



Check Against Delivery

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Fifth Committee

**Introduction of the Notes of the Secretary-General on the Reports of the Joint Inspection Unit on “Review of individual consultancies in the United Nations system”, “Lump-sum payments in lieu of entitlements” and “Staff recruitment in United Nations system organizations: a comparative analysis and benchmarking framework”**

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

I am pleased to introduce, on behalf of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), three notes of the Secretary-General conveying his comments and those of CEB members on reports of the Joint Inspection Unit, “Review of individual consultancies in the United Nations system”, found in document A/68/67/Add.1, “Lump-sum payments in lieu of entitlements”, document A/68/383/Add.1 and Staff recruitment in United Nations system organizations: a comparative analysis and benchmarking framework”, document A/67/888/Add.1.

Each of these reports focuses on a different aspect of workforce policy. While the topics largely do not overlap, some of the comments from agencies convey similar messages.

I begin with a report that does not, strictly speaking, involve staffing directly, but focuses on non-staff workforce support using consultants, which the Unit assessed

through an analysis of policies and practices within agencies. During this analysis, the JIU discovered that consultancies bear some similarities to other contracting modalities, and therefore expanded the scope of its report. This presented some challenges for agencies, and in their comments agencies emphasized the need to clearly distinguish between the contractual modalities, which apply to consultants, and appointments, which may apply to other types of non-staff contracts. For example, some agencies do not view the retaining of consultants as a Human Resource function at all, utilizing procurement as the preferred mechanism for bringing consultants into the organization.

As you can see in the note of the Secretary-General, agencies also raised an objection to the application within the report of conventions and recommendations of the International Labour Organization, which agencies assert apply to states, and not directly to international organizations.

Agencies also expressed concern with some of the recommendations, for instance recommendation 4, which calls on agencies to introduce contracts with a shorter duration in line with the ad hoc and temporary nature of the consultancy. Some agencies noted that the duration of consultancy contracts, especially in the context of an organization's programme of technical cooperation assistance, is based on the duration of the relevant projects and programmes, and therefore would have difficulty applying this recommendation.

These comments notwithstanding, agencies welcomed the in-depth nature of the report and expressed support for many of the recommendations. Agencies express unqualified support for recommendation 5, for example, regarding the need for adequate policies on the use of retirees as consultants and recommendation 7 calling for organizations clearly established policies on the roles and responsibilities for the use of consultants.

I turn now to the report of the JIU on staff recruitment, which takes a fundamentally different approach as it contains only 4 recommendations with the substance of the report contained in benchmarks for agencies to adopt when performing the recruitment process. Agencies of the system appreciate the report's comprehensive

documentation of current practices and operations across the United Nations system, which they note will assist them in their continued efforts to improve recruitment. Agencies also generally support the recommendations contained in the report and confirm that they strive to ensure that their rules, practices and staffing processes adhere to the fundamental principles set out in the report, while taking into account directives of their governing bodies.

While supporting the principles embodied in the report, organizations caution that in some cases the benchmarks themselves can present an apparent conflict. As you can see in the Note of Secretary-General, agencies cite as an example benchmark 14, which encourages gender balance, and 15, which refers to equitable geographical distribution. While in both cases the benchmark recognizes “efficiency, competence and integrity” as the paramount employment consideration, agencies suggest that the inherent tension between the two benchmarks cannot always be resolved equitably.

These issues notwithstanding, organizations indicate that they remain fully committed to the benchmarks.

Finally, Mr Chairman, I turn to the report on lump-sum payments in lieu of entitlements, which addresses a very different aspect of agency workforce policy. Many agencies utilize the practice of providing lump-sum payments for some entitlements, particularly related to travel, in an effort to reduce overhead costs, among other benefits. In responding to the report, agencies welcomed its comprehensive analysis, and agree that the use of these payments, if applied consistently and equitably across the system, can reduce the administrative burden of processing travel requests and result in significant budget savings for organizations. Agencies also largely accepted the 5 recommendations contained in the report.

Mr. Chairman, these three reports covered an extremely diverse range of human resource related topics. As we look at them comprehensively, it is possible to note some commonalities. First, and this has become a regular theme, is that agencies have consistently expressed appreciation for the system-wide reports of the JIU. They find them comprehensive in their analysis and of sufficient scope to allow for an in-depth

analysis. While not all agencies may always agree or accept the recommendations, they do not dispute that the reports contain a wealth of information that allow agencies to make informed decisions.

At the same time, agencies have expressed concern that the recommendations do not always consider the environment agencies face today. In particular, with calls by member states for increased efficiencies, agencies strive to reduce overhead costs, and therefore have fewer funds to perform activities such as suggested by the Unit in recommendation 1 of the report on the lump-sum option. This recommendation calls for an in-depth analysis of the use of lump-sum for home-leave travel. Agencies agree that this would be useful, but they also note that these analyses can be costly to perform. We see this also in the report on staff recruitment, where some organizations believe that a number of the measures proposed, such as assessment centres, or an e-recruitment system, may prove costly and therefore difficult to implement during times of financial constraint, particularly in the case of smaller organizations.

In closing, Mr Chairman, on behalf of the agencies of the UN system, I would like to thank the JIU for these reports, which covered a topic of interest to CEB members and importance to the entire UN system. I reiterate that organizations of the system found much value in the reports, especially their comprehensive nature.

Of course, I stand ready to answer any questions you or the committee may have.

Thank you