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Update on the United Nations reform

Purpose of the document

This document reviews developments in the reform of the United Nations (UN) development system since the Governing Body's last discussion of this topic at its 335th Session (March 2019). It is a revised and updated version of the document prepared for information for the 340th Session (November 2020) ([GB.340/INS/6](#)), which further takes into account the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. It assesses the implementation by the Office of previous Governing Body decisions, giving particular attention to work under the Office Plan of Action 2019–20 to maximize the opportunities of the UN development system reform for the ILO and tripartite constituents, which was endorsed by the Governing Body at its 335th Session. It highlights, inter alia, steps taken to facilitate the engagement of UN resident coordinators and UN country teams with ILO constituents at the country level in the formulation and implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, in particular in respect of the Sustainable Development Goals that are relevant to the ILO's mandate. It also reviews the steps taken to ensure the linkages between Cooperation Frameworks and ILO Decent Work Country Programmes. Experiences with the new resident coordinator system to date are highlighted. The Governing Body is invited to take note of the current status of the reform and the implementation of the Office Plan of Action 2019–20, and to invite the Director-General to take its views into consideration in the continued engagement in and implementation of the reform (see the draft decision in paragraph 53).

Author unit: Multilateral Cooperation Department (MULTILATERALS).

Related documents: [GB.341/POL/4](#); [GB.340/INS/6](#); [GB.340/POL/6](#); [GB.340/INS/18/6](#); [GB.335/INS/10](#).

► Introduction

1. At the time of the last Governing Body discussion on the item in March 2019, the United Nations (UN) reform ¹ was just three months into its implementation phase. Over the two years that have passed since then, the key mandates of the reform have been carried out – the new resident coordinator system is up and running, governance documents have been agreed on and key guidance and reporting systems have been developed. Working together, the UN Deputy Secretary-General's Office, the UN Development Coordination Office and the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) ² ensured that the new resident coordinator system had the technical, operational and financial resources needed to make a successful transition. The ILO continues to be very actively engaged in the reform at all levels – from the Director-General and Deputy Directors-General, to the managers, specialists and other officials at headquarters and in the field who participate in the numerous UNSDG task teams, to the ILO country directors and national coordinators who represent the ILO on UN country teams. While challenges remain in terms of adjusting to the new ways of working, the Office continues to focus on maximizing the benefits of the reform for the ILO and its constituents in pursuit of the Organization's mandate and priorities.
2. Reform implementation has proceeded well overall, in spite of the COVID-19 crisis. In fact, the need for a large-scale crisis response worldwide has been catalytic in advancing tighter UN development system collaboration in both the humanitarian and socio-economic areas. The ILO was an important player in developing the UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 ³ and actively contributed to country-level UN assessments and response plans. ILO knowledge products, such as the ILO Monitor, policy and regional briefs and rapid labour market impact assessments, have helped position the ILO's representatives in UN country teams as a key source of expertise for socio-economic recovery from the crisis. ⁴ There have been many opportunities for joint proposals with other agencies in the context of the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund, in respect of which the ILO is one of the seven UN agencies, funds and programmes on the Advisory Committee. ⁵
3. The ILO has become a key partner of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which has led the UN development system's COVID-19 socio-economic response. In September 2020, the ILO and the UNDP agreed on a global Framework for Action, setting out seven priority areas in which the ILO and the UNDP will enhance sustainable development results in the world of work in the context of the pandemic and

¹ See UN General Assembly, resolution 72/279, Repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, [A/RES/72/279](#) (2018).

² The UNSDG is composed of 34 UN agencies, funds and programmes that carry out operational activities for development.

³ UN, *A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19*, April 2020.

⁴ [GB.340/INS/18/6](#).

⁵ These are: the ILO, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization, in addition to the UN Development Coordination Office and the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (ex officio). Up to five representatives of contributing partners and representatives of selected affected countries also participate.

beyond.⁶ The agreement has already resulted in a number of proposals from the field for joint initiatives, particularly in the areas of job creation, youth employment, gender and social protection. The Office is currently finalizing a similar agreement with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

4. Part I of this document provides an update of key aspects of the reform since the last Governing Body discussion in March 2019, including the recent adoption of a new quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) resolution,⁷ in which UN Member States provide guidance to the UN development system on supporting countries' sustainable development objectives for the coming four years. Part II presents early ILO experiences with the new resident coordinator system and observations from ILO offices in the field. Part III reviews the implementation of action items in the Office Plan of Action 2019–20 to maximize the opportunities of UN development system reform for the ILO and tripartite constituents, which was endorsed by the Governing Body at its 335th Session (March 2019).⁸

► I. Developments in UN development system reform

Quadrennial comprehensive policy review

5. In December 2020, the UN General Assembly adopted a new QCPR resolution.⁹ In that resolution, the General Assembly welcomed the progress achieved thus far in the reform of the resident coordinator system, which UN Member States had set in motion in the previous QCPR resolution in 2016,¹⁰ and which had been more specifically mandated in the 2018 resolution on the repositioning of the UN development system. The following summary highlights key provisions of the 2020 resolution that are of particular relevance for the Governing Body and the work of the Office.
6. The resolution carries forward the mandates of the reform while reaffirming the key principles underlying the UN development system's support to countries in their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These include the system's overarching focus on: poverty reduction and sustainable development; national ownership of UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (Cooperation Frameworks) that are developed by UN country teams in close consultation with governments and relevant stakeholders; and recognition of what each individual entity's mandate, expertise and comparative advantage brings to more coordinated and integrated UN development system support under the leadership of the UN resident coordinator. The resolution reiterates the imperative to leave no one behind and the importance of promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

⁶ ILO and UNDP, *UNDP-ILO Framework for Action*, September 2020.

⁷ The policies of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the General Assembly for the UN development system are reviewed every four years in the context of the QCPR. The process allows the General Assembly to evaluate the UN's effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and impact in helping programme countries meet their sustainable development needs. The resulting General Assembly resolution guides the UN development system operational activities for development, and outlines how the system's entities should work together for the subsequent four years.

⁸ GB.335/INS/10.

⁹ UN General Assembly, resolution 75/233, Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, [A/RES/75/233](#) (2020).

¹⁰ UN General Assembly, resolution 71/243, Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, [A/RES/71/243](#) (2016).

and recognizes the UN contribution to the promotion of human rights, calling on the entities of the UN development system to assist governments, at their request and in consultation with them, in their efforts to respect and fulfil their human rights obligations and commitments under international law. The resolution further outlines expectations for how the UN development system should enhance the coordination of UN humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts to mitigate the drivers of conflicts, disaster risks, humanitarian crises and complex emergencies, promote partnerships and enhance South–South and triangular cooperation.¹¹ It also provides additional guidance on COVID-19 recovery efforts to build back better.

7. The resolution places a particular focus on the system's role in providing integrated policy advice and identifies a number of thematic areas to which the UN development system should pay special attention in the next four years. These include, among others: supporting countries in implementing social protection systems, including social protection floors; effectively mainstreaming disability inclusion in UN development system policies and programmes; taking action to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls; improving support to countries in developing their capacities to ensure quality education and lifelong learning; and strengthening focus on providing support to countries for the collection and analysis of data. It also calls for implementation of the UN System-wide Strategic Approach on Climate Change Action and for the further development of a common approach to integrating biodiversity and ecosystem-based approaches in UN development system programmes.
8. On the funding of the UN development system and the resident coordinator system, UN Member States reinforce the call for stable core contributions for UN development system entities and more predictable, less earmarked voluntary funding and encourages full implementation of and continued dialogue on the Funding Compact agreed with UN development system entities in 2019. While stressing the continued importance of official development assistance, well-designed inter-agency pooled funding and common resource mobilization for joint programming at the country level, the General Assembly urges entities to further explore and implement innovative funding approaches to catalyse additional resources. It also emphasizes that adequate, sustainable funding of the resident coordinator system remains a concern.
9. Regarding the governance and functioning of the UN development system, the General Assembly welcomes the Cooperation Frameworks as the most important instrument for the planning and implementation of UN development activities in countries and recognizes the efforts made to ensure needs-based tailored UN country team configuration. It underscores the importance of full implementation of the Management and Accountability Framework in all UN country teams and requests entities to align their policies, guidance and regulations with the UN development system reforms, including by repositioning staff capacities to respond to the cross-sectional requirements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and promoting inter-agency mobility. UN development system entities are requested to further simplify and harmonize agency-specific programming instruments, business practices, processes, common business operations and reporting.

¹¹ In line with the Nairobi and Buenos Aires outcome documents of the High-level United Nations Conferences on South–South Cooperation, held in 2009 ([resolution 64/222](#), annex) and 2019 ([resolution 73/291](#), annex), respectively.

Update on the Management and Accountability Framework

10. The Management and Accountability Framework, ¹² which sets out the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of resident coordinators and UN country teams at the country level, has been in use since March 2019 on a provisional basis and is currently being reviewed to update it in view of experience to date. The text includes key governance aspects of the reform – such as the dual reporting line whereby UN country team members have two interrelated sets of accountabilities: first, to their respective entities on individual mandates; and, second, to their respective resident coordinator for results as defined in the Cooperation Framework and other inter-agency agreements of the UN country team. The Management and Accountability Framework calls for UN country team members to have at least one performance indicator in their entity-specific performance assessment tool linked to UN country team results and for the resident coordinator to make a formal contribution to the entity appraisal process of UN country team members as an additional reporting officer. UN country team members also provide input on the resident coordinator's performance to the UN Development Coordination Office. Similarly, ILO country office directors are being assessed on their active UN country team engagement and their collaboration with the resident coordinators, who currently submit comments to the respective ILO regional directors for consideration in the country directors' annual performance appraisals. The ILO is currently engaged in a UNSDG performance management task force that is working to define the formalized processes.
11. Now that the review of the regional assets of the UN development system is complete, two additional chapters are being added to the Management and Accountability Framework: one on the role and accountabilities of the UN regional entities ¹³ vis-à-vis the resident coordinator system; and another outlining the division of roles and responsibilities between the UN development system and the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Cooperation Framework roll-out

12. Cooperation Frameworks are a key element of the reform and represent a significant shift from the UN Development Assistance Frameworks that preceded them. First, they are high-level strategic documents that have been elevated to become the single most important planning and implementation instrument for the UN development system to help countries address national needs and priorities to achieve the SDGs. UN entity-specific country programmes are to be derived from the Cooperation Framework, not vice versa. Second, while they are primarily partnership compacts between the UN and the governments of programme countries, they are developed in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders. Third, they are founded on the basis of a common country analysis (CCA), which is the UN system's independent, impartial and collective analysis of the sustainable development context. In this context, the CCA is no longer a one-off exercise, but rather an output generated from a continuous analytical function, with formal updates at least annually.
13. The UNSDG Cooperation Framework guidance (2019) ¹⁴ and its Companion Package (2020), developed through a collaborative effort from across the UN development

¹² UNSDG, *Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System*, 2019.

¹³ The UN regional economic commissions, the regional UNSDG bodies and UN development system entities.

¹⁴ UNSDG, *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework: Internal Guidance*, 2019.

system, further elaborate on a number of themes of importance to ILO constituents, notably:

- the broadened concept of partnerships, identified as critical to forging sustainable solutions, explicitly includes trade unions and employers' organizations and their engagement;
 - the Cooperation Framework is clearly anchored in international standards and obligations and a human rights-based approach to development;
 - SDG targets and indicators become the default monitoring framework to measure progress towards achievements, supported by an improved role for evaluation, including the recognition of evaluation capacity in individual entities;
 - the expanded configuration of the UN country team, encompassing UN entities both physically present in the country as well as those contributing remotely, provides for better inclusion of non-resident agencies in Cooperation Framework processes; and
 - agencies like the ILO have the possibility to pursue normative and standard-setting mandated work that might not fall under the priorities of the Cooperation Framework, through the inclusion of specific outcomes in their country programme documents, alongside the Cooperation Framework outcomes copied verbatim.
14. In 2020, 14 UN country teams were engaged in the development of a new CCA and Cooperation Framework; a further 28 country teams will follow suit in 2021. The COVID-19 crisis added a critical new dimension to this process, with rapid socio-economic impact assessments and response plans being required for all countries in line with the UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. While these response plans have not replaced the CCAs and Cooperation Frameworks, efforts must continue to ensure that they are incorporated into them.
 15. Part II provides additional information on the Cooperation Framework roll-out based on the experience of ILO members in UN country teams thus far.

Business operations strategy and ILO engagement with the reform's efficiency agenda

16. All UN country teams must have a common business operations strategy by the end of 2021. The process encourages country teams to identify efficiency savings by reducing inter-agency duplication, leveraging collective purchasing power and maximizing economies of scale in six service lines – procurement, finance, information and communication technology, logistics, human resources and administration. Common services proposed in a UN country team's business operations strategy continue to be on an opt-in basis for individual agencies "considering quality assurance and cost effectiveness". To support this effort, the ILO has participated in the UNSDG Business Innovation Group's marketplace survey that attempts to identify which services UN entities purchase or would consider purchasing from others and those that they could provide. As part of the Secretary-General's efficiency agenda, the ILO will be required to provide the UN Development Coordination Office with annual reports on efficiency gains and effectiveness improvements. An ILO-specific framework for reporting is currently being developed.
17. One of the key enablers of the reform's goal to promote common business operations is mutual recognition of best practices regarding policies and procedures, which allows a UN entity to use or rely on another entity's policies, procedures, systems and related

operational mechanisms for the implementation of activities without further evaluation, checks or approvals. At present, 20 agencies, including the ILO, have signed the Mutual Recognition Statement.

18. Regarding common back offices, the focus will be on shifting country-level location independent services to global shared service centres, as the level of prospective savings is deemed to be higher than for the consolidation of location-dependent services at the local level. The Office will consider this shift on a case-by-case basis.
19. As the Office looks to future participation in common back offices for location-dependent services, some long-standing issues within the UN system will need to be satisfactorily addressed. Variations currently exist in the types of contracts used and grading policies among agencies, particularly in the field. For example, the ILO applies staff contract rules around the engagement of external collaborators and occupational safety and health requirements for staff more strictly than some other UN entities.
20. Another enabler of common business operations with the potential to generate savings and improve inter-agency collaboration is common premises. The definition of common premises is any two agencies sharing accommodation and a target was set to increase the proportion of common premises in the UN development system as a whole to 50 per cent by 2021. This includes efforts to increase the number of large UN houses hosting multiple agencies. So far, the ILO's experience with common premises has been mixed in terms of cost savings from common services and better collaboration, which reinforces the need to examine each future proposal individually to ensure that a clear business case exists.

Restructuring of the UN development system in the regions and multi-country resident coordinator office enhancement

21. At the May 2020 meeting of the ECOSOC Operational Activities for Development Segment, UN Member States welcomed the Secretary-General's updated proposals for restructuring the regional assets of the UN development system and for strengthening the multi-country offices. The UNSDG principals subsequently approved road maps for implementation, which is now under way.
22. The regional assets of the UN development system comprise the UN regional economic commissions, the regional UNSDG bodies and the regional offices of UN development system entities. The review of these assets has sought to clarify the respective roles and relationships in support of the new resident coordinator system and to consider the many regional and transboundary issues that influence countries' SDG achievement. Given the specificities of each region, ECOSOC members called for a region-by-region approach in providing options for restructuring and re-profiling, emphasizing that changes should not affect the existing mandates of any UN development system entity that operates at the regional level, nor duplicate or undermine the work done by the UN regional economic commissions.¹⁵ The Office played an active role as part of working groups in the individual regions, keeping in mind the need to avoid creating duplicate structures and greater reporting burdens as well as the need to ensure that the standing of ILO statistical work at the regional level is recognized and maintained.
23. The regional reform is creating knowledge hubs to pool expertise; enhancing results-based management and system-wide reporting; consolidating existing capacities on

¹⁵ See 2020 ECOSOC Operational Activities for Development Segment [Chair's Summary](#).

data and statistics; and looking at potential efficiency gains in administrative services through common back offices or co-location, where feasible. The regions have also created or expanded regional issue-based coalitions led by UN entities and the regional economic commissions. The ILO is co-chairing several of these. For example, it co-leads coalitions on equitable growth in Latin America with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the UNDP; on harnessing demographic dividends, gender and youth for development in Africa with the United Nations Population Fund and the World Health Organization; and on inclusion and empowerment in Asia and the Pacific with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

24. The review of the multi-country resident coordinator offices was a response to long-standing concerns of small-island developing States and smaller least developed countries about the level of support and UN presence in the 41 countries covered by multi-country resident coordinator offices. As the review took shape over the past two years, the countries concerned had an important role to play in the consultations. As part of the reform, a new multi-country office is being opened in the North Pacific, resident coordinator job descriptions for multi-country offices have been re-profiled and some resources have been redirected to these offices to provide a dedicated focus on the individual countries covered by them. The ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team structure and the ILO's experience in South-South cooperation will inform the Office's contribution to the implementation of the corresponding road map.

Creation of an independent system-wide evaluation office

25. The ILO was an important contributor to the UN Evaluation Group's development of a UN development system-wide evaluation policy, which supports the Secretary-General's efforts under the reform to provide the UN development system with an independent system-wide evaluation function that contributes to greater accountability and collective learning. This new function will complement, not replace, existing evaluation mechanisms within UN agencies and global-level bodies such as the Joint Inspection Unit, the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services and the UN Evaluation Group. The Secretary-General will report to the May 2021 meeting of the ECOSOC Operational Activities for Development Segment on the proposed structure of a new UN system-wide office, on its funding modalities and on collaboration with other entities in the system with an evaluation mandate.

Funding of the resident coordinator system

26. While considerable progress has been made in establishing the new resident coordinator system, questions remain about the long-term sustainability of the voluntary funding arrangement of the system. In the current environment of extremely tight budgets and subdued funding prospects, UN Member States continue to focus their attention on potential efficiency savings and are eager to see evidence that these are materializing. However, early efficiency savings are not yielding readily available funds for the resident coordinator system. Also, the receipts from the imposition of the 1 per cent levy on earmarked funding to agencies will fall below early projections. The UN Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General continue to rally existing and new donors to provide the needed funds for the system, and 43 countries contributed in 2020. However, last year, there was a budget gap of approximately US\$72 million relative to the original budget of US\$281 million. The cost-sharing formula for UN agency contributions was reviewed within the UNSDG and agreement was reached on a new arrangement for agency contributions from 2021. As the main elements of the formula

were retained, it is not expected that the ILO's contribution will change significantly from its current level of US\$4.4 million per year. A more comprehensive review of the overall hybrid funding model for the resident coordinator system will take place in 2021.

Implementing the Funding Compact

27. The ILO continues to make good progress in fulfilling the actions requested of UN entities as part of the Funding Compact between UN Member States and the UN development system that was agreed in early 2019 with the aim of improving the quality and predictability of resources for the UN development system. For example, the Office is working to increase transparency in ILO results and finance by making use of the data standards for the UN system-wide reporting of financial data and the International Aid Transparency Initiative. The ILO officially joined the initiative in January 2021. The Office has increased joint programme interventions funded by large ILO development cooperation contributors, global and country-level multi-partner trust funds and inter-agency operational partnerships. In 2020, funding from UN sources from trust funds and joint projects accounted for approximately 10 per cent of total voluntary contributions,¹⁶ compared with 6 per cent in 2019. The ILO has also made expenditures, which are listed on the ILO's decent work results and development cooperation dashboards, disaggregated by SDG, signed the Mutual Recognition Statement, improved donor visibility and increased the number of joint thematic and project evaluations. Structured dialogues are proposed with ILO funding partners with the aim of mobilizing funding for ILO policy outcomes, major themes or specific regions or countries and thus providing the Office with strategic and flexible support. It should also be noted that the ILO's Programme and Budget proposals for 2022–23 incorporate an indicator to measure the proportion of UN funding¹⁷ in the total amount of voluntary contributions mobilized during the biennium. The proposed Implementation Plan associated with the ILO Development Cooperation Strategy 2020–25¹⁸ also builds on Funding Compact recommendations.

► II. Emerging good practices and challenges

Working with resident coordinators

28. Proactive outreach to resident coordinators, including briefings and efforts to involve them in meetings and consultations with ILO constituents, has been beneficial in all regions. For example, the ILO and the regional resident coordinators in Latin America and the Caribbean held a two-day dialogue in Lima in September 2019, which helped to improve the understanding and recognition of the ILO's mandate and tripartite governance structure, the role of its constituents and the new UN architecture in the region. Subsequent resident coordinator briefings by the ILO regional director have helped to consolidate this understanding and recognition.
29. Resident coordinators have also opened for the ILO the doors to ministries of finance and planning and other ministries in the Caribbean, Jordan, Namibia and Zambia, helping the ILO in some cases to access new funding streams. There is clear potential

¹⁶ Provisional figure.

¹⁷ Funding from multi-partner trust funds and from UN entities.

¹⁸ GB.341/POL/4.

for working with resident coordinator offices on communications to amplify the ILO's human-centred approach and policy messaging, with examples from Turkey and the Arab States in the context of the Syria refugee crisis, including in relation to the access of refugees to the labour market in Lebanon. In Indonesia and Mexico, resident coordinator advocacy and access to UN information channels has helped to broadcast ILO messages on labour issues more widely.

30. A number of recent examples highlight successful relationships with resident coordinators and resident coordinator offices in the context of COVID-19 responses. In the Arab States, the ILO closely engaged with the resident coordinators in developing evidence-based policy messages on the impact of the pandemic on the labour markets and in shaping response interventions that promote more inclusive social protection frameworks, support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, call for the upscaling of labour-intensive interventions, and promote occupational health and safety. As has been the case in many regions, rapid assessments on the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable workers were carried out in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon in coordination with other UN and international agencies and in close coordination with the resident coordinator offices. Some ILO UN country team members have also reported that the requirement to work virtually due to the crisis has led to better engagement, particularly in teams where the ILO participates as a non-resident agency, by putting them on a more equal footing with members from larger resident entities in UN country team discussions.
31. In the context of the UN COVID-19 Multi-Partner Trust Fund,¹⁹ close collaboration with resident coordinators in Central Asia, notably in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, resulted in the formulation of inter-agency proposals focusing on labour and social issues for submission to the second call for proposals of the Fund. Similar engagement with resident coordinators has resulted in collaborative initiatives to support the socio-economic response to the COVID-19 crisis in North Macedonia, Turkey and Ukraine.
32. In Zimbabwe, the resident coordinator engaged with trade unions and the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare during a UN inter-agency cross-pillar mission on COVID-19 response to explore possible collaboration. In Uganda, ILO support to constituents to undertake an impact assessment of COVID-19 on the labour sector attracted the attention of the resident coordinator, who contributed the support of one of her economists to interface with the Ministry of Labour to provide technical backstopping.

Participation of constituents in common country analysis and Cooperation Framework processes

33. The engagement of ILO constituents in the CCA and Cooperation Framework processes continues to be a significant challenge; however, examples from all regions provide some emerging good practices. In Africa, ILO advocacy in Côte d'Ivoire to both the resident coordinator and worker and employer organizations of the importance of ILO constituent engagement in the CCA and Cooperation Framework processes resulted in the ILO constituents' recognition and involvement. These efforts facilitated the influence of the tripartite constituents in the development of the 2021–25 Cooperation Framework (completed in October 2020) and their participation in outcome working groups. This

¹⁹ As at mid-January 2021, the ILO was participating in 20 joint programmes under the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund, in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Latin America.

created an opportunity for further dialogue between the resident coordinator and trade union representatives on workers' concerns and priorities in December 2020, supported by the ILO country director. In Uganda, ILO constituents contributed to the CCA through an employment diagnostics study they prepared with the support of the ILO. They also participated in the Cooperation Framework validation workshop and provided technical inputs that were reflected in the final text signed by the Government.

34. In the Arab States, the social partners have thus far participated in the discussions on the CCA and the priority-setting process leading to the Cooperation Frameworks in Iraq and Kuwait.
35. In Asia, the social partners in India participated in the CCA and priority-setting consultations for the Cooperation Framework for 2018–22. Their contributions sharpened the focus on informal economy workers, migrant workers, state-level social protection systems and support for decent work and entrepreneurship. In Pakistan and the Philippines, the social partners regularly participate in meetings and activities under the outcome groups that the ILO leads, which has been helpful in expanding their influence within the UN country teams. Constituents in Indonesia and Timor-Leste also participated fully in CCA and Cooperation Framework development in 2020.
36. In Central Asia, ILO constituents in Uzbekistan actively engaged in the process of formulating the CCA and Cooperation Framework, which has proved critical in advancing the preparation of the next Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP). In the Western Balkans, engagement with constituents in North Macedonia and Serbia as part of the design and finalization of the DWCPs in 2019 provided important inputs on labour and social issues that have fed into CCA and Cooperation Framework preparations. In addition, the DWCP in Tajikistan is the result of significant capacity development investments with ILO constituents. Key elements included in the DWCP closely link to the National Development Strategy (2016–30) and will support the formulation of the next Cooperation Framework.
37. In Latin America, workers' organizations participated in the CCA validation process through Argentina's platform for the monitoring of the 2030 Agenda, and a tripartite dialogue with the resident coordinator on the Cooperation Framework for 2021–25 took place in early September 2020. During the latter, constituents highlighted the importance of designing a new DWCP aligned to the Cooperation Framework, the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (Centenary Declaration) and the 2030 Agenda.

Capacity, partnership and resource mobilization issues

38. Among the challenges commonly cited by ILO officials in the field is the significant increase in workloads resulting from participation in UN country team processes, resident coordinator requests and new UN reporting requirements through UN INFO, the UNSDG's new planning, monitoring and results reporting platform. This is attributable in part to the considerable demands of the response to the COVID-19 crisis, but also in part to the relatively smaller size of the ILO country offices and available personnel to respond to greater coordination requirements compared to other key UN agencies. Efforts will be needed within the UNSDG to streamline and simplify reporting burdens on UN country teams.
39. Another issue concerns a need for greater agility in order to have the right expertise in the right places at the right time to provide substantive technical inputs. This is critical for reinforcing ILO leadership in key areas of its mandate, including labour statistics. The

ILO is also a non-resident agency in many countries where it participates as a UN country team member, carrying out its work from multi-country offices with representation in selected countries by national coordinators and sometimes project staff. Decent Work Teams in the regions and headquarters specialists provide technical backing. The Office is looking for ways to be more innovative in delivering in this regard. The skills mapping and forecasting exercise already foreseen as a follow-up to the Centenary Declaration will assist in identifying skills gaps in areas of emerging priority, both in terms of capabilities and capacity. New ways of working will enhance the ability to redeploy ILO technical expertise on demand to address constituent needs. By relying on more virtual means for local capacity development in ILO key policy areas, the Office could address some of the existing gaps in non-resident countries.

40. Work in the area of partnerships and resource mobilization gives a mixed picture. Competition between UN agencies for increasingly scarce resources has not yet reduced sufficiently. Resident coordinators are now leading the coordination of country-level funding based on Cooperation Frameworks, including with the private sector and multi-bilateral funding partners with a growing shift to country-level allocations and decision-making. Experience so far with the Joint SDG Fund and the UN COVID-19 Multi-partner Trust Fund joint bidding processes for UN country teams has shown that the ILO can be successful in leading joint UN responses, as was the case for the Joint SDG Fund's call for proposals on social protection. At the same time, even when ILO bids with other agencies were successful, transaction costs are high relative to the modest size of the projects concerned. One reason for this is that the overall level of funding for UN joint and pooled funding mechanisms has not reached the volume foreseen under the UN Funding Compact. Nonetheless, for the ILO, participating in these joint UN partnerships has proved important, both to further the Decent Work Agenda, including tripartism and respect for international labour standards more broadly within UN country teams, and to leverage subsequent partnerships and funding from bilateral development partners.
41. The important strides the Office has made in delivering as "One ILO" is positioning the ILO well in the new working environment. Large-scale comprehensive programmes involving multiple ILO departments and offices, such as the inter-agency Netherlands-funded Partnership for Improving Prospects for Forcibly Displaced Persons and Host Communities, are allowing the ILO to overcome its relatively small size compared to other agencies and to work effectively, especially in countries where it is a non-resident agency. The diversity inherent in the approach fosters innovation and reinforces the ILO in promising areas of work, for example in the peace, development and humanitarian nexus. It also allows the ILO to develop significantly its engagement with the other partner agencies, such as UNICEF, the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation in this case. Moving towards more of such integrated ILO programmes, including for specific countries as is the case with the SIRAYE programme, which is focused on advancing decent work and industrialization in Ethiopia, offers potential to increase the ILO's profile, including among UN resident coordinators.

► III. Status of work under the ILO plan of action

42. At its 335th Session (March 2019), the Governing Body endorsed the Office's plan of action on UN development system reform covering 2019 and 2020. The following section and the appendix provide a review the actions taken under the three components of the plan.

Developing the capacity of national constituents to engage in Cooperation Framework and SDG processes

43. During 2019 and 2020, both the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) and the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) developed briefing materials and carried out training activities tailored to the specific needs of the social partners. In collaboration with the International Training Centre of the ILO (Turin Centre), ACT/EMP developed a training programme on the SDGs aimed at employer and business membership organizations (EBMOs). The programme covers the 2030 Agenda and the business case for engaging in SDG implementation, and how to link the advocacy work and business priorities of EBMOs to the SDGs. It includes UN reform and how the private sector can best engage with the UN development system at the country level. The training programme was launched in the Asia and the Pacific region in July 2019 and updated and delivered online for the Southern African Development Community region in December 2020. Roll-out to other regions and in other languages is foreseen in 2021. A recent ACT/EMP survey of EBMOs indicated, however, that large gaps persist in their awareness of and involvement in UN processes at the country level. This is particularly the case for the CCA, which is the main entry point for non-governmental actors to engage. Continued efforts by the Office with both resident coordinators and the constituents to improve this situation will be required. To address this challenge, ACT/EMP has developed specific guidance on CCAs for the EBMOs.
44. Knowledge tools, training materials and workshops developed by ACTRAV have helped strengthen the capacities of trade unions to participate and exercise influence in UN consultations in countries, especially in voluntary national reviews and national SDG processes. Over the past two years, trade unions in 15 countries ²⁰ have requested ACTRAV technical support to engage with resident coordinators and UN Country Teams and to participate in the CCA and Cooperation Framework development. However, there have been reports from unions that in some cases they have been excluded from UN country-level processes. This further underscores the need for greater capacity-building efforts and outreach by the Office to resident coordinators to enable constituents to take part effectively. ACTRAV will increase its work on trade union capacity development solutions to help unions bring decent work, employment and fundamental principles and rights at work to the forefront of these processes and discussions. ACTRAV has finalized a trade union reference manual on UN Sustainable Development Cooperation and Decent Work, which will be launched in the first quarter of 2021. A self-guided e-learning course based on the reference manual will be offered starting in March 2021.
45. ILO regional offices have also developed specific technical training for constituents at both the national and the subregional levels to enable them to introduce decent work perspectives and priorities in national Cooperation Frameworks, voluntary national reviews and other strategic national development processes. In Europe and Central Asia, constituents participating in results-based management workshops for DWCP planning also learned how these must now be linked to Cooperation Frameworks. In the Arab States, regional South-South and triangular cooperation workshops for tripartite constituents created a platform for knowledge-sharing and exchanges of experience between countries with specific regard to the preparation of voluntary national reviews. In addition, national information sessions were organized for the social partners on UN

²⁰ Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cameroon, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Fiji, the Philippines, Thailand, Somalia and Zimbabwe.

reform, its implementation and the role of the social partners in Cooperation Frameworks. In Latin America, the Regional Office has prepared training materials for employers' and workers' organizations tailored to their specific needs in the region, focusing on enabling them to actively engage in the Cooperation Framework development processes. In addition, a module for tripartite constituents is being prepared with the Turin Centre with a view to fostering South-South knowledge exchange on CCAs and the new Cooperation Frameworks. In Africa, constituents in Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda were recently briefed on aligning DWCPs with Cooperation Frameworks using the new ILO guidance documents.

46. At the global level, the course Decent Work and the 2030 Agenda, which is delivered to tripartite constituents by the Turin Centre in collaboration with the ILO, was revised to integrate UN reform issues. The Office also developed an online, facilitated training course on Financing Decent Work to build capacity of government agencies, workers' and employers' organizations, and a wider group of development partners and practitioners, to equip them with knowledge and skills to engage in national consultations on SDG finance and ensure that adequate financial resources are channelled towards decent work outcomes.
47. The proposed Implementation Plan for the ILO Development Cooperation Strategy 2020–25, to be discussed by the Governing Body at its 341st Session (March 2021), proposes further actions to address the continued need for support on capacity-building for constituents.

Maximizing the opportunities of UN reform to promote tripartism and support Member States in achieving decent work

48. The reform impacts a number of ILO internal policies and processes and to this end updated guidance on key topics is continually shared with the field. The Office has prepared guidance to support ILO staff working on DWCPs in the context of the Cooperation Framework formulation, including how to derive DWCPs from the Cooperation Framework and ensure ILO constituents' active engagement in the process. The Office has developed a normative stocktaking tool for briefing resident coordinators on a country's status concerning the ratification and application of standards, which will also facilitate the engagement of the social partners in CCAs and Cooperation Frameworks.
49. To support ILO staff in taking better advantage of pooled funding mechanisms and joint funding opportunities, the Development Cooperation Learning Journey on partnerships and resource mobilization organized by Partnerships and Field Support Department and the Turin Centre now includes a focus on partnership development in the UN reform environment. Tailored support has also been provided to an increasing number of staff in ILO field offices engaged in joint programmes, including with regard to the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund and the recent call for proposals of the Joint SDG Fund. Regarding Office follow-up on the UN Common Approach to Due Diligence for Private Sector Partnerships, there has been no further progress on this topic at the UNSDG level, therefore further Office work on this action item is on hold.

Advancing the Office's operational integration with the UN at the country level

50. Mutual recognition of agency rules and systems is complex to implement; however, it is a first step towards greater integration within the UN. The Office will seek to advance this integration where possible and appropriate in the country context. Many of the easy wins in finance, procurement and human resources (joint vacancy notices, training) have been applied for some time. For other areas, such as those dependent on the ILO's enterprise resource planning systems, determining the feasibility, costs and benefits will take longer. To this end, the Office has provided guidance to staff to clarify the concepts and the ILO's positioning.
51. As noted above, sharing common premises is an enabling factor for administrative and support functions, such as those relating to security, reception services, information technology infrastructure, and the use and maintenance of facilities.
52. In 2019, the Office revised the job descriptions for field office directors to ensure their responsiveness to the needs arising from the UN reform. The ILO is also a member of the task team led by the UN Development Coordination Office to develop induction training for resident coordinators. Also, with a view to increasing the number of resident coordinators coming from the ILO as an additional means of increasing the influence and understanding of the ILO and its mandate within the UN at the country level, the Office has developed a new programme and coaching protocol to prepare ILO officials for the resident coordinator assessment centre, which is part of the selection process to become a resident coordinator.

► Draft decision

53. The Governing Body:

- (a) **took note of the current status of the reform of the United Nations development system and the implementation the Office's Plan of Action 2019-20 to maximize the opportunities of the UN development system reform for the ILO and tripartite constituents; and**
- (b) **invited the Director-General to take into consideration the views expressed by the Governing Body in the continued engagement in and implementation of the reform.**

► **Appendix**

Status of the Office Plan of Action 2019–20 to maximize the opportunities of the UN development system reform for the ILO and tripartite constituents

Action item	Due by	Status
Component 1: Developing the capacity of national constituents to engage in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and SDG processes for greater influence in UN-supported national development for achievement of the SDGs		
1. In collaboration with ACT/EMP and ACTRAV, development of awareness-raising and training materials on working with the UN	By end 2019	Completed/continues ¹
2. Continued targeted technical training and Office support for constituent representatives to better enable them to contribute decent work perspectives and priorities in national Cooperation Framework, voluntary national review and other strategic national development processes	2019–20	Completed/continues
Component 2: Maximizing the opportunities of UN reform to promote tripartism and support Member States in achieving decent work		
3. Revision and update of DWCP guidance to align it with the Cooperation Framework process	By end 2019	Completed
4. Development of awareness-raising, training and information resources for ILO field and headquarters staff on working within the reformed UN at the country level to promote the ILO mandate and engagement of constituents	By end 2019	Completed/continues
5. Training and support for ILO staff in field offices on pooled funding mechanisms to better equip them to take advantage of joint funding opportunities	2019–20	Completed
6. Preparation of training modules and information resources for resident coordinators in collaboration with the International Training Centre of the ILO	By end 2019	Ongoing

¹ Completed/continues: Action item achieved with further additional related work under way or envisaged.

Action item	Due by	Status
7. Review of the configuration of ILO technical capacities and expertise in programming, resource mobilization and partnership building to maximize contributions in view of new Cooperation Frameworks and resident coordinator system arrangements (based on the Plan of Action 2019 towards the preparation of the ILO Development Cooperation Strategy 2020–25)	By mid-2020	Ongoing
8. Assessments of how the UN Common Approach to Due Diligence for Private Sector Partnerships can be followed by the ILO, and of further opportunities and possible roles in the UN-wide due diligence approach, in particular regarding the labour principles and the promotion of fundamental principles and rights at work	By October 2019	Ongoing, subject to further progress at UNSDG level
Component 3: Advancing the Office's operational integration with the UN at the country level with respect for ILO values		
9. Strategy to advance mutual recognition as a means to promote further integration in common services	By end 2019	Completed
10. Review and revision of ILO Country Director job descriptions	By end March 2019	Completed
11. Internal consultation on changes to the performance management system and Staff Regulations	By end 2019	Ongoing
12. Reinforcement of the ILO's preparatory development programme for ILO officials interested in the resident coordinator selection process	By mid-2019	Completed/continues