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Update on human resources issues**Contents**

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I. Introduction

1. This paper provides an update on human resources issues, including measures taken, new developments and policy plans, in line with the Global Strategic Priorities (GSPs) 2010-2011 and efforts to enhance the overall effectiveness of the organization.
2. The Division of Human Resources Management (DHRM) is responsible for the recruitment, administration, training, health and welfare, career planning and payrolling of some 7,000 staff members, in over 380 locations, in 128 countries across the world. At present, 87 per cent of UNHCR's staff work outside Headquarters and the Global Service Centre in Budapest, and almost half of the places where they serve are considered hardship duty stations by the United Nations common system standards.
3. The aim of the "strategic human resource and workforce management" goal (GSP 7.8) is to ensure that UNHCR has a diverse and gender-balanced workforce that is motivated and safe, has integrity and meets the current and future needs of the organization.
4. Guided by the results of the Global Staff Surveys in 2006 and 2008, the reform of human resources policies was designed to maximize operational effectiveness while also reinforcing staff dedication, integrity and welfare; it is now in the consolidation phase.

II. Career management

5. Considerable efforts have been focused on achieving better matching of people to positions, through enhanced career planning and management and improvements to the promotions and postings process. In June 2009, the High Commissioner approved a new assignments policy which is expected to facilitate this goal. A new set of transparent and, to the extent possible, measurable criteria, as well as improved selection processes, will take effect starting with the September compendium of available posts. The new system puts in place procedures, which should meet the interests of the organization, individual operations, and the staff members themselves. One important feature will be the involvement of a cadre of eight career management advisors, who have been working since July 2009 to build up a counselling relationship with almost all international professional staff. Through career-transition workshops, their outreach also extends to local staff in the Field.
6. The year 2009 also saw the introduction of a new performance appraisal and management system as well as the setting up of the Global Learning Centre in Budapest. With the creation of the new career planning function and expected improvements to performance management and learning, UNHCR is strengthening the connections between these three areas to facilitate a more strategic approach to integrated career management. Already in place are an on-line learning management system and technological enhancements which make learning more accessible to staff. A comprehensive learning strategy has been launched and several new learning modules have been developed to support effective service delivery in the Field. Development objectives have been built into the performance management system and enhanced succession planning, with the assistance of the career management advisors, is more evident. Future enhancements include a career path planning tool linked to learning and the finalization of methods to undertake better workforce planning.
7. Recognizing that the rotation system will inevitably create situations where some staff are in between assignments (SIBA), UNHCR has made extra efforts in 2009 to find productive temporary assignments, usually for periods of 6-12 months, for such staff. At any one time, about two-thirds of staff who have not been assigned to positions are on such assignments, and most will secure a regular assignment in the periodic compendia. As of 30 July 2010, of the 180 staff not appointed to regular positions, 108 were on temporary

assignments. There are nevertheless a number of staff who do not have temporary assignments and some 40 staff who have been without a regular or temporary assignment for more than two years. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) is completing an audit to examine the SIBA issue and UNHCR looks forward to its report and advice. A more comprehensive SIBA policy, based on the advice on the OIOS should be finalized in the first quarter of 2011.

8. The International Professional Roster (IPR) set up in 2004 has been successful in identifying young professionals for positions for which there have not been sufficient internal applicants. A new programme called PRIDE (Professional Recruitment, Induction and Deployment), which will be launched in the last quarter of 2010, is intended to identify a diverse group of some 30 young professionals per year through a more robust selection process than under the current IPR.

9. In July 2009, UNHCR introduced the new contract regime established under the revised United Nations Staff Rules. Temporary appointments are intended for a strictly time-limited period of 12 months, with possible exceptional extension to 24 months. Fixed term appointments are normally for an initial period of one year, with a possibility of renewals of two years. UNHCR awaits the deliberations of the General Assembly in relation to the establishment of continuing appointments. Concurrently, DHRM is reviewing its policies and procedures governing the affiliate workforce, including consultants, contractors, interns, United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) and individuals on various standby rosters. The intent is to ensure that the purpose of each contract type is clearly defined, so that there is a balance between flexibility and appropriateness of the contract, and so as to serve both organizational needs and staff expectations.

III. Gender equity

10. UNHCR places great importance on gender equity. In early 2010, UNHCR launched the Gender and Diversity Scorecard which was presented to ExCom members at the 47th meeting of the Standing Committee in March. This online statistical resource was developed to help manage the issue of gender parity in UNHCR, and it has become a valuable resource, providing a range of easily accessible and up-to-date statistical data on staffing in UNHCR. In 2000, UNHCR published a statistical analysis of a range of staff data (*The State of UNHCR Staff*), which helped to create a better understanding of UNHCR's workforce at that time. Ten years later, DHRM has commissioned a consultant to update this report to coincide with the 60th anniversary commemorations.

IV. Staff-management relations

11. Positive staff-management relations are critical for effective human resources management. In 2008 UNHCR held its first Staff-Management Consultative Council (SMCC). This now annual three-day event brings together staff and management representatives from each of the five geographic regions and from Headquarters. The SMCC discusses a wide range of issues of concern to staff and makes recommendations to DHRM for implementation. DHRM is pleased to report that most of the recommendations of the SMCC from the 2008 and 2009 sessions have been implemented; there will be a third SMCC before the end of 2010.

V. Administration of Justice system

12. A new Administration of Justice system was introduced in July 2009. Although too early for a full assessment, after one year of implementation, UNHCR believes that the system is working well. A number of administrative complaints have either been resolved

through mediation or at the management evaluation stage when the Deputy High Commissioner reviews the complaint prior to it proceeding to the tribunal stage. In the first year of operation, the United Nations Disputes Tribunal (UNDT) rendered 29 judgments on complaints lodged by UNHCR staff members. In 8 judgements UNDT ruled in favour of the staff member. In 21 judgements, the UNDT ruled in favour of the organization. Of the 21 judgements in favour of the organization, 19 were rejected on the merits of the case and 2 were rejected as not receivable. Within the same time frame, the United Nations Appeals Tribunal (UNAT) rendered 9 judgements on appeals from staff members against judgements of the UNDT. UNAT overruled 2 judgements of the UNDT and upheld 7. UNHCR has adjusted a number of administrative policies and procedures in response to the lessons learned from the management evaluation and the Tribunal judgements to ensure that similar cases do not recur.

VI. Communicating with staff

13. DHRM realizes that, not only should it introduce more staff-friendly policies, but staff must be kept aware of new initiatives. Accordingly, communications with staff have been improved and transmitted more frequently. Since the transfer of the Personnel Administration and Payroll Section to the Global Service Centre in Budapest, the response to personnel administrative needs has been more efficient. With the revision of the intranet interface, DHRM has given priority to the staff resources pages for restructuring and revision with the intention of ensuring that staff have access to all rules and regulations. In August 2009, the Director of DHRM launched a very successful weekly intranet column called "Ask DHRM", where staff ask human resources questions that are answered by the Director. Since then, 170 questions have been answered on a range of topics, such as the new assignments policy, entitlements and benefits, promotions policies, performance management and contracts issues. All of these efforts are now being facilitated by a communications officer in DHRM, whose role is to make human resources information more accessible to staff.

VII. Living conditions

14. As indicated above, the majority of UNHCR staff work in the Field. Forty-eight per cent are in D and E classified duty stations, most of which are non-family duty stations with limited, even non-existent facilities, and often with serious security concerns. In 2009 the Staff Welfare Section of DHRM undertook a survey of staff living and working conditions in all non-family duty stations where UNHCR provides accommodation for its staff. Out of 71 targeted locations in 17 countries, the responses received from 41 locations in 12 operations indicated some improvement in the way in which UNHCR was addressing living conditions, but a good number of locations still reported serious gaps. Insufficient budgets and lack of dedicated technical capacities for implementation of the standards were indicated as major causes of such gaps. A multi-disciplinary working group at Headquarters is following up on those issues.

VIII. Staff benefits

15. At the same time, UNHCR is highly concerned about the outcome of discussions within the United Nations, the International Civil Service Commission and the General Assembly, in the context of system-wide harmonization, on a possible reduction in staff benefits associated with service in non-family locations. The removal of such benefits would have two major effects: a) it would reduce the capacity of staff to address the gaps in living conditions; and b) it would affect the mobility of families, as they would no longer have an option of being relocated to a place close by the staff member's duty station.

UNHCR fears that this would have a significant impact on the willingness of staff to serve in field locations where they are most needed. Together with UNICEF and WFP, UNHCR has made its views known, and calls on Member States, whose delegations are familiar with the conditions in which UNHCR staff work, to support all efforts not to erode staff conditions in the deep field and risk affecting programme delivery.
