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Progress report on the implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for 2022–25

Purpose of the document

At its 343rd Session (November 2021), the Governing Body endorsed the Human Resources (HR) Strategy for 2022–25. The HR Strategy is aimed at ensuring a workforce of the highest standards of competence, efficiency and integrity, with due regard being given to the Action plan for improving the diversity of the ILO workforce, including in terms of gender and geographical diversity, and also addressing under-representation, experience relevant to the three constituent groups and opportunities for youth and young professionals. This document describes the progress made by the Office in 2022 in respect of the key deliverables of the HR Strategy (see the draft decision in paragraph 36).

Relevant strategic objective: None.

Main relevant outcome: Enabling outcome C: Optimized use of resources.

Policy implications: None.

Legal implications: None.

Financial implications: None.

Follow-up action required: None.

Author unit: Human Resources Development Department (HRD).

Related documents: GB.347/PFA/INF/7; GB.343/PFA/14; GB.337/PFA/11.

▶ Introduction

1. At its 343rd Session (November 2021), the Governing Body endorsed the [Human Resources Strategy for 2022–25](#). It requested the Office to take the guidance provided into account in implementing the Strategy, with a view to attracting, recruiting and retaining a workforce of the highest standards of competence, efficiency and integrity, with due regard being given to gender; geographical diversity, also addressing under-representation; experience relevant to the three constituent groups; and opportunities for youth and young professionals and persons with disabilities.¹
2. The HR Strategy for 2022–25 includes the following outcomes:
 - (1) **Diverse workforce with the right skills to face the future:** Fostering employee engagement and inclusion – attract, develop, engage and retain diverse and qualified staff and leaders.
 - (2) **Respectful and empowering environment:** Strengthening leadership, ethical behaviour and accountability for a respectful environment.
 - (3) **Leveraging technology for efficient HR services through innovation and digitalization of the HR function:** HR technologies, digitalization and analytics.
3. This report provides describes the progress made by the Office in 2022 in respect of the key deliverables of the HR Strategy. Specific reporting on progress made against the targets for each of the selected key indicators will be compiled at the end of 2023, in accordance with the defined milestones, and provided to the Governing Body in due course.

▶ Progress on key deliverables

Outcome 1: Diverse workforce with the right skills to face the future

1.1. Focus area: Plan for future workforce needs

4. A new set of **minimum requirements for education and experience** applicable to positions in the Professional and General Service categories was introduced in August 2022 following a process of extensive research and benchmarking across the other United Nations (UN) organizations, and negotiations with the Staff Union. A harmonized approach to minimum education and experience requirements for recruitment and selection purposes provides transparency and clarity to staff and managers as well as internal and external applicants. Furthermore, ensuring that the minimum requirements stipulated for a position reflect the actual needs and take into account the nature and value of relevant work experience in the modern global workplace, particularly experience relevant to the tripartite constituents, reduces the risk that they could present unnecessary barriers to workforce diversity.² The revised minimum requirements ensure that all positions of the same grade require the same

¹ GB.343/PV, para. 721.

² As outlined in initiative 3 of the Action plan for improving the diversity of the ILO workforce, [GB.337/PFA/11](#).

level of education and years of experience, irrespective of job family. A clear definition of what is meant by experience at the international level and the possibility for a first-level university degree in a relevant field and additional years of relevant experience to be accepted in lieu of an advanced degree provide a more consistent and equitable approach to education and experience requirements, which better fits today's working environment. **Minimum requirements for languages** are also being reviewed and standardized, while recognizing that there may be some variations for certain job families.

5. In parallel with the effort to define minimum requirements, work has progressed on the review of jobs for the General Service category at headquarters and at the Professional level worldwide. **New generic job descriptions** have been developed for the Technical Specialist and Evaluation Specialist job families and work is in progress for the Legal Specialists. The review of job descriptions for administration-related support work will be undertaken this year. The ILO's generic job descriptions provide the underlying structural support for recruitment, performance and career development. The revised versions will be implemented as they are finalized, on a job family basis, for use by serving staff and in job vacancies, as foreseen in a new collective agreement between the Administration and the Staff Union that is currently under negotiation.
6. Considering that skills visioning, skills mapping and skills gap analysis form an integral part of strategic workforce planning, in 2022 the Office reviewed the preparatory steps to launch the **skills mapping exercise**, in parallel with the development of the Director-General's programme and budget proposals. This approach recognizes that the overall skills mapping exercise must be rooted in the strategic objectives of the Organization, start from a clear vision and look ahead to future skills needs. The first wave of the exercise will focus on skills for policy departments and technical specialists worldwide. The work plan makes provision for the selection of a skills mapping tool and the development of a consolidated skills framework for the ILO's technical delivery by the end of August 2023. This will be followed by a mapping of current skills and future skills needs. A gap analysis regarding skills, resources and their global distribution will be undertaken and strategies to address such gaps through staff development or recruitment will be developed by the end of 2023.

1.2. Focus area: Attract, recruit and engage diverse staff

7. In 2022, the ILO published 77 **vacancy announcements** through the Recruitment, Assignment and Placement System (RAPS). In 2022, the average time from the close of the vacancy announcement to the selection decision was 172 days. For development cooperation projects, 117 vacancies were filled for Professional positions. The lead time for the development cooperation appointment process in 2022 continued to be regularly monitored. For **key project positions**, the average number of calendar days between the posting of vacancies to the selected candidates being on post was 124 days in 2022 (which is a further decrease in comparison with the average of 145 days over the previous three years). The average timeline from the selection decision to the selected candidate being on post for all development cooperation positions has followed a similar pattern (reduced from 68 days over the previous three years to 62 days in 2022).
8. **Outreach activities** to increase diversity are a key element of the HR Strategy for 2022–25 and initial steps were taken in 2022. In addition to maintaining the practice of contacting constituents for each vacancy published through the RAPS with a view to increasing the number and diversity of the pool of applicants, the Office took new outreach initiatives, such as the release of key vacancies on the corporate ILO **social media** account. All vacancies, both those in RAPS and those for development cooperation, were published and distributed

through a specialist company providing support in outreach to international and humanitarian organizations. In addition to having a large and diverse pool of qualified candidates, the company uses social media tools to increase its reach. For specific vacancies that had proved difficult to fill, the same provider supported the ILO in increasing the level of applications, including in terms of gender and nationality, with promising preliminary results.

9. As part of the outreach to new talent, the ILO participated in three **career fairs** in 2022, which were chosen because attendees from a wide range of nationalities and professional backgrounds were expected. In addition to in-person events, there are plans to participate in 2023 in targeted virtual career fairs, with a focus on specific diversity targets, such as women in senior positions and people with disabilities, and career fairs in regions with a large number of non- and under-represented countries. Organizers of such events have been contacted and their proposals are being evaluated. There are also plans to better track attendees of such events for future outreach activities.
10. The ILO is also engaging in several projects for **cross-UN rosters** of candidates with different job profiles, with the aim of tapping into them to encourage applications from qualified candidates within these target groups.
11. In spite of outreach efforts, improving on **geographical diversity** remains a key challenge, particularly when viewed in the context of the limited number of staff members who are counted for geographical representation, which represents 22 per cent of the total ILO workforce.³ However, as outlined in the current diversity outlook report on the composition and structure of the staff,⁴ the number of adequately-represented countries on 31 December 2022 had increased from the previous year and the number of over-represented countries had decreased slightly compared with 31 December 2021.
12. The Office is also actively seeking to increase the number of staff who have **experience relevant to the three constituent groups** and has undertaken an analysis of applicants since 2018 and an analysis of the experience of recently recruited staff. The results show only a very limited response from these target groups and highlight the need to work more closely with the constituents to increase the pool of applicants, with a focus on specific and relevant positions. In recent years, the ILO has systematically reached out to the missions based in Geneva and through the ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) and the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) in order to encourage a wide dissemination of the RAPS vacancy announcements. More efforts in this area will be undertaken in consultation with constituents, including at the regional level.
13. The ILO recognizes the importance of achieving gender equity at all grade levels and the HR Strategy includes indicators in this regard, with a particular focus the need to address the gender balance in more senior positions. The **ILO Career Mentoring Programme for Women** was launched on 12 July 2022, targeting P4 and P5 female staff members across the Office with more than 3 years in their current grade who wish to progress to a role at a higher grade. A total of 67 mentees were enrolled in this programme. In the mid-point evaluation, over 91 per cent of the respondent mentees stated that the programme was either meeting or exceeding their expectations and that they are able to apply guidance provided by their mentors. More

³ Includes only international professional staff occupying positions which are subject to geographical distribution, namely those in the categories P, D and above that are funded from the ILO's regular budget.

⁴ GB.347/PFA/INF/7.

than 87 per cent considered that the programme was helping them to gain perspective, clarity and insight to navigate their career.

14. As outlined in the current diversity outlook report on the composition and structure of the staff and reported through the **ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality 2022–25**, the percentage of women in ILO senior staff posts (P5 and above on regular budget contracts) had reached 40 per cent at the end of 2022. While this progress is encouraging, disaggregated figures show that a concerted effort is needed to address the gap at the P5 and D1 levels.
15. One important effort that the UN is undertaking to create an enabling environment for women is the introduction of revised and extended entitlements for **parental leave**. They provide a unified period of 16 weeks of leave for all officials who become parents, with an additional ten weeks of leave for those who give birth. The revised entitlements apply equally to all staff categories, irrespective of how their contract is funded. They are intended to support efforts to achieve gender parity and inclusiveness at work, and to enhance gender equality in respect of family and domestic responsibilities through effective co-parenting from the arrival of a child in the family. These measures will also enhance employee engagement, help to position the ILO as an employer of choice for younger generations and improve the retention of a more diverse and skilled workforce. Attention will now be given to the request of the UN General Assembly to ensure that data is compiled on utilization rates, staff satisfaction, expenditure, the incentive function and impact on job attractiveness and workforce retention.
16. While youth unemployment remains a global concern, the world of work is increasingly faced with the challenge of providing an employer value proposition that is appealing to the **younger generation**. In 2022, the Human Resources Development Department (HRD) introduced a 6-month pilot **reverse mentoring** programme in which Junior Professional Officers acted as mentors to senior managers, with the explicit aim of improving communication across generation gaps, exposing managers to new technologies and encouraging innovation. In the closing survey, 100 per cent of the responding senior managers indicated that they were able to gain useful insights from their mentors, had gained confidence in using new technologies or introduced innovation in their work, and had made changes to their attitudes, behaviours or management style as a result of the programme.
17. The ILO seeks to become an employer of choice for **persons with disabilities**. In August 2022 a mandatory e-learning course aimed at increasing staff members' confidence in and commitment to promoting disability inclusion was introduced for all staff. The current compliance for this course is 80 per cent. Several other UN organizations are using this course as a basis to develop disability inclusion courses for their staff. The Office also established an Employee Resource Group that seeks to support ILO staff members who are living with a disability and/or have a family member who has a disability.

1.3. Focus area: Develop capacity to deliver

18. The ILO benefits from dedicated funds for staff development, and HRD, together with the Joint Training Council, are responsible for ensuring that these funds are used effectively and equitably. The **ILO staff learning and development policy**, currently being drafted in consultation with the Joint Training Council, has highlighted the need to review the rules around access to staff development funds, as well as the process for allocating such funds across the Office. The finalized policy and the outputs for 2023 from the skills mapping exercise will facilitate the development of a learning action plan for 2024–25.
19. The ILO's capacity to deliver training to constituents was particularly challenged in the face of restrictions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. As all group activities moved from face-to-

face to an online format, an urgent **need for training in the use of digital tools** arose. The “Design and facilitate digital training” workshops provided an emergency response in 2020-21 and have now become a standard offering. Between November and December 2022, 27 ILO colleagues participated in this activity; they answered the question “How likely would you be to recommend this type of programme to a colleague?” with an average score of 9.43 out of 10.

Outcome 2: Respectful and empowering environment

2.1. Focus area: Reinforce accountability for performance

20. The ILO is in a strong position with regard to **performance management**. It has a well-defined framework which is strongly adhered to by staff and managers. The compliance statistics for 2022 are at 88 per cent as of 31 December 2022. End-of-cycle reports for 2022 are due on 28 February 2023. Furthermore, while an analysis of performance appraisal ratings globally that was undertaken in 2022 highlighted some important differences in the way in which ratings are given by certain managers, it did not reveal any negative cultural or gender bias. The introduction of a five-point rating scale has achieved its aim in allowing managers to more readily highlight strengths and areas for development, and while there is a gradual tendency towards higher average ratings, an increasing number of managers are using appraisals to raise concerns about performance.
21. In order to support this performance culture, a comprehensive framework of learning activities, targeting various audiences from managers to staff and teams, was designed and in 2022 had reached more than 400 staff members and managers. This offering includes topics such as “Managing my performance conversation”, “Effective performance management”, “Giving and receiving feedback” and “GROWTH conversations” as well as customized interventions for organizational units, project teams and country offices. An e-learning module on the ILO’s performance management framework is to be developed in 2023.

2.2. Focus area: New ways of working

22. As all staff started to return to the office following various experiences of lockdown and mandatory teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic, many took advantage of the existing policies in place to opt for teleworking arrangements. Recognizing that telework can be an effective tool to support colleagues in balancing work and life, where the nature of the work and exigencies of the service permit, the Office developed **specific teleworking guidelines** to help managers and other staff ensure that teleworking is planned and organized in a way which is compatible with the needs and priorities of their team, unit or office and which is inclusive and fair for all. Published in August 2022, this document outlines the responsibilities of staff and managers with regard to putting in place such arrangements and contains a link to the current governance document on flexible working arrangements.
23. A new Office-wide policy on **flexible working arrangements** is being negotiated with the Staff Union and will come into force in 2023. The policy recognizes that flexible working arrangements, supported by considerable advances in technology, can be successfully used for a much broader range of jobs than previously considered possible, thereby offering opportunities for better work-life balance across a much greater percentage of staff. This is, however, balanced with clear provisions regarding the need to support an adequate office presence to meet operational needs, the importance of ensuring dedicated time together to allow for teamwork and defined limits on the use of telework outside the duty station.

24. With the increased uptake of teleworking since the COVID-19 pandemic and the new flexible working arrangements policy, managers and staff have an urgent need for training on how to work effectively in **hybrid teams** (where some colleagues are working in the office and others are working from home on an alternating basis). In 2022, the Office designed a comprehensive programme to respond to these needs. This programme, which will be delivered in three languages, includes workshops on managing hybrid teams (for which a pilot was held in December 2022 and which will continue in early 2023), as well as a range of activities to support the implementation of the new flexible working arrangements policy.
25. In this first year of the implementation of the HR Strategy, **mental health and well-being** of staff has gained in prominence on the Office's agenda, with a range of initiatives being undertaken. As an active contributor to the first UN Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy (2018–23), the ILO continues to play a prominent role in the UN-wide collaboration on mental health and well-being by contributing in-kind and financial resources. The World Health Organization's guidelines on mental health at work and the joint ILO/WHO policy brief will serve as a basis for the revision of the UN-wide Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy and will inform the **ILO's action plan on mental health and well-being at work**. Furthermore, the UN-wide health survey, which was carried out in the ILO for the first time in 2022, has yielded a wealth of data about current health and safety risks that UN staff are facing and the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on their physical and mental health. This data can be analysed further to identify priority health risk factors and guide future preventive strategies and interventions.
26. The initial findings of the survey highlight the importance of easy access to information and training. The ILO intranet has a wide range of resources on mental health and well-being in different locations, namely the pages of the Staff Welfare Office, the Medical Service and a dedicated COVID-19 page. The Office is now taking steps to collect information and resources on mental health and well-being at work at a single location to provide easy access for staff. The web pages should be finalized in the first quarter of 2023. The Office is also offering a number of learning opportunities for managers and staff, including: webinars on topics such as stress management and resilience in times of crisis; an online programme for peer support volunteers; a well-being e-learning path in LinkedIn Learning; and a "Search Inside Yourself" workshop that teaches tools for focus, self-awareness and resilience.

2.3. Focus area: Respectful and ethical workplace

27. A key component in enforcing a respectful and ethical workplace lies in ensuring that disrespectful and unethical conduct can be identified, effectively addressed and appropriately sanctioned. Efforts are under way to update the Office **anti-harassment policy** to bring it in line with the principles and rights enshrined in the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), and to ensure that our reporting and investigation functions are properly informed by the work of the Sexual Harassment Task Force of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. This requires coordination with a range of actors across the Office, including the Ethics Officer, the Mediator, the Staff Welfare Officer, the Medical Service, staff representatives and senior management.
28. The ILO has a stated **zero-tolerance policy** in respect of all forms of violence and harassment and other forms of serious misconduct and unethical behaviour; in particularly serious cases, the Office has not hesitated to impose the sanction of summary dismissal. Lesser forms of misconduct are not tolerated and are always subject to some form of administrative response; however, the range of sanctions currently available under the Staff Regulations is inadequate. To support a more nuanced and therefore effective range of disciplinary measures, the Office has developed new provisions for the introduction of a much **broader range of sanctions** with

a more clearly articulated set of procedures to govern the disciplinary process. These measures will be subject to further consultation with staff representatives and it is anticipated that they will be introduced in 2023.

29. Throughout 2022, the ILO collaborated with its International Training Centre in Turin to adapt the UN Secretariat's "United to Respect" e-learning module in order to reflect the ILO's definitions and policies on **sexual harassment**. The ILO version of this e-learning will be available in English, French and Spanish as from March 2023 and will be mandatory for all staff. Another mandatory e-learning module, on **prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse**, was launched in November 2021 and the current compliance level is 92 per cent. In addition to requiring staff to undertake mandatory training in these important areas, the Office has taken further steps to ensure the protection of both staff and beneficiaries by carrying out a range of background checks (including those of ClearCheck, INTERPOL and others) through the One HR UN-wide facility, prior to hiring a new staff member.

Outcome 3: Leveraging technology for efficient HR services through continued innovation and digitalization of the HR function

3.1. Focus area: HR technologies / digitalization

30. While the ILO global **electronic filing system** project is still in its infancy, HRD has piloted an initiative to limit printing and signing documents in ink and to digitalize ILO personal files in a format that preserves the integrity and confidentiality of the information and will enable a smooth transfer to the global system when it becomes functional.
31. In 2022, and in line with the ILO's commitment to become an employer of choice for **persons with disabilities**, the Office took part in a UN-wide project organized by the International Telecommunication Union to assess the accessibility of online job application and recruitment systems. The project resulted in a report on areas where the ILO's online recruitment system, ILO Jobs, could be improved to better support applications from persons with disabilities (in particular, disabilities related to sight). On receipt of the report, HRD addressed all points which were configurable internally as a user of the service. Furthermore, a number of other issues were submitted to the service provider and several of these have now been fixed, to the benefit of the ILO and all other users of the system.
32. Another important area of digitalization undertaken in 2022 was the implementation of the service management tool for the **user support function of ILO People**, the ILO's integrated talent management system. The new tool replaces ad hoc support provided by email, telephone and Microsoft Teams. It provides a number of benefits, including: a consistent interface for users; immediate visibility on the status of tickets; better prioritization of responses; self-service support with relevant articles provided in the portal; and improved management of and better analysis and reporting on queries. The move to the tool was smooth, and the volume of tickets shows that staff have made a successful transition. We are already seeing interesting trends in the ticket categories that will help us in future planning.

3.2. Focus area: HR analytics

33. The ILO's Talent Management System, ILO People, is a "software as a service" product from an external provider. In recent years, the vendor has been upgrading the reporting tools available and in 2022 HRD was able to leverage that functionality. The following **interactive, real-time dashboards** have been developed and made available to users in the areas of learning and recruitment: applicant source data for candidates for vacancies and calls for expression of

interest; applicant gender breakdown and stage 2/stage 3 data for RAPS recruitment processes; learning compliance reports for mandatory e-learning courses; and learning completion data for governance courses (Risk Management, Procurement and Greening the ILO).

34. The advantage of these dashboards is that colleagues have access to data in real time, and no longer need to manually run or schedule list-based reports that then need to be manipulated in Excel, thus saving time and reducing the risk of introducing errors. More dashboards in the areas above and for performance management are currently in progress.

▶ Lessons learned

35. While steady progress has been made in this first year of the HR Strategy for 2022–25, a number of elements provide lessons learned for the upcoming years:
 - A combination of corporate efforts and executive decisions towards increasing the percentage of senior ILO positions (P5 and above, regular staff) held by women have allowed the Office to meet its first target of 40 per cent for the biennium 2022–23.
 - Less progress has so far been achieved among the other diversity targets, and progress remains impacted by the low turnover in the ILO regular workforce. Further strategic initiatives need to be pursued in this regard.
 - New ways of working and digital tools have caused a transformation in the way in which people learn and training is delivered. It is timely to capitalize on this easier access to learning for the ILO staff globally.
 - The increased focus on workforce planning has emphasized that capacity to deliver is not just about having staff with appropriate skills, but also about ensuring that those staff are mobile – to be deployed where they are needed, and to transfer knowledge and experience globally and across the UN system.
 - More focus is needed to ensure that the ILO HR Strategy's outcomes address the needs of the full ILO workforce, including the specific needs of staff employed on development cooperation projects, which currently account for 52.7 per cent of the total workforce.

▶ Draft decision

36. **The Governing Body requested the Office to take into account the guidance provided in the further implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for 2022–25.**