**Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme**

Standing Committee
55th meeting

Human resources issues, including staff security

Contents

I. Introduction

1.   One year ago, UNHCR presented a paper on the strategic directions for human resources management at the 52nd meeting of the Standing Committee, highlighting the main human resources challenges facing the Office and outlining the priorities for the 2012-2013 biennium. This paper provides an update on UNHCR's proactive approach to human resources management and current priorities relating to staff security.

II. Human resources

2.   To ensure that the organization meets its Global Strategic Priority of developing a motivated workforce able to meet operational and organizational demands, a series of key reforms in human resources management have been introduced since 2009, in particular:

- creation of the Global Learning Centre (GLC) and elaboration of a unified learning policy;

- reform of the policy on international assignments and creation of the Career Management Support Section;

- introduction of a new performance management and appraisal system;

- adoption of the new United Nations procedures for contracts and for the administration of justice; and

- introduction in 2012 of the new policy and procedures for the assignment of locally recruited staff members, which offers more opportunities for mobility and delegates authority to the Field for the appointment of National Professional Officers.

A. Responding to changing operational requirements

3.   UNHCR's systems for local and international recruitment and postings are being reformed in order to ensure deployment of a highly qualified and multi-skilled workforce in a rapidly changing humanitarian environment. Its internal systems for position management and assignment - including the fast-track mechanism, temporary assignments, the deployment of staff-in-between-assignments and affiliated workforce partnerships - were sufficiently flexible to respond to the multiple emergency situations over the past year.

4.   UNHCR continued to place a high premium on training for emergency management and maintaining its roster of staff members ready for rapid deployment on emergency response teams. A new model was piloted in 2012, whereby the emergency response teams were replaced after two to three months by staff on temporary assignment. During this time UNHCR consolidated the office structures and assigned staff for an initial one-year period through fast-track procedures. Between September 2011 and August 2012, 132 fast-track positions were filled in emergency operations for Mali, Somalia and South Sudan. During the course of 2011, which was marked by numerous emergencies in the Middle East and North Africa region and elsewhere, 370 staff members were deployed to emergency operations. In 2012 to date, 105 staff members have been deployed on emergency assignments.

5.   The High Commissioner will shortly introduce a new system for international recruitment. This will enable UNHCR to improve its talent search capabilities and also provide career development opportunities for locally recruited staff members through their conversion to the international professional category.

6.   UNHCR frequently needs to adjust its structure and presence, both in the Field and at Headquarters, based on operational requirements. In August 2012, the High Commissioner renewed the policy governing the comparative review process, which is used when locally recruited staff are faced with the abolition of posts, in order to ensure

that the organization retains those who meet the highest standards of competence and integrity.

B.   Caring for staff

7.   It is especially important for UNHCR's operational effectiveness to promote staff well-being and ensure favourable conditions of service in deep field locations where the Office has an extensive presence. UNHCR is advocating at the inter-agency level for the harmonized improvement of conditions of service and is also monitoring the consequences of the changes in conditions of service in non-family duty stations, which were introduced in 2011 by the General Assembly.

8.   Efforts are underway to ensure all office-provided staff accommodation complies with a new policy introduced in February 2012, which provides an accountability framework and a decentralized funding mechanism.

9.   In July 2012, UNHCR published a study on the views of family members which highlighted the need for communicating with them through social media and other channels. It also stressed the importance of providing support to families to help them cope with UNHCR's mandatory rotation system, especially in the context of non-family assignments.

10.   Work is underway to modernize UNHCR's medical information management system which will allow for better monitoring of staff health and increased efficiency in service delivery. An independent evaluation is underway of staff welfare services, and the Office is offering staff systematic psychological preparation for hardship assignments and de-briefing after completion of an assignment.

C.   Maintaining a professional and diverse workforce

11.   There is increasingly broad access to learning, which is key to improving organizational performance and creating opportunities for individual career development. In 2011, the number of staff enrolled in learning initiatives offered by UNHCR more than doubled. In addition to mandatory courses, there is now a vast choice of learning products of various durations and formats, using different technologies and methods, including self-study modules. As part of the strategy to make learning available to a geographically dispersed audience in a cost-effective manner, UNHCR increased its use of distance learning methodologies. A total of 26,000 enrolments were recorded for various online products, as compared to 4,400 learners in face-to-face activities. The response among participants was overwhelmingly positive. More courses are also being subject to in-depth assessments of learning outcomes. While learning products spanned the range of UNHCR's multi-sectoral activities, emphasis was placed on learning that related to protection, resources and programme management, emergency and security, and inter-agency collaboration. A learning initiative for cluster coordinators was launched and also opened to a small number of non-UNHCR colleagues.

12.   In 2011, the High Commissioner introduced measures to enhance UNHCR's capacity in protection. Protection positions now account for 26 per cent of UNHCR posts globally. The figure represents a two per cent increase since 2010 and a seven per cent rise since 2005. Almost half of all protection positions are located in D and E duty stations. A further reinforcement of protection staffing will take place later this year in conjunction with a special initiative to enhance finance/project control and programme staffing. The Office has also reinforced human resource capacity in supply management, field safety, private sector fundraising, information management and technical support.

13.   UNHCR strives to achieve gender equity and to ensure diversity in the composition of its global workforce. The percentage of female international staff is now 43 per cent, compared to 39 per cent in 2000. The percentage of women at the level of P4 and above has increased from around 25 per cent in 2000 to 42 per cent. The Office is also aware of the need to reach geographical diversity at all grades and is taking steps to address this through its new recruitment policy.

14. A key element of UNHCR's human resource capacity, and a source of diversity and expertise, is its affiliate workforce, which is comprised mainly of United Nations Volunteers (UNVs), consultants, contractors and interns. A dedicated unit has been established in the Division of Human Resources Management (DHRM), based in Budapest, to improve affiliate workforce coordination for UNVs and staff with contracts from the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) as well as with the divisions managing consultants and standby partners.

D. Ensuring high quality performance and accountability

15. A major effort was launched last year to revise job descriptions in order to clearly indicate what is expected of incumbents in terms of accountabilities, responsibilities and authorities. DHRM plans to complete this work by the end of 2012.

16. UNHCR's internet-based performance appraisal and management system (PAMS) was introduced in mid-2009. Since its introduction, compliance has been high, with 92 per cent of all performance reports completed in 2010 and 83 per cent completed in 2011. There is also improvement in the calibration of ratings. The link between performance management and personal and career development needs to be strengthened. Measures will also be introduced to simplify the performance appraisal system.

E. Building a respectful workplace environment

17. UNHCR conducted its third Global Staff Survey in October 2011. The results highlighted the need for managers to be better equipped to lead teams, to address conflict and to build confidence. DHRM provided support to managers and their teams through missions by staff welfare and career management officers and coordination with other relevant services, such as the Ombudsperson, the Director of the Ethics Office, the Office of the Inspector General and the Staff Council.

18. Every effort is made to promote respect and integrity among all staff members and to ensure fairness and efficiency in the implementation of the formal and informal administration of justice mechanisms. DHRM continued to issue biannual reports on the status of cases brought to the UN tribunals for adjudication of administrative and disciplinary cases.

F. Ensuring fair and transparent implementation of HR policies

19. The High Commissioner convened a three-day workshop of the Staff Management Consultative Council (SMCC) in December 2011 to examine the results of the Global Staff Survey. Twenty-nine wide-ranging recommendations were issued. Under the leadership of the Deputy High Commissioner, DHRM is providing active support to the SMCC follow-up process.

20. DHRM strives to provide timely, efficient and client-oriented services to staff members and to the organization and to make human resources services accessible, and meaningful for all staff. The Personnel Administration and Payroll Section (PAPS) is conducting regular client satisfaction surveys. Through its intranet pages, blogs, publications, video talks and email, DHRM keeps all staff members informed of their responsibilities and entitlements. The Division also provides various platforms to answer questions of staff members individually and played a key role in the creation of an internal communications unit and the development of an internal communications strategy within UNHCR.

III. Staff security

21. Dangerous and complex operating environments continue to pose daunting challenges for UNHCR. UN security management policies are evolving, allowing for

greater flexibility to adapt security arrangements to meet the needs of fluid security situations. Ensuring security in the highest-risk locations requires the provision of the appropriate mitigating measures. This is often complicated by the logistical challenges of delivery to extremely remote locations and, in some cases, by restrictions on importation of materials and equipment. UNHCR's approach to staff safety seeks to couple security hardware with software, such as projecting a humanitarian and neutral image, ensuring good information and analysis, and developing situationally-aware staff.

22.   This section provides an update on the efforts made to reach these objectives, in line with UNHCR's Security Management: Plan of Action and Strategy for Implementation.

23.   Regrettably, UNHCR lost two national staff members in the first half of 2012. One was killed in April in a conflict-affected area of Damascus, the Syrian Arab Republic, and another was critically injured and later died in May following a robbery attempt at his residence in Goma, the Democratic Republic of the Congo. While these incidents were not related to the victims' work with UNHCR, they serve as a stark reminder that even with the appropriate support structures, training and information sharing, staff remain vulnerable.

A.   Field support and analysis

24.   A key objective of UNHCR's Field Safety Section (FSS) is to provide security guidance and support proactively and in response to reports and queries. FSS continues to provide direct assistance to managers at Headquarters and in the Field, through: 1) ongoing analysis of events which may affect UNHCR's operations; 2) response and management of critical incidents; and, 3) technical advice on all aspects of security risk management processes.

25.   So far in 2012, FSS personnel have conducted 45 missions to support Field operations, including in the Sahel region (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger), Afghanistan, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nigeria, South Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen. This figure surpasses the total number of missions conducted by FSS last year. This has been possible due to the filling of vacant posts in order to reach full strength, and reorganization within the Section that has allowed for more sustained and responsive support to Field operations.

26.   In order to meet the security needs in the Field, UNHCR has recruited an additional seven Field Safety Advisors (FSAs) in 2012. This brings the number of FSAs recruited in the past three years to 27, nearly half of UNHCR's global total of 57 security professionals. This represents a significant step towards achieving the goal articulated in the Security Plan of Action of renewing the security workforce through FSA profiles that include greater analytical capacity and the communications skills needed to apply technical expertise to the safety of both staff and persons of concern.

B.   Oversight and Headquarters processes

27.   The organization regularly reviews its security posture and preparedness through the Security Steering Committees (SSC), minimum operational security standards (MOSS) compliance reviews, and appropriate security budgeting to reflect the needs in the Field.

28.   UNHCR is presently undergoing an audit by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services on security funding and resource utilization. The audit is timely, given the increasing security costs faced by UNHCR due to factors such as its contribution to the jointly-funded activities of the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), local security cost-sharing arrangements and costly security hardware which is often required to protect staff operating in high-risk environments.

29.   Through the Annual Programme Review, FSS has provided advice on appropriate security budgets and resources for 2013-2014, based on analysis of the security situations and planned operations.

30.   In 2012, FSS provided 12 additional armoured vehicles to operations where threats from improvised explosive devices and collateral damage from firearms are high. FSS has also provided personal protective equipment to other high-risk operations.

C.   Coordination and policy development

31.   UNHCR continues to actively participate in the inter-agency security management framework in order to influence policy and ensure its continued ability to reach populations of concern. This includes the Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN), its steering group and working groups tasked with policy development. UNHCR remains actively engaged with UNDSS and other actors within the UN Security Management System.

32.   In May 2012, the High Commissioner issued a revised UNHCR Security Management Policy which reiterated accountability at all levels in accordance with the UN Security Management System Framework for Accountability, as well as UNHCR's Global Management Accountability Framework (GMAF). In addition, a number of new security polices of the UN Security Management System have been distributed to all staff electronically and through security trainings.

D.   Training

33.   FSS continues to work closely with the Global Learning Centre (GLC) to ensure training that supports the over-arching goal of strengthening a culture of security within the organization.

34.   In line with the strategy of developing an FSA workforce suited to UNHCR's needs, GLC and FSS organized a workshop on security of persons of concern. This training was part of the rollout of the *Manual on Security of Persons of Concern*, released last year, and was designed to strengthen cooperation between security, protection and other staff in finding solutions to ensure the safety of persons of concern. With approximately half of all safety incidents occurring on the road, FSS and GLC also organized a training-of-trainers workshop on specialized driving skills. FSS is now on target to meet its goal of conducting supplementary driver training in 2012 in at least 10 operations with the highest risk. Meanwhile, UNHCR continues its unique security risk management training for field managers, conducting training in 2012 in Algeria, Egypt, Georgia, Greece and Libya, and with plans for training in Myanmar, Pakistan and Uganda. To date, over 600 managers have been trained. This has resulted in a substantial improvement in the organization's ability to continue operating safely in places where the urgency of needs and attendant risks to staff are both considerable.

35.   In keeping with the policy of developing national staff capacity, FSS and GLC presented a training workshop for national staff with security risk management responsibilities. Security training for managers and staff at large continue in order to strengthen the culture of security throughout the organization. This includes the Security Management Exercise and security awareness trainings, which this year have been conducted in Algeria, Egypt and Georgia. Further sessions are scheduled for Central America, Greece, Pakistan and Venezuela (the Bolivarian Republic of). A High-Risk Environment training was conducted in Algiers for both UNHCR staff and its partners.

E.   Conclusion

36.   UNHCR continues to make significant progress in the implementation of its *Security Management Plan of Action and Strategy for Implementation* to ensure that operations have appropriate security preparedness mechanisms in place and that managers

and staff fully understand their responsibilities and are appropriately trained. Accountability and oversight is being maintained throughout the organization so that operations can continue to deliver programmes safely even where residual risk remains.

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