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Introductory statement on the JIU report
“Review of change management in United Nations system organizations”
A/74/669 (JIU/REP/2019/4)

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Mr. Chair, distinguished delegates,

I have the honour to introduce to you the JIU report entitled “Review of change management in United Nations system organizations.” This review was undertaken in response to a recognition that the United Nations system is undergoing an unprecedented level of reform, ranging from the development system, to peace and security, management reforms in the Secretariat and multitude of organization-specific reforms across the system to reposition and refocus efforts in order to better deliver against its core mandates.

Change management lies at the heart of organizational reform. It is the means through which to prepare, equip and support individuals to successfully adopt a change in order to drive organizational success and deliver positive outcomes. The evidence from thousands of case studies from the public and private sector illustrates that organizational reforms often fail to achieve their intended goals, and this is primarily due to weaknesses in leadership, management, communication and engagement with those implementing the actions and changing the way they work.

The central purpose of the present review is to support United Nations system organizations undertaking or planning to undertake organizational reforms or major management initiatives. The review highlights the significance of change management as a strategic priority worthy of consideration by governing or legislative bodies. It provides guidance to management on the critical elements of successful change management, and on how these can be applied in United Nations system organizations. The review also highlights measures for enhancing harmonization and collaboration across the system, and for institutionalizing change management in the current context of continuous, emergent, and fast pace of change in the world.

To look more closely at how well United Nation system organizations have understood and internalized identified successful practices of change management, this review studied 47 organizational reforms from across 26 United Nation system organizations, covering the period 2010-2018. These included reforms from the UN Secretariat, Funds and Programmes, and Specialized Agencies. Reform types analysed included those focused on improving business processes, management system reforms, organizational restructuring and organization-wide cultural transformations. Extensive analyses of differences among organization and reform types were done to highlight good practices and to guide appropriate action.

Mr. Chair, allow me to briefly highlight five **key findings** of the report.

1. Change management is understood and applied in different ways across the United Nations system

The majority of reforms over the past decade focus on both what needs to change in terms of structures, systems and processes, and also include consideration of change management addressing how it should change, and the management of that change. Twenty percent (20%) of all reforms studied showed no evidence of change management as defined in this study in their design or implementation. At the other extreme, thirty percent (30%) of the reforms showed evidence of incorporating most key elements of change management in their work. In effect, those that did seek to incorporate change management comprehensively in their reform did so reasonably well. The remaining reforms types (50%) manifested mixed results.

2. Earmarking resources for change management and incorporating a clear results strategy ensures that the costs and benefits of the investment can be demonstrated

Twenty percent (20%) of the reforms studied earmarked budgets for change management. Less than 30% prepared results frameworks with indicators and metrics to establish and track which changes occurred, which did not, and the reasons why given the complex and emergent nature of the change process. If the results and benefits of change management cannot be attributed to a budget, then the investment and the return on that investment may not be clearly visible.

3. Aligning organizational culture and individual behaviours is key to managing effective change

If staff understand the benefits of change and what is in it for them, they are more likely to participate and adopt the change successfully. The report reveals that a number of United Nations system organizations paid close attention to culture, behaviour and attitude as an integral part of their reforms. Many organizations carry out culture and behavioural surveys which is important for effective diagnosis. Notwithstanding organizational specificities and priorities, a set of common content areas in surveys would be important to drive effective system wide assessment, policy coherence, effective exchange and or knowledge development.

4. Change management capacity embedded in the organizational structure can play a critical role to coordinate reforms, and build on lessons over time

One third of the organizations in the United Nations system had established a unit to coordinate the change management function. Having a locus for change management, either in the strategic human resource management function, and/or close to the senior management, should be considered by all UN system organizations in this era of constant change.

5. For system-wide coherence and collaboration, a mechanism to learn and share from each other's experience is important for the UN system in order to provide guidance and to establish tools and benchmarks that are relevant and useful in the UN system context

The United Nations Laboratory for Organizational Change and Knowledge (UNLOCK) provides change management lessons, advisory services and convenes a network and community of practice of those working in change management across the United Nations system. As a mechanism still in relative infancy, it is reliant on strong capable individuals to drive it forward. The review concludes that it is an important mechanism to learn and share from each other's experience across the UN system, and should continue to be supported.

Based on our findings, the report outlines 6 recommendations addressed to governing/legislative bodies or executive heads

The report recommends that governing/legislative bodies ensure that executive heads embed change management approaches and methods in their organizational reforms and report on the results.

It recommends to executive heads take measures to:

- Embed structured and comprehensive change management approaches in their ongoing and future organizational reforms and report thereon to their governing bodies.
- Support the development and coordination of organizational survey across the United Nations system, through the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.
- Ensure that resources allocated to change management are clearly earmarked and the intended results measured, tracked and assessed.
- Give greater prominence to the role that their strategic human resources management functions play in organizational change management. This would include promoting changes in individual attitudes and behaviours, establishing mechanisms to reinforce these, and creating channels to communicate feedback across all personnel.
- Include an item on the agenda of the next meeting of the High-level Committee on Management to consider how to support the United Nations Laboratory for Organizational Change and Knowledge to play a greater role in United Nations system reforms.

We are pleased that the comments from the Chief Executives Board welcomed the report and noted its appreciation for providing evidence, lessons and recommendations to guide the system in ongoing and future reforms.

Mr. Chair, distinguished delegates, thank you for your kind attention, and I welcome any comments or questions you may have.
