <li>(e) Capacity underutilization for existing facilities that were originally designed for on-site work;</li> <li>(f) Reduced feasibility of monitoring employee behaviour as a control mechanism;</li> <li>(g) Increased technology costs and potential cybersecurity vulnerability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Blurred boundary between work life and personal life;</li> <li>(b) Increased work intensity;</li> <li>(c) Stress, burn out, mental health impairment, musculoskeletal disorders and other health risks associated with prolonged teleworking;</li> <li>(d) Damages to family structures owing to blurred boundaries and extended demands on employees' time;</li> <li>(e) Fragmentation of work relationships, social isolation;</li> <li>(f) Proximity bias<sup>a</sup> in a hybrid workplace;</li> <li>(g) Reduced career progression and decreased job security for users of flexible working arrangements, notably teleworkers;</li> <li>(h) Negative perception of fairness among employees whose access to flexible working arrangements, notably teleworking, is limited or not available;</li> <li>(i) Concerns regarding privacy, data security and cybercrime.</li> </ul>

Source: Prepared by JIU (2023).

<sup>a</sup> Proximity bias describes the tendency of leadership to show favouritism or preferential treatment to employees who are close to them physically. Managers affected by proximity bias might view remote workers as less committed than their in-office counterparts. See [www.techtarget.com/whatis/feature/Proximity-bias-explained-Everything-you-need-to-know](http://www.techtarget.com/whatis/feature/Proximity-bias-explained-Everything-you-need-to-know).

38. **Measuring the impact of the assumed benefits of flexible working arrangements and the unintended consequences of prolonged teleworking.** The relationship between workplace flexibility and well-being, and productivity has not yet been fully analysed and established in the United Nations context. As organizations look towards the longer term, they will need to measure the impact of the assumed benefits of flexible working arrangements and the unintended consequences of teleworking and teleworking-based models for both organizations and personnel (see table 5, col. 1 (c)). This is particularly important in the context of budgetary and human resources constraints. Both the positive and

<sup>42</sup> See Lebene Richmond Soga and others, "Unmasking the other face of flexible working practices: a systematic literature", *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 142 (March 2022).

negative impacts should be measured in order to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of flexible working arrangements and the new ways of working, as well as accountability to member States and other stakeholders. In doing so, the United Nations organizations should collaborate and consult with each other, as appropriate.

39. The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to enhance the efficiency and improve the effectiveness of flexible working arrangements.

#### **Recommendation 2**

**The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should develop, by the end of 2026, methods to measure the impact of the assumed benefits and the unintended consequences of flexible working arrangements, including the effects of prolonged teleworking modalities, to ensure that the arrangements in place are in the best interests of the personnel and the organization.**

40. **Periodic assessment of flexible working arrangement benefits.** The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should use the methodology developed to periodically assess if and to what extent the assumed key benefits of flexible working arrangements are achieved.

### **C. Flexible working arrangements prior to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic**

41. **Flexible working arrangements were not widely used prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.** A decade ago, it was noted in the first JIU review of flexible working arrangements in the United Nations system organizations that the usage of flexible working arrangements in the organizations was generally low and that implementation of such arrangements was not embedded in the organizational culture. As the administration of flexible working arrangements has usually been decentralized and data on the utilization rates of flexible working options have not been captured and/or centrally maintained, the ease with which these arrangements were granted prior to, during and immediately after the pandemic across the United Nations system organizations are generally not known. Hence, the statistical information presented in table 6 should be considered bearing in mind the challenges of compiling data and statistics on flexible working arrangement usage.<sup>43</sup> According to information shared by fewer than one third of the participating organizations (namely the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), IAEA, IMO, UNEP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Universal Postal Union (UPU), WHO),<sup>44</sup> flexible working hours, staggered work hours and compressed work schedules<sup>45</sup> were the three options that were easily/very easily granted in relation to flexible working arrangements at the duty station, while teleworking outside the duty station was occasionally or almost never granted prior to the pandemic. The current review also found that, in the period between 2012 and 2020, flexible working arrangements were used to varying degrees across the United Nations system (see table 6).

<sup>43</sup> See chap. V, sect. B, of the present report.

<sup>44</sup> Responses to annex 5 of the JIU questionnaire.

<sup>45</sup> The compressed work schedule option is not available at WHO.

Table 6

**Usage of flexible working arrangements prior to the COVID-19 pandemic**  
(Percentage of workforce)

0	1–25	26–50	51–75	76–99	100
	FAO (flexible working hours, teleworking at duty station)				
	IAEA (76–99% flexible working hours, 1–25% teleworking at duty station)				
	IMO				
	ITC (31% teleworking at duty station, 8% teleworking outside of duty station)				
	ITU				
	UNEP (flexible working hours)				
	UNHCR (flexible working hours, teleworking at duty station)				
	UNICEF (45% teleworking at duty station, 8.6% teleworking outside of duty station)				
	United Nations Secretariat <sup>a</sup> (54.55% telecommuting, 9.5% staggered work hours)				
			UPU (flexible working hours)		
	WIPO (57% compressed work schedule, 46.5% staggered work hours)				

Source: Prepared by JIU, based on information provided by 10 organizations in annex 4 of the JIU questionnaire.

<sup>a</sup> Based on information in United Nations, “Flexible working arrangements utilization report” (2017).

42. **Data released by some organizations corroborate the information on uptake of flexible working arrangements provided to JIU.** Whereas data collection on the usage of flexible working arrangements was not regular and/or customarily released, the information included in some staff surveys confirmed JIU findings.<sup>46</sup> According to an ad hoc statistical report by the United Nations Secretariat,<sup>47</sup> the number of staff utilizing flexible working arrangements increased over the period 2012 to 2017 (with telecommuting being the most frequently used option). No other statistical data were publicly released before 2012 or after 2017 to confirm this trend. In general, the unavailability of comparable data meant that JIU could not establish trends of increasing prevalence in the use of flexible working arrangement options in participating organizations between 2012 and 2020.

43. **The limited scope of pre-pandemic policy frameworks and policies made the operational implementation of flexible working arrangements in the United Nations system organizations ineffective.** Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, few organizations had explicitly embedded flexible working arrangements in their human resources management strategies<sup>48</sup> or promoted their implementation and monitoring through ad hoc decisions and resolutions by legislative or governing bodies.<sup>49</sup> Generally, flexible working arrangement policies were not explicitly applicable to non-staff personnel, who constituted approximately

<sup>46</sup> See, for instance, ITC, “Work/Life balance survey report” (2017).

<sup>47</sup> United Nations, “Flexible working arrangements utilization report” (2017), available at [https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/2017%20FWA%20utilisation%20report%20-%20Final\\_0.pdf](https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/2017%20FWA%20utilisation%20report%20-%20Final_0.pdf).

<sup>48</sup> FAO 2020-2021, ITU 2020-2023, UNESCO 2017-2022 and UNIDO 2020-2022.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, General Assembly resolution 67/255, paras. 30 and 31.



45 per cent of the total workforce of the United Nations system organizations.<sup>50</sup> With some exceptions, pre-pandemic policy documents were aimed at accommodating staff, in particular women, and their design was reflective of this approach. In the same vein, the “personal circumstances” clause has been the determinant in the “reason”-driven policies. The fact that flexible working arrangements are “not” an entitlement further underlined the voluntary nature of these arrangements.

**44. Policies were weakly aligned with human resources management strategies and their periodic review was not prioritized.** Prior to the pandemic, all the participating organizations had in place policy guidance relating to flexible working arrangements in the form of policies for stand-alone flexible working modalities, generic policies on flexible working arrangements or a mix of both (see annex I). Only four organizations did not have in place generic policies on flexible working arrangements (the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), UNRWA, WHO and WMO). Pre-pandemic policies were sporadically updated and only two policies (the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)) included specific or explicit provisions on the frequency of the policy review/update. Based on the responses to the JIU questionnaire, only five policies were considered to be adequate and not requiring updates (IAEA, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UN-Habitat, the United Nations Secretariat and WMO). All the organizations reported that existing flexible working arrangement policies and their reiterations were the outcome of collaborative approaches that involved the key stakeholders, albeit fewer from the field duty stations. In terms of policy drivers and alignment, most organizations mentioned mainly internal documents and system-wide initiatives relating to work-life balance and gender parity. In general, flexible working arrangements were not embedded in human resources management strategies, hence the lack of references to workplace flexibility and making flexible working arrangements a strategic management tool.

**45. A knowledge deficit.** Since flexible working arrangements were not firmly positioned as a strategic management tool, there was little incentive to track their use, document their benefits and assess their effectiveness systematically and comprehensively. Very few organizations conducted surveys of flexible working arrangements specifically (ITC started conducting annual surveys of flexible working arrangements in 2015). Out of the 17 organizations that indicated that they collected data on the utilization of flexible working arrangements (although not always disaggregated by gender and other relevant dimensions nor covering all flexible working arrangements), only six specified that the collected data were synthesized in ad hoc reports for senior and executive management (IAEA, the International Trade Centre (ITC), UNEP, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP). Similarly, no oversight reviews covering the topic of flexible working arrangements had been conducted prior to the pandemic and less than one third of participating organizations indicated that they reported on flexible working arrangements to their legislative organs and governing bodies (FAO, IAEA, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNOPS, UNWTO, WFP and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)). Flexible working arrangement policies were not always communicated effectively, either internally or externally, to raise awareness and foster transparency, and only a handful of organizations made their policy documents available on their official websites (UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNODC and the United Nations Secretariat).

**46. Trust, management support and implementation deficits.** Lack of trust and accountability can be significant management issues with wide-reaching implications. Lack of trust and accountability were recognized as serious obstacles to mainstreaming flexible working arrangements across the organizations and increasing their uptake, notably prior to the pandemic. In one pre-pandemic staff survey, resistance among managers was identified as the leading impediment to providing or increasing the use of flexible working arrangements,<sup>51</sup> a perception that was shared by staff members in other employee surveys (e.g. global staff surveys, pulse check surveys), as referenced by participating organizations in their responses to the JIU questionnaire. Relatedly, arbitrary rejections and restrictive

<sup>50</sup> See JIU/REP/2014/8, executive summary. JIU is currently updating this review.

<sup>51</sup> See ITC, “Work/Life balance survey report” (2017).

interpretations of flexible working arrangements have often been perceived by United Nations personnel and staff representatives<sup>52</sup> as a reflection of a conservative managerial culture that undermines trust within teams and efforts to create a more harmonious work-life balance. This type of environment fosters staff's fear of paying a penalty in career mobility and enhances the sense of stigma if they request flexible working arrangements, which, in turn, undermines the uptake of flexible working arrangements. The review also found that the organizations have not relied on dedicated focal points on flexible working arrangements to promote and advocate for mainstreaming the operational implementation of such arrangements. While focal points were occasionally employed in some United Nations entities, only one organization (ITC) reported the availability of a designated focal point on flexible working arrangements. Other obstacles or problems that have hindered the mainstreaming and implementation of flexible working arrangements in the United Nations system organizations include cultural barriers that prioritize presenteeism and face-to-face interactions, lack of technology infrastructure to support teleworking modalities and concerns about reduced collaboration and productivity.

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<sup>52</sup> United Nations Staff Union, Vienna, *Annual Report 2022-2023*, sect. 2.4. Available at [https://staffunion.unov.org/scv/uploads/documents/AnnualReports/2022\\_2023\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](https://staffunion.unov.org/scv/uploads/documents/AnnualReports/2022_2023_Annual_Report.pdf).



### III. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic: a critical point of change

#### A. Flexible working arrangements during and immediately after the pandemic

47. **Alternate working arrangements were less challenging for organizations that had practised pre-pandemic teleworking.** The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic forced the organizations to impose alternate working arrangements whereby personnel were required to work remotely unless their physical presence on the premises was necessary for carrying out essential work. Unlike flexible working arrangements, alternate working arrangements are not voluntary arrangements between managers and personnel, but a mandatory requirement of the organization. Organizations whose flexible working arrangement policies included teleworking were less affected by the sudden imposition of alternate working arrangements than those that did not have such an organizational policy, practice and experience. The latter organizations were forced to introduce teleworking capabilities, teleworking policy provisions, even stand-alone teleworking policies (e.g. UNRWA and WMO) and guidelines on the use and implementation of teleworking for managers and personnel.

48. **While pandemic-related guidelines proved effective, the use of teleworking under alternate working arrangements was not always straightforward.** The global health emergency made teleworking an alternate working arrangement to ensure business continuity. The pandemic triggered the activation of business continuity plans and compelled all organizations, including those that were not familiar with teleworking, to issue guidelines on how to work or continue to work remotely. Bearing in mind the differences between alternate working arrangements and flexible working arrangements, some participating organizations issued ad hoc guidelines on how to implement alternate working arrangements under different teleworking scenarios at the duty station and outside the duty station, as well on transitional measures. Some organizations acknowledged the risk of possible confusion: for example, the United Nations Secretariat included a summary table in an annex to its guidelines illustrating the steps to be taken by personnel and managers to implement teleworking under flexible working arrangements and alternate working arrangements,<sup>53</sup> which the Inspector considers to be a good practice. The present review found that, in general, organizations were successful in issuing fit-for-purpose guidelines which worked well for managers and personnel. Nonetheless, the Inspector observed that, in several organizations, there was some confusion among staff and managers as to which policies and/or guidelines were applicable to teleworking requests. That situation was particularly noticeable in organizations that had issued pandemic-related guidelines on remote working and the phased return to the office, which were expected to remain in effect until the promulgation of new or updated flexible working arrangement policies, with some policies being at the pilot stage.

49. **Use of flexible working arrangements was affected differently during the pandemic.** The imposition of alternate working arrangements during the pandemic limited the use of flexible working arrangements, other than the teleworking option, and impacted their application in United Nations system organizations in different ways. UNEP, UNHCR, the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and WIPO personnel were permitted to use flexible hours/staggered hours when working remotely, while IAEA suspended that option and UNIDO allowed the option only for personnel who worked from an office setting. UNHCR maintained a variable day schedule for its telecommuters, while WIPO briefly suspended the compressed work schedule option. Recognizing the increased workload and the need to work overtime, as well as to support personnel in emergency duty stations, some organizations offered an office-wide compressed schedule for staff. Furthermore, most organizations

<sup>53</sup> United Nations, Office of Human Resources, “Alternate working arrangements (AWA) and flexible working arrangements (FWA) in the context of COVID-19”, policy guidance – all duty stations, version 2 (October 2020). Available at [www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2020/10/2020-10-12\\_covid-19\\_awa-fwa\\_guidance\\_v2.pdf](http://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2020/10/2020-10-12_covid-19_awa-fwa_guidance_v2.pdf).

adopted a more flexible approach to teleworking, both at and outside the duty station, allowing staff the opportunity of working remotely outside the duty station owing to factors beyond their control. In the same vein, the provision on core working hours was also affected in some organizations, in terms of allowing the possibility of temporarily lifting this requirement (e.g. the United Nations Secretariat, UN-Women and WIPO).

**50. Post-pandemic uptake of flexible working arrangements, notably teleworking.**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, prior to the global health emergency, only a fraction of United Nations personnel took advantage of flexible working arrangements. According to the information provided by the participating organizations, the destigmatization of flexible working arrangements, the digital technology enabling teleworking and the cultural shift towards work flexibility have led to significant increased interest on the part of United Nations personnel in the use of flexible working arrangements post-pandemic, as well as to higher levels of acceptance by managers and teams of in particular teleworking modalities. This has translated into an increased uptake of teleworking at the duty station for half of the 16 organizations that had submitted data on this flexible working arrangement modality (see table 7). The percentage of staff utilizing teleworking outside the duty station during and immediately after the pandemic also increased in two thirds of the 11 organizations that shared such information. It is interesting to note that the use of teleworking outside the duty station decreased in two organizations, but this may be attributed to the inaccuracy of collection methods used or incomplete internal data submissions, as was suggested during some interviews. Furthermore, based on information obtained from interviewees and the responses to the JIU questionnaire, the use of other flexible working arrangement options did not change significantly, but rather remained essentially at pre-pandemic levels.

Table 7

**Use of teleworking at and outside the duty station prior to and immediately after the pandemic**

(Percentage of workforce)

Organization	Teleworking at the duty station			Teleworking outside the duty station		
	Pre-pandemic (pre-2020)	Post-pandemic (mid-2022)	Increase/decrease <sup>a</sup> (Number)	Pre-pandemic (pre-2020)	Post-pandemic (mid-2022)	Increase/decrease <sup>a</sup> (Number)
United Nations Secretariat <sup>b</sup>	54.55	-	-	-	-	-
UNCTAD	11.5	93.6	714	0.0	19.8	-
UNEP	4.1	22.2	441	0.7	17.5	2 400
UNHCR	0.3	5.5	1 733	0.8	2.1	162
ITC	30.9	45.8	46	8.3	2.5	-70
UNODC	2.2	23.1	950	0.4	3.0	650
UNRWA	-	15.0	-	-	1.5	-
UNDP	-	-	-	-	11.0	-
UNICEF	20.4	9.5	-53	8.8	5.4	-39
UNOPS	-	16.6	-	-	8.4	-
WFP	-	0.6	-	-	2.4	-
FAO	7.7	3.4	-56	-	-	-
ICAO	11.9	-	-	-	-	-
UNESCO	2.5	37.0	1 380	-	-	-
WIPO	-	96.9	-	-	6.0	-
IAEA	21.1	28.9	37	-	-	-

Source: Prepared by JIU, based on responses to annex 4 of the JIU questionnaire.

Note: Percentage calculation: (final value - starting value) ÷ starting value × 100.

<sup>a</sup> Decreases are indicated by a minus sign.

<sup>b</sup> Value for the United Nations Secretariat taken from United Nations, "Flexible working arrangements utilization report (2017), p. 4.

**51.** There were limitations in compiling comprehensive and consistent figures on the use of flexible working arrangements in general and of teleworking modalities in particular. Half

of the participating organizations shared data regarding flexible working arrangement usage prior to (i.e. pre-2020), during and immediately after (i.e. mid-2022) the pandemic. Only six participating organizations submitted full data sets, as requested in the JIU questionnaire, and out of those, only three presented data disaggregated by flexible working arrangement modality, staff category, seniority and gender. **As the use of teleworking increases, it will be important to ensure that this option is systematically recorded and reported. This would improve not only its visibility and monitoring, but also contribute to an organizational culture that promotes a sustainable balance between on-site and remote/hybrid work settings.**

## **B. Perspectives of staff and managers on flexible working arrangements**

### **Perspectives and expectations of staff unions**

**52. Additional flexibility and system-wide coherence would generally be welcomed by staff unions and staff at large.** In general, the staff representatives interviewed expressed the view that certain additional amendments to the existing flexible working arrangement policies would be warranted to better address the interests of staff and the organizations and to incorporate the experiences of teleworking under alternate working arrangements. Additional flexibility could be achieved by, inter alia: increasing the number of teleworking days per week for teleworking at the duty station (including full teleworking for a specific limited duration); allowing teleworking outside the duty station for extended standard periods of time without specific additional requirements; extending the eligibility for flexible working arrangements to all personnel; streamlining the flexible working arrangements request and approval process, notably by establishing clear timelines for line managers to respond to a request; and requiring managers to respond formally in the respective management systems and to provide the reasons if a request is rejected. Many staff representatives also called for improving system-wide coherence and further streamlining flexible working arrangement policies, in particular the various options and their conditions, across the United Nations system organizations, in view of the existing significant differences. That should include modalities, details and requirements in respect of all flexible working arrangement options and clarification of the adjustments to benefits and entitlements with regard to teleworking outside the duty station, for which different practices are followed by the various organizations.

**53. Consistent policy application across an organization is an ongoing concern.** According to the staff representatives interviewed, the consistency of policy implementation across the same organization was an area that should be improved in all the organizations. Rejection of requests was often perceived by some staff members as “unfair” and “discriminatory”. This may concern not only a same office, unit or service, but also different offices, departments and functions, and it has been reported as an issue in field offices in particular, where, although differences across duty stations and operational environments were acknowledged, in many settings, decisions were being made in ways perceived as arbitrary and not justified by operational requirements. Hence, there is a need to strengthen accountability on the part of managers with respect to transparent, fair and equitable consideration of flexible working arrangement requests, including providing written justification if requests are denied. Another concern was that of assuring the confidentiality of private and personal information, in particular when personal compelling reasons or information about personal circumstances are required in the flexible working arrangement requests. It was pointed out that staff should only be required to share the details about their personal circumstances with medical or human resources officers, who, by the nature of their function, are subject to strict privacy and confidentiality rules. Some staff representatives also highlighted the need to collect relevant data and information, including on flexible working arrangement usage, disaggregated by gender, staff category, duty station and seniority, and to carry out analyses, including on if and how the use of flexible working arrangements support the achievement of gender, inclusion and diversity objectives. Staff representatives should also have access to such data.

**54. Engagement with management.** Flexible working arrangements have been an important topic for staff unions and organizations as they concern staff at large and are a key

enabler for work-life balance, staff well-being and balancing the personal and professional life of employees. The views of staff unions generally corresponded to those voiced by staff at large in flexible working arrangement-related surveys. Staff representatives have been actively engaged in the discussions and processes relating to the review and update of flexible working arrangement policies. They also provide inputs and perceptions on policy and implementation issues on a continuous basis through the various established channels, including staff management meetings, position papers and town hall meetings, in line with their mandates. Given the increased importance of flexible working arrangements and their significant impact on personnel and the organizations, such arrangements should constitute a subject of continuous engagement for staff and management. **Senior management and staff representatives should include the topic of flexible working arrangements in the agendas of staff management discussions, including in the appropriate formal forums, such as staff management committees, so as to address the issues raised by staff representatives and managers.**

#### Perspectives and expectations of line managers and first reporting officers

55. **JIU conducted an exploratory survey to capture the perceptions of a sample of managers.** Line managers, supervisors and first reporting officers are best placed to assess the functions and performance of their supervisees and team members. They are entrusted with the task of taking decisions on flexible working arrangements in line with their delegated authority and the applicable policies. Given the critical role and responsibilities of managers in administering flexible working arrangements, JIU decided to conduct an exploratory survey to gather their views. The survey was addressed to line managers and first reporting officers in all 28 JIU participating organizations, at headquarters and in the field, and in different functions and services. The exploratory survey was mainly intended to solicit their views and perceptions on flexible working arrangements and the associated management issues and challenges encountered, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, the lessons learned from the pandemic, and the way forward. The statistical representativeness of the results was not the main aim. The survey covered all the flexible working arrangement options, with a focus on teleworking.

56. **In general, line managers support and encourage the use of flexible working arrangements.** The responses received from line managers who participated in the JIU survey revealed that line managers, for the most part, support and encourage the use of flexible working arrangements. The large majority of line managers (83 per cent of respondents) indicated that the experience of remote working during the pandemic had led to a paradigm shift towards accepting flexible working arrangements, in particular teleworking, in the organizations. The organizational culture was cited as a critical factor for the successful implementation of flexible working arrangement policies and the use of such arrangements. Several suggestions for further improving flexible working arrangements and leveraging their benefits for the organizations and staff were mentioned (see table 8).

Table 8

#### Flexible working arrangement policy areas and practices requiring improvement (according to managers)

<i>Requiring improvement</i>	<i>Respondents (percentage)</i>
Further refinements are necessary in the organization's policy on flexible working arrangements as well as in the inter-related policies	69
Managers and supervisors should be made aware of their rights and responsibilities	57
Standard procedures are needed for uniform implementation across the organization(s)	53
Adequate managerial training and guidance relating to flexible working arrangements	53
Written guidance is needed to indicate which job types do not lend themselves to certain types of flexible working arrangements and/or are not authorized in certain working environments	49
Different layers of approval should be avoided; the line manager should take the final decision	48

Source: Responses to the JIU line manager survey.

Note: Multiple responses were possible.

57. **Lack of clarity of certain policy provisions.** Sixty-nine per cent of respondents agreed that there was a need for further refinements in their organizations' policies on flexible working arrangements as well as in interrelated policies. Many managers noted that some key policy issues needed to be clarified or specified in the policy framework, in particular in relation to teleworking outside the duty station (notably the impact on entitlements and benefits) and some generic terms (such as compelling personal circumstances, home, location of main residence and medical reasons), as it was difficult, in some cases, to decide which reasons and situations should be considered compelling personal circumstances. More clarity on which functions or posts may or may not be suitable for teleworking (or other types of flexible working arrangements) would also be helpful. Written procedures are subject to interpretation and applied differently by different divisions and sometimes even within the same division. This creates challenges in consistency in implementing the flexible working arrangement policy within divisions, offices or departments, but also across the organization, leading to a sense of unfairness in policy application. More exchange of information among managers may be helpful, as would briefings, written communications and information campaigns to ensure that all managers apply the policy in a consistent manner.

58. **Additional managerial training and guidance are anticipated.** While 47 per cent of line managers agreed that their organizations had adequate programmes in place to build managerial capacity relating to flexible working arrangements (i.e., training, briefings or other formats to address and manage concerns), the majority (53 per cent) did not. Although some online and other types of training was provided for those managers who were interested, some managers would welcome additional managerial training and additional guidance, for instance, on how to motivate staff when they are disconnected from the team, to better understand what changes in managerial style are necessary to support flexible working and hybrid teams in a way that would help teams to work most effectively.

59. **Recurring challenges.** A number of recurring challenges related to flexible working arrangements and their implementation were voiced by various line managers (see box 1).

#### Box 1

#### **Recurring challenges related to flexible working arrangements and their implementation (According to line managers)**

- Weak compliance with rules
- Risks of abuse and lack of accountability
- Inadequate monitoring systems
- Lack of analytical information on flexible working arrangements, including their impact (gender, work-life balance, individual and organizational productivity)
- Day-to-day supervision of staff and managing hybrid teams
- Flexible working arrangements considered an entitlement by some staff members
- Cumbersome approval processes
- Inadequate support from senior and executive management

*Source:* Responses to the JIU line manager survey.

60. **Risks of abuse and weak accountability.** Managers pointed out that some staff members who considered flexible working arrangements as an entitlement did not always comply with the policy rules. Flexible working arrangement policies and related guidance should be clear on this so as to manage the expectations of the personnel. Moreover, some managers mentioned that many staff had been granted special exceptions (such as teleworking outside the duty station for extended periods, full-time teleworking at the duty station, etc.) but those possibilities may not have been indicated in the policy provisions. Exceptions from the standard flexible working arrangement options should only be granted in the case of exceptional reasons or compelling personal circumstances. The managers raised the need for adequate accountability mechanisms to monitor and track staff compliance. Measures need to be put in place so that teleworking is not abused.

61. **Inadequate or duplicative monitoring systems.** Some managers noted that there was often more than one management system capturing information on flexible working arrangements, including duplication of the organization's enterprise resource planning (ERP)

system by systems dealing specifically with flexible working arrangements. That would make tracking and monitoring flexible working arrangement requests and agreements difficult and cumbersome, as well as dilute accountability. Managers also felt that the existing systems lacked the necessary monitoring functionalities. Managers who supervise multiple staff members indicated that they found it difficult to monitor the requests that they had approved.

**62. Inadequate data collection and analysis of flexible working arrangements use and their assumed impact.** Several managers felt that more needed to be done to collect and analyse whether the assumed advantages and benefits of flexible working arrangements for the organization and personnel were actually achieved, including the claim that flexible working arrangements enhance individual and organizational performance. A study on the costs and benefits of flexible working arrangements to staff and to the organizations has not been done and may be useful.

**63. Cumbersome approval processes.** Some managers noted that the flexible working arrangement request process was cumbersome. The request process should be simpler and more flexible. Rather than signing a request form that is valid for six months, the request should be an online document that can be easily modified and updated, as needed, in agreement with the manager.

**64. Analysis of the exploratory survey confirmed common managerial challenges.** The findings of the survey are illustrative of certain recurring challenges that line managers and direct supervisors face in relation to the operational implementation of flexible working arrangements. Similar issues and concerns were raised by managers during the interviews, while some of the issues and concerns raised by line managers were also raised by staff unions and staff at large, such as the importance of the organizational culture, robust policy design and clear guidelines for the effective implementation of flexible working arrangements. Another common concern was how to achieve equitable, consistent and fair implementation of flexible working arrangements across the organization. The responses to the exploratory survey highlighted that flexible working arrangements involved specific managerial challenges, such as managing hybrid teams, overseeing teleworking and ensuring adequate performance and productivity levels.

### **C. Impact and effects of the pandemic on the organizational approach to flexible working arrangements**

**65. Transformational change.** The global health emergency accelerated transformational change and provided an opportunity to challenge many assumptions about the way organizations work. According to various documents by CEB and many participating organizations, the prolonged full teleworking under the alternate working arrangements during the pandemic showed that teleworking can be done without productivity loss, technology is available to support teleworking, and this type of flexibility can work for both the organizations and their personnel. The growing understanding of teleworking as a flexible working arrangement modality that could also support operational models based on potentially higher flexibility and more agile new ways of working reconfirmed an earlier system-wide articulated need for a revamped model of management that is more trusting, more results based and more cost-effective. This realization, which is supported by the recent initiative taken by CEB in defining the medium- to long-term workforce needs of the participating organizations, has accelerated the process of rethinking organizations' approach to flexible working arrangements and new ways of working. Demands for more flexible ways of working have also created challenges and elevated expectations of some stakeholders, as well as raised fears and doubts.

#### **A revamped regulatory framework for flexible working arrangements**

**66. Drivers for revising the policy guidance.** According to participating organizations, the latest review of their flexible working arrangement policy guidance was triggered by various factors, including work-life balance initiatives, rapidly changing technologies and employees' evolving expectations and demands. In some organizations, various

implementation issues also led to the revision of existing policies. However, the two main driving factors for reviewing flexible working arrangement policy guidance were the experience with extensive teleworking during the global health emergency, and the issuance of the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work, in October 2021. The related discussions held by the Task Force on the Future of the United Nations Workforce, including on potential changes in contractual modalities in some organizations and system-wide, may have also influenced and contributed to the review and update of the flexible working arrangement policies in some organizations.

**67. Most of the organizations reviewed their flexible working arrangement policies in the past three years.** Two organizations (IMO<sup>54</sup> and WMO) revised their policies in 2020 and 2021, respectively; 14 organizations (FAO, IAEA, ITC, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOPS, UNRWA, UPU, WFP, WHO and WIPO) revised theirs in 2022, while ILO and UNWTO revised theirs in 2023. The reviews undertaken by FAO, WFP and IMO concerned only certain provisions, notably teleworking at the duty station and teleworking outside the duty station, and the new provisions are being piloted for a limited period. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), ITU, UNDP and WIPO are in the process of reviewing their policies and expect to issue the new policies in 2024. UN-Women follows the UNDP policy, with additional guidance to adapt it to its needs. Similarly, UNCTAD, UNEP and UN-Habitat follow the flexible working arrangement policy of the United Nations Secretariat. Apart from updating or revising their flexible working arrangement policies, many organizations, including the United Nations Secretariat, UNESCO, UNFPA and WIPO, have issued additional implementation guidelines that provide further details and guidance to both line managers and staff on how to apply the policies (see table 9).

Table 9

**Overview of recent revisions of flexible working arrangement policies**

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
United Nations Secretariat <sup>a</sup>	IMO	WFP <sup>b</sup>	FAO, <sup>c</sup> IAEA, ITC, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNOPS, UNRWA, <sup>d</sup> UPU, WHO, WIPO and WMO <sup>e</sup>	ILO UNWTO	ICAO, ITU, UNDP, UN-Women <sup>f</sup> and WIPO <sup>g</sup>

*Source:* Prepared by JIU, based on the responses to questions 1.1.3 and 1.1.4 of the JIU questionnaire.

<sup>a</sup> UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat and UNODC follow the flexible working arrangement policy of the United Nations Secretariat.

<sup>b</sup> WFP revised its stand-alone teleworking policy only; revision of the generic flexible working arrangement policy is ongoing.

<sup>c</sup> FAO launched a one-year flexible working arrangement pilot project in March 2022 with a view to updating its policy.

<sup>d</sup> UNRWA has issued a teleworking policy only.

<sup>e</sup> WMO has issued a stand-alone teleworking policy only.

<sup>f</sup> UN-Women follows the UNDP policy, tailored to its needs.

<sup>g</sup> ICAO, ITU and UNDP are reviewing their policies.

**68. Main areas of revision.** In general, the revision of flexible working arrangement policies in the period from 2020 to 2023 concentrated on provisions that dealt with teleworking, both at the duty station and outside the duty station, and involved notably revisions to the different teleworking scenarios, including clearer parameters relating to requirements and conditions, duration, approval process (with escalation of the process, as necessary) and details on the impact of flexible working arrangements on, inter alia, the compensation package, entitlements and insurance. In addition, more flexibility was introduced in the policy documents with the inclusion of new options, such as additional sub-options or variations of a same option. Some entities introduced options that were previously not granted: for example, UNESCO now allows for staggered working hours and

<sup>54</sup> In 2023, IMO introduced limited amendments to its 2020 flexible working arrangement policy.



time off for study purposes. In some organizations (IAEA, IMO, UNIDO, UNRWA, UPU, WHO, WIPO and WMO), teleworking modalities were introduced as a new option, which, in some cases, was previously only available in exceptional circumstances (mostly for medical reasons). The revised policies also contain additional management guidance for supervisors and line managers regarding the handling and review of flexible working arrangement requests. Moreover, some policies include annexes containing risk management provisions, further details as to specific options and the impact on compensation package, entitlements and benefits when teleworking outside the duty station. Many organizations also updated their request forms and agreement templates. Overall, the most recent updates to the policies illustrate a general shift towards providing more flexibility to personnel of the United Nations systems organizations. At the same time, the basic condition that flexible working arrangements are subject to the exigencies of service and must be compatible with the operational needs and interest of the organization is further emphasized. Annex IV highlights the main changes in the recently revised flexible working arrangement policies. Other changes will be discussed in chapter IV.

### **Flexible working arrangements as a new key consideration in human resources strategic positioning**

69. **Flexible working arrangements are being increasingly considered in human resources management strategies.** Given the increased importance of flexible working arrangements and of new ways of working, more than half of the participating organizations have included references to those arrangements in different items and sections of their human resources management strategies. Sixteen organizations reported that they had initiated the process of updating their strategies, which will maintain and consolidate specific references to flexible working arrangements, and several others envisage including flexible working arrangements in their revised human resources strategies. Fifteen organizations confirmed their intention to integrate flexible working arrangements into subsequent strategies, and only two organizations have not confirmed such intentions (see table 10). More specifically, organizations indicated that they intended to include flexible working arrangements under existing headings such as work-life balance, well-being and health, as well as under other related key human resources objectives such as gender, inclusion and diversity, and workforce planning.

Table 10

#### **Integration of flexible working arrangements into human resources management strategies**

<i>Flexible working arrangements embedded in the human resources management strategy</i>	<i>Flexible working arrangements not embedded in the human resources management strategy</i>	<i>Flexible working arrangements expected to be embedded in the next iteration of the human resources management strategy</i>
FAO, ILO, IMO, ITU, UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, United Nations Secretariat, UNOPS, UN-Women, UNWTO, WFP, WHO and WMO	IAEA, ICAO, ITC, UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, United Nations Secretariat, UNRWA, UPU and WIPO	FAO, ICAO, ITU, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOPS, UN-Women, UNWTO, UPU

*Source:* Prepared by JIU, based on the responses to questions 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 of the JIU questionnaire.

70. **Integration of flexible working arrangements into human resources strategies also aims at underpinning new ways of working initiatives.** For instance, the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022–2025 states that flexible working modalities will be further expanded to introduce more modern, agile ways of working that optimize organizational productivity while enhancing staff well-being and career growth. These measures will help to enable more deliberate and innovative talent management throughout the employee life cycle, making



UNICEF an employer of choice.<sup>55</sup> Strategic goal 4 of the Human Resource Strategy 2021–2025<sup>56</sup> of WFP is to enhance employee experience to strengthen engagement. To achieve this goal, WFP has designed detailed outcome metrics and specific outputs, including the roll out of “creative and flexible work arrangements” in support of its new ways of working. Those arrangements are supported by technology to improve work efficiency and cross-regional and cross-functional team collaborations to enable the tapping of more talent across the globe. For its part, UNOPS envisages updating its human resources strategy taking into consideration the United Nations strategy on the future of work, while the draft strategy of UNESCO is articulated around three global focus areas, which involves, inter alia, looking into flexibility in ways of working and remote working.

**71. Embedding flexible working arrangements more prominently in human resources management strategies.** Flexible working arrangements have yet to become a key consideration in the different elements of human resources strategic positioning in most of the organizations. Therefore, the new status and role of those arrangements should be clearly set out in the organizations’ human resources strategies or similar documents. Among others, this would support a more strategic, systematic and structured approach to flexible working arrangements, which can also support new ways of working, and would ensure that the working arrangements are aligned with and mutually support other key human resources objectives and goals.

**72.** The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to enhance the efficiency and improve the effectiveness of the management of flexible working arrangements.

### **Recommendation 3**

**The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should integrate flexible working arrangement considerations into the next iteration of their organization’s human resources management strategy, in order to ensure a strategic approach to flexible working arrangements.**

### **Reaching higher levels of management and governance to effectively leverage flexible working arrangements**

**73. Fewer than half of the participating organizations submit information relating to flexible working arrangements to their legislative organs and/or governing bodies.** Based on the information provided in the responses to the JIU questionnaire, 13 organizations include information on flexible working arrangements in the reports submitted periodically to their legislative organs and governing bodies (see table 11). Of these organizations, eight report on an annual basis, and three report on a biennial basis. UNESCO reported that it submits such reports as requested by its governing bodies.

<sup>55</sup> UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022–2025 (E/ICEF/2021/25), para. 97.

<sup>56</sup> WFP Human Resources Strategy 2021–2025, chap. 7, strategic goal 4.

Table 11  
**Reporting on flexible working arrangements to legislative organs and governing bodies**

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Periodicity</i>	<i>Governing/legislative body and/or committee</i>
UNOPS	Annual	Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS
UPU	Biennial	Council of Administration, Committee 1
UNAIDS	Annual	Programme Coordinating Board
WHO	Biennial	Executive Council
UNESCO	Upon request	Executive Board, General Conference
IMO	Biennial	Council and Assembly
ITU	Annual	Council
WIPO	Annual	Coordination Committee, Programme and Budget Committee
UNHCR	Annual	Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's programme
FAO	Annual	Finance Committee
IAEA	Annual	General Conference and Board of Governors
WFP	Annual	Executive Board
UNWTO	Biennial	General Assembly, Executive Council

*Source:* Prepared by JIU, based on the responses to the JIU questionnaire.

74. **Reporting practices vary across organizations.** Based on the information obtained, the reports of most of the organizations contain information on flexible working arrangement policy updates and general information on how those arrangements support work-life balance, staff well-being, attracting and retaining talent, as well as on innovative practices such as pilot projects and efforts towards new ways of working and the hybrid working environment. Some organizations, such as UNWTO, also provided information on flexible working arrangements in the context of their ongoing development of a new human resources strategy. Other organizations, for example UNICEF, provided some information on flexible working arrangements in the context of staff surveys and the overall description of the organizational culture. WFP provided information on flexible working arrangements in several reports and contexts, including the WFP People Policy, which was approved by the Executive Board in June 2021, the Annual Performance Report for 2021, and WFP Corporate Results Framework (2022–2025).<sup>57</sup> The United Nations Secretariat does not prepare periodic reports on flexible working arrangements; however, it responds to written queries from the intergovernmental bodies on such arrangements and related issues. For instance, written responses to queries were provided in 2021 in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Of the organizations that do not yet provide information on flexible working arrangements to their legislative organs and governing bodies, some indicated that they planned to do so in the future. For instance, UNIDO mentioned that information on the implementation of flexible working arrangements is expected to be shared with the governing bodies in the future. UNDP indicated that, as part of the second phase of its 2030 people strategy, it will strengthen the talent analytics function, linking personnel, processes and performance in order to drive organizational performance. The inclusion of data on flexible working arrangements is foreseen in this context.

75. **Driving support for member States' data and evidence-based decision-making on human resources management, including flexible working arrangements.** While half of the participating organizations stated that they included some information relating to flexible working arrangements in various reports submitted to their legislative organs and governing bodies, the data provided are rather general. They mainly include broad descriptions of how flexible working arrangements are assumed to support work-life balance, staff well-being and attracting and retaining talent, and limited information on pilot projects, among others. However, concrete and quantifiable data and statistics on the use of flexible working arrangements in the organization, both at headquarters and in the field, as relevant, related trends and patterns, and information on the impact and implications of such arrangements on the organization and staff at large, including the capacity to assist legislative bodies in their work to carry out their decisions, are missing. Given the prevalence of flexible

<sup>57</sup> See WFP/EB.A/2021/5-A, WFP/EB.A/2022/4-A/Rev.1 and WFP/EB.1/2022/4-A/Rev.1.

working arrangements, notably teleworking, in the new hybrid working environment in which most organizations operate, as well as the current and emerging initiatives related to new ways of working and the future of work, which include teleworking as a key element, collecting, analysing and reporting relevant data flexible working arrangements are of paramount importance, and would also support an evidence-based approach to flexible working arrangements. Hence, information relating to flexible working arrangements should be included in the relevant periodic human resources management reports, as well in other relevant reports submitted to the legislative organs and governing bodies, so as to enable them to provide overall high-level strategic guidance and direction in line with their mandates.

76. The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to enhance transparency and accountability to the legislative organs and governing bodies concerning the management of flexible working arrangements.

**Recommendation 4**

**The legislative organs and governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should request, by the end of 2025, that the executive heads provide, as part of reporting on human resources management, periodic updates on the implementation of flexible working arrangements and teleworking policies, including statistical data, disaggregated by gender and other relevant dimensions, with a view to ensuring data-driven and evidence-based decision-making on flexible working arrangements management.**

## IV. Flexible working arrangement policy design: a work in progress

### A. Foundational and new high-level principles for policy guidance on flexible working arrangements

77. **New system-wide guiding principles.** In moving towards more workplace flexibility, several additional, new guiding principles associated with flexible working arrangements and their implementation have been discussed system-wide, within the Task Force on the Future of the United Nations Workforce as well as in some participating organizations (e.g. the United Nations Secretariat, UNHCR and UNICEF). As a result, the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work introduced a set of high-level principles aimed at helping organizations augment their guidance to support the management of flexible working arrangements and new ways of working (see box 2).

Box 2

#### Guiding principles for flexible working arrangement policy documents

- People-centred approach
- Focus on organizational and individual results
- Focus on trust and accountability
- Consideration given to the organization's environmental footprint and ecological responsibility
- Gender parity, diversity and inclusion
- Flexibility for field contexts, certain functions and specific operational environments
- Resourcing and support

*Source:* Prepared by JIU; adapted from the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work.

78. **Foundational guiding principles remain valid.** The newly introduced high-level principles are complementary to and do not replace existing key guiding principles, which, essentially, constitute preconditions for the use of flexible working arrangements. Flexible working arrangements are not an entitlement and are cost neutral; their use must comply with exigencies of service, operational needs of the organization and the function; they must meet occupational health and safety requirements and not create additional liabilities to the organization.

79. **System-wide endorsement of new guiding principles leverages flexible working arrangements and underpins human resources management.** The new high-level principles are not limited to flexible working arrangements, but are also relevant for sustainable human resources management, and may support the achievement of its objectives relating to new ways of working, notably hybrid working models based on flexible work. **The Inspector stresses that there is an opportunity for participating organizations that have not yet done so to formalize and operationalize the new system-wide guiding principles on flexible work by including them, at the earliest opportunity, in their flexible working arrangement policy documents, as well as in related guidance pertaining to new ways of working.**

### B. Policy elements and areas for improvement

#### Enhancing flexible working arrangement policies in terms of comprehensiveness

80. **Progress has been made in recent years in enhancing flexible working arrangement policies.** The desk review of the flexible working arrangement policies of participating organizations found that, overall, progress had been made since 2012 in terms of improved policy content. Many documents are structured around a basic set of key policy elements that include guiding principles and general provisions applicable to flexible working arrangements, available options, eligibility clauses, duration and approval procedures, roles and responsibilities. The elements in more recent policy documents, notably those that were updated during and immediately after the pandemic, have been

aligned, to varying degrees, with the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work and some include provisions concerning the adjustment of benefits and entitlements relating to teleworking outside the duty station. While definitional issues still persist and provisions for periodic review of the policies are largely absent, many flexible working arrangement policies have been further enhanced by the inclusion or exclusion of certain options and by more precise outlines of their underlying conditions and requirements, including through annexes to the policies. Several policy documents also identify control actions to mitigate potential risks relating to the approval process.

**81. Improving the comprehensiveness of flexible working arrangement policies is warranted.** While many organizations have made progress in enhancing their flexible working arrangement policies, the situation is uneven across organizations. For example, some documents do not contain all the key policy elements that would ensure their comprehensiveness and detailedness. Through an analysis of the policies in the participating organizations, the Inspector identified a set of key elements that could support a comprehensive policy design (see box 3). **Participating organizations that have not yet done so should consider including the key policy elements identified in the present report in the next update of their flexible working arrangement policy guidance. That would further improve the policy design, provide additional clarity for both staff and managers, and support the equitable and fair implementation of the policy.**

#### Box 3

##### Key elements for flexible working arrangement policy guidance

- Provisions for policy objectives (a purpose statement outlining why the organization is issuing the policy and what the desired effects or outcomes of the policy should be)
- General provisions, including eligibility clause and a generic and precise definition for flexible working arrangements
- Alignment with the United Nations system-wide policy and use of standardized or common terminology (as available and necessary)
- Alignment/complementarity with other related internal organizational policies
- Inclusion of guiding principles
- Description of flexible working arrangement options (clear and precise definition for each individual option, as well for their associated modalities)
- Provisions that enable some flexibility for the implementation of flexible working arrangements in different operational environments (e.g. field locations), including guidance as to what type of work is suitable or not for teleworking and what may be permissible/non-permissible combinations of different options
- Provisions for the operational implementation and procedures (e.g. approval process, including roles and responsibilities, risk management matrix, specific guidelines for adjusting benefits and entitlements when teleworking outside the duty station beyond maximal duration, tools for tracking usage and measuring benefits, etc.)
- Provisions for other special arrangements or requirements (e.g. core working hours, “ability to disconnect”, insurance disclaimer for teleworking personnel, compliance with occupational safety and health guidance when teleworking, and with other organizational requirements, e.g. electronic information security, cybersecurity)
- Provision for periodic review of the policy or policy guidance

*Source:* Prepared by JIU.

##### Expanding the eligibility for personnel

**82. Most flexible working arrangement policies contain eligibility provisions.** Based on the desk review of flexible working arrangement policy documents across the United Nations system, the review found that 24 organizations<sup>58</sup> included specific and clear provisions on the eligibility of personnel (staff and non-staff, as applicable).

<sup>58</sup> FAO, IAEA, ICAO, ILO, IMO, ITC, ITU, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, the United Nations Secretariat, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women, UNWTO, UPU, WFP, WHO, WIPO and WMO.

83. **Flexible working arrangements are not equally applicable to all personnel.** Fifteen organizations make flexible working arrangements available to staff members only (see table 12, col. 2). For example, UNFPA states that its policy applies to all staff members holding a temporary, fixed-term, continuing or permanent contract; while WHO states that flexible working arrangements are applicable to staff members holding temporary appointments under staff rule 420.4, fixed-term appointments and continuing appointments, regardless of grade or level, unless otherwise stated in the policy. Fourteen organizations provide for the applicability of flexible working arrangements to staff and non-staff.

Table 12

**Eligibility for flexible working arrangements in United Nations system organizations**

<i>Eligibility clauses for all personnel</i>	<i>Eligibility clauses for staff only</i>	<i>Eligibility clauses for staff and certain non-staff categories, with limitations (for specific options and/or additional provisions)</i>
ICAO, ILO, <sup>a</sup> UNESCO, <sup>b</sup> UNWTO and IMO	IAEA, ITC, ITU, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, United Nations Secretariat (incl. UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat, UNODC), UNRWA, UN-Women, WHO and WMO	FAO, IMO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOPS, UPU, WFP and WIPO <sup>c</sup>

Source: Prepared by JIU, based on the policies of the participating organizations.

<sup>a</sup> The flexible working arrangement policy of ILO explicitly stipulates that the “directive applies to all ILO staff members, irrespective of grade, service category or contract type. Interns may also use flexible working arrangements, as provided for in the ILO Internship Policy and Procedure”. ILO does not have non-staff.

<sup>b</sup> UNESCO has a flexible working arrangement modality for breaks for study activities, which is applicable to staff members only, and subject to further conditions under the study leave policy.

<sup>c</sup> At WIPO, it is not only staff that are eligible for flexible working arrangements, but also fellows and interns and without limitations. Other categories of non-staff personnel (e.g. individual contractors, agency workers) are eligible but with limitations.

84. **Policy provisions on eligibility for non-staff personnel.** Five organizations have a general clause or provision stating that the flexible working arrangements policy is applicable to staff as well as other personnel (see table 12, col. 1). For instance, the guidelines on transition to the workplace, adopted by ICAO in 2022, “apply to all staff and non-staff personnel (hereinafter referred to collectively as ‘personnel’)” at its headquarters in Montreal, Canada, and based on local health and safety recommendations, the directors of ICAO regional offices “may also extend these guidelines to personnel at their respective duty stations”.<sup>59</sup> At ILO, the policy is applicable to all staff members, and ILO does not have any non-staff personnel. According to the policies of 15 organizations, flexible working arrangements are available to staff members only. However, the United Nations Secretariat, for example, has indicated that it does not necessarily mean that non-staff personnel cannot avail themselves of some flexible working arrangement options. For instance, interns may be allowed to telework and, depending on their contract requirements, consultants and individual contractors may be able to organize their work flexibly. Nine organizations have provisions on the eligibility of personnel other than staff members for flexible working arrangements (see table 12, col. 3). Those clauses provide details on which categories of non-staff personnel may avail themselves of flexible working arrangements, including any limitations on options, and additional requirements and conditions that must be met. For example, the UNICEF policy provides that “staff members and their supervisors or Heads of Office may agree on other flexible work arrangements, subject to the principles in this procedure”. It states that “flexible working arrangements for other personnel are equally encouraged and subject to discussions with the supervisors, taking into consideration the nature and duration of the function”.<sup>60</sup> In its administrative circular introducing its policy on flexible working arrangements, UNESCO provides that, “unless otherwise specified

<sup>59</sup> ICAO, Guidelines on transition to workplace (April 2022), para. 2.1.

<sup>60</sup> UNICEF, Procedure on flexible working arrangements (PROCEDURE/DHR/2022/003), July 2022, paras. 3 and 4.

hereafter and in the HR Manual, flexible working arrangements may be authorized for all persons employed by UNESCO, namely staff members and non-staff members (referred to as ‘employees’).<sup>61</sup> At WMO, “all staff members on permanent and fixed-term appointments are eligible for teleworking. Staff members on temporary appointments may exceptionally be considered eligible if, in the specific case, teleworking would be in the interest of the Organization”.<sup>62</sup> For its part, UNHCR has included in its policy<sup>63</sup> very specific provisions on the applicability of its flexible working arrangements policy in respect of affiliate workforce, including individual contract holders, United Nations Volunteers, various deployment schemes engaged through partner non-governmental organizations and Governments (on nil-consultancy contracts), as well as interns for whom flexible working arrangements are governed by the UNHCR policy on interns.

**85. Promoting equal applicability across the workforce.** Flexible working arrangements are intended, in essence, to support all personnel across a range of situations without discrimination, stereotyping or biases. For organizations with specific types of non-staff personnel, such as UNHCR, it may be a good practice to have specific and detailed provisions thereon, including any limitations regarding certain flexible working arrangement options and types of non-staff. Otherwise, it may suffice to have a general clause in the flexible working arrangements policy that foresees the eligibility of non-staff personnel on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the nature and duration of the function and the interests and needs of the organization. For instance, as mentioned earlier, UNICEF encourages the use of flexible working arrangements for other personnel, subject to discussion with supervisors and taking into consideration the nature and duration of the functions. **In the Inspector’s view, the entire workforce of an organization, including non-staff personnel, should have fair and equitable access to the flexible working arrangement options offered by the organization, subject to the teleworkability of functions and exigencies of service. As there is no one-size-fits-all situation when it comes to exigencies of service, personnel should be made aware of the operational requirements of the organization.**

#### **A more flexible and enhanced set of options**

**86. Flexible working hours and staggered working hours.** All flexible working arrangement policies include flexible working hours and/or staggered working hours options. The Inspector considers staggered working hours a sub-category of flexible working hours. According to the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work, these two options can be grouped together and there is no need to distinguish between them, as staggered working hours are the same category as flexible working hours despite the different terminology.<sup>64</sup> Already in 2012, all the organizations, except for UNESCO and UNRWA, had these options in place. However, in some entities, there were restrictions on the use of the two options, notably as regards “flexitime”, for instance, at ILO, it was available only to staff in the GS category, at WIPO and WMO, to staff in the P-5 category and below, and at UPU, to staff in the P-4 category and below. It should be noted in this context that, in 2012, clocking systems were in place at IAEA, UNIDO, UPU, WIPO and WMO, time sheet systems were used at ILO, UNHCR and WHO, and an honour system was used at ITU. Clocking systems have since been abolished in most organizations. To track and monitor presence, the new and updated flexible working arrangement policies contain, for the most part, provisions that requests must be submitted through the organizations’ management systems and/or the enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, which, in the Inspector’s view, should become the standard requirement in flexible working arrangement policy guidance.

<sup>61</sup> UNESCO, Administrative circular AC/HR/84, Introducing the policy on flexible working arrangements (April 2022), annex I, para. 13. The footnote to para. 13 states that “by definition, consultants and other specialist contractors are expected to work off-site”.

<sup>62</sup> WMO Teleworking policy, Service note No. 1/2023, annex, para. 24.

<sup>63</sup> UNHCR Policy on flexible work (UNHCR/HCP/2022/04), August 2022, para. 3.

<sup>64</sup> See CEB/2021/HLCM/10/Add.1, para. 20.

87. **Compressed work schedule.** A compressed work schedule allows personnel to redistribute the daily working hours in a given period to accrue time off.<sup>65</sup> Various compressed work schedule options are included in the organizations' flexible working arrangement policy documents (see annex II). This option offers more flexibility in the revised policies; it is available at FAO, IMO, ITC, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOPS, the United Nations Secretariat (including UNCTAD, UN-Habitat, UNEP and UNODC), UN-Women, WHO and WIPO. In 2012, the compressed work schedule option was only available at FAO, UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, the United Nations Secretariat, UNOPS, UN-Women and WFP.<sup>66</sup> While it is considered that a compressed work schedule is particularly well suited to meeting the needs of personnel in hardship duty stations,<sup>67</sup> it should be noted that considerable capacity is needed to implement this option, in terms of recording and monitoring. It may be particularly challenging to apply it in small-size organizations and in field contexts. **To effectively implement the compressed work schedule option, notably in field contexts, participating organizations that have not yet done so should identify the optimal compressed work schedule scenario(s) for their contexts and ensure that recording and monitoring systems are in place. Data on their usage should be collected, disaggregated as relevant, and regularly communicated to the appropriate management levels.**

88. **Scheduled breaks for external learning activities.** This option provides flexibility to the staff members concerned to participate in relevant training during work hours in line with the pertinent conditions, notably the requirement to make up the time dedicated to training at a later time, in order to ensure that the expected total working hours are met. According to the United Nations System Model Policy, work-related training and related activities are not flexible work.<sup>68</sup> Different standpoints were expressed by interviewees in this regard; some were of the view that time off for study purposes should be under flexible working arrangements, while others considered that time off for study purposes would be better covered in work-related training policies. Most entities have such training policies, which also include mandatory training for staff and managers. Hence, in many participating organizations, time off for studies is governed by policies and procedures related to training and professional development. Only five organizations provide for this option in their flexible working arrangement policy documents, namely ITC, ITU, UNESCO, UNIDO and the United Nations Secretariat.<sup>69</sup> UNESCO has included time off for study purposes in its recently revised policy on flexible working arrangements (see annex IV). In general, all five organizations have put forward very similar provisions regulating the use of this option.

89. **Teleworking.** The most striking change in comparison to the situation prior to the recent updates of the flexible working arrangement policies is that teleworking at the duty station is now available at all the organizations, and most of the entities also allow for teleworking outside the duty station. This is a major development compared with the situation in 2012, when the first JIU review on flexible working arrangements was conducted. As noted in annex I of JIU/Note/2012/4, seven organizations (UN-Habitat, UNIDO, UNRWA, UNWTO, UPU, WHO and WMO) did not have a teleworking modality at all in their flexible working arrangement policies, while four organizations (ICAO, IMO, UNESCO and WIPO) only allowed teleworking in exceptional circumstances and/or for medical reasons. While the most recently updated policies make this additional flexibility available to the personnel, they also contain limiting conditions, such as the compatibility of teleworking with the nature of the function and exigencies of service, compelling personal circumstances, and a tiered approval process. Details on the different flexible working arrangement options available in the organizations, including teleworking, and an outline of the different scenarios and their underlying conditions and requirements can be found in annex III.

90. **Teleworking at the duty station.** All the participating organizations offer teleworking at the duty station as a flexible working arrangement modality. However, there are substantial differences across organizations, notably as to the number of days per week

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., para. 21.

<sup>66</sup> JIU/Note/2012/4, annex I.

<sup>67</sup> CEB/2021/HLCM/10/Add.1, p. 5.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., para. 5.

<sup>69</sup> UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat and UNODC are included under the United Nations Secretariat.



that personnel can telework. While most organizations allow teleworking at the duty station for two or three days per week, some entities provide the option of full-time teleworking (e.g. UNAIDS, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF and UN-Women). Other organizations (such as ITC and the United Nations Secretariat, including UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat and UNODC) offer the possibility of full-time teleworking as well but with the requirement that the staff member concerned has compelling personal circumstances. There are several variations on the initial duration of these options, different approval levels, additional requirements, and the conditions and modalities that must be met in certain cases (see annex V). Several organizations have various scenarios for teleworking at the duty station to address specific situations. For instance, UNHCR allows full-time teleworking for the duration of assignment or contract upon initial appointment. Table 13 provides an overview of the different options and modalities for teleworking at the duty station, which do not require compelling personal circumstances or equivalent conditions and/or approval from a higher management level. Table 14 shows the options and modalities in which such requirements (compelling personal circumstances or equivalent reasons, additional approval or consultation) must be met.

Table 13

**Teleworking at the duty station (without additional requirements)**

<i>Teleworking at the duty station: scenarios that do not require compelling personal circumstances, equivalent conditions, higher management approval and/or consultation with human resources</i>			
<i>Maximum 2 days</i>	<i>Maximum 3 days</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Other scenarios</i>
FAO IMO ITU UNDP UNESCO UN-Women UPU WMO	ICAO ILO ITC UNFPA UNIDO United Nations Secretariat (incl. UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat and UNODC) WIPO <sup>a</sup>	UNAIDS UNDP UNHCR UNICEF UN-Women WFP	IAEA: up to 24 days per calendar year ILO: up to 10 consecutive working days per calendar month UNFPA: alternating weeks (5 consecutive days); two-week periods (10 consecutive working days) UNHCR: full teleworking upon initial appointment UNICEF: blended approach: e.g. alternating teleworking with on-site work (5 days in office; 5 days telework) UNRWA: 5 working days per month WFP: teleworking for a duration equal to/less than 90 consecutive calendar days; intermittent teleworking on alternative days (e.g. once or twice per week or several days per month) WHO: up to 5 days per month WIPO: occasional teleworking: on an ad hoc basis for limited periods – subject to a maximum of 30 days per calendar year <sup>b</sup>

*Source:* Prepared by JIU, based on the flexible working arrangement policies of the participating organizations.

<sup>a</sup> WIPO is reviewing its flexible working arrangement policy; the new policy, expected to enter into force on 1 January 2024, provides for a maximum of 2 days per week teleworking at the duty station.

<sup>b</sup> As of 1 January 2024, occasional teleworking up to a maximum of 40 days per calendar year.

Table 14  
**Teleworking at the duty station (with additional requirements)**

<i>Teleworking at the duty station: scenarios requiring compelling personal circumstances, equivalent conditions and/or approval from higher management level</i>		
<i>More than 2–3 days per week</i>	<i>Full-time teleworking for a consecutive period</i>	<i>Other scenarios</i>
ITC ITU: medical reason justifying teleworking United Nations Secretariat (incl. UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat and UNODC)	FAO: preferably not exceeding 3 months (specific compelling personal circumstances or particular health reasons) WIPO: exceptional full-time teleworking arrangement (compelling personal circumstances, e.g. temporary medical condition) for a limited period on a case-by-case basis, normally limited to a maximum of 6 months	UNRWA: taken in days per week or continuous periods not exceeding 60 calendar days a year (for extenuating personal circumstances); exceptional teleworking on a regular and prolonged basis from 61 to 180 calendar days a year (for compassionate reasons with proper relevant supporting documentation) WHO: exceptional teleworking for more than 5 days per calendar month ITU: a regular part of the work week (to accommodate personal situations)

*Source:* Prepared by JIU, based on the flexible working arrangement policies of the participating organizations.

91. **Teleworking outside the duty station.** Except for UNESCO, all the participating organizations allow teleworking outside the duty station. There are substantial differences among organizations in terms of the maximum allowed duration of this modality, the underlying conditions and requirements and other aspects, such as possible adjustment to benefits and entitlements. In several organizations, teleworking outside the duty station for a specific maximum duration may only be approved if the staff member concerned faces compelling personal circumstances. For example, at the United Nations Secretariat and ITC, consideration may be given to allow teleworking outside the duty station for up to six months (with a possible one-time extension for another three months, in exceptional cases). Some organizations allow this modality without the requirement of compelling personal circumstances or equivalent conditions for a specific limited duration. For instance, at UNICEF and WFP, teleworking outside the duty station may be allowed for up to 90 days; at UNFPA, for up to 60 days; and at UNAIDS and WIPO, for up to 30 days. Some entities (e.g. ILO, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP) provide for additional long-term teleworking outside the duty station scenarios beyond the maximum duration, subject to additional approval requirements and/or conditions. At UNFPA, an exceptional extension beyond 60 days is possible for six months to up to one year, subject to the approval of the Director of Human Resources. UNHCR provides for an exceptional extension beyond 90 calendar days per calendar year upon prior approval of the Director of the Regional Bureau, the Director of the Division or the Head of the Service Centre. Several entities make additional teleworking outside the duty station scenarios available. For instance, UNHCR may allow this modality from the beginning of a regular or temporary assignment/appointment for the entire duration of the said appointment/assignment. ILO provides that, in exceptional circumstances, authorization to telework outside the duty station may be granted for an appropriate duration not exceeding 63 working days over a 12-month period. If the serious and compelling circumstances that gave rise to the initial arrangement are continuing, consideration may be given to an extension of the arrangement for up to an additional 63 working days.<sup>70</sup> Table 15 provides an overview of the maximum period allowed for teleworking outside the duty station, while annex VI contains additional details on the arrangement for all the organizations.

<sup>70</sup> ILO Policy on flexible working arrangements, Office directive IGDS No. 640-version 1, para. 46.

Table 15

**Maximum duration of teleworking outside the duty station (without compelling personal circumstances)**

<i>Maximum duration (per calendar year)</i>							<i>Options/extensions with additional requirements</i>
<i>10 days</i>	<i>3 weeks</i>	<i>24 days</i>	<i>30 days</i>	<i>60 days</i>	<i>70 days</i>	<i>90 days</i>	
ITU	ICAO	FAO	ILO UNAIDS WIPO	UNFPA	UNOPS	UNHCR UNICEF WFP WHO	UNHCR: Entire duration of initial appointment/assignment UNHCR: up to one year upon prior approval of Regional Bureau Director/Division Director/Head of Service Centre UNICEF: up to one calendar year upon approval of Regional Director and Division Director UNOPS: over 70 days in a calendar year UNFPA: Up to one-year extension with approval of Human Resources Director WFP: more than one year must be endorsed by Regional/Country/Division Director and approved by Human Resources Director UNDP: no limitation, as per policy UN-Women: uses UNDP policy, no limitation ILO: not exceeding 63 working days over a 12-month period (with possible extension for an additional 63 working days) in exceptional circumstances

Source: Prepared by JIU, based on the policies of the participating organizations.

92. **Adjustment to benefits and entitlements if teleworking outside of duty station beyond established maximum duration.** Organizations foresee possible adjustments to benefits and entitlements when an employee requests to telework outside the duty station, notably when the established maximum duration is exceeded. The adjustments may concern the staff member's salary and related allowances and entitlements, travel, mobility and relocation, and social security benefits (see table 16). Some policies contain additional provisions, for instance, on travel-related costs between the official duty station and the alternate teleworking location, costs for administrative arrangements (e.g. obtaining visas), the impact on and possible required changes to medical evacuation options, medical insurance coverage, visa status, privileges and immunities in accordance with the organization's internal policies and the legal requirements of the host country. At the same time, not all flexible working arrangement policies contain detailed provisions on adjustments to benefits and entitlements if teleworking outside the duty station beyond the established maximum duration (see table 17).

Table 16

**Benefits and entitlements that may be subject to adjustment in case of teleworking outside the duty station beyond the established maximum duration**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Subject to adjustment</i>
Salaries and related allowances	General Service and national Professional staff:
	- Net base salary
	International Professional staff and higher categories:
	- Post adjustment
	- Rental subsidy
	- Overtime compensation
Travel, mobility and relocation	- Education and/or special education grant
	Danger pay, rest and recuperation, home leave (accrual of credit points), non-family service allowance, hardship allowance, mobility incentive, special leave with full pay
Social security	Health and life insurance
	Compensation for service-incurred death, injury and illness

Source: Prepared by JIU, based on the policies of the participating organizations.

Table 17

**Extent of policy coverage relating to adjustment to benefits and entitlements in case of teleworking outside the duty station beyond the established maximum duration**

<i>Policies with detailed provisions</i>	<i>Policies with general provisions</i>	<i>Policies with limited provisions</i>	<i>Policies without specific provisions</i>
ILO, ITC, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, United Nations Secretariat, UNOPS, UNRWA, WFP, WIPO	ICAO, IMO, ITU, UNAIDS, WHO	UNDP, UN-Women, UNWTO, UPU, WMO	IAEA, FAO

Source: Prepared by JIU, based on the policies of the participating organizations.

**93. Good practices for the implementation of teleworking outside the duty station.**

Some flexible working arrangement policies (e.g. those of UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP) contain clear provisions, including annexes, on the impact and possible adjustments to staff members' remuneration, benefits and entitlements in the case of teleworking outside the duty station beyond the established maximum duration. Additional guidance is also included on, inter alia, costs relating to travel, administrative arrangements (e.g. obtaining visas), the impact on visa status, privileges and immunities, medical insurance coverage and legal requirements of the host country. **The inclusion of detailed provisions on the adjustment of benefits and entitlements, as well information on potential implications for visa status, remuneration, social security benefits and other entitlements, into the organization's flexible working arrangement policy is a good practice that could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of teleworking outside the duty station.** The adjustment of benefits and entitlements in the case of teleworking outside the duty station beyond the established maximum duration is discussed in chapter VIII, with a view to achieving system-wide coherence.

**Considerations for improving other policy areas**

**94. Teleworkability<sup>71</sup> of functions not always explicit in policy provisions.** Several recently revised policies include general provisions indicating that flexible working arrangements and/or certain options are not suitable for certain functions, job categories and/or services. For example, UNHCR states that "requests may be denied for reasons including but not limited to incompatibility with the staff member's functions, the need for physical presence, access to technology, security environment or due to the exigencies of service."<sup>72</sup> However, general provisions may be insufficient as policy guidance, notably for organizations with a field presence and/or for specialized technical agencies. The global health emergency imposed and expanded teleworking for most occupational categories of the United Nations system workforce, including groups of personnel that did not telework or did so rarely before the COVID-19 pandemic. **The participating organizations should determine with more clarity the job profiles that are suited to teleworking, and what job or task characteristics determine teleworkability, with a view to enhancing policy provisions in this area.**

**95. Teleworking does not dispense with core working hours.** Several flexible working arrangement policies have clear provisions that teleworkers must observe the core working hours. The WMO policy states that "the normal hours of work and core working hours apply to staff members who telework, and staff must be contactable during those hours".<sup>73</sup> According to the WIPO policy, "supervisors may establish core days and/or core hours, when all team members must be working and/or present on WIPO premises, for example for meetings and other team-wide activities".<sup>74</sup> Certain organizations, for example, the United Nations Secretariat, have discussed the possibility of abolishing core working hours for

<sup>71</sup> See, for example, Enrique Fernández-Macías and Martina Bisello, "A taxonomy of tasks for assessing the impact of new technologies on work" (Seville, Spain, European Commission, 2020).

<sup>72</sup> UNHCR, Policy on flexible work (UNHCR/HCP/2022/04), para. 22.

<sup>73</sup> WMO Teleworking policy, service note No. 1/2023, annex, para. 9.

<sup>74</sup> WIPO, Policy on working hours and flexible working arrangements, Office instruction No. 19/2021 (October 2021), para. 13.

teleworkers. United Nations staff unions have also voiced that proposal. Different views have been expressed thereon by various interviewees from different organizations. Most were in favour of maintaining core working hours for teleworking personnel. **Clearly defining core working hours in the appropriate policy documents would be in the interest of the organization and would support organizing work effectively, notably in hybrid team settings and programme delivery. At the same time, flexible working arrangement policy guidance should provide for the possibility of granting exceptions for individual staff members, based on a case-by-case assessment and in line with the applicable provisions, so as to accommodate particular needs and circumstances.**

96. **Caveats pertaining to some concepts.** Many flexible working arrangement policies refer to concepts such as “commuting distance”, “exigencies of service” and “duty station-specific needs” that are intended to help managers exercise their discretion when dealing with individual cases. Their meanings vary among organizations and their implementation is not uniform across the United Nations system. The lack of definitional clarity and specific guidance leaves those concepts open to individual and varying interpretations by both the personnel requesting a flexible working arrangement and the managers responsible for approving the requests. This may lead to actual or perceived unequal application of flexible working arrangement policies, which may impede their coherent, fair and equitable implementation across the organizations or within the same organization, as well as negatively impact personnel morale. Lack of clarity may also affect accountability and make the monitoring of compliance difficult.

97. **Clarifying the concept of duty station area.** In general, organizations do not define or link the concepts of “duty station area” and “commuting distance” in their flexible working arrangement policies. However, these concepts are key for distinguishing teleworking at and outside the duty station. **The Inspector encourages the participating organizations to introduce in the relevant policies a clear stipulation or definition of “duty station area”. For the purpose of any flexible working arrangement policy offering teleworking modalities, the concept of “duty station area” should be understood as comprising the duty station to which the staff member has been assigned, as indicated in the letter of appointment, and any area within commuting distance.**

98. **A quantifiable concept of commuting distance.** The prevalence of teleworking in the “new normal” shines a different light on the concept of commuting distance. A clear definition of commuting distance would better support the application of the provision on exigencies of service, whereby teleworking personnel would be required to reach the office at short notice. Many flexible working arrangement policies do not explicitly define commuting distance. The policies of 12 organizations do not contain provisions on commuting distance, while the policies of another 12 organizations do, but the definitions are not quantifiable. For instance, the United Nations Secretariat and UNOPS explicitly define commuting distance in their flexible working arrangement policies as “a distance between the alternate workplace and the assigned office at the duty station that would still allow the staff member to commute to work every day when not telecommuting and be able to come to and be physically present at the office during the required working hours when requested, including at short notice”.<sup>75</sup> WIPO provides a definition in its recently updated flexible working arrangement-related guidance, which should be taken into consideration in determining reasonable commuting distance.<sup>76</sup> A few organizations, including FAO, ILO, UNESCO and UNICEF, define commuting distance in their flexible working arrangement policies by specifying quantifiable details, such as commuting distance in kilometres or miles and/or commuting time in hours (see table 18), which the Inspector considers a good practice. In general, the policy provisions on commuting distance, notably those that are quantified, apply to headquarters only. A few policies (e.g. that of UNICEF) specify that each head of

<sup>75</sup> United Nations Secretariat, information circular on flexible working arrangements (SC/IC/2019/15), footnote 1 on page 11/19.

<sup>76</sup> See WIPO, Working hours and flexible working arrangements– questions and answers, para. 44: “Locations outside a radius of 80 km (100 km as of 1 January 2024) from WIPO premises are generally considered outside the area of the duty station ... As a general guideline, you should be able to reach the office, if required, on the same day within 1h/1h30 (taking traffic into account) ... If this is not possible, the location may not be considered within reasonable commuting distance.”

field office shall define the area within which teleworking can be considered to be within commuting distance.

99. **There is no conclusive evidence as to how the concept of commuting distance is applied in practice.** While some policy documents contain references to “commuting distance”, no conclusive evidence was provided by the officials interviewed as to how this provision is actually implemented in terms of compliance, notably in conjunction with the exigencies of service provision (including the staff member’s obligation to report to the office at short notice, if needed). In addition, no compelling arguments were provided as to why the stipulated maximum commuting distance is considered optimal for the organization. The lack of exact definitions for commuting distance and duty station area in some organizations affects accountability and makes monitoring compliance difficult, as the two terms are key criteria for distinguishing teleworking at the duty station from teleworking outside the duty station. To make the concept of commuting distance quantifiable, participating organizations may use specific criteria such as maximum commuting time to reach the office, maximum commuting distance to the office or a combination thereof to avoid ambiguity. For additional clarity, the policy guidance may include other relevant details, such as factors determining the commuting time, what should be taken into consideration when deciding on a reasonable commuting distance, as well as indicating the maximum commuting time. Moreover, the provision on maximum commuting distance should be reviewed periodically, as should the flexible working arrangement policy itself.

Table 18

**Definition/description of “commuting distance” in flexible working arrangement policies**

<i>Headquarters</i>	<i>No policy provisions</i>	<i>Defined, but not quantified</i>	<i>Quantified (commuting distance or time)</i>	<i>Quantified (commuting distance and time)</i>
New York	UNDP UNFPA UN-Women	United Nations Secretariat	UNICEF (New York): within 50 miles of Manhattan (i.e. within the tri-state area of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut)	
Geneva	ITC ITU UNAIDS UNHCR WIPO WMO	UNCTAD WHO	ILO: a reasonable commuting distance that would enable the staff member to travel to the office on the same day within 2 hours	WIPO: within 80 km (100 km as of 1 Jan. 2024) of WIPO premises and ability to reach the office on the same day within 1.5 hours
Rome		WFP		FAO: within 100 km of the duty station and approximately 1.5 hours travel time
Vienna	IAEA	UNIDO UNODC		
Paris			UNESCO: distance between the employee’s telecommuting location and the office premises that allows the employee to reach the office within 2 hours <sup>a</sup>	
Copenhagen		UNOPS		
Nairobi		UNEP UN-Habitat		

Other headquarter locations	UNRWA (Amman) UPU (Bern)	ICAO (Montreal) IMO (London) UNWTO (Madrid)		
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Source: Prepared by JIU.

<sup>a</sup> UNESCO Administrative circular AC/HR/84, introducing the policy on flexible working arrangements (April 2022), annex I – HR Manual Item 16.13 on flexible working arrangements, para. 11.

100. The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to enhance compliance and accountability by establishing clear-cut teleworking criteria to facilitate rigorous implementation of the organizations' policies at the main offices/headquarters and in field locations.

#### Recommendation 5

**The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations who have not yet done so should ensure, by 2025, that a quantifiable definition of “commuting distance” is included in their organization’s policy guidance on flexible working arrangements, for headquarters and field duty stations, in order to improve compliance with the exigencies of service provision. The executive heads should ensure that the commuting distance for field duty stations is established and reviewed, as appropriate, in close cooperation with all United Nations system entities physically present at the country level, under the auspices of the resident coordinators.**

101. **Reducing ambiguity concerning the concepts of exigencies of service, compelling personal circumstances and duty station-specific needs and realities.** Flexible working arrangement policies contain references to terms and concepts such as “duty station-specific needs and realities”, “exigencies of service” (or similar wording, such as “needs of the organization” or “organizational interest”) and “compelling personal circumstances” (or equivalent terms such as “unique personal circumstances” or “provisions to accommodate personal situations”). While these concepts are rarely defined in the policies, additional guidance on how they should be understood and applied have been developed or issued by only a few organizations. Some policies (e.g. those of UNHCR and WHO) include stipulations that certain provisions may be applied differently by the different duty stations and offices, taking into account the circumstances and conditions in the respective contexts. For instance, UNHCR notes that “certain locations may face more challenges in being able to take advantage of some options; therefore flexible work options should be adapted to respond to duty station-specific realities and needs”.<sup>77</sup> WHO states that “the categories of FWA set out in this policy may be adopted and applied by Major Offices for staff members in accordance with their exigencies of service and local conditions”.<sup>78</sup> The use of broad terms that are open to interpretation and different understandings may lead to situations whereby the policy is implemented in different ways. For instance, interviewees from several organizations stated that some heads of office had put in place certain restrictions and limitations, such as reducing the number of days that staff can telework in a week or requesting that staff be present in the office on specific days of the week. The staff considered that those limitations were not justified and questioned why they were applied only in their offices. Another example mentioned by several interviewees was line managers' interpretation of “compelling personal circumstances”, which meant that flexible work may be approved for some staff members, but not others, which led to a feeling of unfair and inequitable implementation of the policy and negatively impacted staff morale. Hence, developing further guidance, complemented by a non-exhaustive list of sample scenarios, situations and cases would be helpful. **Participating organizations that have not yet done so should develop and issue additional guidance for the operational concepts and provisions commonly used in flexible working arrangement policies, such as “exigencies**

<sup>77</sup> UNHCR Policy on flexible work (UNHCR/HCP/2022/04), para. 13.

<sup>78</sup> WHO eManual, section III.6.28 on flexible working arrangements, para. 30.

of service” and “personal compelling circumstances”, as well as guidance on clauses authorizing heads of offices to take into account office-specific needs when considering flexible working arrangement requests, in order to enhance clarity, consistency, and fair and equitable implementation of the policy across the organization. In doing so, an adequate balance between the need for sufficient detail while still allowing the necessary degree of flexibility should be considered so that the guidance is not too prescriptive and allows managers to exercise discretion in implementing the policy in accordance with their delegated authority, taking into consideration the specific circumstances of each individual case. The guidance should be made available to staff at large, as well as managers, through the appropriate communication channels.

#### **Flexible working arrangements policy provisions for mitigating implementation risks**

102. **Including an implementation risk mitigation matrix in the flexible working arrangements policy is a good practice.** UNICEF and UNFPA have included risk matrices that identify risks and proposes mitigation measures in their flexible working arrangement policies.<sup>79</sup> The matrices list typical flexible working arrangement-related risks and outline the minimum expected mitigation measures. As can be seen from the examples of UNICEF and UNFPA, the matrix can be more specific and detailed in covering flexible working arrangement-related operational risks and suitable mitigation activities than the corporate risks register that covers an organization’s entire risk universe and exposure. **The Inspector suggests that risk matrices outlining the typical risks associated with the implementation of flexible working arrangements be developed and incorporated into the organizations’ flexible working arrangement policies.** However, doing that does not dispense the organizations from adequately addressing and mitigating risks relating to the implementation of flexible working arrangements through their enterprise risk management processes and corporate risk registers. A model of a risk matrix, prepared based on the examples of UNICEF and UNFPA, can be found in annex VII.

#### **Periodic review and continuous improvement of flexible working arrangement policy guidance**

103. **Review practices relating to flexible working arrangement policies vary across organizations.** The organizations were surveyed with regard to their practices in reviewing their flexible working arrangement policies. Several organizations indicated that they planned to review and amend their policies, as necessary, within a time frame of one to three years. The policies of some organizations already contain provisions for periodic review and update, while many policies lack such clauses (see table 19). **The Inspector encourages the participating organizations to regularly review the relevance and adequacy of their flexible working arrangement policies, as well as any interrelated policies, to assess whether they are still fit for purpose. Explicitly providing for periodic policy review in the policy guidance is not only a good practice, but also a requirement.**

<sup>79</sup> UNICEF Procedure on flexible working arrangements (PROCEDURE/DHR/2022/003), Risk management, p. 12; and UNFPA Policy and procedures on flexible working arrangements (February 2022), sect. IV, Risk control matrix, pp. 12–14. UNFPA FWA Toolkit (February 2022) provides additional guidance and information on flexible working arrangement-related risks and concerns.



Table 19

**Practices relating to the review of flexible working arrangement policies in the participating organizations**

<i>Policies without specific provisions for policy review</i>	<i>Policies containing specific provisions for regular policy review</i>	<i>Established procedure or general requirement for mandatory review of all organizational policies</i>
FAO IAEA ICAO IMO ITC ITU UNAIDS UNCTAD <sup>a</sup> UNDP UNEP <sup>a</sup> UNESCO UN-Habitat <sup>a</sup> United Nations Secretariat UNODC <sup>a</sup> UNOPS UNRWA UN-Women <sup>b</sup> UNWTO UPU WFP WHO WIPO WMO	ILO: current policy (2023) provides for a review after an initial period of 18 months, and every three years thereafter  UNHCR: current policy (2022) is being updated and prescribes the next review no later than Sept 2024  UNIDO: current policy (2022) was assessed by the Joint Advisory Committee after the initial year of implementation	UNFPA: current policy (2022) was subject to a mandatory review in February 2023  UNICEF: current policy (2023) provides for a mandatory review every three years

Source: Prepared by JIU.

<sup>a</sup> These organizations follow the policy of the United Nations Secretariat.

<sup>b</sup> UN-Women follows the policy of UNDP.

### C. Process for requesting and approving flexible working arrangements

104. **Flexible working arrangement policies have been enhanced by the inclusion of more elaborate provisions on the approval process.** The desk review of flexible working arrangement policies, including the recently revised ones, revealed that many organizations had included additional provisions and more detailed guidance on procedures, which serve to enhance the approval process. The additions outline the key procedural steps and requirements relating to the approval of flexible working arrangement requests, such as the modality for submitting the request, consultation between staff member and line manager, time frame for approval and the conditions for early discontinuation of flexible working arrangement agreements.

105. **Paradigm shift towards more flexibility is reflected in the approval process.** In general, the approval process reflects the paradigm shift towards work flexibility. Some recently revised policies contain, inter alia, clauses stating that flexible working arrangement requests should be considered favourably if all the conditions are met, specifying a time frame within which managers must make a decision on requests, and requiring managers to provide the reasons in writing if a request is rejected.

106. **Consultation between staff member and manager during the approval process.** Most flexible working arrangement policies contain provisions requiring that requests be discussed by the staff member concerned and the line manager, and other relevant persons such as the team manager or head of office, mostly in the case of non-standard requests. According to some policies, the discussion is intended to clarify the requirements and conditions, as well as the impact of the arrangement on the staff member, the manager and

the team, so as to arrive at a mutual understanding of the agreement and the associated implications.

**107. Pre-approval consultation between staff member and manager: strength or weakness?** According to the flexible working arrangement policies examined, the pre-approval consultation between the staff member and the manager is a key policy provision for the approval process. Such a provision embodies the discretionary power of the manager to accept or deny the request informally. While the provision is aimed, arguably, at rendering the flexible working arrangement agreement effective, it also introduces and legitimizes a certain degree of informality in the approval process.

**108. A high level of informality in the flexible working arrangement approval process.** Very often, flexible working arrangement requests are discussed and agreed offline prior to the staff member inputting the request formally into the organization's system. One of the main grievances raised by several interviewees was the practice of managers handling flexible working arrangement requests informally and offline, and sometimes dissuading staff from introducing a written request. This finding corroborates the grievances presented and discussed during formal staff-management meetings in several organizations, before and after the pandemic. The same practice was perceived as a vehicle for perpetuating a conservative managerial culture that translated into actual or perceived arbitrary rejections of flexible working arrangement requests, which undermined efforts to create a more harmonious work-life balance. It also points to a potential implementation gap between policy and practice. Officials from some participating organizations acknowledged that certain managerial behaviours needed to be addressed and expressed the view that issuing additional guidance capturing the issues of concern would contribute to improving the situation.

**109. Permissibility to request is a key foundational principle of the flexible working arrangement concept.** The practice of dissuading staff from introducing a written flexible working arrangement request and handling requests informally can distort the perception of compliance with policy provisions. While consultation between staff and managers may be useful, the staff member concerned should be able to submit a formal request for a flexible working arrangement either before or after such consultation. In contrast to the approaches taken by many national and international organizations (e.g. the European Commission), the United Nations system organizations do not specify the "right to request" flexible working arrangements. Nonetheless, the "permissibility to request" is a key foundational principle of the flexible working arrangement concept in the United Nations system. If there was no such permissibility, no flexible working arrangement policy could have materialized. All the flexible working arrangement policies promulgated by the participating organizations are based on the premise that personnel may request to avail themselves of a flexible working arrangement or a combination thereof, as provided for in the organization's policy.

**110. Making the approval process more transparent and accountable.** Eliminating the informal element from the approval process and operationalizing the "permissibility to request" principle by elevating the formal request as the first step in the approval process would be effective ways of overcoming both cultural barriers and weaknesses in the flexible working arrangement policy design. This means, in practice, doing away with informal discussions and consultations between the staff member concerned and manager(s) prior to submission of the formal flexible working arrangement request in the organization's management system and/or ERP system. Such consultations and discussions may take place once the request has been submitted. The Inspector believes that the introduction of this procedure in the policy guidance and formalized consideration of flexible working arrangement requests could improve the transparency and accountability of the approval process. **The Inspector encourages the participating organizations to revise the procedures of the flexible working arrangement approval process, by making the submission of a formal request for a flexible working arrangement the first procedural step, followed by employee-manager(s) consultations, if required.**

## **Special approval for flexible working arrangements on medical grounds and other exceptional cases**

**111. Policy provisions for granting flexible working arrangements on medical grounds.** The flexible working arrangement policies of seven organizations (ITC, UNAIDS, UNICEF, the United Nations Secretariat, UPU, WHO and WIPO) contain provisions stating that flexible working arrangements may exceptionally be granted for medical reasons. For example, a staff member may be allowed to telework full time for a limited period in order to accommodate specific exceptional circumstances owing to a temporary medical condition and/or to accommodate medical restrictions or limitations. Such arrangements are usually subject to additional approval requirements and layers such as, in many cases, prior approval of the Director of Human Resources, who must take into account the recommendation of the organization's medical adviser or medical service, before being approved by the line manager. Such requests are reviewed and decided on a case-by-case basis, and are granted on an exceptional basis, if all the conditions are fulfilled. The flexible working arrangement policy of the United Nations Secretariat states that "certain components of the flexible working arrangements may be advised by the Medical Director or a duly authorized medical officer as being suitable to accommodate medical restrictions or limitations as part of a time-limited return-to-work programme. In line with the general principles of reasonable accommodations for short-term disability, if that advice is rejected, the manager would be required to establish that the requested accommodations represent a disproportionate or undue burden on the workplace".<sup>80</sup> In its policy, UPU provides that "the Union's medical adviser may recommend certain flexible working arrangements to accommodate medical restrictions or limitations as part of a time-limited return-to-work programme. In line with the general principles of reasonable accommodations for short-term disability, any such arrangements, to be decided by the Director General, shall not represent a disproportionate or undue burden on the workplace."<sup>81</sup>

**112. Further clarification needed for the role of the medical service in the flexible working arrangements approval process.** The Medical Service can only provide expert advice and opinion on medical issues and grounds; the decision-making authority still rests with the supervisor and the additional approval levels, notably the Director of Human Resources and, in some cases, higher-level managers. In practice, it is generally difficult to distinguish those types of special flexible working arrangement requests from cases requesting reasonable accommodation<sup>82</sup> based on medical grounds, which is governed by other policies. During the interviews, officials from some organizations indicated that there was some confusion as to the role of the Medical Service in the approval process. **The Inspector suggests that the status of expert advice from the Medical Service in the flexible working arrangement approval process should be clearly stipulated and specified in the policy guidance, in order to avoid confusion and to ensure that decisions are made in line with policy provisions.**

**113. A tiered approval process with different levels of approval.** The authority to approve standard flexible working arrangement requests usually rests with the line manager or first reporting officer/supervisor. Requests for teleworking at the duty station beyond the established maximum number of days per week and for teleworking outside the duty station beyond the established maximum duration require additional approvals and/or consultations, for instance of the head of the department, unit or service, head of office and/or the Director of Human Resources. Hence, depending on the type of flexible working arrangement request and the reason for it, different levels of approval and processes apply. More detailed provisions, including indication of when several levels of approval are required, would provide clarification for all parties involved in the process and would serve as an implicit mechanism for checks and balances and as a risk mitigation measure. The involvement of senior managers and/or human resources, where indicated, notably for the more complicated and exceptional cases, would ensure compliance with the applicable provisions. However, in practice, some organizations subject standard flexible working arrangement requests, notably

<sup>80</sup> ST/SGB/2019/3, para. 2.2.

<sup>81</sup> UPU, Administrative instruction (DRH) No. 48 on flexible working arrangements (30 May 2022), para. 7.

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, JIU/REP/2023/4, chap. V, in particular paras. 88 and 90.

regular teleworking at the duty station, to several levels of approval. As an explanation of the need for a tiered approval mechanism, management has claimed that, “while the first reporting officer often has the best visibility of work circumstances, higher-level managers often also have an interest in office attendance requirements”.<sup>83</sup> Some staff representatives and human resources experts interviewed for the present review acknowledged that such managerial approaches to regulate the “flexibility” provided for in the updated flexible working arrangement policies were not entirely justified. **The Inspector encourages the executive heads of the participating organizations to carefully consider the level of approval needed for standard flexible working arrangement requests and to ensure that they reflect the authority and role of line-managers and/or supervisors to grant flexible working arrangement requests and an organizational culture that supports flexible working arrangements in line with the policies, as well as a hybrid working environment.**

114. **Flexible working arrangement agreements.** Not all policy documents contain sufficiently detailed provisions on flexible working arrangement agreements and/or templates, forms and annexes. **A flexible working arrangement agreement must be established for each approved flexible working arrangement, with details on the selected flexible working arrangement option, the duration and relevant conditions, so as to ensure transparency, accountability and monitoring. The agreement (in electronic and/or paper format) must clearly indicate the flexible working arrangement option and must be signed by the staff member and the relevant manager/supervisor, as applicable. Based on existing good practices, the approved duration of any flexible working arrangement should not be longer than one year, with the possibility of renewal in accordance with the relevant policy provisions. Furthermore, the flexible working arrangement agreement forms should be streamlined and simplified so as not to be perceived as burdensome by staff and managers. All necessary forms should be made available in electronic format. Flexible working arrangement agreements may be renewed on an ad hoc basis, subject to the approval of the respective line manager or supervisor, as appropriate.**

115. **Role of the human resources function.** Only a few organizations (ITC, UNOPS, the United Nations Secretariat, UPU and WIPO) specify the role of the human resources function in their flexible working arrangement policies. **The Inspector is of the view that including a paragraph in the policy guidance on the role of the human resources function in relation to flexible working arrangements, for instance, to provide advice on the implementation of teleworking modalities, monitor the application thereof, review requests to telework outside of the duty station beyond the established maximum duration, take action on the necessary adjustments to the staff member’s benefits and entitlements in the case of teleworking outside the duty station beyond the established maximum duration, would be a good practice.** Since flexible working arrangements policies do not confer on the human resources function a meaningful role in the implementation of the flexible working arrangements policy, it has little visibility of, and little possibility to support, the request and approval of the arrangement not only from the perspective of work-life balance and organizational effectiveness, but also in terms of technical support, administration and monitoring. **The visibility of the human resources function in the flexible working arrangement approval process would be enhanced by the inclusion of a provision in the policy tasking human resources to, among others, systematically collect information and prepare statistics on approved and rejected requests, as well as on discontinued arrangement agreements, and provide disaggregated data (for each arrangement and modality) to the appropriate management level(s) and the staff unions/associations, upon request or regularly.** Overall, such a measure may also contribute to a more transparent and accountable approval process relating to flexible working arrangement requests and implementation overall.

116. **Good practices pertaining to approval process.** Some policies require that flexible working arrangement requests be submitted and recorded in the organization’s management system and/or ERP system. This requirement not only formalizes the approval process, but

<sup>83</sup> United Nations Staff-Management Committee, Final report SMC X, 23–28 April 2022, para. 75.

also facilitates the monitoring of the use of flexible working arrangements. However, the existing systems do not always allow for the compilation of requests so that managers can have an overview of work schedules and can check for compatibility. Therefore, organizations may wish to develop a monitoring tool to enable the recording of flexible working arrangements for the calendar year. Several policies also stipulate a specific time frame within which the line manager should respond to the request. In addition, a few policies (e.g. ITC and WIPO) contain a clause stating that a request is considered approved if the responsible official does not react in a timely manner. For example, WIPO states that supervisors should promptly approve or reject any request for a flexible working arrangement, and that failure to act within two weeks would trigger an automatic approval of the request in the Administrative Integrated Management System. Some policies go even further and consider a flexible working arrangement request granted if a manager does not react (i.e. respond to and/or request additional time to consider the request) within the set time frame. **The Inspector considers the “default approval” to be a good practice that could make the approval procedure more efficient, and suggests that organizations include, whenever applicable, a specific provision to that effect in their flexible working arrangement policies.** Some policies also require that the supervisor or line manager provide reasons in writing if a request is denied. For instance, under the section on general principles, UNICEF states that, “while approval is a discretionary decision, the approving authority shall inform the staff member of the specific reasons for rejecting a request for flexible work arrangements, in writing, based on the job function, exigencies of service, team collaboration requirements or other prevailing organizational interests”. The Inspector is of the view that the aforementioned provisions make the approval procedure more efficient and are in line with the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work. **Participating organizations that have not yet done so should consider including additional provisions in the next update of their flexible working arrangement policy guidance to make the approval process for flexible working arrangement requests more transparent and efficient (see box 4).**

#### Box 4

##### Provisions for an enhanced and transparent approval process

- Mandatory submission of the formal request in the management system and/or ERP system
- Time frame for approval of requests and automatic approval if there is no reaction on the part of the line manager within the specified time frame
- Consultations between employee and manager(s), if necessary
- “Default” approval of requests if organizational conditions are satisfied
- Mandatory written reasons provided by line manager if a request is rejected
- Use of detailed forms/templates for flexible working arrangement agreements
- Annual review of flexible working arrangement agreements

*Source:* Prepared by JIU, based on good practices in the participating organizations.

117. **Early discontinuation of a flexible working arrangement agreement.** The desk review of flexible working arrangement policy documents found that all policies contain revocation clauses. In general, revocation clauses stipulate that a flexible working arrangement agreement may be deferred or cancelled at any time, if the manager considers that the operational needs of the unit or service necessitate the return to normal working hours and/or the presence of the staff member at the office, or if the staff member’s performance does not meet the requirements for the applicable flexible working arrangement. Some policies provide for early discontinuation of a flexible working arrangement agreement if the underlying conditions change or for exceptional cases. In addition, the policies usually provide a minimum time frame for the staff member to make arrangements to accommodate the change in situation and return to the workplace, for example in the case of teleworking outside the duty station. **The inclusion in the policy guidance of a provision on early discontinuation of flexible working arrangement agreements for justified reasons, notably emergencies and special circumstances, but also performance issues, can be considered a good practice. Such provisions would ensure a balanced approach, taking into consideration the interests of both the organization and the staff member, and would reflect the voluntary nature of flexible working arrangements, subject to the**

**general condition of exigencies of service.** An adequate time frame should be foreseen for the early discontinuation of a flexible working arrangement, so that the staff member concerned can make the necessary arrangements to return to the office, notably in the case of teleworking outside the duty station, and the reason(s) for the discontinuation should be communicated in writing.

## V. Drivers and enablers of flexible working arrangements

### A. Information and communications technology-based solutions to enable flexible working arrangements and new ways of working

118. **A reliable digital environment is indispensable for effective flexible working arrangements and hybrid working models.** Responses to the JIU questionnaire indicated that the pre-pandemic ICT infrastructure, including the cybersecurity framework, in several organizations was not fully fit for purpose. For instance, not all the organizations had in place the required communication and meeting tools and software, and the personnel did not have remote access to documents or to the ERP system or similar systems to facilitate teleworking. The global health emergency highlighted the need to equip personnel with proper tools and technology to work not only on site but also remotely. It incentivized all the organizations to look at, adjust and upgrade their ICT systems and infrastructure to accommodate and support the new work realities, and the new ways of working in the “next normal”. Among others, laptops were provided and the required communication, meeting and other ICT tools were made available to personnel working off-site. Web-based and cloud-based systems and tools that are accessible remotely and securely were enhanced. Despite the improvements, several organizations reported some challenges, such as limited resources for adapting and upgrading systems to adequately support teleworking and hybrid work, weak awareness on the part of the personnel of ICT security, information security, and cybersecurity protocols and risks, and the lack of related training.

119. **Cybersecurity is an area in which more needs to be done.** Many organizations indicated that cybersecurity was a continually growing and evolving risk, notably owing to the increased use of remote devices, web-based and cloud systems and tools, and various communication, meeting and data- and document-sharing platforms and systems.<sup>84</sup> The use of personal devices (e.g. laptops, tablets, smartphones) to access business networks has caused additional vulnerabilities and security risks, since personal devices are not part of the organization’s ICT infrastructure and are not protected by the same security system (e.g. firewalls and anti-virus software) that protects the network. With the risks of loss and theft, malware and viruses and unverified applications, security risks, in terms of data breaches, have increased even more. Unencrypted file-sharing through third-party cloud services and email services creates additional risks as employees share a lot of sensitive information daily, from work data to classified information. Stolen information can lead to ransomware attacks, theft and reputational risk. Improperly configured home Wi-Fi networks are another risk factor. Finally, working from home means unprotected access to the Internet from business-provided (corporate laptop) and/or personal devices, which increases the risks of phishing email attacks.

120. **Ensuring a secure and resilient digital environment.** The risks related to ICT and cybersecurity, including those listed above, underscore the need to review, adapt and update ICT systems, infrastructure and tools, and provide adequate training to personnel on their use in order to effectively support new and hybrid ways of working. More specifically, as some organizations noted, it is important to ensure that personnel have proper technology and tools to telework, notably in field contexts. **The Inspector encourages organizations to ensure the digital and cyber literacy of their personnel, review options for further consolidation of a secure and resilient digital environment, and reflect the outcome in the organization’s ICT policy and action frameworks, as appropriate.**

<sup>84</sup> See JIU/REP/2021/3 on cybersecurity in the United Nations system organizations.

## B. Tools to assess, monitor and leverage flexible working arrangements

### **Fit-for-purpose flexible working arrangement data-collection tools, with adequate analytical capacities**

121. **Importance of data collection as an enabler for effective flexible working arrangements management.** Fit-for-purpose data collection systems and tools, and adequate analytical capacities and functionalities, are critical for effectively measuring flexible working arrangements usage and their impacts on the organization and personnel, as well for the effective management of the arrangements. The United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work acknowledges the importance of regularly collected anonymized data, disaggregated by gender and other relevant dimensions, to monitor and evaluate the implementation of flexible working arrangement policies and other related internal policies. The Inspector was interested to find out how organizations collect such data, how it is used, shared and communicated with management and other relevant functions. In addition to questions on these issues in the questionnaire and interview guides for the present review, statistical data were requested from organizations on the actual usage of flexible working arrangements offered to personnel.

122. **Inadequate capacity for systematic and comprehensive data collection on flexible working arrangement usage.** Eighteen organizations collect data on flexible working arrangement usage. However, in most of those organizations, the systems and tools used do not have the capacity to collect comprehensive information, that is for all the flexible working arrangement options and/or all duty stations. Furthermore, the existing management systems and tools do not have the necessary analytical and reporting functionalities. Some of the tools do not even have the basic functionalities to create statistics and reports on flexible working arrangement usage. Several organizations use several different systems for different flexible working arrangement options. For instance, teleworking information is captured in a separate system from compressed work schedule information. Some entities use bespoke management systems and applications, which are only used at a specific duty station and which are not connected to other flexible working arrangement tools and systems, so that a systematic and comprehensive collection of data across the organization is impeded. Some organizations (ICAO, ILO, IMO, UNDP, UNRWA, UN-Women, WHO and WIPO) collect data centrally or, at least, have processes and/or systems in place that would enable them to compile, corroborate and cross-reference flexible working arrangement data from different offices and duty stations. Several organizations still collect data manually, at least partially, at certain duty stations and/or for some flexible working arrangement options. For instance, at UN-Women, each section or country office collects data manually, while teleworking may be reported through Atlas, its ERP system. In some organizations, the flexible working arrangement approval process is fully, or partially, integrated in their ERP systems and related information is collected and recorded in that way. Finally, the systems vary as to their functionalities and analytical capacities. Significant differences exist in terms of the detail and completeness of the data collected. Annex IX (Data-collection system and tools for flexible working arrangements) provides an overview of the systems used to collect flexible working arrangement-related data for all the organizations.

123. **Data on flexible working arrangements are partially collected.** Most organizations only partially collect data on flexible working arrangements, for instance, for certain options only. Often, such data collection is done manually, while some organizations use multiple systems to collect data. The United Nations Secretariat collects data on the telecommuting and compressed work schedule options through Umoja, its ERP system, while some duty stations have developed bespoke systems to process flexible working arrangement requests. For example, the system used at United Nations Headquarters (New York) is for teleworking only; the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna (including UNODC) have their own systems and tools, including SharePoint. Hence, there is no single, central system to record and administer the flexible working arrangement process and for collecting the related data. Staff record their time and attendance in Umoja, in accordance with their flexible working arrangement agreements and based on their actual presence in the office. Some information, such as approval documents and reasons for not approving requests, is collected manually,



while the type of arrangement and the compelling reasons are recorded on the template form and collected in the locally used systems.

**124. Collected data are rarely disaggregated.** The different United Nations system organizations do not all collect the same flexible working arrangement-related information. Some organizations collect detailed information, including the option, duration, approval documents and so on, while other entities do not collect all the essential data, notably not for all options and/or not for all duty stations. Many organizations do not link the flexible working arrangement data to personal information, such as the staff member's duty station, functional group, gender and staff category (Professional, General Service and so on). Although the information would be available in other management systems, notably the human resources management systems, any corroboration or cross-referencing for analytical and other purposes often cannot be done automatically, but requires manual intervention. For instance, at UNESCO, data collected on teleworking may be disaggregated by cross-referencing it with data generated from the ERP system. Similarly, at UNEP, flexible working arrangement data include the staff member's index number, which would allow checking it against the available human resources information.

**125. Good practices for recording and collecting disaggregated data.** In organizations in which data on flexible working arrangements are captured through ERP systems, corroboration and cross-analysis can be done automatically, as, for example, at WIPO, which extracts data through queries in the management system, as and when needed. UNICEF has e-tools linked to the ERP system for all flexible working arrangement requests; data are stored in the attendance recording system and available through the InSight dashboards to the different offices and divisions, as needed, and not limited to one particular unit. Data are centrally collected with the necessary detail and aggregation, and the system has reporting capabilities by region, gender and staff category.

**126. A few organizations are working to enhance their ERP systems and flexible working arrangement-related data collection.** Some organizations (e.g. FAO and the United Nations Secretariat) envisage improved flexible working arrangement-related data collection and management systems in the future, with the upgrade of their ERP systems. Work is ongoing at the United Nations Secretariat to develop a flexible working arrangement solution in the ERP system for global use, with anticipated completion by 2024. At WIPO, analytical functionalities and dashboards have been built, which produce real-time data reports. FAO is currently developing a solution intended to enable more detailed reporting, including on teleworking.

**127. Flexible working arrangement-related data collection and analysis need to be improved.** The tools and systems for flexible working arrangement-related data collection and analysis are not adequate. Enhancements are required, notably to make the management and ERP systems fit for purpose to collect, analyse and report on data, including basic statistical data on how many staff use flexible working arrangements and what types of options are used, so as to constitute a repository of flexible working arrangement agreements and key information on requests, including approvals and rejections, for all the options and across the organization, including all duty stations. In addition, analytical and reporting capabilities need to be improved, including reporting functionalities by option and cross-referencing data to human resources information, such as staff category (Professional and General Service), seniority, gender, location (headquarters and field offices), function, unit/department/service, and so on. The approval process and the related data should ideally be fully integrated into the organization's ERP system. That would serve to enhance monitoring, accountability and transparency.

**128. Supporting data-driven management of flexible working arrangements.** Lack of capacity to collect flexible working arrangement-related data centrally and inadequate data collection and analytical tools make it difficult to improve the organizational approach to flexible working arrangements. Addressing the data-collection shortcomings could help organizations to conduct cross-functional analysis and generate evidence as to whether, and to what extent, the assumed benefits of flexible working arrangements have been achieved, and if and how flexible working arrangements have contributed to improvements in other related areas, such as gender parity, inclusion, diversity, attracting/retaining talent, workforce planning and a sustainable environment. It can also underpin a qualitatively improved

reporting to management, the legislative organs and the governing bodies to support informed decision-making.

129. The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to enhance the effectiveness of flexible working arrangements.

#### **Recommendation 6**

**The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations who have not yet done so should review, by 2025, the management systems and tools related to data collection and analysis of flexible working arrangements and ensure that they are upgraded as necessary and fit for purpose, in order to support data-driven and effective management of flexible working arrangements.**

#### **Surveys as additional data-collection tools**

130. **Periodic surveys can reveal trends and patterns concerning flexible working arrangements.** Surveys conducted periodically allow for the identification of trends and patterns over time. Since they are anonymous, confidential and allow staff at large to provide their views and perceptions on specific issues, they are a complementary method of collecting flexible working arrangement-related data. The Inspector was interested to find out how flexible working arrangements and their related aspects are featured in surveys conducted by United Nations system organizations and, in this light, reviewed various surveys conducted across the United Nations system, including staff engagement surveys, pulse surveys, specialized surveys (such as surveys relating specifically to flexible working arrangements, gender, health and well-being, etc.), as well as ad hoc surveys conducted by the staff unions/associations and surveys related to COVID-19.

131. **Staff-focused surveys.** Increasingly and notably during and immediately after the pandemic, flexible working arrangement-related information has been reflected, to varying degrees, in most of the staff-focused surveys. Yet, flexible working arrangement-related aspects have been covered only peripherally in other areas, such as work-life balance, staff well-being, and conditions and modalities of work. Not all organizations necessarily include the topic of flexible working arrangements in their staff surveys and/or pulse surveys. According to the responses to the JIU questionnaire, one third of the participating organizations (namely FAO, ILO, ITC, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, the United Nations Secretariat and UNOPS) included an item on flexible working arrangements in their surveys. However, the degree to which flexible working arrangement-related issues have been covered and how much detail has been included varied. Some surveys may only have a general question on how staff would rate flexibility and work control, while other surveys (e.g. periodic staff surveys) may include one or more questions addressing flexible working arrangements directly. For example, the section on well-being in the ITC Employment Engagement Survey included is a question directly related to flexible working arrangements, seeking staff perception as to whether they were happy with their work-life balance, while the Global Staff Survey conducted by UNFPA included questions seeking the views of staff on flexible working arrangements. The Global Staff Survey conducted by UNICEF sought to measure work-life balance as a dimension that includes flexible working arrangements. The aim was mainly to monitor the degree of support that the organization and managers offer staff to encourage them to work flexibly, as well as the extent to which staff are aware of well-being tools, including flexible working arrangements.

132. **Including questions on flexible working arrangements in staff-focused surveys is a good practice.** Given the common survey structure and methodology, survey results enable analysis against various criteria and by key population groups such as function, grade, seniority and location, which can render the results a useful tool for monitoring, on an ongoing basis, reviewing and improving flexible working arrangements and their implementation, as needed. **In the Inspector's view, including questions relating to flexible working arrangements in periodic staff-focused surveys in order to obtain feedback on the state of those arrangements across the organization is a good practice.** The survey questions may cover areas such as flexible working arrangement awareness,

usage, impediments, perception of supervisors on managing (hybrid) teams and related implications, such as the impact of flexible working arrangements on productivity and performance.

**133. Conducting surveys specifically on flexible working arrangements in the context of flexible working arrangement policy updates is useful.** Only ITC and WIPO have conducted surveys specifically on flexible working arrangements in the context of reviewing and updating their flexible working arrangement policies. The surveys were tailored to their respective policies and the debate on proposed amendments, which were being considered at that time. In terms of coverage, the objective of the surveys was to identify the concerns of staff and managers and identify areas where flexible working arrangements could be enhanced, with a view to using the inputs and results to improving their respective flexible working arrangement policies. The surveys helped to identify a number of areas in the entities' flexible working arrangement policies and practices that could be enhanced, including awareness, usage, impediments, value, productivity, acceptance, organizational and personal impacts and their implementation. **The Inspector suggests that organizations conduct surveys focusing specifically on flexible working arrangements, notably in the context of reviewing their flexible working arrangement policies, as they would provide additional and useful inputs for the continuous improvement of the relevant policies and their implementation.** Survey questions may cover the following areas: flexible working arrangements usage, impediments, impact on staff at large, perception of supervisors on administering flexible working arrangements, and impact of the arrangements on organizational and individual productivity and performance.

### **C. Effective operational implementation of flexible working arrangements: capacity considerations**

#### **Strengthening managerial skills to effectively manage hybrid teams and oversee teleworking**

**134. Enhancing managerial skills for hybrid and remote work settings.** The anticipated increase in the use of flexible working arrangements after the pandemic comes with a number of additional challenges for managers, such as managing hybrid teams (including geographically dispersed teams), overseeing and monitoring remote work and performance management of staff working remotely. That is in addition to possessing the necessary skills to ensure team building, staff motivation and collaboration, and the efficient exchange of information in hybrid work settings and teams. Equipping managers with the skills and expertise to address the new work realities has gained importance.

**135. Fewer than half of the United Nations system organizations provide training relating to flexible working arrangements for managers and staff.** Currently, 12 organizations conduct training relating to flexible working arrangements for managers, while two entities (IAEA and UNFPA) are in the process of developing training courses. Ten organizations offer training relating to flexible working arrangements to their staff members (see table 20). Although there is no specific training on flexible working arrangements offered to managers and/or staff in all the organizations, some, for instance the United Nations Secretariat, offer other related activities, and efforts have been made to support departments, offices and managers, including sessions facilitated by human resources units (in the form of global virtual meetings), and provide clarification on the flexible working arrangement policy and other relevant issues.

Table 20

**Organizations that conducted training on flexible working arrangements for managers and staff (2018–2022)**

<i>Flexible working arrangement-related training for managers</i>	<i>Flexible working arrangement-related training for staff</i>
FAO, ILO, IMO, ITC, ITU, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, United Nations Secretariat, <sup>a</sup> UNOPS, UNWRA and WHO	FAO, IAEA, IMO, ITC, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, United Nations Secretariat, <sup>a</sup> UNOPS, UNWRA and WHO

Source: Prepared by JIU, based on the responses to the JIU questionnaire.

<sup>a</sup> The United Nations Secretariat has conducted other activities aimed at supporting managers and staff on the use of flexible working arrangements.

**136. Types and formats of managerial training on flexible working arrangements vary across organizations.** Training is usually provided in an online format and is voluntary. Training sessions are often conducted in the context of the launch of a new or updated flexible working arrangement policy. Only a few organizations, including UNOPS, offer flexible working arrangement-related training beyond the roll-out of an updated policy. The training for managers generally provides an introduction to the relevant policy, including procedural aspects, and covers topics such as management and leadership of hybrid teams and the overall management of flexible working arrangements, including the use of the relevant tools and systems. Among the organizations that provide training relating to flexible working arrangements to managers, IMO, UNESCO, UNIDO and UNRWA only provide an introduction to flexible working arrangements, while ITC, UNEP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNOPS have more comprehensive training activities, including information sessions on their flexible working arrangement policies and procedures, training to enhance leadership skills in managing hybrid teams, and training to promote inclusion and employee well-being in hybrid team settings. During 2022, UNOPS offered several training courses targeting different audiences, such as instructor-led interactive workshops on embracing flexible and hybrid work to selected leaders in all regions, for which participation was voluntary; a capacity-building course entitled, “LCR hybrid team management and well-being”, in specific regions, as well as training for all supervisors on managing flexible teams, which is in the pilot phase. The UNOPS comprehensive training programme reflects its commitment to equipping both managers and staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively navigate flexible working arrangements in the organization.

**137. Flexible working arrangement-related training for staff.** Staff training primarily focuses on introducing newly approved or revised flexible working arrangement policies, but there may also be information sessions on using the management systems and tools for submitting flexible working arrangement requests and agreements. In some organizations, staff may also benefit from training in similar or related areas, such as working in hybrid teams, conducting hybrid or online meetings, inclusivity in hybrid team settings, time management when working from home, and supporting mental health when working remotely.

**138. Flexible working arrangement-related managerial training is particularly useful in field settings.** While the majority of the officials interviewed welcomed flexible working arrangement-related training for managers and staff, some considered that the existing flexible working arrangement policies and guidelines were clear and effective, and that training was not necessary. Most interviewees agreed that participation in such training should be voluntary; they felt that making it compulsory would add to managers’ workload as they are already required to take many training courses. Providing training comes with costs; therefore, integrating flexible working arrangement training into existing training courses would be the most efficient and effective way to achieve the objective. In terms of topics covered, flexible working arrangement-related training for managers should focus on managing hybrid teams effectively, inclusivity in hybrid work settings, well-being and work-life balance, reviewing and approving requests, including using the related management systems and tools. Several interviewees from organizations with field presences noted that there appeared to be a better understanding of flexible working arrangements and a stronger knowledge base on how to implement them effectively at headquarter locations

than in field locations, where there seemed to be some knowledge and awareness gaps among both managers and staff. Hence, flexible working arrangement-related guidance and training in field locations would help to remedy and improve the situation.

**139. Providing focused training on remote and hybrid working to staff and managers.** By providing targeted training specifically focused on hybrid work environments and sharing best practices from both headquarters and field locations, organizations would be able to bridge the knowledge gap and foster coherent and effective implementation of flexible working arrangements. That will ultimately facilitate the shift to a hybrid workforce. **Organizations that have not yet done so should develop flexible working arrangement-related training for both managers and staff. The training should also reflect enhanced skill sets required for teleworking, based on new ways of working. Training topics should cover areas such as managing hybrid teams, promoting inclusivity in remote workplaces, effective virtual collaboration, overseeing remote work, and supervision and performance management of staff using flexible working arrangements, notably teleworking.** The training materials should be shared through the appropriate inter-agency networks and forums, notably the human resources policy repository under the CEB Human Resources Network. This would facilitate the sharing of good practices and create cost efficiencies.

## D. Risk management and oversight

### Including flexible working arrangement-related risks in the organizations' risk management processes

**140. Only nine organizations include flexible working arrangement-related risks in their risk management processes and/or risk registers.** These organizations apply different approaches. Some of them (e.g. UNICEF, WFP and WIPO) consider flexible working arrangement-related risks as risks related to human resources management, such as staff well-being and work-life balance. The corporate risk register at WFP includes the risk related to "lack of flexible work modality" under "employee well-being". At UNICEF, all relevant policies (including the policy on flexible working arrangements) are included under "human resources" in the organizational risk management matrix; and mitigation measures are further outlined in the policy itself. WIPO identifies the risk, "abuse by staff members of benefits and entitlements, work time or insurance coverage", which includes flexible working arrangements, and outlines some controls mechanisms (see table 21).

Table 21

### Inclusion of flexible working arrangements in organizations' risk registers and/or management processes

<i>Flexible working arrangement-related risks included in the organization's risk management process</i>	<i>Flexible working arrangement-related risks not included in the organization's risk management process</i>
IAEA, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and WIPO	FAO, ICAO, ILO, IMO, ITC, ITU, UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat, UNIDO, United Nations Secretariat, UNODC, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women, UNWTO, UPU, WHO and WMO

Source: Prepared by JIU, based on the responses to the JIU questionnaire.

**141. Flexible working arrangement-related risks are rarely included in organizational risk registers.** Nineteen participating organizations have not included flexible working arrangement-related risks in their organizational risk registers and/or risk management processes. Different reasons were presented by the organizations. Several indicated that such risks are covered by other organizational risks and not as a separate risk. For instance, in the case of UNOPS, flexible working arrangement risks are not a dedicated risk category in the organization's risk taxonomy, but rather indirectly covered under other risk categories. Similarly, ILO does not consider flexible working arrangements as a separate category of risks or treat them as a separate risk event; rather, risks related to flexible working arrangements are covered by the general provisions of its risk register. Some organizations

stated that flexible working arrangements were not identified as a key organizational risk. Several organizations that have not included flexible working arrangement-related risks in their risk management processes and/or risk matrixes, including FAO, UNIDO, the United Nations Secretariat and UPU, indicated that they envisaged including flexible working arrangement-related risk in their risk management processes in the future, as appropriate. Given the increased uptake of flexible working arrangements post-pandemic, notably teleworking, the associated organizational, accountability and operational risks are expected to increase. In the light of that, **organizations are encouraged to consider including flexible working arrangement-related risks in their organizational risk management processes and/or risk registers.**

**Lack of comprehensive coverage of flexible working arrangements management by oversight functions**

142. **An opportunity for more comprehensive oversight of flexible working arrangements management.** The administration of flexible working arrangements and the implementation of flexible working arrangement policies are not yet subject to audits in the United Nations system organizations. According to the responses to the JIU questionnaire, only some elements related to flexible working arrangements are covered in the context of oversight assignments on other topics, such as gender parity, cybersecurity, ICT tools and systems, flexible workplace, and COVID-19 reviews and crisis management. One reason given by organizations as to why flexible working arrangements have not been the subject of any specific audit assignments undertaken to date was that the oversight offices did not consider flexible working arrangements to be a key risk area, given their low usage before the pandemic. However, interviews with human resources directors and several representatives of internal oversight offices confirmed that more attention to flexible working arrangements management would be necessary, given the paradigm shift towards work flexibility and the increased importance placed on flexibility by senior management, the legislative organs and the governing bodies. Several organizations indicated that, after a certain period of implementation of the recently revised flexible working arrangement policies, the oversight services would prioritize audits and other oversight reviews of flexible working arrangements management. **The Inspector suggests that oversight offices consider flexible working arrangements management in their audit risk universe and prioritize it for more consistent and comprehensive coverage, in line with their oversight mandates and methodologies.**

## VI. Optimizing the positive impacts of flexible working arrangements

### A. Occupational safety and health

143. **Teleworking settings may not meet the occupational safety and health standards available at traditional worksites.** Although flexible working arrangements support work-life balance and the well-being of staff, at the same time, teleworking options can generate, in certain circumstances, occupational safety and health risks for staff. According to the interviews held with officials of the participating organizations, the two most commonly recognized risks are ergonomic and psychosocial risks. There are strict rules and mandatory provisions for ensuring occupational safety and health on the premises and offices of most of the organizations. It should be ensured that the required and applicable safety and health standards are also met in teleworking settings.

144. **Most flexible working arrangement policies contain occupational safety and health provisions requiring staff working from home or an alternate workplace to maintain an ergonomic and safe work environment.** In order to address and mitigate these additional flexible working arrangement-related occupational safety and health risks, flexible working arrangement policies contain provisions to the effect that the responsibility for meeting all the basic safety and security standards lies with the staff member. The majority of the flexible working arrangement policies (25 out of 28) place the responsibility for setting up and maintaining a proper and safe work environment in their home or remote workplace on the staff member concerned. Many policies also have detailed provisions on the staff member's responsibility to maintain a safe environment in their home or remote workplace, and several include a comprehensive safety checklist to that end.

145. **Additional occupational safety and health policy clauses, notably for teleworking outside the duty station.** Flexible working arrangement policies usually contain clauses on other aspects relating to flexible work, notably teleworking outside the duty station, such as medical insurance coverage, compensation for accidents, illness or death and medical evacuation. The policies of some organizations with personnel in high-risk and fragile field duty stations and operational environments contain additional provisions whereby teleworking from a non-family duty station is not allowed, security clearance is required and the staff member must provide the address of the remote workplace, all of which are intended to enhance the safety and security of staff working in those locations. The provisions are aimed at ensuring that occupational safety and health standards and requirements are met by teleworking personnel. However, they also stipulate that no additional costs or liabilities shall be incurred by the organization as a result of the use of flexible working arrangements, notably teleworking.

146. **Medical insurance and medical evacuation coverage.** In principle, staff members who are teleworking continue to have medical insurance coverage paid by the organization. However, some adjustments may have to be made in the case of teleworking outside the duty station. Since the medical insurance coverage is determined by reference to the staff member's official duty station and not the location of teleworking, staff members are advised to discuss the impact of teleworking outside the duty station with their medical insurance provider and/or the local health insurance section or local human resources office.<sup>85</sup> Medical evacuation may not be available to staff teleworking outside the duty station. For example, in its policy (paras. 36.1 and 36.2), UNICEF advises staff "to discuss the impact of teleworking outside the duty station with their human resource business partners or medical insurance provider and consider appropriate supplementary insurance, if desirable. Staff members teleworking outside the duty station are not covered by medical evacuation mechanisms and are encouraged to consider appropriate supplementary insurance coverage".

147. **Compensation for illness, injury and death.** It is the responsibility of the staff member (or his or her survivor) to provide adequate evidence of the direct causal link between the accident, illness or death, as the case may be, and the performance of the staff

<sup>85</sup> See, for example, ST/IC/2019/15.

member's official duties. The provisions of some organizations state that only accidents that take place during working hours within registered commuting locations are covered. Staff members are required to sign disclaimers to that effect (see, for example, the policy of UNAIDS).

**148. Non-eligibility for teleworking at a non-family or danger-pay location.** Teleworking at certain locations, such as non-family or danger-pay locations, may pose additional risks to the teleworker's safety and security. Hence, some policies contain clauses stating that staff are not permitted to telework at non-family or danger-pay locations, except national staff who are citizens of the host country. For example, UNICEF stipulates in its policy that, "as a matter of occupational health and safety, as well as staff security, teleworking from a non-family or danger-pay location is not permitted, except for national staff who are citizens of the country of the location. Family members may not accompany the teleworking staff member in a non-family duty station, regardless of their nationality, unless exceptionally approved by the Under-Secretary-General for Security and Safety" (para. 37).

**149. Additional guidance and briefings.** In support of the relevant clauses and provisions in the flexible working arrangement policies, several organizations (e.g. ITC, ITU and WIPO) have developed and issued additional guidelines, such as checklists, frequently asked questions and codes of conduct elaborating on the requirements that teleworkers need to comply with, notably in the case of teleworking outside the duty station. A number of organizations, including UNOPS, UN-Women and WHO, have also developed and given presentations and briefings to staff and managers aimed at helping them to better understand the implications of teleworking in terms of occupational health and safety, and the related provisions in the flexible working arrangement policies. For instance, UNOPS provides training and awareness-raising sessions to staff regarding ergonomics and safe work at home, WHO has taken steps to ensure compliance with occupational safety and health requirements, through seminars and presentations on the subject, as well as one-to-one engagements, while UN-Women advises staff on how to set up their home office. The ergonomic programme of the Medical Service at WFP produces and delivers video-assisted remote training on how best to set up ergonomic chairs delivered from the office to the staff members' homes. Furthermore, some policies contain provisions stating that staff may consult and seek advice on any of the aforementioned issues and aspects from the human resources office, the medical unit and/or the staff counsellor, as needed.

**150. Enhancing flexible working arrangements policies through inclusion of occupational safety and health provisions.** Given the expected increase in the number of teleworking personnel post-pandemic, including at alternative workplaces outside the duty station, more attention should be paid to occupational safety and health risks and exposures for personnel and potential additional liabilities for the organization. **The Inspector suggests that organizations that have not yet done so include specific provisions on occupational safety and health in their flexible working arrangement policies.** Organizations should develop and issue additional guidance, frequently asked questions, briefings and presentations for staff and managers, as possible. That would help managers and staff to better understand the occupational safety and health risks that may stem from flexible working arrangements, notably teleworking, and take the necessary steps and measures to address and mitigate them.

**151. Responsibility for compliance rests with the staff member concerned.** In terms of practical implementation, compliance with the provisions and rules on occupational safety and health when using flexible working arrangements rests with the staff member. This is owing to the voluntary nature of flexible working arrangements; hence, staff wishing to avail themselves of such arrangements must take the necessary steps to comply with the occupational safety and health standards of the organization. In line with the guiding principles of flexible working arrangements, no extra costs may be incurred by the organization; any additional costs or expenses shall be borne by the staff member requesting the arrangement. Specific clauses in the policies, additional guidance and checklists in the requests and agreements, as well as the provision of advice by human resources experts and medical services staff, support staff with regard to complying with occupational safety and health measures when teleworking.



152. **Improved monitoring required.** There is no systematic monitoring or assessment of compliance in place in the organizations, besides the standard accountability in line with the assigned responsibilities of the line manager/supervisor. Given the increasing number of staff using flexible working arrangements, in particular teleworking, including from alternative workplaces outside the duty station, more should be done to ensure that occupational safety and health risks and compliance with policies and rules are monitored, addressed and mitigated, as necessary. Such monitoring would also help to prevent any potential liability claims against the organization.

153. **Ensuring that occupational safety and health standards and requirements are met by teleworking personnel.** Coverage of flexible working arrangements in occupational safety and health policy guidance can enhance monitoring. Several organizations (e.g. WFP and UNESCO) have initiated work to include occupational safety and health aspects of flexible working arrangements, notably teleworking, in their occupational safety and health policy guidance. For example, WFP has developed high-level guidelines on safety at home and ergonomics when teleworking and has promoted awareness of incident reporting when teleworking, as part of the organization's ongoing occupational safety and health training to staff through the focal point network. Detailed policy guidance will be included in the workplan for 2024, as part of the implementation of the occupational safety and health management system. UNESCO stated that the occupational safety and health aspects of flexible working arrangements would be examined in the framework of the occupational health and safety policy to be developed during the period 2022–2023. **In order to ensure that occupational safety and health standards and requirements are met by teleworking personnel, organizations that have not yet done so should include flexible working arrangement-related occupational safety and health requirements in their occupational safety and health policy guidance, and continuously monitor and assess their implementation and compliance status.**

## B. Environmental footprint and flexible workplace

### Assessing the potential of flexible working arrangements to support environmental sustainability

154. **Flexible working arrangements may potentially reduce the organizations' environmental footprint.** Flexible working arrangements may have the potential to reduce the organizations' environmental footprint and support the achievement of the objectives relating to environmental sustainability and climate change outlined in the Strategy for Sustainability Management in the United Nations System, 2020–2030.<sup>86</sup> This view is shared by many participating organizations (ICAO, ILO, ITC, ITU, UNAIDS, UNEP, UNESCO, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOPS, UN-Women, UNWTO, UPU, WIPO and WMO), which indicated in their responses to the JIU questionnaire that flexible working arrangements could contribute to the entity's environmental sustainability objective. Notably, teleworking and hybrid ways of working can have a positive impact. Several organizations (FAO, IMO, WFP and WHO) noted that this aspect of flexible working arrangements had not yet been assessed. Some entities (e.g. FAO and UNEP) mentioned that they planned to look into this area as the use of flexible working arrangements, in particular teleworking has been increasing, and is expected to continue to do so in the future. Most organizations share the view that enabling factors to achieve the anticipated environmental sustainability benefits of using flexible working arrangements included moving forward with teleworking, hybrid ways of working, digitalization, paperless policies, electronic signatures, enhanced capacities for hybrid meetings and flexible workplaces. **Since flexible working arrangements, notably teleworking, and the expected increase in their usage have the potential to support the implementation and achievement of the targets of the Strategy for Sustainability Management in the United Nations System, 2020–2030, organizations that have not yet done so should consider including provisions for flexible working arrangements in the measures for implementing and achieving environmental sustainability in the area of management, in accordance with the strategy.**

<sup>86</sup> CEB/2019/1/Add.1.

**155. Quantifying the effect of flexible working arrangement implementation on the environment.** Several organizations mentioned the lack of hard evidence and a methodology for assessing and quantifying the effect of flexible working arrangements on environmental sustainability. For example, WFP noted that, in terms of the overall environmental footprint, there has been no calculation of the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions as a result of the reduced population commuting to the office every day, nor a calculation of the increased emissions owing to prolonged heating and cooling and additional electrical consumption at home. In addition, from a global perspective, an in-depth analysis would be required to determine whether changes in carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions from facilities in field locations, if any, could be directly attributed to flexible working arrangements or whether they were a result of other unrelated factors. Where the use of flexible working arrangements meant that facilities could be totally closed for certain periods, then the CO<sub>2</sub> footprint of the organization could be reduced but, as noted above, it may simply be that emissions are “transferred” from the office to private residences. The use of flexible working arrangements could also lead to a reduction in and/or “transfer” of waste generation and water consumption. Furthermore, it is not clear whether CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from air travel will increase with more staff teleworking. UNEP mentioned that it was looking at options for accounting for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and other entities (e.g. UNOPS) may adopt the new methodology when available. **The Inspector encourages the executive heads of the participating organizations, notably the organizations with environmental mandates, to continue efforts to identify methodologies aimed at quantifying the combined effect of the use of flexible working arrangements and the implementation of flexible workplace initiatives.**

#### **Complementarity between flexible working arrangements and flexible workplace initiatives**

**156. When strategically coordinated, flexible working arrangements and flexible workplace initiatives can have complementary benefits.** According to the responses to the JIU questionnaire, seven organizations (FAO, ITU, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, the United Nations Secretariat and UN-Women) shared the view that a flexible workplace, notably hot-desking and unassigned desks, in conjunction with the increased use of teleworking, could generate cost savings and a more efficient use of workspaces. For instance, FAO noted that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, its headquarters in Rome had identified about €680,000 in cost savings in the following areas combined: cleaning, maintenance, electricity, gas and water. Similarly, the United Nations Secretariat indicated that the combination of unassigned desks on floors designated as flexible workplaces and an increase in teleworking had the potential to reduce office space requirements in the long term. A reduction in real estate expenses would be possible if the desk-sharing ratio in offices was increased, since a proportion of the staff assigned to any given floor would be working remotely every day of the work week. Such reductions would only be possible where staff work flexibly in unassigned workspaces. Three organizations (ILO, IMO and WIPO) have not yet analysed this matter, while three other organizations (ITC, UNFPA and WFP) noted that they were looking at this aspect. For instance, WFP carried out an initial analysis of its facilities in relation to real estate costs to determine the benefits of hybrid working. A financial benefit of about \$6 million was estimated as cost avoidance during the pilot of hybrid working, covering lease, utilities and maintenance. Although this was mainly for headquarters, in Rome, cost avoidances were expected from some pilot field locations, to be derived from the planned reduction in the office footprint. However, many organizations were not in the position to quantify potential cost savings at this stage. It should be noted that, while flexible working arrangements and flexible workplace initiatives are not dependent on each other, they can provide complementary benefits when strategically coordinated. Their level of integration should therefore be optimized. **Organizations that have not yet done so should consider including flexible working arrangements as an integral part of their flexible workplace strategies or similar initiatives. In doing so, organizations should develop a methodology for assessing the complementary benefits and potential cost savings for the organization.** Such an approach is supported by the

General Assembly, which has decided that flexible working arrangements should be an integral part of all flexible workplace strategies.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> A/76/669, para. 19 (e).

## VII. Inter-agency cooperation

157. **Few attempts were made before the pandemic to deal directly with flexible working arrangements on a system-wide basis.** Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, few attempts had been made to deal directly with flexible working arrangements on a system-wide basis. The positive potential of flexible working arrangements and the need to mainstream them into general operations was chiefly mentioned in the reports of some meetings, while in some documents, the CEB Human Resources Network focused on work-life balance and staff well-being initiatives across the United Nations system.<sup>88</sup> Recognized as a potent tool for promoting work-life balance, flexible working arrangements have been incorporated into several common system initiatives, including the Secretary-General's system-wide strategy on gender parity" (October 2017)<sup>89</sup> and the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System (2019).<sup>90</sup> While the supportive role of flexible working arrangement in the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system has been regularly highlighted in the context of the Secretary-General's biennial reports on the subject, it is interesting to note that the United Nations system strategy on the future of work (May 2019)<sup>91</sup> remained silent on flexible working arrangements and new ways of working.

158. **United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work: first system-wide document covering flexible working arrangements.** With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CEB Task Force on the Future of the United Nations Workforce, which was established in 2019,<sup>92</sup> re-oriented its work to focus on elements of an expanded approach to remote working, supported by agile contractual arrangements and enabling technologies.<sup>93</sup> As a result, the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work and several other relevant documents relating to this area, including the "Senior Leadership Commitments for the Future of Work in the United Nations system"<sup>94</sup> and the "United Nations System Model Guidelines on the Right to Disconnect",<sup>95</sup> were endorsed by the CEB High-level Committee on Management. The Model Policy codifies, inter alia, most of the United Nations system remote working common principles that were laid out in the 2020 interim report of the CEB Task Force on the Future of the United Nations Workforce.<sup>96</sup> The Model Policy also aims to better balance employers' and employees' perspectives pertaining to workplace flexibility. The Model Policy deals with various options for flexible working, sets out several high-level principles and provides a harmonized framework for United Nations system organizations to build on and operationalize.

159. **The United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work seems to address the organizations' main need for system-wide guidance.** Most of the organizations reported that they appreciated that the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work provided high-level guidance and key principles for flexible working arrangements, as well as the fact that it was not too prescriptive and allowed flexibility with regard to its implementation, with due consideration for individual needs, priorities and specificities (see para. 6). A few organizations noted that the Model Policy provided the right amount of guidance and flexibility, and that a more detailed system-wide policy guidance would most likely be at the expense of flexibility and would impose a centralized approach that may be restrictive and lacking consideration of the specific conditions of each entity and of each individual. To exemplify this view, one organization mentioned that "when it comes to minimum office presence, even in each duty station, we all want the flexibility to implement [the Model Policy] as best as it suits our needs". A few other organizations pointed out that "the Model Policy is useful, but it is rather too generic and unspecific", and that "additional

<sup>88</sup> See, for example, CEB/2008/HLCM/HR/11.

<sup>89</sup> See [www.un.org/gender/sites/www.un.org/gender/files/gender\\_parity\\_strategy\\_october\\_2017.pdf](http://www.un.org/gender/sites/www.un.org/gender/files/gender_parity_strategy_october_2017.pdf).

<sup>90</sup> See <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3799577?ln=en>.

<sup>91</sup> CEB/2019/1/Add.2.

<sup>92</sup> See CEB/2019/5.

<sup>93</sup> CEB/2020/HLCM/13, para. 4.

<sup>94</sup> CEB/2021/HLCM/6/Add.2/Rev.1.

<sup>95</sup> CEB/2022/HLCM/5/Add.2.

<sup>96</sup> CEB/2020/HLCM/13.

operational guidance is needed to support consistent implementation across the organization”. With reference to the possibility of part-time work, as set out in the Model Policy, one organization pointed out that it would not be possible to implement those aspects, given that such an option was not incorporated into the flexible working arrangement policies of more than a dozen organizations.

**160. United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work: a useful benchmark.**

With 16 organizations having updated their policies during the period 2022–2023, and three entities currently in the process of reviewing and revising their policies, the majority of the organizations have updated their flexible working arrangement policies after the issuance of the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work. Most organizations reported that they used the Model Policy as a reference and guidance, and aligned their updated policies with it in relation to the key principles, the flexible working arrangement options, their modalities, the approval process and several other related matters. Seven organizations aligned to varying degrees in their policies the definition of flexible working arrangements to the definition of flexible work, as in the Model Policy, but did not change the title of their policies, as was the case for the Model Policy. At the same time, the organizations took the liberty of adapting the system-wide guidance to their organizational needs, priorities and particularities – an approach promoted by, and in line with, the Model Policy. Based on these developments, it can be said that the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work and the discussions around it have contributed to the harmonization of policies and practices in some areas. Nonetheless, a cohesive and consistent system-wide approach by United Nations organizations is still lacking with regard to certain aspects, especially provisions on and implementation of teleworking modalities.

**161. Additional system-wide guidelines should be considered.** While the organizations have appreciated the level of guidance provided by the Model Policy, most of them expressed the need for and possible benefit of having more detailed system-wide guidelines on certain flexible working arrangement-related matters. For instance, one organization stressed that it would welcome further guidance in the area of hybrid work, the need to disconnect, work boundaries and work-life harmony in relation to flexible working arrangements. Another organization stated that specific guidelines on assessment criteria for flexible working arrangements and how to utilize such metrics would be helpful. Examples might include how best to monitor and measure the impact on staff well-being (e.g. sickness, retention, etc.) as well as any environmental impacts and other considerations such as usage of office space and possible economies. In addition, there should be an agreement or framework regarding functions that are suitable or not for teleworking, and some entities may benefit from a repository of good practices for mainstreaming the operational implementation of flexible working arrangements.

**162. High demand for system-wide coherence in the implementation of teleworking outside the duty station.** The most sought-after additional guidance pertains to the implementation of teleworking outside the duty station. There are significant policy differences among the organizations as to the conditions and maximum duration of teleworking outside the duty station, and when and to what extent adjustments to benefits and entitlements are made, in the event that teleworking outside the duty station is used beyond the established maximum duration. For instance, some organizations (e.g. UNHCR and the United Nations Secretariat) make adjustments to benefits and entitlements that are based on the staff member’s physical presence at the duty station as of the first day of teleworking outside the duty station beyond the maximum duration set out in the agreement, while other entities implement the adjustments only after a certain amount of time beyond the established maximum duration. For instance, WFP implements adjustments to the teleworking staff member’s benefits and entitlements after 90 calendar days, including weekends, official holidays and leave days, immediately preceding and following the period of teleworking outside the duty station or which fall within the approved duration (see table 22). In addition, WFP (and several other organizations) differentiates as to the category of personnel concerned, so that different rules apply to staff and non-staff categories. Similarly, there are variations among the organizations in terms of the adjustments to different benefits and entitlements, such as education grant and rental subsidy (see annex X). Some specific solutions in this area were explored in the context of developing the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work; however, the discussions were not

followed through, given the high-level nature of the document. As a result, the Model Policy does not elaborate on the maximum duration of teleworking outside the duty station or on the impact on remuneration, benefits and allowances, should teleworking outside the duty station be used beyond the established maximum duration. Regarding remuneration, benefits and allowances, the Model Policy only mentions key principles for internationally and locally recruited personnel and provides some general guidance.<sup>97</sup> This lack of specificity has resulted in the organizations having to pioneer their own approaches, as their management do not have consistent guidance or models of best practice to refer to. Most of the organizations indicated that more detailed system-wide guidelines supplementing the Model Policy would be very useful in respect of these matters. **The Inspector stresses the need for close consultation with the International Civil Service Commission when developing criteria for establishing the maximum duration of teleworking outside the duty station and for adjusting entitlements and benefits when such teleworking arrangement is used beyond the established maximum duration, so as to have a coherent and joint approach.**

Table 22

**Adjustment of entitlements and benefits when teleworking outside the duty station is used beyond the established maximum duration<sup>a</sup>**

<i>From first day</i>	<i>After two months</i>	<i>After three months</i>	<i>No provision</i>
ITC UNCTAD UNEP UN-Habitat UNHCR UNODC United Nations Secretariat	UNFPA UNOPS (on the 71st working day) UNRWA	ILO UNICEF WFP WIPO	IMO ITU UNDP UNIDO UN-Women

*Source:* Prepared by JIU, based on the policies of the participating organizations.

<sup>a</sup> It should be noted that there are differences in the remuneration structure across categories and differences in practice across organizations: adjustments may concern different benefits and entitlements, and they may be implemented at different times for staff and non-staff categories and across organizations.

163. **High-level character of the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work leaves room for inter-agency coordination.** The Model Policy leaves room for inter-agency coordination. The Inspector underscores the need for further discussion on flexible working arrangements and related issues through the appropriate forums, including the CEB High-level Committee on Management, the Human Resources Network and the human resources policy repository group. While there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution, and organizations are fully entitled to shape their flexible working arrangement policies in line with their specific needs, there is a strong argument for improving United Nations system-wide coherence in that area, to the extent possible. Ongoing and future discussions should focus on the challenges and expected benefits of flexible working arrangements, including the development of additional guidelines in the areas mentioned in this chapter. The United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work encourages organizations to endeavour to, inter alia, “develop a coherent approach to telework outside the duty station”.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>97</sup> “The compensation package for internationally recruited personnel is based on the Noblemaire principle and the post adjustment component of their remuneration is associated with the cost of living at their official duty station. The compensation package for national staff is based on the Flemming principle, i.e., associated to best prevailing conditions of service at the official duty station. Accordingly, some benefits and allowances may need to be adjusted during periods of teleworking outside the duty station in accordance with the purpose and intent of such benefits and allowances as defined by the ICSC. Organizations are to exercise flexibility in regard to requests to telecommute outside the duty stations, subject to exigencies of service, as there may be multiple reasons for which an individual may make such a request” (CEB/2021/HLCM/10/Add.1, p. 6–7, explanatory notes).

<sup>98</sup> CEB/2021/HLCM/10/Add.1, p. 6–7, explanatory notes.

164. The implementation of the following recommendations is expected to enhance the coordination and harmonization of flexible working arrangement practices, as well as improve efficiency and enhance the effectiveness of the management of flexible working arrangements.

#### **Recommendation 7**

**The Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, should request the Human Resources Network of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination to establish a working group to develop, by the end of 2026, harmonized criteria for determining the maximum duration of teleworking outside the duty station and for adjusting the entitlements and benefits should such teleworking be used beyond the established maximum duration, with a view to achieving system-wide coherence.**

#### **Recommendation 8**

**The General Assembly should consider, by its eighty-second session, the Secretary-General's proposals regarding harmonized criteria, within the current United Nations common system framework, for determining the maximum duration of teleworking outside the duty station and for adjusting the entitlements and benefits should such teleworking be used beyond the established maximum duration.**

165. **Voluntary periodic review of the implementation of the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work would benefit participating organizations.** The United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work covers flexible working arrangements. It represents an enabler to make the United Nations system more effective through new capabilities that promote agility, integration and cohesion across the system, as called for in the Secretary-General's 2021 report entitled "Our Common Agenda".<sup>99</sup> The Inspector is of the view that, in addition to the ongoing work of the Human Resources Network and its human resources policy repository group, voluntary periodic reporting to the CEB High-level Committee on Management on the implementation of the Model Policy and, in this context, sharing experiences, challenges, achievements and innovative good practices on various issues relating to flexible work and the future of work would be beneficial to the United Nations system organizations, inter-agency cooperation and system-wide coherence in respect to flexible working arrangements and new ways of working. In addition, voluntary periodic reporting directly to the CEB High-level Committee on Management would provide an additional layer of transparency and constitute an additional impetus for the implementation of the Model Policy across the United Nations system. Officials from most of the participating organizations interviewed for the present review acknowledged the utility of a voluntary reporting tool to assess the implementation of the Model Policy and its impacts. Some of them pointed out that a set of relevant parameters for voluntary reporting would raise the system-wide value of such an exercise.

166. The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to enhance the transparency and accountability relating to the implementation of the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work.

<sup>99</sup> CEB/2021/5, para. 24.

**Recommendation 9**

**The Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, should request the High-level Committee on Management of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination to consider requesting the participating organizations to present, starting in 2026, voluntary periodic reports, ideally on a triennial basis, on the implementation of the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work, in order to maximize its benefits and promote system-wide coherence, including through sharing related experiences, challenges, achievements and innovative good practices.**



## VIII. Flexible working arrangements and new ways of working in the “new normal”

167. **“New normal” marks the departure from the old ways of working.** The COVID-19 pandemic has created a “new normal” whose contours and content are being shaped by ongoing strategizing across the United Nations system and by various initiatives currently undertaken by the participating organizations in order to transform the United Nations workplace. By entrusting the Task Force on the Future of the United Nations Workforce with the examination, on an expedited basis, of “the elements of an expanded approach to remote working, supported by agile contractual arrangements and enabling technologies”, the CEB High-level Committee on Management stimulated, in 2020, discussion about post-pandemic scenarios that consider enhanced flexible working arrangements and remote work as part of the “new normal”. Two thirds of the organizations that shared their views about flexible working arrangements in the “new normal” and the benefits of new ways of working, in response to the JIU questionnaire, considered that these concepts are generally associated with increased workplace flexibility that promotes work-life harmony, productivity and cost-effectiveness, as well as fosters equality, diversity and inclusion, and better responds to the demands of a multigenerational workforce. Many felt that a prominent feature of the “new normal” should be the mainstreaming of teleworking modalities. More specifically, 12 organizations associated this notion with the availability of revised policies providing for enhanced flexible working arrangements (including teleworking modalities with increased flexibility) and/or promoting a hybrid working environment.

168. **Experimenting with working models building on potentially higher flexibility.** According to the responses to the JIU questionnaire (question 5.3.3), almost one third of the participating organizations (UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIDO, UN-Women, UPU, WFP and WIPO) have seized the opportunity to accelerate the move towards new operational working models, based on potentially higher flexibility – a shift that was already well under way prior to the pandemic, as illustrated by the 2019 mandate of the Task Force on the Future of the United Nations Workforce.<sup>100</sup> For instance, UNICEF is drafting a new policy to allow for a new post modality, whereby, for positions deemed appropriate for full-time remote work (based on a feasibility study), the selected incumbents/staff members may have the option of taking on the role as fully remote. UNFPA has started discussions on “elsewhere” contracts’, which are not linked to a particular duty station. WIPO is currently experimenting with four staff members, who have been exceptionally authorized to relocate outside their official duty station for a period of one year and who are performing their functions remotely during this period. WIPO does not exclude hiring home- or remote-based staff in the future, neither does UPU, which admits that some IT positions, language services or budget positions could work in full remote mode. UNIDO indicated that a future assessment of its new flexible working arrangement policy might include consideration of new operational models which could lead to full remote working for certain job profiles. The use of “anywhere” contracts in the “new normal” is also not excluded by UN-Women, which considered that this would potentially open the opportunity to recruitment with wider reach and hire qualified personnel/women who otherwise might not be able to move to a certain duty station, but could work from their home country.

169. **WFP hybrid working model.** WFP has piloted its own vision of the “new normal”, defined as “the move towards flexible working models along with enabling business processes and systems”.<sup>101</sup> The WFP hybrid model, which has been piloted in a number of offices for some time, aims to “combine office and remote work within the duty station.” Moreover, the model is designed as an “alternative working arrangement whereby the organization is allowing employees to work from home a set amount of time per week”. Introduced as part of a “new ways of working” project that does not fall under the flexible working arrangement policy, but which can be combined with flexible working

<sup>100</sup> CEB/2020/HLCM/13, para. 1.

<sup>101</sup> WFP, “New ways of working at WFP: hybrid working model pilot”, concept paper, version 1.2 (2021).

arrangements, the model has been piloted on select jobs and functions that are suited for a hybrid work model.

170. **“New ways of working” is a trendy concept, but vaguely defined and broadly interpreted.** While the “old ways of working” (i.e. all personnel work together in the same office at the same time) will not go away, the transitioning towards new ways of working, based on “an expanded approach to remote working”, as called for in the re-focused mandate (2020)<sup>102</sup> of the Task Force on the Future of the United Nations Workforce, has been gaining ground. However, the purpose of these developments is blurred by the concepts and human resources approaches introduced in many organizations but not sufficiently explained or precisely defined. Often, they are used as “umbrella terms” or describe flexible working practices that sometimes cover hybrid working models and remote work, and which are not related to flexible working arrangements. Several flexible working arrangement policies, including some that were promulgated in the period 2021–2023 (as at the date of writing this report), contain a representation of flexible working arrangements that sometimes goes beyond the individual organization’s balance with its expected “mutual benefits” that underpin their main purpose (i.e. “balancing the demands on staff while at work with life outside the office and the challenge of finding new and better ways to manage people, time, space and workloads effectively”).<sup>103</sup> While enhanced flexible working arrangements can also be conceived as management tools and practices of organizational change, they cannot be considered new ways of working that have the potential to or aim to transform the organizations and the world of work. Relatedly, promoting flexible (“agile”) contractual modalities as new ways of working “under the guise of flexible working arrangements” is a concern that has been formally expressed by staff representatives.<sup>104</sup> These issues will continue to resurface until a common definition of “new ways of working” is agreed within the United Nations system.<sup>105</sup>

171. **Defining new ways of working.** Outside the United Nations, new ways of working are increasingly understood or defined as “forms of work that allow employees to choose when and where they work, using information and communications technologies (ICT) to be available anywhere, anytime”.<sup>106</sup> This definition seems to describe the realities of private sector employees who work in the digital platforms or gig economy, in which services tend to be provided through short-term contracts, independent contractors and freelancers. Looking towards the future of work in the United Nations system organizations and how the workplace might be set up, it is important to consider remote work and not long-term teleworking,<sup>107</sup> which is a flexible working arrangement option, as set out in current United Nations policy documents. **The Inspector is of the view that, within the United Nations context, the new ways of working should be understood as work practices that blend virtual and physical attendance, and synchronous and asynchronous communications, supported by ICT and based on exigencies of service, which are intended to increase the flexibility, autonomy, work performance and work-life harmony of personnel, as well as optimize the organization’s functional flexibility according to its changing needs, as part of a broader transformation of the workplace, the workforce and the organization.**

<sup>102</sup> CEB/2020/HLCM/13, para. 4.

<sup>103</sup> ST/SGB/2019/3, p. 1.

<sup>104</sup> Letter from Public Services International to the Secretary-General, 13 October 2020.

<sup>105</sup> “New ways of working” should not be confused with the United Nations concept, “New Way of Working”, which was conceived in 2017, and which calls upon a diverse range of humanitarian and development actors, including those outside the United Nations system, to work together collaboratively, based on their comparative advantages, towards “collective outcomes” that reduce need, risk and vulnerability over multiple years (see [www.un.org/jsc/content/new-way-working](http://www.un.org/jsc/content/new-way-working)).

<sup>106</sup> R. Baane, P. Houtkamp and M. Knotter, “New ways of working unravelled: about bricks, bytes and behavior” (*Het nieuwe werken ontrafeld*), (Assen, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Koninklijke Van Gorcum BV, 2011).

<sup>107</sup> Teleworking is not normally defined to include those who work in the platform or gig economy; for example, based on the ILO Home Work Convention, 1996 (No. 177), a freelancer who works primarily from home will not be classified as a teleworker, rather as a home worker. See also ILO, “Teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond: a practical guide”, July 2020.

172. Table 23 depicts some of the new ways of flexible working that are in operation or have been run as pilots or are considered the “future of work” in the participating organizations.

Table 23

**New ways of working in the United Nations system**

<i>Hybrid working models based on flexible working arrangement principles</i>	<i>Hybrid working models based on flexible working arrangements, alternate working arrangements and remote working principles</i>	<i>Working models with higher flexibility</i>
<i>Who initiates the arrangement</i>		<i>How the work is performed</i>
Teleworking is initiated by staff personnel	Teleworking is initiated by staff personnel and the organization; some work is performed under selected fully remote contracts	Working models are based on on-site and remote working principles; some work is envisaged to be performed under remote contracts
<i>Implications for United Nations personnel</i>		<i>Implications for the contractual status</i>
Hybrid working models are not mandatory for staff personnel	Hybrid working models are mandatory for some personnel	Contractual agreements will need to differentiate between fully office, remote-based modalities and blended or hybrid work models depending on the job requirements and specific functional contexts Contractual agreements and/or conditions of service may require modifications/ adjustments for personnel teleworking 100% of the time outside the duty station

Source: Prepared by JIU.

173. **New ways of flexible working can take many forms.** As shown in table 23, hybrid working models and operational working models with higher flexibility can take many forms and can also stretch “beyond increased productivity and work life balance”, as stressed in the concept paper of one organization. Each organization has implemented or piloted hybrid working models in accordance with their business models and actual needs. Relatedly, in their responses to the JIU questionnaire, a few organizations (e.g. UNESCO) pointed out that, at this stage, they did not envisage full remote working for some specific job profiles or that they were sceptical of such possibilities since remote work had proven to be effective for a limited period of time and that, in the longer term, the pandemic pattern could be unsustainable in terms of achieving programmatic deliveries. Moreover, the impact of prolonged and large-scale remote working on the organizational culture and performance was uncertain.

174. **New ways of flexible working may require further regulation.** Hybrid working models and, especially, operational working models with higher flexibility bring their own challenges. Organizations will need to consider the related issues when or before implementing new ways of working. The existing guidelines on hybrid working may not be sufficient and the need may arise for organizational policies that specify, for instance, the functions that are eligible for hybrid and remote working, whether hybrid working is mandatory or optional, any limits on where an employee can work remotely and the circumstances in which employees will be required to be present in the workplace. **The Inspector suggests that participating organizations explore and consider the benefits of adopting a stand-alone policy on hybrid working or including its core elements in an ad hoc flexible work policy. Furthermore, organizations should clearly define the new ways of working and describe their role, as well their relationship with enhanced flexible working arrangements, as part of a broader vision set out in their human resources strategies and other similar documents.**

## Annex I

### Overview of the implementation of the recommendations contained in the 2012 Joint Inspection Unit review of flexible working arrangements in the United Nations system organizations

The first JIU review of flexible working arrangements in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/NOTE/2012/4) contained five recommendations. According to the JIU web-based tracking system, all the organizations that had accepted recommendations 1 and 3 have recorded that implementation is complete (100 per cent); and the implementation rate for recommendation 2 has been recorded as 93.75 per cent complete.

In terms of acceptance, the ratings for recommendations 4 and 5 are “not available”. It should be noted, in this context, that recommendations 4 and 5 were addressed to CEB and not to the participating organizations. In October 2021, CEB endorsed the United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work, which covers the issues raised in recommendations 4 and 5.

<i>Recommendations in JIU/NOTE/2012/4</i>	<i>Issued to participating organizations</i>	<i>Accepted<sup>a</sup> by participating organizations</i>	<i>Acceptance (%)</i>	<i>Implemented by participating organizations</i>	<i>In progress in participating organizations</i>	<i>Implementation (accepted/implemented) (%)</i>
All recommendations	38	23	60.53	22	1	95.65
1. Executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should, without delay, discontinue the use of clocking systems for the purposes of monitoring flexible working arrangements.	5	1	20	1	0	100
2. Executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should institute training courses, within existing resources, for managers on how to manage employees on flexible working arrangements in a results-based organization. Such training should be incorporated into the general managerial training.	24	16	66.67	15	1	93.75
3. Executive heads of the United Nations system organizations which offer flexitime should eliminate, without delay, the practice of allowing large groups of staff to automatically accrue credit hours in excess of the normal working hours per week in exchange for extra days off.	9	6	66.67	6	0	100
4. CEB, through its High-level Committee on Management and the Human Resources Network, should, without delay, agree on one definition and one term for flexibility in hours of work (e.g. flexitime), and one definition and one term for flexibility in place of work (e.g. telecommuting). There should be a common understanding of what these arrangements are.	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
5. CEB, through its High-level Committee on Management and the Human Resources Network, should, without delay, promulgate two policies: one for flexitime and one for telecommuting.	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available

Source: JIU web-based tracking system (as of 24 August 2023).

<sup>a</sup> Recommendations that have not been recorded as “accepted” are either considered “not relevant” or are still outstanding.

## Annex II

### Overview of flexible working arrangement options

Organization	Eligibility	Flexible working hours <sup>a</sup> (flexitime)	Staggered working hours <sup>a</sup>	Compressed work schedule	Teleworking (telecommuting)		Time off for learning activities/study	Other options
					At the duty station	Outside the duty station		
United Nations Secretariat <sup>b</sup>	Staff personnel  Non-staff personnel may be eligible, depending on conditions of service		Yes	- 10 working days in 9 - 5 working days in 4.5 (with adjusted working hours/working day)	- Up to a maximum of 3 days/ work week (half or full days) as authorized by the manager - More than 3 days/work week, in case of compelling personal circumstances	- An appropriate duration not exceeding 6 months, in case of compelling personal circumstances - An additional 3 months, in exceptional circumstances, may be considered by the manager	Yes, for staff personnel - up to 6 hours/week, to be made up during the same week	
ITC	Staff personnel  Non-staff personnel may be eligible, depending on conditions of service		Yes	- 10 working days in 9 - 5 working days in 4.5 (with adjusted working hours/working day)	- Up to a maximum of 3 days/ work week (half or full days) as authorized by the manager - More than 3 days/work week, in case of compelling personal circumstances	- An appropriate duration not exceeding 6 months, in case of compelling personal circumstances - An additional 3 months, in exceptional circumstances, may be considered by the manager	Yes, for staff personnel - up to 6 hours/week, to be made up during the same week	
UNAIDS	Staff personnel	Yes, with requirement to fill in a time sheet		- 10 working days in 9	- Up to 12 months at a time may be requested - May be renewed if several conditions are met, including supervisor approval	- Up to a maximum of 30 consecutive days, with mandatory prior approval of UNAIDS Safety and Security Officer and clearance by Human Resources Management/Support Services Division - Non-renewable	No	
UNCTAD	Staff personnel	Same as United Nations Secretariat						

Organization	Eligibility	Flexible working hours <sup>a</sup> (flexitime)	Staggered working hours <sup>a</sup>	Compressed work schedule	Teleworking (telecommuting)		Time off for learning activities/study	Other options	
					At the duty station	Outside the duty station			
UNDP	Staff and non-staff personnel	Yes		The following options are available and must be approved by the immediate supervisor: - 10 working days in 9 - 5 working days in 4.5 - 3 and 2 option - 2 and 2 option - 1 and 3 option - 1.5 and 3 option Under those options, the staff member may leave earlier on some days and compensate the time by working additional hours on the other days	- Up to a maximum of 1 year at an alternate dedicated worksite for full-time work outside the office (at/outside duty station) - Up to 2 days per week under a telecommuting compact Both options require a formal teleworking agreement between the staff member and the supervisor for maximum duration of 1 year				
UNEP	Staff personnel  Eligibility for non-staff personnel limited to United Nations Volunteers only	Same as United Nations Secretariat							
UNFPA	Staff personnel <sup>c</sup>	Yes		- 10 working days in 9 for General Service staff only (day off should be a Friday or a Monday)	Three options available and subject to the manager's approval: - Up to 3 working days/ calendar week - 1 full week/alternating weeks - 2 full weeks/alternating two-week periods	- Up to 60 working days/calendar year (continuous or cumulative) subject to the manager's approval	No		
UN-Habitat	Staff personnel	Same as United Nations Secretariat							

Organization	Eligibility	Flexible working hours <sup>a</sup> (flexitime)	Staggered working hours <sup>a</sup>	Compressed work schedule	Teleworking (telecommuting)		Time off for learning activities/study	Other options
					At the duty station	Outside the duty station		
UNHCR	Staff and non-staff personnel	Yes, two options: staggered working hours or variable day schedule, whereby the full number of hours and core hours are worked each week, but the total number of hours worked may be varied among the weekdays	Yes, or variable day schedule	Variations on the number of hours and days off may be applied, subject to agreement between the personnel and their manager: a maximum of 11 hours/day may be worked and a maximum of 4 days off/month may be accrued	Options: - At the outset of a regular or temporary assignment/appointment - Within the duty station country There are no restrictions on number of hours or days; must be authorized by the supervisor	Options: - At the outset of a regular or temporary assignment/appointment - Outside the duty station country for up to a maximum of 90 calendar days (continuous or cumulative)/calendar year, and must be authorized by the supervisor - Beyond 90 days is only possible on an exceptional basis and with prior approval from the Regional Bureau Director/Division Director/Head of Service Centre	No	Part-time work, including job-sharing, as agreed between the personnel and the managers
UNICEF	Staff and non-staff personnel <sup>d</sup>	Yes		- 10 working days in 9 (variations may be applied, subject to discussion with the supervisor)	- Designated days of the week or month - Blended approach, such as alternating teleworking with on-site work	- Up to a combined total of 90 working days/year (counted from 1 April to 31 March), with approval of supervisor - For longer periods, such as a continuous period of at least 91 working days up to a maximum of one calendar year, with approval of Regional Director/Division Director	No	- Temporary part-time employment - Job-sharing - Special Emergency Compressed Time Off (SECTO) (only applicable to locally recruited staff in designated emergency locations)
UNODC		Same as United Nations Secretariat						

Organization	Eligibility	Flexible working hours <sup>a</sup> (flexitime)	Staggered working hours <sup>a</sup>	Compressed work schedule	Teleworking (telecommuting)		Time off for learning activities/study	Other options
					At the duty station	Outside the duty station		
UNOPS	Staff and non-staff personnel	Yes		- 10 working days in 9 - 5 working days in 4	- Informal working from home up to 3 days/week with no formal agreement required	- Formal remote work with annual leave: 15 accumulative days/ calendar year - Formal remote work: 15 to 70 days/calendar year - Formal long-term remote work: over 70 days/calendar year with mandatory approval of Head of Business Unit	No	- Job-sharing - Additional options possible upon discussion with the Director of the People and Change Group
UNRWA	International staff with indefinite, fixed-term or temporary appointments, including Junior Professional Officers and those on inter-agency mobility				- Regular: up to 60 calendar days/year, approved by the Director of Human Resources - Exceptional regular: 61 to 180 calendar days/year, approved by the Director of Human Resources in consultation with the Chief of Staff	- Regular: up to 60 calendar days/year approved by the Director of Human Resources - Exceptional regular: 61 to 180 calendar days/year approved by the Director of Human Resources in consultation with the Chief of Staff		
UN-Women	Staff and non-staff personnel	Same as UNDP						
WFP	Staff and non-staff personnel	Yes, up to a maximum of 12 months	No	- Statutory weekly hours may be worked in less than 10 days/2 weeks - Special compressed work schedule: compression of working days over a minimum of 8 weeks for a gain of 5 consecutive working days at a time	- Short-term teleworking: equal to or less than 90 consecutive calendar days - Intermittent telecommuting: alternative days (e.g. 1 or 2 days/week or several days/months)	Long-term teleworking: more than 90 calendar days with arrangement initially approved for up to 6 months, with possible extension to one year	No	- Phased retirement - Job-sharing (both are considered as variations of part-time work)



Organization	Eligibility	Flexible working hours <sup>a</sup> (flexitime)	Staggered working hours <sup>a</sup>	Compressed work schedule	Teleworking (telecommuting)		Time off for learning activities/study	Other options
					At the duty station	Outside the duty station		
FAO	Staff and non-staff personnel	Yes		Statutory weekly hours may be worked in less than 10 days/two weeks	- Up to 2 days/week - Longer-term teleworking within or outside the duty station: preferably not exceeding 3 months	- Up to a maximum of 4 weeks (20 working days)/calendar year - Longer-term teleworking within or outside the duty station: preferably not exceeding 3 months	No	- Phased retirement - Job-sharing
IAEA	Staff personnel	Yes		No	- Work from home: normally not exceeding a total of 24 days/ calendar year, and approved by supervisor on case-by-case basis - Work from home outside the duty station may be approved on an exceptional basis, based on personal compelling circumstances and business needs		No	
ICAO		Yes	No	No	Up to 3 days/week, subject to the approval of the responsible manager (first reporting manager)	3 accumulative or consecutive weeks/calendar year; non-renewable and subject to the approval of the responsible manager (first reporting manager)	No	
ILO	Staff personnel	Yes	No	Cumulated hours for staff member working 40 hours/week: - 10 working days in 9 - 5 working days in 4.5	- Maximum of 3 working days/week - Up to 10 consecutive working days/month for a period of up to 12 months	- 10 consecutive working days/month, subject to a maximum limit of 30 working days/calendar year, with no adjustments to benefits and entitlements - Not exceeding 63 working days/12 months, subject to the agreement of the responsible Chief and the express approval of the Director of Human Resources Development - Extension possible for up to an additional 63 days, under serious and compelling circumstances	Languages courses and training activities	- Cumulated hours - Medical and other appointments
IMO	Staff and non-staff personnel	Yes	Yes	- 10 working days in 9 - 5 working days in 4.5	Up to 3 days a week	- Non-recurring limited duration not exceeding 6 months - Exceptional extension under “exceptional circumstances” must be approved by manager and may not exceed 3 months	No	
ITU	Staff personnel	Yes	Yes		Maximum of 2 days/week	Up to 10 days/calendar year	Yes	

Organization	Eligibility	Flexible working hours <sup>a</sup> (flexitime)	Staggered working hours <sup>a</sup>	Compressed work schedule	Teleworking (telecommuting)		Time off for learning activities/study	Other options
					At the duty station	Outside the duty station		
UNESCO	Staff and non-staff personnel		Yes		Up to 2 days/week	- Authorized within commuting distance only - Outside commuting distance would be exceptional and for compelling reasons only (e.g. medical)	Up to 6 hours/week, and the time must be made up in the same week	
UNIDO	Staff and non-staff personnel	Yes, as part of staggered working hours	“Credit” or “debit” - 10 working days in 9 working hours may be accumulated by working more or fewer hours within the flexible periods, based on the standard working day of 8 hours (7.5 hours in the summer). The maximum credit/debit that may be carried over from one calendar month to the next is 16 working hours	- 5 working days in 4.5 (this option may also be utilized in combination with staggered working hours)	Up to a maximum of 3 working days (half or full days)/week	- An appropriate duration not exceeding 6 months - An exceptional extension not exceeding 3 months may be possible, with the approval of the Director of Human Resources Management or a representative thereof	Up to 6 hours/week, and the time must be made up within the same month, unless otherwise agreed by the personnel and the manager	
UNWTO	Staff and non-staff personnel		Yes	No	- Regular: up to 3 days/week	- Occasional: up to 30 working days/calendar year, with possible special extension for an additional period of 30 working days/calendar year	No <sup>e</sup>	
UPU	Staff member and non-staff	Yes, except staff at the P-5 level and above may take a maximum of 1 day or 2 half days off in lieu of flexitime/calendar month		Yes, as part of the flexitime option	- Up to 2 days (number of days teleworking relates to the staff member’s working rate)	Exceptional circumstances, such as: - Duty travel - Private travel with compelling and unforeseen reasons - Private travel with mandatory quarantine Duration not specified	No	

Organization	Eligibility	Flexible working hours <sup>a</sup> (flexitime)	Staggered working hours <sup>a</sup>	Compressed work schedule	Teleworking (telecommuting)		Time off for learning activities/study	Other options
					At the duty station	Outside the duty station		
WHO	Staff personnel		Yes, for a minimum of 6 months to a maximum of 1 year; may be continued subject to exigencies of service or other criteria	- 10 working days in 9 (with 1 day off during the 10-day work period) - 5 working days in 4.5 (with 1 half day off every week) This arrangement may be used for a minimum of 6 months to a maximum of 1 year	Exceptional teleworking available for periods longer than 5 days/calendar month	Exceptional teleworking available for periods longer than 5 days/month, up to a maximum of 90 cumulative days/calendar year (prorated for appointment duration)	No	
WIPO	Staff and non-staff personnel (e.g. interns)		Yes, includes flexibility to stagger working hours from one week to the next, up to 5 hours within a maximum continuous period of 2 weeks	Full-time employment: - 5 working days in 4.5 - 10 working days in 9 - 20 working days in 19	- Regular: 0.5 to 3 working days/week <sup>f</sup> - Occasional: up to a maximum of 30 working days/calendar year <sup>g</sup> Approval granted for a maximum period of 12 months	Limited to 30 working days/calendar year <sup>h</sup>	No <sup>i</sup>	
WMO	Staff personnel	Yes	Yes	No	Up to 2 working days/week, with an initial trial period of 3 months	Normally not more than 5 working days/month	No	

<sup>a</sup> Flexible, or staggered, working hours (also referred to as flexitime) allow personnel to adjust the start and end times of their working days, provided that they work the required number of hours in any given day or week and are present during the common work week or core working hours established for their duty stations, if any (see United Nations System Model Policy on Flexible Work, para. 20).

<sup>b</sup> The United Nations Secretariat policy applies to UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat and UNODC; however, the policy stipulates that it is up to the heads of the entities to determine to which degree flexible working arrangement requests should be reviewed taking into account the level of the service or division or any other relevant organizational unit.

<sup>c</sup> UNFPA's current flexible working arrangement policy applies to staff personnel only, however, the organization is reviewing the modalities for non-staff personnel (i.e. consultants, individual contractors and interns) and will include flexible working arrangement options in the relevant documents.

<sup>d</sup> The UNICEF policy applies to staff personnel only. However, "flexible working arrangements for other personnel are equally encouraged and subject to discussions with the supervisors, taking into consideration the nature and duration of the function" (para. 4).

<sup>e</sup> At UNWTO, the possibility of time off for study is provided for under a separate policy, in the context of career development (offered as special leave with full pay).

<sup>f</sup> As of 1 January 2024, maximum 2 working days/week will be allowed.

<sup>g</sup> As of 1 January 2024, up to a maximum of 40 working days/calendar year.

<sup>h</sup> Available as of 1 January 2024.

<sup>i</sup> Time off for studies is available as special leave with full pay at WIPO; it is not considered a flexible working arrangement.

## Annex III

### Policy framework for flexible working arrangements in the United Nations system organizations

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Flexible working arrangement policy/guidelines</i>	<i>Other guidance, standard operating procedures, etc.</i>
United Nations Secretariat	Flexible working arrangements, Secretary-General's bulletin, ST/SGB/2019/3 (18 April 2019) Flexible working arrangements, Information circular, ST/IC/2019/15 (11 June 2019)	Updated policy guidance and frequently asked questions on flexible working arrangements and alternate working arrangements, available on United Nations iSeek website
UNCTAD	Same as United Nations Secretariat	
UNEP	Same as United Nations Secretariat	
UN-Habitat	Same as United Nations Secretariat	
UNODC	Same as United Nations Secretariat	
ITC	Work/Life Balance (WLB), Executive-Director's bulletin, ITC/EDB/2022/01 (1 July 2022)	WLB Code of conduct WLB frequently asked questions ITC Gender and WLB e-system, brochures (2015) Towards gender equality and an enabling environment, ITC gender brochures (2019 and 2020)
UNAIDS	Flexible working arrangement policy, HRM/IN 2013-7 (22 November 2013)	
UNDP <sup>a</sup>	Flexible working arrangements (2013 and updated 2019)	
UNFPA	Policy and procedures on flexible working arrangements (1 February 2022)	FWA toolkit (February 2022)
UNHCR	Policy on flexible work, UNHCR/HCP/2022/04 (23 August 2023) (entry into force 1 October 2022) Flexible working arrangement policy for interns, Internships in UNHCR, Administrative instruction, UNHCR/AI/2018/03/Rev.1	Guidelines on flexible work (December 2022)
UNICEF	UNICEF procedure on flexible working arrangements, PROCEDURE/DHR/2022/003 (1 July 2022)	Guide for managers on granting long-term teleworking arrangements (for more than three consecutive months) (August 2020) UNICEF has a dedicated Intranet site with additional guidance for staff, managers and human resources partners, which is regularly updated

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Flexible working arrangement policy/guidelines</i>	<i>Other guidance, standard operating procedures, etc.</i>
UNOPS	Manage flexible working arrangements, Revised policy provision PQMS 7.5.4 (January 2022)	Reboarding toolkit Guiding principles Reboarding practices for managers Reboarding practices for individuals Reboarding checklist Addressing hopes and fears Establishing work arrangements fit for your team Tip sheet 1: Practical tips for hybrid team collaboration Tip sheet 2: Leading and motivating hybrid teams Tip sheet 3: More productive and inclusive hybrid meetings Tip sheet 4: Managing your work schedule via Google calendar
UNRWA	Teleworking, International personnel directive, PD I/1/rev.1 (20 March 2022)	
UN-Women <sup>a</sup>	Uses UNDP flexible working arrangement policy Note: UN-Women is currently preparing its own policy.	
WFP <sup>a</sup>	Flexible working arrangements, chap. V.7, Human Resources Manual (12 January 2022)	
FAO <sup>a</sup>	Flexible working arrangements, chap. III, FAO Manual (3 December 2013) Guidelines on part-time employment, sect. 327, appendix B, chap. III, FAO Manual (1 November 2013) Job-sharing, sect. 327, appendix D, chap. III, FAO Manual (25 March 2009) Flexible work schedule, sect. 327, appendix E, chap. III, FAO Manual (25 March 2009) Compressed work schedule, sect. 327, appendix F, chap. III, FAO Manual (25 March 2009) Note: Guidelines on teleworking, sect. 327, appendix A, chap. III, FAO Manual (25 March 2009) has been suspended. A pilot project for flexible working arrangements is currently in force until 31 July 2023. The pilot project is included in FAO guidelines on COVID-19.	
IAEA	Update on COVID-19-related measures, STA/NOT/3164 (2 June 2022) Flexible working hours, AM.II/5 I, annex I (1 January 2019) Work from home, AM.II/5 III, annex III (26 March 2021) Working time models, AM.II/5 II, annex II (30 October 2020)	
ICAO <sup>a</sup>	Guidelines on transition to the workplace (1 April 2022) Flexi-time working hours, Staff notice No. 5269 (31 March 2009)	

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Flexible working arrangement policy/guidelines</i>	<i>Other guidance, standard operating procedures, etc.</i>
ILO	ILO policy on flexible working arrangements, Office directive (17 May 2023) Procedures for flexible working arrangements, Office procedure (22 May 2023) (effective 1 July 2023)	
IMO	Flexible working arrangements, Policy and procedures (July 2020)	
ITU <sup>a</sup>	Policy on working hours, Service order No. 11/15 (26 July 2011) Policy on teleworking arrangements, Service order No. 09/12 (15 December 2009) Rules applicable to part-time work, Service order No. 06/14 (9 October 2006)	Frequently asked questions on teleworking (April 2023)
UNESCO	Introducing the policy on flexible working arrangements, Administrative circular AC/HR/84 (13 April 2022)	Guidance to facilitate and accompany the implementation of the flexible working arrangement policy issued April 2022 (e.g. frequently asked questions, tips for managers, presentation for communication sessions for different target groups)
UNIDO	Flexible working arrangements, Administrative instruction, AI/2022/01 (11 March 2022)	
UNWTO	Working hours, flexible working arrangements, overtime and compensatory time off, AI/924/23 (16 June 2023) (effective 1 July 2023)	
UPU	Flexible working arrangements, Administrative instruction (DRH) No. 48 (30 May 2022) Flexitime and the UPU time-keeping system, Administrative instruction (DRH) No. 22/Rev 5 (3 December 2012)	
WHO	Flexible working arrangements, sect. II.6.28, WHO eManual, version 1.0 (29 July 2022)	
WIPO <sup>a</sup>	Policy on working hours and flexible working arrangements, Office instruction No. 19/2021 (15 October 2021) (superseded) Working hours and flexible working arrangements, Human Resources Manual (15 March 2023) (A new flexible working arrangement policy will enter into force on 1 January 2024)	Working hours and flexible working arrangements. Questions and answers (updated regularly)
WMO	Teleworking policy, Service note No. 1/2023 (1 January 2023)	

Source: Prepared by JIU.

<sup>a</sup> Organizations that are currently reviewing their flexible working arrangement policies.

## Annex IV

### Options and modalities introduced in the most recent updates to flexible working arrangement policies

Organization	Teleworking at duty station	Teleworking outside duty station	Other flexible working arrangement options	Additional sub-options, flexibility granted for existing flexible working arrangement options
United Nations Secretariat		Yes		Teleworking at the duty station: - Increased to 3 days/week - Full-time, with compelling personal circumstances Teleworking outside duty station: - Up to 6 months, with compelling personal circumstances, plus exceptional extension of 3 months Compressed work schedule: - 5 working days in 4.5
ITC		Yes		
UNHCR				Teleworking: - Upon initial appointment, full time at/outside duty station for full contract duration - Amendments to other teleworking modalities - New percentual part-time work options added
UNRWA	Yes	Yes		
UNDP*				
UNFPA		Yes	Yes, compressed work schedule (10 working days in 9) for staff in the General Service category	Teleworking at the duty station : - Up to 3 days/week and option of alternating weeks Teleworking outside the duty station: - Up to 60 working days/calendar year, - Exceptional arrangement for compelling personal circumstances: minimum of 6 months and up to 1 year
UNICEF		Yes		Teleworking at the duty station: - Full-time teleworking possible for limited time and option of alternating weeks Teleworking outside the duty station: - Option 1: increased to a maximum of 90 working days/annual cycle - Option 2: up to a maximum period of 1 calendar year, with approval

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Teleworking at duty station</i>	<i>Teleworking outside duty station</i>	<i>Other flexible working arrangement options</i>	<i>Additional sub-options, flexibility granted for existing flexible working arrangement options</i>
UNOPS				Teleworking at the duty station: - increased to 3 days/week Teleworking outside the duty station (exceptional pre-pandemic, more of the norm post-pandemic) - Increased options and days: formal, with annual leave: up to 15 days; formal: between 15 and 70 working days/calendar year; formal long term: over 70 working days/given calendar year
WFP*		Yes		WFP has already revised its teleworking provisions
FAO*		Yes		FAO has launched a new telecommuting pilot project
ICAO	Yes	Yes		
ILO		Yes		- Teleworking outside the duty station introduced, with a well-defined regulatory framework - Cumulated hours option available to all staff (not only General Service staff)
IMO	Yes	Yes		Teleworking at the duty station: - Increased to up to 3 days/week Teleworking outside the duty station: - Up to 6 months with compelling exceptional reason, plus extension of 3 months
ITU	Yes	Yes		- Teleworking at the duty station: maximum of 2 days/week - Teleworking outside the duty station: maximum of 10 days/year - Full-time teleworking for medical reasons
UNESCO			Yes, staggered working hours and time off for external learning activities	Regular/long-term teleworking outside the duty station is not included in the current flexible working arrangement policy
UNIDO	Yes	Yes		
UNWTO	Yes	Yes		- Teleworking at the duty station: up to 3 days/week - Teleworking outside the duty station: up to 30 working days/calendar year, with possibility of an exceptional extension of up to an additional 30 working days
UPU	Yes	Yes		- Teleworking at the duty station: possible up to 2 days/week - Teleworking outside the duty station: possible in exceptional circumstances, must be approved by the Director General, 3 pre-defined restricted options, during which the staff member cannot return to the duty station
WHO	Yes	Yes		



<i>Organization</i>	<i>Teleworking at duty station</i>	<i>Teleworking outside duty station</i>	<i>Other flexible working arrangement options</i>	<i>Additional sub-options, flexibility granted for existing flexible working arrangement options</i>
WIPO*	Yes	Yes		The new provisions of the flexible working arrangement policy will enter into force on 1 January 2024. The main changes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regular teleworking limited to 2 days/week (instead of 3)</li> <li>- Occasional teleworking increased to 40 days/calendar year (instead of 30)</li> <li>- Consecutive teleworking limited to 30 working days</li> <li>- Teleworking outside the duty station limited to 30 days/calendar year</li> </ul>
WMO	Yes	Yes		
IAEA	Yes	Yes		Teleworking at the duty station: up to 24 working days/calendar year

*Source:* Prepared by JIU.

\* Organizations that are currently reviewing their flexible working arrangement policies.

## Annex V

## Teleworking at the duty station

Organization	Options (maximum number of days per week allowed)				Duration of arrangement	Conditions		
	Less than 3 days	3 or more days	Full-time telecommuting possible	Other		Compelling personal circumstances	Approving authority	Other comments
United Nations Secretariat <sup>a</sup>		Up to 3 days (half or full days)			Specific duration upon written request	No	Supervisor, with signed formal agreement	Heads of entities may decide that requests should be reviewed at the service/division/ any other relevant organizational unit level
			More than 3 days			Yes		
UNCTAD	Same as United Nations Secretariat							
UNEP	Same as United Nations Secretariat							
UN-Habitat	Same as United Nations Secretariat							
UNODC	Same as United Nations Secretariat							
ITC <sup>a</sup>		Up to 3 days (half or full days)/			Specific duration must be requested in ITC Work-Life Balance e-system	No	Supervisor and Section Chief, agreement registered in ITC Work-Life Balance e-system	
			More than 3 days			Yes		
UNAIDS <sup>a</sup>	1 day				As per current policy: up to 12 months at a time within country of official duty station; may be renewed upon meeting several conditions	No	Supervisor, with signed agreement	

Organization	Options (maximum number of days per week allowed)				Duration of arrangement	Conditions		
	Less than 3 days	3 or more days	Full-time telecommuting possible	Other		Compelling personal circumstances	Approving authority	Other comments
UNDP <sup>a</sup>			Compact (full-time) at an alternate dedicated worksite		Maximum 1 year, with possible extension, under agreement between staff member and supervisor	No	Supervisor, with signed agreement	
	Compact (part-time) in office: up to 2 days							
UNFPA <sup>a</sup>		Up to 3 days			Specific duration of up to 1 year	No	Supervisor, decision (approval or denial) must be recorded in signed Flexible working arrangement agreement	
				1 full week/alternating weeks				
				2 full weeks/alternating 2-week periods				
UNHCR <sup>a</sup>			At outset of regular/temporary assignment/appointment		Entire duration of assignment/appointment on regular/temporary basis	No	Supervisor, with signed formal agreement	Applicable to international professional staff only upon initial appointment
		No restriction on number of hours or days			Specific duration as agreed between staff member and supervisor			
UNICEF <sup>a</sup>				Regular: on designated days of week/month, continuously	Not mentioned	No	Supervisor	Regional Directors or Division Directors are authorized to put in place additional or time-bound flexible working arrangements applicable to an entire office or division
				Blended approach: alternating telework with on-site work (e.g. 1 week in the office, 1 one week remote)				

Organization	Options (maximum number of days per week allowed)				Duration of arrangement	Conditions		
	Less than 3 days	3 or more days	Full-time telecommuting possible	Other		Compelling personal circumstances	Approving authority	Other comments
UNOPS		Informal work from home: up to 3 days			6 months, with automatic renewal	No	Supervisor, request for either option (formal and informal) requires a signed agreement	
				Formal, with annual leave: 15 accumulative days/calendar year	1 calendar year, with automatic renewal			In conjunction with annual leave
UNRWA				Occasional: 5 working days (half or full days)/ month	Not mentioned	No (however, only for assignments that require uninterrupted concentration	Supervisor	If exceeding 5 days/month, signed agreement required
				Regular: days per week or for continuous periods not exceeding 60 calendar days/year	1 calendar year	Yes, extenuating personal situations	Director of Human Resources for a regular teleworking	
				Exceptional: on a regular and prolonged basis from 61 to 180 calendar days/year	1 calendar year	Yes, compassionate reasons with proper supporting relevant documentation	Director of Human Resources, in consultation with Chief of Staff	Compelling circumstances in the interest of the Agency or short-term temporary appointments
UN-Women	Same as UNDP							
WFP	Within commuting distance of official office location: 2 days			Short-term: up to a maximum of 90 consecutive calendar days	Initial period of up to 6 months, with possible extension to 1 year	No	Supervisor Telecommuting on a continuous basis beyond 1 year must be endorsed by Regional Director concerned and approved by Director of Human Resources	
				Intermittent: on alternative days		No		

Organization	Options (maximum number of days per week allowed)				Duration of arrangement	Conditions		
	Less than 3 days	3 or more days	Full-time telecommuting possible	Other		Compelling personal circumstances	Approving authority	Other comments
FAO	Up to 2 days					No	Supervisor, in consultation with Division Director/ heads of units, as appropriate	
				Longer term: preferably not exceeding 3 months		Yes, specific personal compelling exigencies or particular health reasons	Responsible member of leadership team and Regional Representative for Regional Office concerned	If exceeding 3 months, concurrence of relevant Deputy Director General through Director of Human Resources required  Not applicable to non-staff personnel
IAEA				Up to 24 days/calendar year	Not mentioned	No	Immediate supervisor and Division Director	
ICAO		Up to 3 days			Not mentioned	No	Supervisor (first reporting officer)	
ILO <sup>a</sup>				Up to 3 days/week or up to 10 consecutive days/calendar month	Up to 12 months	No	Supervisor	Staff member must submit request to the supervisor in advance, using IRIS
IMO <sup>a</sup>		Up to 3 days				No	Supervisor (line manager)	Separate from teleworking based on medical reasons

Organization	Options (maximum number of days per week allowed)				Duration of arrangement	Conditions		
	Less than 3 days	3 or more days	Full-time telecommuting possible	Other		Compelling personal circumstances	Approving authority	Other comments
ITU <sup>a</sup>	Up to 2 days		For medical reasons only	May request to telework more than 2 days/week	No time limit	Yes, if requesting to telework for more than 2 days/week	<p>Direct supervisor, requests are approved for each day teleworked in the ERP system</p> <p>Secretary-General, on a case-by-case basis for requests to telework more than 2 days/week, with compelling personal circumstances</p> <p>Chief of Human Resources Management on recommendation of the Medical Adviser, if requesting full-time teleworking</p>	<p>Applicable to staff holding temporary, permanent, continuing or fixed-term appointments</p> <p>Other personnel may be authorized to telework by the direct supervisor; however, the arrangements are not recorded in the ERP system</p>
UNESCO	Up to 2 days				Initial period not exceeding 6 months, renewable for an additional 6 months at a time	No		Arrangement does not cover occasional work away from the office on an ad hoc basis
UNIDO <sup>a</sup>		Up to 3 days (half or full days)		May request to telework more than 3 days/week	Maximum period of 12 months at a time	No	<p>Direct supervisor, if not more than 3 days/week</p> <p>First/second level supervisors and responsible Managing Director if requesting to telework more than 3 days/week</p>	
UNWTO		Up to 3 days (half or full days)				No	Immediate supervisor, request must be submitted through the Telecommuting Request form	

Organization	Options (maximum number of days per week allowed)				Duration of arrangement	Conditions		
	Less than 3 days	3 or more days	Full-time telecommuting possible	Other		Compelling personal circumstances	Approving authority	Other comments
UPU	Maximum of 2 days					No	Immediate supervisor and relevant Director, in order to establish an arrangement	
WHO				Occasional: up to 5 days/month	Not mentioned	No	First-level supervisor and validated by Human Resources	The two modalities can be taken at the same time
				Exceptional: beyond 5 days/calendar month				
WIPO		Regular: up to 3 days <sup>b</sup>			Maximum period of 12 months	No	Supervisor	Not recommended for newly recruited staff during the first 3–6 months of service, so as to facilitate integration within the workplace, team and Organization
				Occasional: maximum of 30 days/calendar year <sup>c</sup>		No	Supervisor	
			Exceptional full-time teleworking arrangement on case-by-case basis, normally limited to a maximum of 6 months			Yes	Prior approval of the Director of Human Resources Management, considering the recommendation of the Supervisor and Sector Lead and, where appropriate, the Medical Adviser	

Organization	Options (maximum number of days per week allowed)				Duration of arrangement	Conditions		
	Less than 3 days	3 or more days	Full-time telecommuting possible	Other		Compelling personal circumstances	Approving authority	Other comments
WMO	Up to 2 days				Initial trial period of 3 months; a new agreement must be signed every 12 months	No	Director (within the relevant department)  Request/agreement must be submitted to the Director's supervisor in Executive Management	

Source: Prepared by JIU (2023).

<sup>a</sup> Organizations that allow teleworking at the duty station on an ad hoc basis.

<sup>b</sup> As of 1 January 2024, maximum of 2 days per week.

<sup>c</sup> As of 1 January 2024, maximum of 40 days per calendar year.



## Annex VI

### Teleworking outside the duty station

Organization	Options, duration	Conditions		Adjustment to benefits and entitlements	Comment
		Compelling personal circumstances	Level of approval required		
United Nations Secretariat	Not exceeding 6 months  Exceptional extension possible for an additional period not exceeding 3 months, in exceptional circumstances	Yes	Manager	No change of official duty station (see staff rule 4.8 (a))  Benefits and entitlements requiring physical presence shall be suspended for the period of teleworking outside the duty station	
UNCTAD	Same as United Nations Secretariat				
UNEP	Same as United Nations Secretariat				
UN-Habitat	Same as United Nations Secretariat				
UNODC	Same as United Nations Secretariat				
ITC	Not exceeding 6 months  Exceptional extension possible for an additional period not exceeding 3 months, in exceptional circumstances	Yes	Manager and Chief of Section	No change of official duty station (see staff rule 4.8 (a))  Benefits and entitlements requiring physical presence shall be suspended for the period of teleworking outside the duty station	
UNAIDS	Maximum of 30 consecutive days, non-renewable	No	Supervisor, work schedule included in agreement		
UNHCR	At the outset of a regular/temporary assignment/appointment for the entire duration of the appointment/assignment	No	Supervisor	Salary comparison made between the official duty station and the location where the international personnel are teleworking, as of the first day of assignment	This modality is applicable to international professionals only
	Maximum 90 calendar days (continuous or cumulative)  Exceptional extension possible for 3 months to 1 year	No	Supervisor  Prior approval of the Regional Bureau Director/Division Director/Head of Service Centre for extension	Possible adjustment to salary and benefits/allowances, medical evacuation, medical insurance coverage, visa and residence permit status, privileges and immunities	Personnel should consider the impacts

Organization	Options, duration	Conditions		Adjustment to benefits and entitlements	Comment
		Compelling personal circumstances	Level of approval required		
UNRWA	Up to 2 months within a calendar year  Exceptional extension is possible; period of time not specified	Yes, extenuating personal situations	Supervisor and relevant Director of Human Resources - for extension	Salaries, allowances and other conditions of service remain the same; no overtime or time-off in lieu thereof will be granted during the telecommuting period	
UNDP	Compact (full time): maximum of 1 year	No	Supervisor - to establish formal arrangement	Depending on the distance between the telework location and the official duty station, adjustment to the staff member's conditions of service may be necessary, including a change of duty station for the purpose of entitlements. The human resources focal point at the duty station must inform the human resources team lead in Benefits and Entitlements Services, Global Shared Services Centre	Nationally recruited staff are not eligible for telecommuting outside the commuting distance of the duty station.
	Compact (part time): up to 2 days per week	No	Supervisor - to establish a formal arrangement		
UNFPA	Remote work: up to 60 working days (continuous or cumulative)/calendar year  Generally, no extension; however, an exceptional extension may be possible for an additional 6 months to 1 year	No	Manager  Director of Human Resources for exceptional extension	The post adjustment system for international professional staff is designed to ensure that remuneration levels provide the same purchasing power at all duty stations General Service staff are not subject to international mobility, therefore they are paid according to local salary scales established on the basis of salary surveys (not based on a single global salary scale)	
UNICEF	Option 1: up to a combined total of 90 working days/year (counted from 1 April to 31 March)  Generally, no extension; however, possibility to avail oneself of Option 2 once Option 1 has been exhausted	No	Supervisor	Adjustments will be made to benefits and entitlements during teleworking period (both options 1 and 2)	
	Option 2: period of at least 91 continuous working days, up to a maximum of 1 calendar year <i>Note:</i> Following the completion of option 2, staff cannot avail themselves of option 1 for a period of 3 calendar months as of their return to active service at the duty station.  Exceptional extension of option 2 is possible only for continuous periods of at least 25 working days	No restrictions for staff on fixed-term, continuing or permanent appointments	Relevant Regional Directors and Division Directors for initial period and exceptional extension		Staff holding temporary appointments may request, with compelling personal circumstances, approval of the Director of Human Resources required

Organization	Options, duration	Conditions		Adjustment to benefits and entitlements	Comment
		Compelling personal circumstances	Level of approval required		
UNOPS	Formal, with annual leave: up to 15 accumulative days/ calendar year	No	Supervisor, with signed agreement	In conjunction with annual leave	
	Formal regular: between 15 and 70 days/calendar year		Supervisor, and agreement must be approved by the Head of business unit		
	Formal long term: over 70 days/calendar year		Supervisor, and the agreement must be approved by the Head of business unit		
UN-Women	Same as UNDP				
WFP	Long term: more than 90 calendar days (initial arrangement approved for up to 6 months, with possible extension to 1 year)  Exceptional extension possible for beyond 1 year (see Comments)	No	Director concerned  Director of Human Resources (for extension beyond 1 year)		Must be requested through WFP Self-service and endorsed by Supervisor  Request for extension must be discussed with first and second supervisors and endorsed by Regional/ Country/ Division Director  Managers must provide reason(s) for rejection of request in writing
FAO	Up to a maximum of 4 weeks (20 working days)/ calendar year	No	Supervisor, in consultation with Division Director/ Head of Unit		
	Longer term: preferably not exceeding 3 months  Exceptional extension beyond 3 months possible, however, more than 6 months will not be approved unless very specific exceptional circumstances (see comments)	Yes, specific personal compelling exigencies or particular health reasons	Responsible member of leadership team and Regional Representative of Regional Office concerned	Benefits and entitlements based on the staff member's physical presence at the official duty station (e.g. danger pay, non-family service allowance) will be suspended during the period of teleworking	For extension beyond 3 months, concurrence of relevant Deputy Director General through Director of Human Resources required

Organization	Options, duration	Conditions		Adjustment to benefits and entitlements	Comment
		Compelling personal circumstances	Level of approval required		
IAEA	Maximum of 24 days/calendar year possible	Yes, compelling personal circumstances, decided on a case-by-case basis and the specific work situation of the staff member	Supervisor, and express approval of Director of Human Resources, as delegated by the Director General	Generally not affected, as arrangement is for a limited number of days/year	
ICAO	Non-recurring 3 weeks (accumulative or consecutive)/calendar year	No	Responsible manager	Not affected; arrangement may be carried out in conjunction with home leave, family visit or education grant travel	Responsible manager shall duly inform Human Resources, Staff Employment and Administration Section
ILO	Up to a maximum of 10 consecutive working days/month, subject to a maximum 30 working days/calendar year	No	Manager (based on work compatibility)	Payment and/or accrual of any benefits and entitlements that are based on the staff member's physical presence at the duty station may be suspended accordingly for the teleworking period	
	Serious compelling circumstances: not exceeding 63 working days/12-month period  Exceptional extension may be granted for up to an additional 63 working days, if the serious and compelling circumstances continue	Yes, for serious and compelling circumstances	Agreement of responsible chief and express approval of the Director of Human Resources	In exceptional situations, e.g. continuous teleworking for more than 63 working days over a 12-month period, salary or post adjustment will be adjusted to reflect the applicable salary scale or cost of living at the actual place of teleworking, if lower than that applicable at the duty station	During teleworking, staff member shall maintain residence at the duty station, and will be able to return once the teleworking period has ended or earlier if reasonably required to do so
IMO	Non-recurring, limited duration not exceeding 6 months  Exceptional extension for up to 3 months possible	Yes, for compelling exceptional cases, with appropriate justification	Supervisor/line manager  Manager (for exceptional extension)	Generally not affected	Separate from teleworking based on medical reasons

Organization	Options, duration	Conditions		Adjustment to benefits and entitlements	Comment
		Compelling personal circumstances	Level of approval required		
ITU	Up to 10 days/calendar year More than 10 days possible, with compelling personal reason	Yes, for more than 10 days teleworking	Direct supervisor (requests for up to 10 days)  Secretary-General, on a case-by-case basis (requests for more than 10 days for compelling personal circumstances)	Not mentioned	All requests must be approved in the ERP system  Applicable to staff holding permanent, continuing, fixed-term or temporary appointments only
UNESCO	Not normally allowed  Exceptional: for compelling reasons (e.g. medical) only	n/a	n/a	n/a	Exceptional teleworking outside the duty station for medical reasons is governed by another organizational policy
UNIDO	An appropriate duration not exceeding 6 months  Exceptional extension not exceeding 3 months possible with approval by or on behalf of the Director of HRM	Yes	Supervisors (first and second reporting officers), and responsible Managing Director  Director of Human Resources Management (for extension)	Generally not affected	
UNWTO	Up to 30 working days/calendar year  Exceptional extension for an additional period of up to 30 working days possible	Yes, for compelling personal circumstances or family reasons	Authorizing officer (department level), endorsed by Supervisor, and positive recommendation of Human Resources Department	Generally not affected	
UPU	Exceptional circumstances only, e.g.: - Duty travel - Private travel, with compelling and unforeseen reasons - Private travel, with mandatory quarantine Duration not specified	Yes, exceptional circumstances	Director General	Benefits and entitlements not affected if teleworking for a maximum of 30 consecutive calendar days	

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Options, duration</i>	<i>Conditions</i>		<i>Adjustment to benefits and entitlements</i>	<i>Comment</i>
		<i>Compelling personal circumstances</i>	<i>Level of approval required</i>		
WHO	Exceptional: up to 5 days/calendar month up to a maximum of 90 cumulative days/calendar year	No	First-level supervisor and validated by Human Resources	Generally not affected	
WIPO	Up to 30 working days/calendar year <sup>a</sup>	No	Supervisor	n/a	Security clearance required in TRIPS
	Exceptional full time: on a case-by-case basis, normally limited to a maximum of 6 months	Yes	Director of Human Resources Management, considering the recommendation of the supervisor and the Sector Lead and, where appropriate, the recommendation of the Medical Adviser	An exceptional teleworking arrangement from outside the duty station area that exceeds three months will lead, where appropriate, to a reduction of a staff member's remuneration, allowances and other entitlements	Consideration of recommendation of Supervisor and Sector Lead and, where appropriate, the Medical Adviser
WMO	Normally not exceeding 5 working days/month	Yes, compelling circumstances	Secretary-General	Depending on the duration of the arrangement, the staff member's benefits and entitlements, including post adjustment and education grant, may be affected	Arrangements may exceptionally be considered eligible if the Department Director decides that such teleworking would be in the interest of the Organization

Source: Prepared by JIU (2023).

<sup>a</sup> As of 1 January 2024.

## Annex VII

### Model of a risk management matrix relating to the implementation of flexible working arrangements

<i>Typical implementation risks</i>	<i>Minimum expected mitigation measures</i>
Staff member's request is denied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff and managers should discuss flexible working arrangement</li> <li>- Managers should indicate the reason(s) for denying the staff member's request; second reporting officer may be consulted for further advice</li> <li>- Staff member and manager could do a trial flexible working arrangement, then make an informed decision after the trial</li> </ul>
Staff member is unable to produce the deliverables as agreed prior to the start of the flexible working arrangement, less collaborative or not available during agreed working hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff and managers should discuss expectations before starting the flexible working arrangement</li> <li>- Discussions about performance can help to make an informed decision about the viability of the arrangement</li> <li>- Variations on the flexible working arrangement may be considered; managers must revise the arrangement in a timely manner in the event of a negative impact on delivery of products/services or fulfilment of performance objectives</li> <li>- An arrangement may be terminated at any time by either the staff member or the manager; failure to adhere to the terms of the arrangement, as well as underperformance, would necessitate suspension or discontinuation of the arrangement</li> </ul>
Staff member and manager(s) are not clear about the flexible working arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff and managers should discuss flexible working arrangements; for any further questions, the local human resources officer can be consulted</li> <li>- Discussions about performance can help to make an informed decision about the viability of the arrangement</li> </ul>
Managers exhibit bias when considering flexible working arrangement requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Managers are encouraged to promote equal applicability across the workforce so that all staff have fair and equitable access to the range of flexible working arrangements</li> <li>- Managers should consider flexible working arrangement requests favourably, but may deny requests that are incompatible with exigencies of service or the nature of the functions (e.g. physical presence of staff member required)</li> <li>- A staff member wishing to formally contest a decision may request a management evaluation (where such a possibility exists)</li> </ul>
Managers have difficulty guiding staff on flexible working arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff and managers must agree on clear and measurable outputs to be delivered in line with individual performance objectives</li> <li>- Both staff and managers should have defined roles and responsibilities</li> </ul>
Remote work from outside the duty station negatively impacts the organization's collaboration with stakeholders, or its reputation owing to the actual or perceived reduced presence of staff in the duty station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flexible working arrangements should be adapted to respond to duty station-specific realities and needs</li> <li>- Requests for flexible working arrangements may be denied for various reasons, including, but not limited to, incompatibility with a staff member's functions, the need for the staff member's physical presence to serve beneficiaries and collaborate with implementing partners and host Governments, and inadequate access to technology to deliver daily tasks</li> </ul>

*Source:* Prepared by JIU, based on the risk matrix models of UNICEF and UNFPA (see UNICEF, Procedure on flexible working arrangements (PROCEDURE/DHR/2022/003), July 2022, p. 12; and UNFPA Policy and procedures on flexible working arrangements, February 2022, pp. 12–14).

## Annex VIII

## Provisions for requesting and approving flexible working arrangements

Organization	Provisions/principles <sup>a</sup>									Notes/comments
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
United Nations Secretariat <sup>b</sup>	✓	✓	X <sup>1</sup>	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	<sup>1</sup> Currently, no system is mentioned in the policy, however, a copy of the signed request/agreement must be submitted to the Executive Office or local administrative/human resources office for recording and reporting purposes
ITC	✓	✓	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✓ <sup>2</sup>	✓	✓ <sup>3</sup>	✓	X	X <sup>4</sup>	<sup>1</sup> Request/agreement must be entered in Work/Life Balance e-System, unless it is an ad hoc, one-time agreement with the manager <sup>2</sup> Managers should approve request within 10 working days <sup>3</sup> e-System automatically approves request after 10 working days <sup>4</sup> Reason(s) for rejection(s) must be given in writing; there is no formal appeal process, however, staff may seek the advice of the Chief of Human Resources
UNHCR	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓ <sup>1</sup>	X	<sup>1</sup> The reviewing officer will take a final decision, based on the exigencies of service and possible operational impact; the Staff Health and Well-being Service as well as the Ombudsperson are available for support
UNRWA	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X <sup>1</sup>	X	X	<sup>1</sup> No provisions regarding rejection of flexible working arrangement requests available
UNAIDS	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	
UNDP	✓	✓	X <sup>1</sup>	X	X	X	X <sup>2</sup>	X <sup>3</sup>	X	<sup>1</sup> Only requests for teleworking outside the duty station need to be entered when possible change in duty station and/or service condition are concerned <sup>2</sup> Managers are only required to provide written justifications for maternity leave, paternity leave, and adoption and surrogacy leave, which are not strictly flexible working arrangement options <sup>3</sup> Rejection or denial of a request for a flexible working arrangement is not subject to UNDP's grievance/appeals procedures
UN-Women	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	UN-Women applies the UNDP flexible working arrangements policy
UNFPA	✓	✓	✓ <sup>1</sup>	X	✓	X	X	X	✓	<sup>1</sup> UNFPA is currently using an agreement tool, which will be replaced by new enterprise resource platform; decisions (approval or denial) must be recorded in the flexible working arrangement agreement form
UNICEF	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	X <sup>1</sup>	<sup>1</sup> The staff member and manager are encouraged to try out the flexible working arrangement so as to make an informed decision after the trial
UNOPS	✓	✓	✓ <sup>1</sup>	X	✓	X <sup>2</sup>	X <sup>3</sup>	X	✓	<sup>1</sup> Flexible working arrangement requests may be recorded in the OneUNOPS system <sup>2</sup> Once a remote work agreement has been established, it is automatically renewed without additional review <sup>3</sup> Reason(s) are required for rejection of flexible working arrangement requests, but not in written form
WFP	✓	✓	✓ <sup>1</sup>	X	✓	X	X	✓ <sup>2</sup>	X	<sup>1</sup> Managers should notify Human Resources about any changes to staff's employment status; staff should ensure that their first entry to and last exit from WFP premises are recorded daily <sup>2</sup> Appeal is possible for rejection of requests for telecommuting arrangements



Organization	Provisions/principles <sup>a</sup>									Notes/comments
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
FAO	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	X	
ICAO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	The ICAO “Guidelines on transition to the workplace” do not contain procedural provisions for requesting and approving flexible working arrangements
ILO	✓	✓	✓	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✓ <sup>2</sup>	X	✓	X	X	<sup>1</sup> Supervisor and responsible chief decide on requests in accordance with the provisions of the policy and should respond in IRIS within two weeks <sup>2</sup> There is no explicit provision on preferential consideration relating to flexible working arrangements, however, the policy is de facto favourable towards such arrangements, including the ability to “disconnect”
IMO	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	✓	
ITU	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	✓	
UNESCO	✓	✓	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	<sup>1</sup> Requests to telecommute must be recorded in the leave/time management system (TULIP)
UNIDO	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	✓	
UNWTO	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	
UPU	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	
WHO	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	
WIPO	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	
WMO	✓	✓ <sup>1</sup>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	<sup>1</sup> If basic conditions for a successful teleworking arrangement are met, staff should seek written approval from their managers to avail themselves thereof
IAEA	X	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	

Source: Prepared by JIU (2023).

Symbols: ✓ (Yes); X (No).

<sup>a</sup> Procedural provisions and principles for requesting and approving flexible working arrangements:

Requesting a flexible working arrangement:

- (1) Consultation encouraged between first reporting officer and staff (may include staff member requesting flexible working arrangement and other staff who may be affected by the regular absence of their colleague)
- (2) Use of detailed flexible working arrangement request forms and/or agreements
- (3) Mandatory recording of information in the management system and/or ERP system

Approving flexible working arrangement requests:

- (4) Clear time frame for approval
- (5) Managers consider flexible working arrangement requests favourably, if conditions are met
- (6) Request automatically approved if no reaction from approving authority (manager/office/unit) within the given time frame
- (7) Approving authority (manager/office/unit) provides written justification for rejecting a request
- (8) Possibility of appealing rejection of a request (e.g. formal appeal, such as management evaluation)
- (9) Possibility of appealing rejection of a request to a higher authority (e.g. Head of office, Human Resources Director, other)

<sup>b</sup> The policy of the United Nations Secretariat applies to UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat and UNODC.

## Annex IX

## Systems and tools for collecting data on flexible working arrangements

Organization	Data collected	Data collected centrally	Data collected for all options	Data collected automatically	Multiple systems/tools are used to collect data	Integration of data collection tools with ERP system	Other major data collection methods used to measure and analyse arrangements	Comments
United Nations Secretariat	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personnel surveys	- Some duty stations have developed bespoke systems for processing requests; data are therefore collected in a partial and decentralized manner - At duty stations that have a bespoke system, staff are instructed to send a copy of their agreement to their local human resources office for reporting and monitoring purposes - Currently, only telecommuting is recorded
UNCTAD	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Group focus analysis	- Data are collected through a dedicated flexible working arrangement platform in SharePoint
UNEP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X		- Both the flexible working arrangement application portal on UNEP Intranet, WeCollaborate, and Umoja Employee Self Service are used to manage such arrangements, however, they not mutually integrated - The development of Power BI Dashboard is in progress
UN-Habitat	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X		Data are collected manually and the Excel list is updated accordingly
UNODC	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X		- Data are collected through a dedicated application in SharePoint and Umoja - Only data on external learning are not collected
ITC	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personnel surveys <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focal point <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) <input type="checkbox"/> Exit survey	- ITC Work/Life Balance e-system uses WorkFlowGen framework web-based and MS SQL Database technologies; Excel User list on WorkflowGen is synchronized from Active Directory - Data collection and analysis are largely manual so there is need to automate generation of statistics for manager reporting purposes and dashboards
UNHCR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personnel surveys <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Specialized surveys (work-life balance, health, diversity, etc.)	Since 1 October 2022, all UNHCR personnel have to enter their flexible work requests in Workday; all flexible work options are collected in Workday

Organization	Data collected	Data collected centrally	Data collected for all options	Data collected automatically	Multiple systems/tools are used to collect data	Integration of data collection tools with ERP system	Other major data collection methods used to measure and analyse arrangements	Comments
UNRWA	X	X						UNRWA also uses the leave system to record flexible working arrangements
UNAIDS	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	☑ Personnel surveys	Data are collected through the ERP system, Microsoft flow and Sisense dashboards
UNDP	X	X						Data collected manually by each Section/Country Office and for remote work, some reporting from Atlas
UN-Women	✓	X	X	X	X	X		Data collected manually by each Section/Country Office and for remote work, some reporting from Atlas
UNFPA	✓	✓		X	X	X		- In house tool developed by the IT unit, see <a href="https://applications.myunfpa.org/FWP/">https://applications.myunfpa.org/FWP/</a> - Current tool collects requests and approvals; reporting is done manually
UNICEF	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	☑ Personnel surveys ☑ Specialized surveys (work-life balance, health, diversity, etc.) ☑ Focal point	- VISION, Fiori (SAP system) are used to collect data; staff submit their requests and implemented arrangements in the leave systems (VISION, Fiori) - Possibility of extracting and analysing data for each office - Fully integrated in ERP and recently updated for more self-service and reporting features (1 July 2022)
UNOPS	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓		- ERP integrated function, OneUNOPS Absence - Only telecommuting is recorded
WFP	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓		- WFP uses WFP Information Network and Global Systems (WINGS) and currently, only telecommuting is recorded - A new information system, Workday Human Capital Management (HCM) solution, will be implemented by 2024 and will replace some staff-related processes in WINGS. HCM is expected to support harmonization and automation of people management processes and will become a single tool for Human Resources and a one-stop-shop for employees and managers with regard to all human resources-related areas anywhere and at any time. It is envisaged that the new platform will include a functionality for compressed work schedules and flexible working hours

Organization	Data collected	Data collected centrally	Data collected for all options	Data collected automatically	Multiple systems/tools are used to collect data	Integration of data collection tools with ERP system	Other major data collection methods used to measure and analyse arrangements	Comments
FAO	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focal point	- Global Resource Management System (GRMS) is used to collect data centrally, while Excel files are used for data relating to the pilot project currently in place - The development of specific and new system solutions are currently underway and will integrate with GRMS. The new tool is expected to be integrated in the ERP with dashboards, including for teleworking - Currently, only telecommuting is recorded
ICAO	X	X					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personnel surveys	
ILO	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓		
IMO	X	X					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personnel surveys	
ITU	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personnel surveys	- Only telecommuting is recorded
UNESCO	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓		- The home-grown application, TULIP Leave Management, is used for recording teleworking data; the application was initially used to record leave and other types of absence and off-site work - Only telecommuting is recorded
UNIDO	✓	✓		✓	X	✓		The self-service portal of the SAP system is used
UNWTO	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓		- Oracle HCM Employee Self Service is currently used for administration of flexible working arrangements; data can be extracted through relevant reports
UPU	✓	✓	X	X	X	X		Requests are compiled in a Word document; consolidated table; and absence management online system
WHO	X	X					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personnel surveys	
WIPO	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personnel surveys	- Oracle PeopleSoft HCM Employee Self Service is currently used for the administration of flexible working arrangements; data are extracted through PeopleSoft queries and can be done on an ad hoc basis - Analytical functionalities and dashboards are currently being built to enable real time data reports
WMO	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personnel surveys	- The human resources section collects teleworking requests, but it is not used systematically
IAEA	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓		Oracle E-Business Suite is in use

Source: Prepared by JIU, based on the information provided by organizations in response to the JIU questionnaire.

## Annex X

### Teleworking outside the duty station: adjustment to benefits and entitlements

Organization	Teleworking options	Applicable to	Benefits and entitlements	Type of adjustment	Date of adjustment (As of days of teleworking)					
					1	30	60	90	Other	
United Nations Secretariat	Maximum of 6 months, with exceptional extension of up to 3 months	Staff	Salary adjustment to lower salary scale <sup>a</sup>	Adjustment						
			Education grant, special education grant prorated after two thirds of the academic year	Adjustment <sup>b</sup>					√	
			Danger pay, rest and recuperation	Suspension	√					
			Non-family service allowance, hardship allowance	Suspension		√				
			Home leave points	Suspension <sup>b</sup>		√				
UNCTAD	Same as United Nations Secretariat									
UNEP	Same as United Nations Secretariat									
UN-Habitat	Same as United Nations Secretariat									
UNODC	Same as United Nations Secretariat									
ITC <sup>c</sup>	Maximum of 6 months, with exceptional extension of up to 3 months (total of 9 months)	Staff	Danger pay, salary, accrual of qualifying service towards rest and recuperation	Adjustment	√					
			Education grant, special education grant prorated if staff telework in their home country for more than two thirds of the academic year	Adjustment <sup>b</sup>						√
			Non-family allowance, hardship allowance, when staff are teleworking in their home country	Suspension		√				
			Home leave points	Suspension <sup>b</sup>		√				
UNAIDS	Maximum of 30 consecutive days, non-renewable	Staff	Continuity of service will not be broken during teleworking period and service credits will continue to accrue for purposes of all entitlements (e.g. annual leave, home leave, repatriation grant, etc.) Adjustments may be applied in respect of location-specific benefits/entitlements (e.g. danger pay, hardship allowance, non-family service allowance, etc.), as per the terms and conditions for the respective entitlements							
UNDP	Compact (full time)	Internationally recruited staff	Depending on distance from official duty station, the telecommuting arrangement may involve an adjustment in the staff member's conditions of service, e.g. this may require a change of duty station for the purpose of entitlements. The human resources focal point at the duty station must inform the human resources team lead in Benefits and Entitlements Services, Global Shared Services Centre, as appropriate							
UNFPA	All options	International Professional staff	Danger pay	Not entitled	√					
			Rest and recuperation (when teleworking more than three consecutive days)	Suspension						√

Organization	Teleworking options	Applicable to	Benefits and entitlements	Type of adjustment	Date of adjustment (As of days of teleworking)				
					1	30	60	90	Other
UNHCR	All options	Staff	Rental subsidy	Suspension				√	
			Danger pay, rest and recuperation	Not entitled	√				
			Home leave and accrual of home leave points	Suspension <sup>b</sup>					√
		International Professional staff and Field Service staff	Salary comparison <sup>d</sup>	Adjustment	√				
			Education grant will remain applicable for the school year in progress only, if staff member teleworks in home country	Adjustment					Applicable for school year in progress only
		General Service staff and National Professional Officers	Salary adjustment to lower salary scale	Adjustment	√				
	At the outset of or during the assignment/appointment	International Professional staff and Field Service Staff	Non-family service allowance, shipment of personal effects, settling-in/relocation grant only payable when the staff member travels to the official duty station	Adjustment					√
			Mobility incentive points will be granted only if the staff member spends a minimum of 1 year at the duty station	Additional entitlement					√
			Transportation costs and daily subsistence allowance (DSA) provided by UNHCR when staff member is requested by the organization to travel to the duty station on mission, under this option	Additional entitlement					√
	Beyond 90 days	International Professional staff and Field Service staff	Non-family service allowance	Suspension				√	

Organization	Teleworking options	Applicable to	Benefits and entitlements	Type of adjustment	Date of adjustment (As of days of teleworking)				
					1	30	60	90	Other
UNICEF	All options	Staff	Rest and recuperation, danger pay, special leave with full pay following service at D/E/non-family duty station, repatriation grant	Suspension <sup>e</sup>	√				
	Option 2: at least 91 continuous working days up to a maximum of 1 calendar year	Staff - fixed term, continuing or permanent appointment	Post adjustment	Adjustment	√				
			Education grant prorated after two thirds of the academic year; special education grant not affected	Adjustment <sup>b</sup>					√
			Home leave (with credit points accrual)	Not entitled <sup>b</sup>	√				
			Non-family service allowance, allowance in lieu of family relocation, hardship allowance, mobility incentive, home leave travel, education grant travel, reverse education grant travel	Not entitled	√				
UNOPS	Formal long term: over 70 days/calendar year	International Professional staff	Post adjustment as of 71 working days, education grant	Adjustment					√
			Rental subsidy payments for current lease will remain in place; no rental subsidy payable at the new location	Suspension <sup>b</sup>					√
			Education grant entitlements, including education or reverse education travel, except for the academic year already under way, if the eligible dependents had already been attending classes before the start of the teleworking	Suspension <sup>b</sup>	√				
			Home leave points, rest and recuperation, danger pay, non-family service allowance, hardship allowance	Suspension <sup>b</sup>	√				

Organization	Teleworking options	Applicable to	Benefits and entitlements	Type of adjustment	Date of adjustment (As of days of teleworking)					
					1	30	60	90	Other	
UNRWA	Up to 2 months within a calendar year	Staff whose regular duty station is a non-family duty station	Rest and recuperation, non-family service allowance, danger pay	Suspension	√					
	Exceptional extension beyond 2 months	Staff	Post adjustment, education grant, special education grant, rental subsidy	Adjustment			√			
			Home leave points	Suspension <sup>b</sup>			√			
			Payments related to relocation and settling in will normally be prorated and recovered/adjusted accordingly	Adjustment					√	
	Beyond 60 working days	General Service staff and National Professional Officers	Salary adjustment to lower salary scale	Adjustment			√			
		International Professional staff	Post adjustment, rental subsidy	Adjustment			√			
			Home leave, family visit, repatriation grant, non-family service allowance, hardship allowance, mobility incentive	Suspension			√			
			Education grant prorated after two thirds of the academic year; no adjustment for special education grant	Adjustment <sup>b</sup>						√
UN-Women	Same as UNDP									
WFP	Long term: more than 90 calendar days (including weekends, official holidays and periods of leave immediately preceding/ followed by periods of teleworking or which fall within the approved teleworking period	Staff	Adjustments as per the below are implemented after 90 calendar days, including weekends, official holidays and period of leave that are immediately preceded and followed by periods of telecommuting or which fall within the approved period of telecommuting. <sup>f</sup>							
		Staff - internationally recruited and eligible General Service staff	Post adjustment	Adjustment <sup>b</sup>				√		
			Special leave with full pay (in non-family duty stations), danger pay, rest and recuperation, non-family service allowance	Suspension					√	
			Cost-based elements of residential security measures	Suspension					√	
	Staff - locally recruited	Salary adjustment to lower salary scale	Adjustment				√			
FAO	No policy provisions relating to adjustments to benefits and entitlements found									
IAEA	No policy provisions relating to adjustments to benefits and entitlements found									



Organization	Teleworking options	Applicable to	Benefits and entitlements	Type of adjustment	Date of adjustment (As of days of teleworking)				
					1	30	60	90	Other
ICAO	General provision	Staff	No additional benefits and entitlements; conditions of service (e.g. salaries, entitlements and benefits) shall continue to be managed in accordance with ICAO Service Code, Staff rules, personnel instructions, and other promulgated administrative issuances						
ILO	All options	Staff	Danger pay, rest and recuperation	Suspension	√				
	More than 30 days	Staff	Non-family service allowance, hardship allowance	Suspension		√			
	Exceptional: more than 63 working days	Staff	Post adjustment	Adjustment					√
IMO	General provision	Staff	No additional benefits or entitlements during teleworking arrangements outside of the official duty station						
ITU	Maximum of 10 days/calendar year	Staff	No impact on benefits or entitlements						
UNESCO	Teleworking outside the duty station is not available at UNESCO								
UNIDO <sup>c</sup>	Maximum of 6 months, with exceptional extension up to 3 months	Staff	Salary adjustment to lower salary scale	Adjustment	√				
			Education grant, special education grant prorated after two thirds of the academic year	Adjustment <sup>b</sup>					√
			Danger pay, rest and recuperation	Suspension	√				
			Non-family service allowance, hardship allowance	Suspension		√			
			Home leave points	Suspension <sup>b</sup>		√			
UNWTO	No policy provisions relating to adjustments to benefits and entitlements found								
UPU	All options	Staff	Benefits and entitlements not affected if teleworking outside of normal duty station for a maximum of 30 consecutive calendar days						
	Exceptional: private travel with compelling and unforeseen reasons; private travel with mandatory quarantine	Staff	Daily subsistence allowance (DSA)	Suspension	√				
WHO	General provision	Staff	Staff remain assigned to the duty station to which they were appointed and will continue to receive salary, benefits and entitlements at the rates applicable at that duty station, unless foreseen otherwise in the specific rules and policies governing these elements (e.g. danger pay, rest and recuperation)						

Organization	Teleworking options	Applicable to	Benefits and entitlements	Type of adjustment	Date of adjustment (As of days of teleworking)				
					1	30	60	90	Other
WIPO	Normally 30 working days per calendar year	All staff	No impact on benefits and entitlements  Overtime compensation is generally not granted, however, exceptions are possible on a case-by-case basis; ordinary overtime may be authorized					√	
	Exceptional (full time): 3 to 6 months	All staff	Salary, post adjustment	Adjustment				√	
			Expatriate benefits, rental subsidy (P and higher staff categories)	Suspension					
	Allowed at beginning of an assignment, before travel to the duty station	International Professional staff	Post adjustment (other benefits will not be paid until staff member travels to the duty station)	Adjustment	√				
WMO	Exceptional: not exceeding 5 days/month	Staff	Adjustment to local salary scale	Adjustment					√

Source: Prepared by JIU (2023).

<sup>a</sup> At the United Nations Secretariat, there is no adjustment to a "lower salary scale" (i.e. no change in post adjustment for internationally recruited staff or applicable local salary scale for locally recruited staff); only certain benefits and entitlements may be subject to adjustment.

<sup>b</sup> Adjustments are made when personnel concerned are telecommuting from their home country or country of permanent residence.

<sup>c</sup> ITC and UNIDO have their own flexible working arrangement policies, but follow the United Nations Secretariat's policy on telecommuting.

<sup>d</sup> Taking into account the applicable post adjustment, hardship allowance and mobility allowance.

<sup>e</sup> Under the current policy, repatriation grant is not suspended; however, all policies, procedures and guidelines are subject to amendments from time to time.

<sup>f</sup> For staff previously authorized to telework outside the duty station and/or relocating to a new duty station, the salary, benefits and entitlements of the former duty station will be maintained for a maximum of three months; after which, the hardship allowance will be suspended. For staff authorized to telework outside the duty station from the start of an initial appointment, benefits and entitlements will be adjusted as of entry on duty date.

## Annex XI

### List of informal recommendations in the present report

#### Chapter II. Snapshot of flexible working arrangements in the United Nations system

1. The CEB High-level Committee on Management, through the Human Resources Network, should consider re-establishing the initial definition of flexible working arrangements that was proposed by workstream 2 of the Task Force on the Future of the United Nations Workforce, and reconsider and agree, at the earliest opportunity, on a common definition of flexible work that is distinguishable from the definition of flexible working arrangements (para. 25).
2. The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations who have not yet done so are strongly encouraged to remove from their organizational policies the provisions for reduced work schedules related to contractual modalities, in the context of the next established internal policy review process. The executive heads are also strongly encouraged to ensure that those forms of part-time employment, which offer flexibility in terms of time but do not constitute flexible working arrangements, are covered in the appropriate internal regulatory documents and/or policies and not in the policy guidance on flexible working arrangements (para. 30).
3. The CEB High-level Committee on Management, through the Human Resources Network, should consider and agree, at the earliest opportunity, upon the use of a common/ standardized term and definition for each flexible working arrangement, and promote the inclusion and utilization thereof in the policy guidance of the participating organizations (para. 32).
4. The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should use the methodology developed to periodically assess if and to what extent the assumed key benefits of flexible working arrangements are achieved (para. 40).

#### Chapter III. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic: a critical point of change

5. As the use of teleworking increases, it will be important to ensure that this option is systematically recorded and reported. This would improve not only its visibility and monitoring, but also contribute to an organizational culture that promotes a sustainable balance between on-site and remote/hybrid work settings (para. 51).
6. Senior management and staff representatives should include the topic of flexible working arrangements in the agendas of staff management discussions, including in the appropriate formal forums, such as staff management committees, so as to address the issues raised by staff representatives and managers (para. 54).

#### Chapter IV. Flexible working arrangement policy design: a work in progress

7. The Inspector stresses that there is an opportunity for the participating organizations that have not yet done so to formalize and operationalize the new system-wide guiding principles on flexible work by including them, at the earliest opportunity, in their flexible working arrangements policy documents, as well as in related guidance pertaining to new ways of working (para. 79).
8. Participating organizations that have not yet done so should consider including the key policy elements identified in the present report in the next update of their flexible working arrangements policy guidance. That would further improve the policy design, provide additional clarity for both staff and managers, and support the equitable and fair implementation of the policy (para. 81).

9. In the Inspector's view, the entire workforce of an organization, including non-staff personnel, should have fair and equitable access to the flexible working arrangement options offered by the organization, subject to the teleworkability of functions and exigencies of service. As there is no one-size-fits-all situation when it comes to exigencies of service, personnel should be made aware of the operational requirements of the organization (para. 85).
10. To effectively implement the compressed work schedule option, notably in field contexts, participating organizations that have not yet done so should identify the optimal compressed work schedule scenario(s) for their contexts and ensure that recording and monitoring systems are in place. Data on their usage should be collected, disaggregated as relevant, and regularly communicated to the appropriate management levels (para. 87).
11. The inclusion of detailed provisions on the adjustment of benefits and entitlements, as well as information on potential implications for visa status, remuneration, social security benefits and other entitlements, into the organization's flexible working arrangement policy is a good practice that could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of teleworking outside the duty station (para. 93).
12. The participating organizations should determine with more clarity the job profiles that are suited to teleworking, and what job or task characteristics determine teleworkability, with a view to enhancing policy provisions in this area (para. 94).
13. Clearly defining core working hours in the appropriate policy documents would be in the interest of the organization and would support organizing work effectively, notably in hybrid team settings and programme delivery. At the same time, flexible working arrangements policy guidance should provide for the possibility of granting exceptions for individual staff members, based on a case-by-case assessment and in line with the applicable provisions, so as to accommodate particular needs and circumstances (para. 95).
14. The Inspector encourages the participating organizations to introduce in the relevant policies a clear stipulation or definition of "duty station area". For the purpose of any flexible working arrangement policy offering teleworking modalities, the concept of "duty station area" should be understood as comprising the duty station to which the staff member has been assigned, as indicated in the letter of appointment, and any area within commuting distance (para. 97).
15. Participating organizations that have not yet done so should develop and issue additional guidance for the operational concepts and provisions commonly used in flexible working arrangement policies, such as "exigencies of service" and "personal compelling circumstances", as well as guidance on clauses authorizing heads of offices to take into account office-specific needs when considering flexible working arrangement requests, in order to enhance clarity, consistency, and fair and equitable implementation of the policy across the organization (para. 101).
16. The Inspector suggests that risk matrices outlining the typical risks associated with the implementation of flexible working arrangements be developed and incorporated into the organizations' flexible working arrangement policies (para. 102).
17. The Inspector encourages the participating organizations to regularly review the relevance and adequacy of their flexible working arrangement policies, as well as any interrelated policies, to assess whether they are still fit for purpose. Explicitly providing for periodic policy review in the policy guidance is not only a good practice, but also a requirement (para. 103).
18. The Inspector encourages participating organizations to revise the procedures of the flexible working arrangement approval process, by making the submission of a formal request for a flexible working arrangement the first procedural step, followed by employee-manager(s) consultations, if required (para. 110).
19. The Inspector suggests that the status of expert advice from the Medical Service in the flexible working arrangement approval process should be clearly stipulated and specified in the policy guidance, in order to avoid confusion and to ensure that decisions are made in line with policy provisions (para. 112).
20. The Inspector encourages the executive heads of the participating organizations to carefully consider the level of approval needed for standard flexible working arrangement requests and to ensure that they reflect the authority and role of line managers and/or supervisors to grant flexible working arrangement requests, and an organizational culture that supports flexible working arrangements in line with the policies, as well as a hybrid working environment (para. 113).

21. A flexible working arrangement agreement must be established for each approved flexible working arrangement, with details on the selected flexible working arrangement option, the duration and relevant conditions, so as to ensure transparency, accountability and monitoring. The agreement (in electronic and/or paper format) must clearly indicate the flexible working arrangement option and must be signed by the staff member and the relevant manager/supervisor, as applicable. Based on existing good practices, the approved duration of any flexible working arrangement should not be longer than one year, with the possibility of renewal in accordance with the relevant policy provisions. Furthermore, the flexible working arrangement agreement forms should be streamlined and simplified so as not to be perceived as burdensome by staff and managers (para. 114).
22. The Inspector is of the view that, including a paragraph in the policy guidance on the role of human resources function in relation to flexible working arrangements, for instance: to provide advice on the implementation of teleworking modalities, monitor the application thereof, review requests to telework outside the duty station beyond the established maximum duration, take action on the necessary adjustments to the staff member's benefits and entitlements in the case of teleworking outside the duty station beyond the established maximum duration, would be a good practice (para. 115).
23. The visibility of the human resources function in the flexible working arrangement approval process would be enhanced by the inclusion of a provision in the policy tasking Human Resources to, among others, systematically collect information, prepare statistics on approved and rejected requests, as well on discontinued arrangement agreements, and provide disaggregated data (for each arrangement and modality) to the appropriate management level(s) and the staff unions/association, upon request or regularly (para. 115).
24. The Inspector considers the "default approval" to be a good practice that could make the approval procedure more efficient, and suggests that organizations include, whenever applicable, a specific provision to that effect in their flexible working arrangement policies (para. 116).
25. Participating organizations that have not yet done so should consider including additional provisions in the next update of their flexible working arrangement policy guidance to make the approval process for flexible working arrangement requests more transparent and efficient (see box 4) (para. 116).
26. The inclusion in the policy guidance of provision on early discontinuation of flexible working arrangement agreements for justified reasons, notably emergencies and special circumstances, but also performance issues, can be considered a good practice. Such provisions would ensure a balanced approach, taking into consideration the interests of both the organization and the staff member, and would reflect the voluntary nature of flexible working arrangements, subject to the general condition of exigencies of service (para. 117).

#### **Chapter V. Drivers and enablers of flexible working arrangements**

27. The Inspector encourages organizations to ensure the digital and cyber literacy of their personnel, review options for further consolidation of a secure and resilient digital environment, and reflect the outcome in the organization's ICT policy and action frameworks, as appropriate (para. 120).
28. In the Inspector's view, including questions relating to flexible working arrangements in periodic staff-focused surveys in order to obtain feedback on the state of those arrangements across the organization is a good practice (para. 132).
29. The Inspector suggests that organizations conduct surveys focusing specifically on flexible working arrangements, notably in the context of reviewing their flexible working arrangement policies, as they would provide additional and useful inputs for the continuous improvement of the relevant policies and their implementation (para. 133).
30. Organizations that have not yet done so should develop flexible working arrangement-related training for both managers and staff. The training should also reflect enhanced skill sets required for teleworking, based on new ways of working. Training topics should cover areas such as managing hybrid teams, promoting inclusivity in remote workplaces, effective virtual collaboration, overseeing remote work, and supervision and performance management of staff using flexible working arrangements, notably teleworking (para. 139).

31. Organizations are encouraged to consider including flexible working arrangement-related risks in their organizational risk management processes and/or risk registers (para. 141).
32. The Inspector suggests that oversight offices consider flexible working arrangements management in their audit risk universe and prioritize it for more consistent and comprehensive coverage, in line with their oversight mandates and methodologies (para. 142).

#### **Chapter VI. Optimizing the positive impacts of flexible working arrangements**

33. The Inspector suggests that organizations that have not yet done so include specific provisions on occupational safety and health in their flexible working arrangement policies (para. 150).
34. In order to ensure that occupational safety and health standards and requirements are met by teleworking personnel, organizations that have not yet done so should include flexible working arrangement-related occupational safety and health requirements in their occupational safety and health policy guidance, and continuously monitor and assess their implementation and compliance status (para. 153)
35. Since flexible working arrangements, notably teleworking, and the expected increase in their usage have the potential of supporting the implementation and achievements of the targets of the Strategy for Sustainability Management in the United Nations System, 2020–2030, organizations that have not yet done so should consider including provisions for flexible working arrangements in the measures for implementing and achieving environmental sustainability in the area of management, in accordance with the strategy (para. 154).
36. The Inspector encourages the executive heads of the participating organizations, notably the organizations with environmental mandates, to continue efforts to identify methodologies aimed at quantifying the combined effect of the use of flexible working arrangements and the implementation of flexible workplace initiatives (para. 155).
37. Organizations that have not yet done so should consider including flexible working arrangements as an integral part of their flexible workplace strategies or similar initiatives. In doing so, organizations should develop a methodology for assessing the complementary benefits and potential cost savings for the organization (para. 156).

#### **Chapter VII. Inter-agency cooperation**

38. The Inspector stresses the need for close consultation with the International Civil Service Commission when developing criteria for establishing the maximum duration of teleworking outside the duty station and for adjusting entitlements and benefits when such teleworking arrangement is used beyond the established maximum duration, so as to have a coherent and joint approach (para. 162).


#### **Chapter VIII. Flexible working arrangements and new ways of working in the “new normal”**

39. The Inspector is of the view that, within the United Nations context, the new ways of working should be understood as work practices that blend virtual and physical attendance, and synchronous and asynchronous communications, supported by ICT and based on exigencies of service, which are intended to increase the flexibility, autonomy, work performance and work-life harmony of personnel, as well as optimize the organization’s functional flexibility according to its changing needs, as part of a broader transformation of the workplace, the workforce and the organization (para. 171).
40. The Inspector suggests that participating organizations explore and consider the benefits of adopting a stand-alone policy on hybrid working or including its core elements in an ad hoc flexible work policy. Furthermore, organizations should clearly define the new ways of working and describe their role, as well their relationship with enhanced flexible working arrangements, as part of a broader vision set out in their human resources strategies and other similar documents (para. 174).

## Annex XII

### Overview of actions to be taken by the participating organizations on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit

		Intended impact	Participating Organizations of the Joint Inspection Unit																											
			United Nations *	UNAIDS	UNCTAD	ITC	UNDP	UNEP	UNFPA	UN-Habitat	UNHCR	UNICEF	UNODC	UNOPS	UNRWA	UN-Women	WFP	FAO	IAEA	ICAO	ILO	IMO	ITU	UNESCO	UNIDO	UNWTO	UPU	WHO	WIPO	WMO
Report	For action		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	For information		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recommendation 1		f	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 2		h	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	E
Recommendation 3		f	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		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 5		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 6		f	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	E
Recommendation 7		d	E																											
Recommendation 8		d	L																											
Recommendation 9		a	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 transparency and accountability b: dissemination of good/best practices c: enhanced coordination and cooperation d: strengthened coherence and harmonization e: enhanced control and compliance f: enhanced effectiveness g: significant financial savings h: enhanced efficiency i: other.

\* As listed in ST/SGB/2015/3.