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UN80 INITIATIVE

Shifting Paradigms: United to Deliver

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Workstream 3: Changing Structures and
Realigning Programmes

Cover photo: Corner-Stone Laying Ceremony Marks United Nations' Fourth Birthday

Caption Description

The corner-stone of the United Nations Permanent Headquarters was laid on United Nations Day, 24 October, at a special open-air General Assembly meeting held on the site of the Headquarters building in Manhattan, New York. The ceremony, marking the Fourth Anniversary of the United Nations, was attended by President Harry S. Truman who was the principal speaker. Secretary-General Trygve Lie deposited in the stone copies of the United Nations Charter and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The picture shows Mr. Lie, accompanied by Wallace K. Harrison, Chief Architect, depositing documents in metal box inside the cornerstone.

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Preface

I am pleased to present for the consideration of Member States my progress report “Shifting Paradigms: United to Deliver”. This first report on Workstream 3 of the UN80 Initiative sets out possible structural changes and programme realignments across the United Nations system.

Complementary efforts are advancing under the other workstreams. The revised programme budget estimates for 2026, circulated on 15 September 2025, include initial proposals under Workstream 1 to drive efficiencies and improvements. My report on the mandate implementation review, published on 31 July, and the subsequent establishment by the General Assembly of an Ad Hoc Working Group, reflect progress under Workstream 2.

This progress report is the product of intensive, United Nations system-wide consultations. Following discussion on the UN80 Initiative at the session of the Chief Executives Board in May 2025, I established seven thematic clusters as vehicles for these consultations: peace and security; development (Secretariat); development (system); specialized agencies; human rights; humanitarian activities; and training and research. I am grateful to the Principals and colleagues across the system for their hard work and engagement.

On the basis of this collective effort, I commend to Member States the ideas and proposals that follow. They are initial steps towards a genuine paradigm shift in how the UN system organizes its work and collaborates for greater impact for the people we serve. Several measures lie within my authority and can be advanced without delay; most, however, rest with Member States. It is for them to determine the way forward. My responsibility as Secretary-General is to facilitate and inform the deliberations, and to support the decisions that carry forward the spirit of the UN80 Initiative to strengthen and unite our efforts to deliver.

António Guterres

Introduction

1. The United Nations marks its 80th anniversary in a world scarred by brutal and widespread conflicts, deep inequalities and injustice, flagrant violations of human rights and looming existential threats. It is also a world of lightning-fast, transformative change – and unprecedented opportunity. These forces are testing the United Nations system itself, which is navigating heightened political tensions and divisions, financial strain and uncertainty.

2. But it is precisely in this moment of crisis and possibility that the United Nations has never been more needed. Our mission – to advance peace, dignity, and justice for all – is even more vital today. The world needs the UN's one-of-a-kind legitimacy, convening power and vision to unite nations, bridge divides and seize the opportunities of our time.

3. That is the logic – and urgency – of the UN80 Initiative. We should approach its Workstream 3, and this re-examination of our structures and programmes, with full appreciation of what is at stake and with honesty and lucidity to strengthen what works and to improve what does not. Complex systems often default to caution and the familiarity of the status quo; today's realities demand political courage and shared resolve to deliver meaningful change.

4. Our 80th anniversary is therefore a moment of opportunity: a chance to ensure that the forces of renewal and progress prevail over inertia. By acting with unity and purpose now, we can carry forward the remarkable achievements of the past eight decades and equip the Organization to meet the challenges of the future.

5. That effort begins with a candid recognition: the UN system has been built over time – mandate by mandate, crisis by crisis – rather than from a single blueprint. Like any large, long-standing institution, no one would design it today exactly as it stands. But this moment also calls for our Organization to rise to the challenges as demands and needs grow. With numerous entities, governance arrangements and mandates, there is significant scope to strengthen efficiency, effectiveness, coherence, transparency and accountability. We must act with resolve to deliver the results the world expects and deserves.

3 KEY SHIFTS

Towards new paradigms in every pillar of our work

- Peace and security
- Humanitarian
- Sustainable development
- Human rights

Shifts in our cross-pillar work

- Global level
- Regional level
- Country level

Paradigm shifts in how we enable impact

- Technology
- Shared services
- Training and research
- Data commons
- Pooled and core funding

6. This document presents a series of proposals and ideas for the consideration of Member States that, if acted upon, can set in motion paradigm-shifting processes of change in how the UN system is structured and how its parts work together. It will be for Member States to judge the merits and to engage in the decision-making processes required..

PRINCIPLES

7. As support for reform across the UN system grows, we must guard against change for its own sake. Reform must be purposeful, anchored in clear ends and measurable improvements in people's lives. That is why the proposals in this progress report have been framed in accordance with the following principles:

- 1 **Advance the purposes and respect for the Charter of the United Nations** in a balanced manner across all three pillars: peace and security, sustainable development and human rights.
- 2 **Strengthen the system's capacity to support countries** in delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in responding effectively to emerging issues, including those identified in the Pact for the Future.
- 3 **Maximize concrete impact of activities and services** and improve timely, demand-driven access to expertise for Member States.
- 4 **Optimize efficiencies and effectiveness** by reducing duplication and streamlining operations; considering consolidation or merger of structures where appropriate; and expanding shared services and common facilities.
- 5 **Build on past reforms** to further enhance coherence and cooperation among structures and programmes, and across the three pillars.
- 6 **Ensure that all reforms are undertaken in accordance with the applicable rules and procedures**, including the Charter of the United Nations and decisions, resolutions and established practice of the competent intergovernmental organs.

8. This progress report sets out a series of proposed paradigm shifts to strengthen the UN system and position it for the challenges ahead. It begins with proposals for each of the UN's main areas of action – peace and security, humanitarian, sustainable development and human rights. For each, we identify challenges, articulate goals and set out possible action areas to drive the necessary transformation. We then advance proposals to strengthen cross-pillar work and the core enablers that make system-wide delivery possible.

THE WAY FORWARD

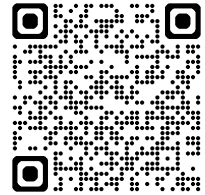
9. This progress report is being issued ahead of the High-Level Week of the 80th Session of the General Assembly to enable Member States to consider its proposals and orientations at the highest level.

10. As an immediate follow-up, the Secretary General, in close consultation with the President of the General Assembly, will identify opportunities for further consultations with a view to deciding the actions that may be appropriate to advance Workstream 3 of the UN80 Initiative. The Secretary-General and his team remain at the disposal of Member States and the President of the General Assembly to support any process that can help chart the way forward.

11. As this process unfolds, the three workstreams of the UN80 Initiative will progressively converge. This is a work in progress. We look forward to working with Member States – as owners of the process – to realize our common ambition: a United Nations system that is more coherent, more effective and better equipped to serve “We the Peoples”.

UN80 Initiative

Visit the UN80 website for updates and insights at www.un.org/un80-initiative



Towards new paradigms in every pillar of work

- Peace and security
- Humanitarian
- Sustainable development
- Human rights

Peace and security

From splintered to seamless, together for peace

>75%

Peace and security as a share of the UN Secretariat's assessed contributions

CHALLENGE: EVOLVING CONFLICTS OUTPACE CURRENT RESPONSES

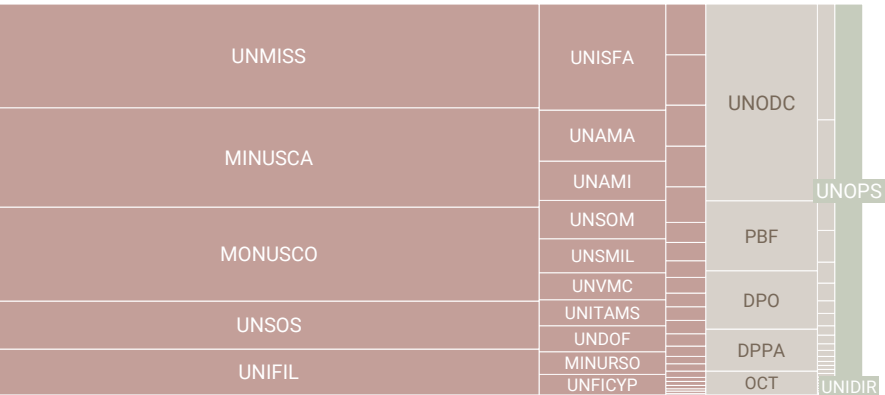
12. Peace and security take up the largest share of the UN Secretariat's assessed budgets. But for too long, this work has been split across mandates, offices and missions – often disconnected from the rest of the system. The nature of conflicts is evolving rapidly, but the UN system has not yet adequately adapted. Past reviews have consistently delivered the same message: develop more joined-up, system-wide and cross-pillar approaches. Despite past improvements, work still remains largely siloed and reactive, diluting impact of efforts to prevent crises and sustain peace.

GOAL: JOINED UP AND NETWORKED FOR LASTING IMPACT

13. Going forward – and as set out in the New Agenda for Peace – the peace and security pillar will emphasize prevention, peacebuilding and political solutions. It will adapt its systems and architecture to be lean, agile, and field-focused, delivering impact across mission and non-mission settings. It will anchor disarmament and counterterrorism more firmly within one coherent peace and security pillar. At all levels, the pillar will join forces with development, human rights and humanitarian action when and where it matters most.

At a glance: UN system-wide peace & security expenditure

Overview of entities, with size of each box proportionate to US dollar amount



Sources: UN budgets; UN Chief Executives Board, 2023/24

AREAS FOR ACTION

14. In pursuit of this goal, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) plan to undertake a substantial reorganization, building on the 2017 reforms with additional measures to consolidate the entire pillar. Areas for action will broadly: 1) develop expertise and centres of excellence; 2) consolidate mission and management structures; and 3) leverage UN system expertise in mission settings from the design and start-up phases of new missions. Specific steps within each of these areas appear below. Some of these actions have already been integrated in the revised budget estimates for 2026, and others will help improve our work in the years to come.

ACCELERATE SHIFT FROM SILOS TO JOINED-UP EXPERTISE

1. Establish one centre of excellence on prevention, peacebuilding and peace support¹

15. We plan to establish a unified Peacebuilding and Peace Support Office, bringing together existing capacities of peacebuilding, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform, and justice and corrections expertise that are currently split between DPPA and DPO. This unified structure would provide more coherent support to Member States from prevention through transition, ensuring that security gains are reinforced by institution-building and development. It would also answer the call to action under consideration in the Peacebuilding Architecture Review. As part of this reform, one Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) post would be abolished.

2. Create one centre of excellence on women, peace and security²

16. We plan to establish a single centre of excellence on Women, Peace and Security, bringing together the DPPA and DPO gender units. This would provide more coherent support to missions and country teams, working in close partnership with UN Women and other relevant entities.

~70

UN system entities with significant
spending on peace and security

3. Join up cross-cutting policy, training and innovation functions³

17. To avoid duplication, we will establish mechanisms – including joint strategies and programmes – to link cross-cutting functions. Capacities currently separated across departments in training, innovation, partnerships and information integrity will be brought together to provide more coherent support to all missions. Pooled capacities will strengthen support for mission transitions. Expertise in data analytics, digital and artificial intelligence will join up to improve early warning, conflict analysis and anticipatory action.

4. Integrate expertise on drugs, crime and disarmament

18. We plan to integrate the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) into the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), embedding UNICRI expertise within a global network. The UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) would be integrated into the Office for Disarmament Affairs (ODA) so its analysis informs negotiations and field support. In both cases, research independence would be preserved.

MOVE FROM FRAGMENTATION TO CONSOLIDATION

1. Consolidate management layers⁴

19. We plan to unify leadership within the pillar by consolidating two Assistant Secretary-General posts for the Americas, Europe, Asia-Pacific and the Middle East into one. In parallel, we plan to combine the Western and Northern Africa divisions, streamlining support across the Sahel, Maghreb and Gulf of Guinea.

2. Consolidate and reconfigure missions

20. As a first step, we propose the following measures:

- Integrate the UN Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement into the Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen, in line with Security Council resolution 2786 (2025), including abolishing one ASG position.⁵
- Streamline and align the UN Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes.⁶
- Streamline and align the Office of the Special Adviser for Cyprus with the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) – including abolishment of one Under-Secretary-General (USG) post – while preserving the Office's capacity to deliver its mandate.⁷

- Rationalize the Office of the United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions (UNRGID), optimizing staffing resources and streamlining support structures while ensuring credible engagement. This would abolish one ASG position.⁸

21. As a result of the changes in the pillar outlined above, we plan to abolish five senior posts at the level of Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General. Beyond leadership consolidation, we also plan to streamline structures more broadly, with reductions across staffing layers and a leaner footprint at headquarters and in the field. Further measures will be proposed following the review of thematic and geographic envoys discussed in paragraph 62.

3. Strengthen linkages in counter-terrorism work

22. We plan to reinforce cooperation on counterterrorism and violent extremism, with clearer reporting lines, joint planning, and resource mobilization. In this context, the Director overseeing the UNODC Terrorism Prevention Branch would also report to the Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism.

MOVE TO NETWORKED MULTI-DIMENSIONAL OPERATIONS

1. Delegate delivery of civilian mandates to best placed entities

23. For future peace operations, we will innovate to deliver civilian mandates better. We will take steps to delegate relevant programmatic tasks such as rule of law, governance and child protection – and the associated resources – to UN system entities best equipped to deliver them. This will allow missions and entities to exercise their comparative advantage and avoid duplication. Crucially, it will also ensure continuity before, during and after mission transitions. All programmatic results, tied to clear frameworks, will be transparently reported through missions for clear accountability.

24. As conflicts evolve, peace operations must keep adapting. On the basis of the Peace Operations Review, a comprehensive proposal for their reset will be presented to Member States upon conclusion of the review mandated by the Pact for the Future.

Civilian mandates

Resources for programmatic tasks as share of peace operations budgets



Source: UN budgets, 2023/24

1. This proposal was included in the "Revised estimates relating to the proposed programme budget for 2026 and the support account for peacekeeping operations for the 2025/26 period", see paragraphs 119 (a)(i)(a) and 132 (a)(i)(a).

2. Ibid., paragraph 119 (a)(i)(c).

3. Ibid., paragraph 119 (a)(i)(d).

4. Ibid., paragraph 119 (a)(i)(b).

5. Ibid., paragraph 254.

6. Ibid., paragraphs 224 and 249.

7. Ibid., paragraph 217.

8. Ibid., paragraph 221.

Humanitarian

From breaking point to New Humanitarian Compact

116M

people reached with
life-saving aid in 2024

CHALLENGE: CRISES MULTIPLYING, SYSTEMS STRETCHED

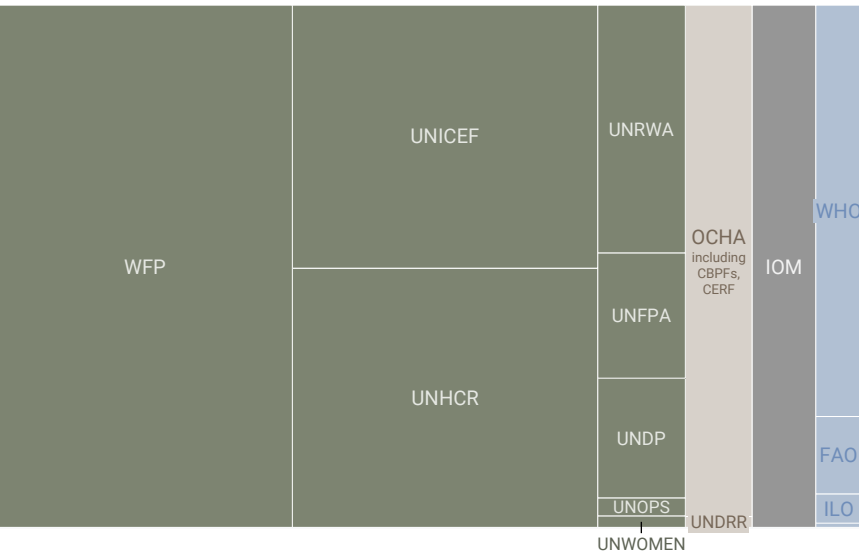
25. Humanitarian action is stretched to a breaking point. In 2024, only half of the \$50 billion global appeal was funded, leaving tens of millions of people without support. In 2025, appeals face even greater shortfalls. At the same time, conflicts are multiplying; disasters are intensifying; humanitarian workers are under attack; and respect for international humanitarian law is eroding. Despite these pressures, the humanitarian system reached 116 million people last year with life-saving aid. It remains the primary driver of global crisis response, yet is overburdened, underfunded and too fragmented to keep pace.

GOAL: MAXIMIZING IMPACT

26. Now is the decisive moment to forge systemic change. The vision is a New Humanitarian Compact – a six-step blueprint to deliver faster, leaner and more accountable support to people in crises; restore trust in multilateral action; and maximize impact from every dollar.

At a glance: UN system-wide humanitarian expenditure

Overview of entities, with size of each box proportionate to US dollar amount



Sources: UN Chief Executives Board, 2023, based on data standards for system-wide financial statistics

AREAS OF ACTION

1. Cut bureaucracy to serve over 100 million people faster

27. Plans are too long, reporting too duplicative and coordination too complex. Humanitarian Needs and Response Plans will become shorter and sharper, coordination structures simpler and action better aligned with local capacities. Streamlined digital reporting will free staff to serve people, not paperwork.

2. Make supply chains work as one

28. Today, around 70% of humanitarian spending – or \$18 billion – flows through fragmented supply chains. Even small gains from deeper integration could unlock hundreds of millions of dollars in savings, potentially freeing up resources for essential relief. A coalition of UN system entities is coming together to drive change. The New Humanitarian Compact proposes coordinated procurement of key items, pooled use of global freight and logistics, and unbranded in-country services open to the entire UN system. A coordination cell will link these efforts, making delivery faster, cheaper, and more reliable for people in need.

3. Scale up common services

29. Agencies still maintain separate premises, fleets, ICT, security and other services, potentially wasting millions of dollars. Scaling up common services – building on successes like the Booking Hub – could save tens of millions of dollars annually, meaning a greater share of resources could go directly to front-line humanitarian response. Linked to wider reforms, a Global Services Hub and interoperable digital platforms will help consolidate surge rosters, logistics, security, telecoms and engineering support, cutting overheads and speeding delivery.

4. Strengthen country leadership, supported by better data

30. Empowered leaders are key to coherent responses that deliver faster, smarter and closer to people in need. Stronger coordination

~15

UN system entities with significant humanitarian spending

led by Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators will ensure communities receive humanitarian aid while building long-term resilience. To that end, the Deputy Secretary-General and the Emergency Relief Coordinator have started work on a practical Shared Platform Initiative (see paragraph 71 for more details). A new Humanitarian Data Collaborative will scale common platforms, collective financing, shared centres, capacities and standards, ensuring all actors can work from one evidence base. This will sharpen targeting, improve accountability, and better support more than 100 million people who receive humanitarian assistance every year.

5. Speak with one voice in humanitarian diplomacy

31. Access is shrinking, and humanitarian principles are under attack. A Collaborative Humanitarian Diplomacy Initiative will bring agencies together under the coordination of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, piloted in a few contexts and supported by DPPA, DPO and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human rights (OHCHR). By negotiating collectively, the UN can better defend principles, secure access and protect civilians.

6. Clarify roles to reduce duplication and strengthen impact

32. Programmatic overlaps in food, mobility, data, health and nutrition reduce efficiency. Agencies are aligning responsibilities: FAO/WFP/IFAD on food security; UNHCR/IOM on mobility; UNICEF/WFP/UNHCR on beneficiary data; WHO/UNICEF/WFP on health and nutrition. Clearer divisions of labour will mean greater efficiency, predictability and results at scale.

Sustainable development

From fragmentation to joint impact at scale

33. The 2017 UN development system reforms significantly reshaped how the system supports the 2030 Agenda. Yet, the vision of a more integrated, efficient, and coherent UN development system remains unfinished, while global challenges have continued to proliferate. If the UN were created today, against the backdrop of a global development emergency, there is no doubt its development arm would be designed differently from its current set-up. Sustainable development requires multidimensional, at-scale, cross-sectoral support to global goals, which a fragmented system of projectized support simply cannot deliver.

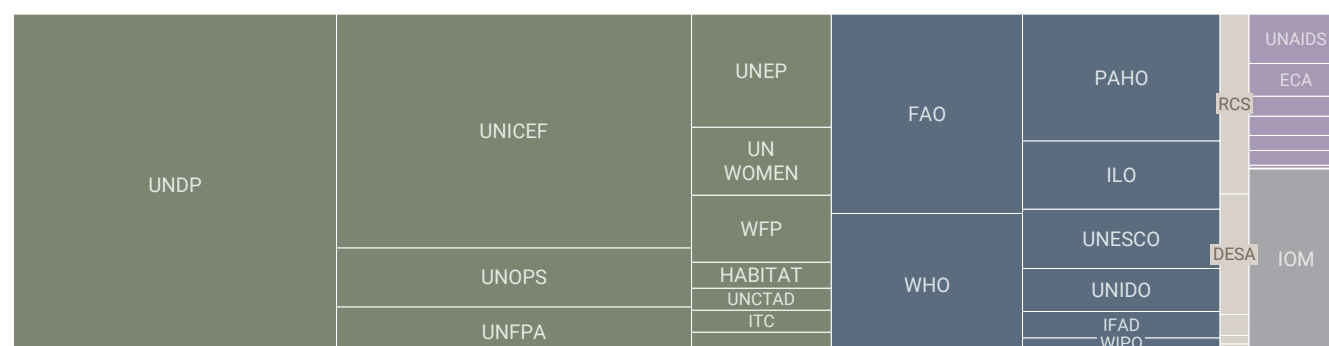
Global realignments for 2030 Agenda: streamlining structures

CHALLENGE: A PATCHWORK OF ENTITIES

34. The UN development system has grown into a patchwork of entities, including specialized agencies, many with overlapping mandates, functions and fragmented governance. Notwithstanding the important work of these entities, this has left governments facing a maze of entry points and competing initiatives in duplicative structures. For many challenges of our time, the system is spread too thin, limiting its ability to deliver real impact at scale.

At a glance: UN system-wide sustainable development expenditure

Overview of entities, with size of each box proportionate to US dollar amount



Sources: UN budgets; UN Chief Executives Board statistics, 2023

~40

Entities with significant sustainable development spending across the UN system

GOAL: UNIFIED SUPPORT TO PEOPLE & PLANET

35. Our vision is a UN development system that is more coherent and better configured to support sustainable development in all its dimensions. This means moving from fragmentation to integrated responses through restructuring that reduces duplication and closes gaps in support for implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

AREAS FOR ACTION

36. The proposals set out below constitute a first phase in a series of possible mergers, consolidations and realignments that could open a path toward greater joint impact at scale.

1. Merge UNDP and UNOPS

37. We will conduct a thorough assessment of the benefits of a merger between UNDP and UNOPS, which could create a stronger engine for sustainable development in UN Country Teams, with greater scale. Initial analysis will be presented to the Executive Boards in February 2026.

2. Merge UNFPA and UN Women

38. We will conduct a thorough assessment of the benefits of a merger of UNFPA and UN Women and their respective mandates to create a unified voice and platform on gender equality and women's rights. As a subsequent step, we will also consider options to optimize normative functions on population statistics and related activities, including those currently undertaken by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). Initial analysis will be presented to Member States in early 2026.

3. Sunset UNAIDS

39. We plan to sunset UNAIDS by the end of 2026. This would entail mainstreaming capacity and expertise into relevant entities of the UN development system in 2027.

4. Create a single entry point for macroeconomic analysis

40. We will realign macroeconomic analysis capacities across DESA, UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the Regional Commissions to create a unified "single entry point" for Member States, anchored in joint mechanisms.

5. Streamline support for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS

41. We plan to realign UN Secretariat support for least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS) across DESA, UNCTAD and the Office of the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS (OHRLLS). This realignment would strengthen and optimize organizational arrangements and support for these countries.

6. Consider other mergers

42. The Secretary-General stands ready to provide further analysis to Member States on other potential mergers they may wish to explore.

Global realignments for 2030 Agenda: unlocking system-wide expertise

CHALLENGE: SCATTERED CAPACITIES, OVERLAPPING MANDATES AND FUNCTIONS

43. Expertise across the UN development system is dispersed across dozens of entities, often competing for visibility and funding and operating in silos. Governments seeking support face a confusing landscape of overlapping initiatives, duplicative products and fragmented sources of advice. This scattering of knowledge reduces efficiency, weakens policy impact and makes it harder for countries to access the best that the UN system can offer.

GOAL: UNIFIED KNOWLEDGE HUBS AND EXPERTISE ON DEMAND

44. Our vision is a UN development system where expertise is pooled and easily accessible, moving from scattered initiatives to joined-up SDG solutions. The steps we are taking now mark the first phase of a transformation to reassert the UN's role as a provider of high-quality, effective knowledge and advice.

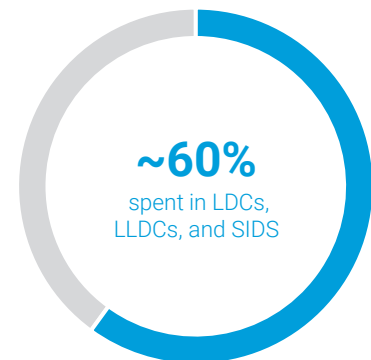
AREAS FOR ACTION

1. Establish Joint Knowledge Hubs

45. As a first step, we will establish Joint Knowledge Hubs to pool knowledge on key issues spread across UN development system entities and avoid duplications. These hubs will be co-led by the best placed entities and be anchored in joint mechanisms. They will start

Focused support

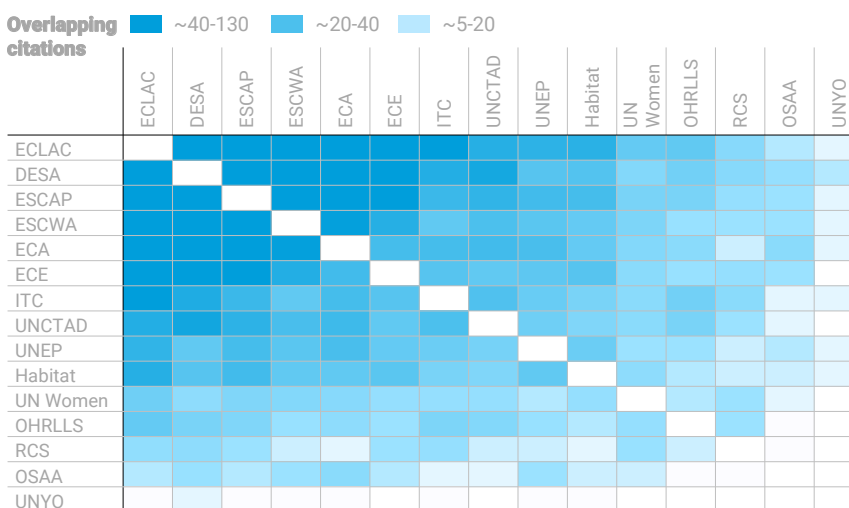
Share of total UN system spending



Source: UN Chief Executives Board, 2023

Shared development mandates require joint approaches

Number of overlapping mandate citations between entities in the UN Secretariat



Source: Report of the Mandate Implementation Review (A/80/318).

within the UN Secretariat, be open to other UN system entities, and link to regional and Resident Coordinator offices. These hubs are not new institutions and are not coordination committees. Instead, they will leverage existing assessed resources, eliminate overlaps, link to pooled funding mechanisms, and focus on adding real value. A provisional list of key issues for hubs to address includes: climate change; science, technology and innovation; financing for development; critical minerals; trade; and regional integration.

2. Provide expertise on demand

46. We will create a pro-active mechanism to identify and channel to Member States and country teams on-demand, UN system-wide expertise, particularly from specialized agencies and non-resident entities. Over time, this will replace duplicative UN system capacities, with co-location, delegation and regular reviews to eliminate overlaps.

3. Streamline environmental support for more impactful action

47. Environmental issues are growing in importance, and environmental responsibilities are dispersed across UN entities. We will undertake a thorough assessment of current arrangements and make proposals on possible structural changes and programme realignments on environmental issues..

A Regional Reset

CHALLENGE: REGIONAL CONFIGURATIONS OUT OF STEP WITH REGIONAL & COUNTRY NEEDS

48. Our regional presence is fragmented, with multiple entities working in parallel. This drives up costs; weakens coordination with governments, partners and country teams; and limits the system's ability to tackle regional and national challenges.

GOAL: INTEGRATED REGIONAL SUPPORT FOR STRONGER DELIVERY

49. Our vision is a coherent regional setup with capacities clustered in and around the Regional Commissions. We will take steps to move from scattered capacities to an integrated regional system that better articulates global mandates, region-wide strategies and country-level action. These steps will form part of a Regional Reset, to be led by the Deputy Secretary-General, with the goal of improving impact and strengthening links across pillars.

AREAS FOR ACTION

1. Launch the Regional Reset

50. We will establish a system-wide working group, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General, to develop proposals on how to advance a reset of regional capacities for sustainable development, with actionable recommendations to the Secretary-General. The group will also propose how to institutionalize Regional Integrated Platforms (see paragraphs 65-66 for more details on these platforms).

2. Co-host regional capacities within economic commissions

51. We will systematize the practice of hosting regional capacities within the Regional Economic Commissions, starting with DCO regional directors and teams, as well as other Secretariat functions. Simultaneously, as the assignment of the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel comes to an end, we plan to abolish this post and its associated office. We will ensure that all functions and responsibilities are absorbed and performed by existing entities, building on the role of relevant Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams (UNCTs).

>200

Offices with regional responsibilities across the UN system

Country realignment

CHALLENGE: DISPERSED CAPACITIES, STRETCHED TOO THIN

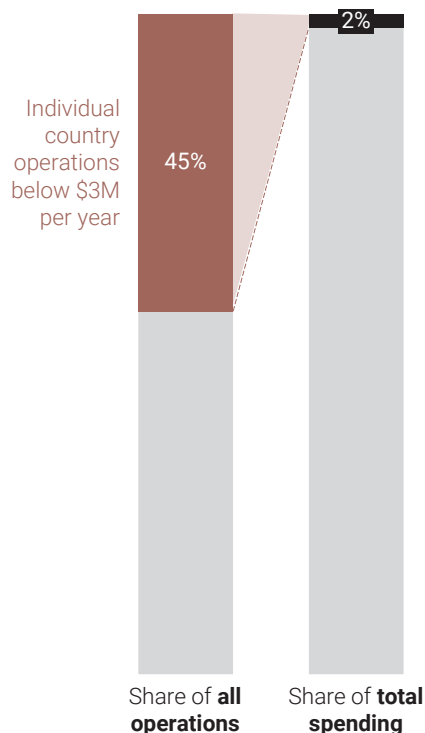
52. At country level, our engagement is now increasingly stretched too thin. On average, more than 20 UN development system entities operate in each country, often with small individual budgets, overlapping mandates and costly administrative footprints. While the Resident Coordinator system has strengthened UN leadership, too many country teams still function as loose collections rather than a unified system.

GOAL: RECONFIGURED COUNTRY TEAMS WITH EMPOWERED LEADERSHIP

53. Our goal is to fully deliver the vision of a new generation of country teams that are leaner, more coherent and impactful. Resident Coordinators will serve as the single entry point, bringing together system-wide expertise into integrated offers that are tailored to national priorities.

Many operations, small spend

45% of entities' country operations account for just 2% of total spend



AREAS FOR ACTION

1. Reconfigure country teams

54. To maximize the use of resources and expertise for delivery, we will propose a model to reconfigure country teams that streamlines physical presence to fewer entities, reduces overhead costs, builds more coherent delivery, and aligns with national priorities. To this end, the system-wide working group, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General, will make recommendations by early 2026.

2. Further strengthen the Resident Coordinator system

55. We will strengthen and recalibrate the Resident Coordinator system to better leverage system-wide expertise and accountability. Resident Coordinators will serve as the gateway to knowledge hubs and expertise-on-demand to mobilize specialized capacities more easily, particularly from specialized and non-resident entities. We will jointly develop a Shared Platform Initiative (see paragraph 71 for more details) to further support and empower Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators in their leadership.

Human rights

Turning commitments into system-wide practice

CHALLENGE: UNPREDICTABLE SUPPORT, UNEVEN IMPACT

56. Anchored in the UN Charter and reaffirmed in the Pact for the Future, human rights are central to the UN's mandate. But their integration across all areas of the UN's work remains uneven at a time when human rights themselves are under growing pressure worldwide. The current thematic and sector-specific approach – in addition to a proliferation of mechanisms – has led to fragmentation, duplication and competition for resources, limiting collective impact. As a result, some missions and country teams place human rights at the centre of their work, while others engage only sporadically, leaving Member States and communities with inconsistent support.

GOAL: UNIFIED APPROACH TO HUMAN RIGHTS

57. In Action 46 of the Pact for the Future, Member States decided to “enhance coordination and cooperation among United Nations entities working on human rights and avoid duplication of activities [...]”. Accordingly, the goal is to ensure that a single mechanism can drive system-wide coordination to ensure that human rights, in all their dimensions, are fully integrated into UN activities.

AREAS FOR ACTION

58. We will establish a Human Rights Group comprising entities from across the UN system, led by the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Group will ensure that human rights considerations are systematically integrated into UN policies and activities, while also improving efficiency and impact across the system at all levels.

Human rights work lacks UN Principal-level coordination mechanism

Internal mechanisms by issue



Source: UN80 Human Rights Cluster

Shifts in cross-pillar work: better together

- Global level
- Regional level
- Country level

Shifts in cross-pillar work: better together

Global collaboration across pillars

CHALLENGE: MISALIGNED ARRANGEMENTS, SUBOPTIMAL IMPACT

59. More than two-thirds of UN system-wide spending goes to complex contexts that cut across peace, development, humanitarian and human rights work. Yet our global arrangements remain fragmented, with resources often divided into such small components that they may struggle to achieve significant impact. Multiple offices and senior leaders work on similar issues, for example, at times using different strategies or approaches. Coordination forums proliferate to resolve these overlaps, but instead often amplify them. The end result is global arrangements that too often focus on bureaucracy, thereby reducing ability to drive effective cross-pillar work that responds to worldwide and country-specific challenges.

GOAL: FORM TO FOLLOW FUNCTION

60. We will move to a truly systemic approach for managing cross-cutting capacities. The aim is to eliminate overlap that flows from duplicative global arrangements and to optimize these arrangements to address global challenges and clearly support and enable the work of frontline country-level leaders and teams. Form will follow function, with global arrangements being revised as necessary so that teams can focus on delivery, especially in crisis-affected and complex settings.

AREAS FOR ACTION

1. Rationalize global coordination

61. We will undertake a review of top management fora to ease the coordination burden for senior leaders and ensure coherent action across pillars. These include the subsidiary bodies of the Chief Executives Board, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee

(IASC), the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) and the Secretary-General's Executive Committee. As a first step, we will consider proposals to unify administrative backend support and streamline duplicative agendas without affecting core substantive competencies.

2. Review thematic and geographic envoys

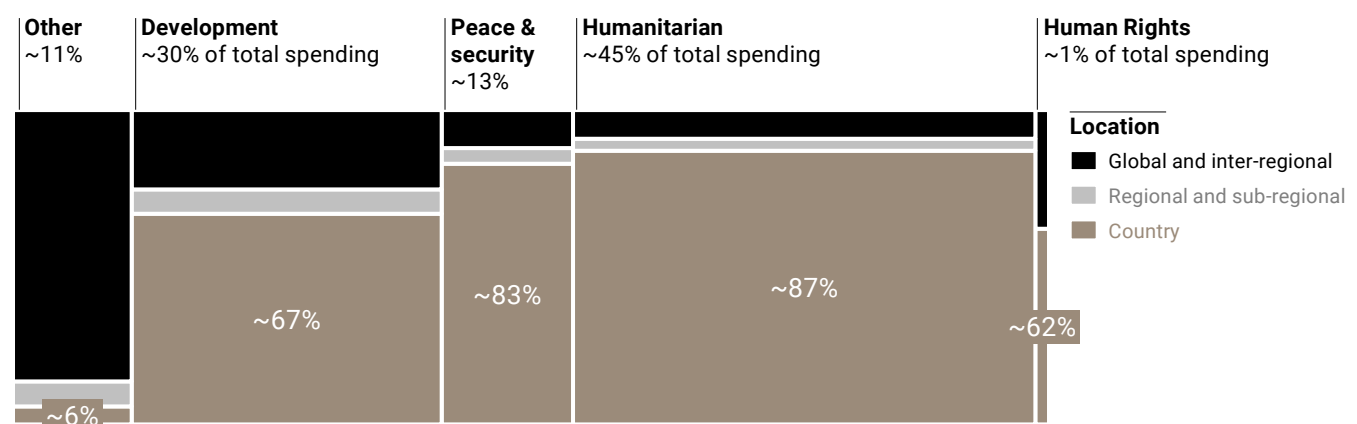
62. We will review and make proposals to Member States regarding the Secretary-General's some 30 special envoys, representatives, coordinators and advisers, both thematic and geographic. The goal is to create greater impact across the UN system and reduce costly duplication at the senior leadership level.

3. Revamp the prevention platform

63. We will bring together all Headquarters coordination on country-specific, cross-pillar approaches to crisis prevention and centre capacities around the Regional Monthly Review platform. We will review existing interagency task forces and working groups to ensure coherence, reduce duplication and align work within priorities established by a unified decision-making framework.

In 2024, the UN system delivered ~\$64 billion of work across all pillars and geographic levels

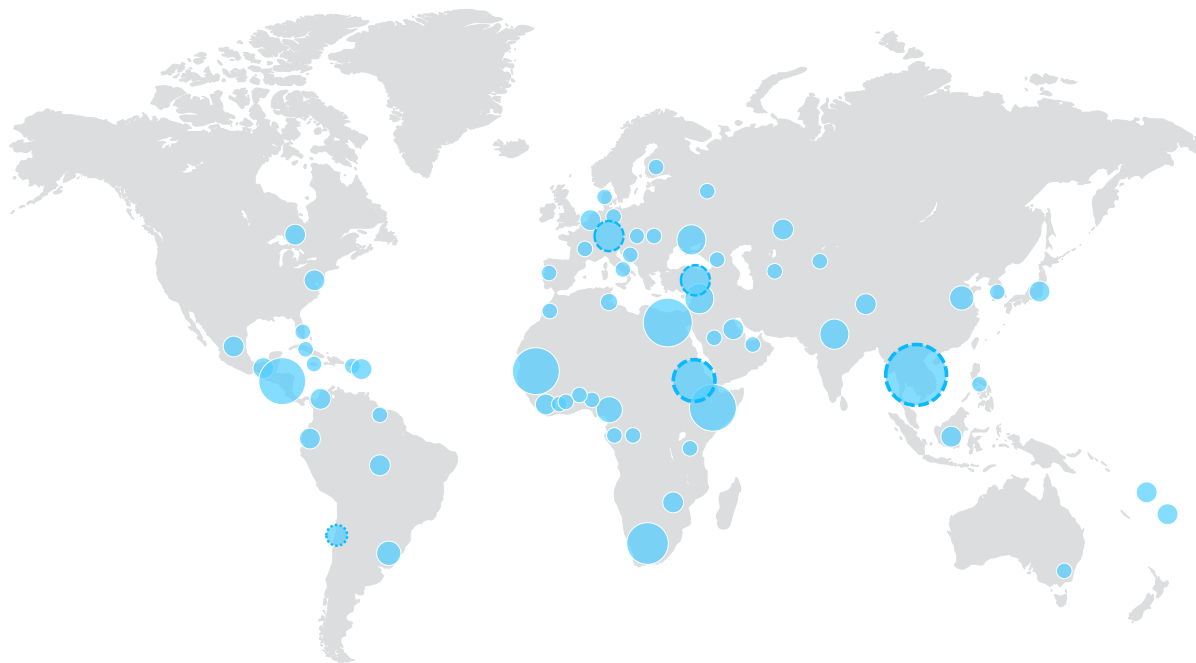
Estimated share of total UN system expenditure by pillar and geographic location



Source: Report of the Mandate Implementation Review (A/80/318).

UN system's regional offices are spread around many locations

Map of >200 regional and similar offices of UN system entities



Illustrative map only. Source: UN Advisory Alliance calculation based on UN Chief Executives Board, 2023; UN Info; and desk research

Regional cross-pillar support

CHALLENGE: INSUFFICIENT CROSS-PILLAR LINKS, DISCONNECTED FROM DELIVERY

64. Across the UN system, hundreds of regional capacities remain fragmented and do not enable adequate cross-pillar analysis. Regions are defined differently by different entities. Regional directors, offices, commissions, centres and advisers often operate in parallel with too few links. The result is weaker collaboration across pillars, disjointed strategies, higher costs, underutilized expertise, and governments and partners left navigating multiple entry points.

GOAL: SIMPLIFYING ACCESS TO REGIONAL EXPERTISE

65. Extending the Regional Reset for sustainable development, based on proposals from the working group led by the Deputy Secretary-General, we will concentrate capacities from all pillars in shared Regional Integrated Platforms. These platforms will provide a single, streamlined entry point to access cross-pillar expertise. They will align our work across all pillars at the regional level.

AREAS FOR ACTION

1. Create Regional Integrated Platforms

66. We will establish lean Regional Integrated Platforms to unite regional leaders across all pillars around joint plans, strategies, crisis response and resource mobilization for cross-cutting issues. Regional peace and development advisers will be hosted by Regional Commissions and will support these coordination mechanisms. In this context, we will also work to harmonize how UN system entities organize their regional work to promote joint efforts.

2. Co-locate regional leadership and expertise

67. We will begin co-locating regional DCO teams, special political missions with a regional focus, regional peace and development advisers, and regional disarmament centres, with Regional Commissions serving as physical hosts. DPPA and DPO regional divisions will also participate remotely.

3. Bring together specialized capacities

68. We will consolidate expertise across all pillars at the regional level. Capacities on peace and security, rule of law, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform, small arms control, mission transitions, prevention of extremist violence, and counterterrorism will join Regional Integrated Platforms, ready for surge deployment. This will serve as an extension of the expertise-on-demand mechanism outlined in the sustainable development pillar (see paragraph 46).

Country-level cross-pillar delivery

CHALLENGE: GLOBAL SILOS REPRODUCED AT COUNTRY LEVEL

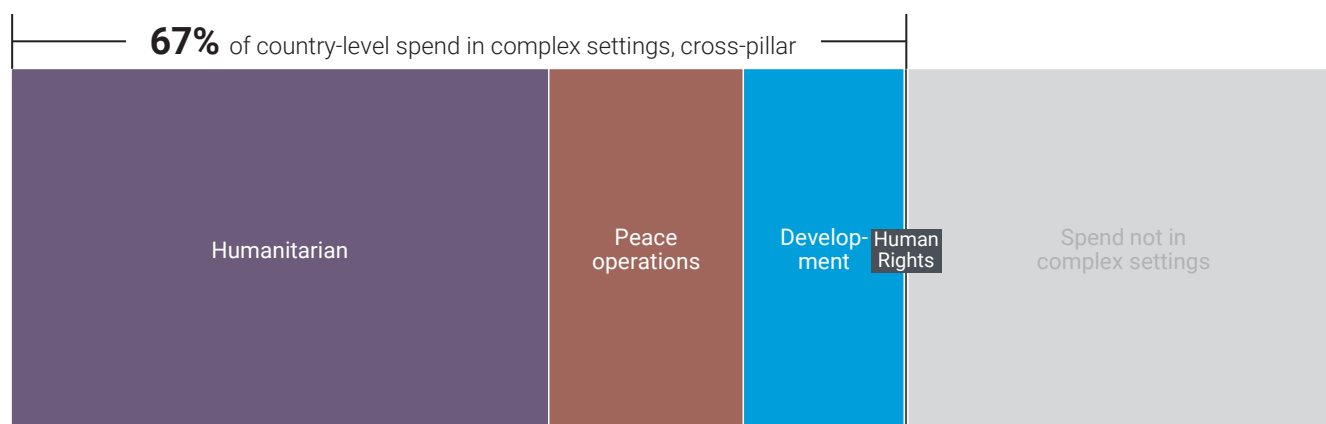
69. Limited by funding practices and under pressure from Headquarters demands, country leaders often struggle to connect impact and achieve results across pillars, despite country-level delivery accounting for two-thirds of UN system expenditure.

GOAL: ENABLING CROSS-PILLAR DELIVERY

70. A reconfigured system will better coordinate capacities to create leaner, cross-pillar country platforms in all settings.

More than two-thirds of UN system-wide spending goes to complex contexts that cut across pillars

Estimated share of total UN system expenditure by setting and pillar



Source: UN Chief Executives Board statistics, 2023

AREAS FOR ACTION

1. Improve and standardize operational coordination

71. In order to simplify the work of Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators and their teams, the Shared Platform Initiative (SPI) will cover co-location of their offices; common performance management; clear accountability towards RC/HCs; and joint strategies for transitions and advocacy. The Deputy Secretary-General and the Emergency Relief Coordinator are working together to develop the SPI and will report to the Secretary-General on initial progress by December 2025. Where RC/HCs also serve as Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (DSRSGs) in field missions, corresponding measures will be considered.

2. Simplify planning frameworks

72. We will prepare a proposal to ensure that RC/HCs and planning teams simplify Development Cooperation Frameworks, Humanitarian Response Plans, Peacebuilding Strategies and associated needs analyses for relevant settings.

3. Expand prevention, peacebuilding and peace support

73. We will integrate peace and development advisory support in all relevant Resident Coordinator Offices to ensure conflict risks are integrated into common country analyses. We will create pools for physical and remote surge at Headquarters and through Regional Integrated Platforms (see paragraphs 65-66 for more on these

Platforms) and make expertise easily available on rule of law; security sector reform; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; and other relevant areas.

4. Sharpen the division of labour in peace operations

74. As set out in our proposal for networked multi-dimensional peace operations (see paragraph 23), we will take steps to delegate delivery of relevant civilian mandates and associated resources to UN system entities best equipped to deliver them. This would ensure continuity through mission transitions, promote clear accountability and allow missions to focus on their core strengths.

5. Strengthen leadership accountability

75. Building on the Secretary-General's Senior Managers' Compacts and the realigned performance framework for Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators, we will reinforce 360-degree reviews for Special Representatives and their leadership teams, thereby strengthening accountability for coherent peace, development, humanitarian and human rights support.

Paradigm shifts to enable impact

- Technology and mindsets
- Shared services across all pillars
- Training and research
- Data commons
- Core and pooled funding

Paradigm shifts to enable impact

Accelerating technology and changing mindsets for a future-forward coalition

CHALLENGE: COSTLY AND FRAGMENTED SERVICES, LAGGING IN A DIGITAL AGE

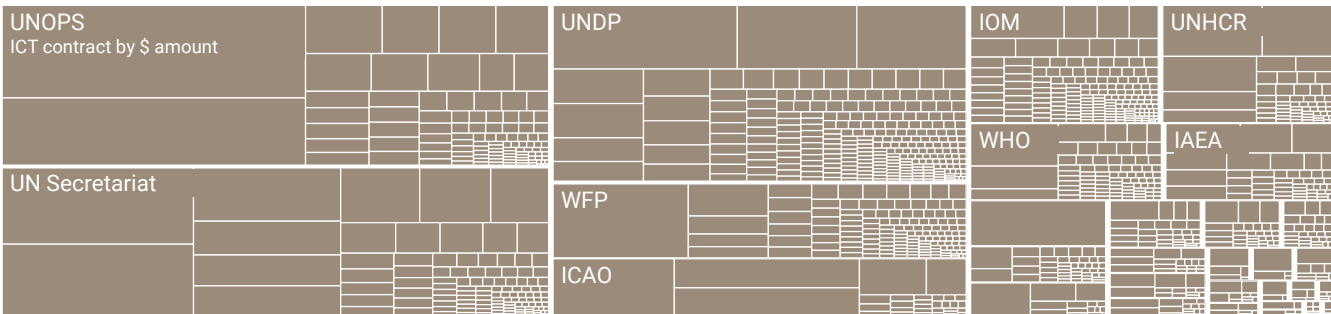
76. The UN system’s technology backbone is fragmented, costly and underpowered at a time when digital tools and advancements like artificial intelligence are reshaping our world. More than \$2 billion is spent annually on basic software, cloud platform and connectivity products, services and support, but too often in isolation and without scale. This drives up costs, creates duplication, limits interoperability and hinders action to shift capabilities to the future. To stay credible and effective, the UN system must adapt faster in the digital age.

GOAL: TRANSFORMATION THROUGH TECHNOLOGY AND NEW MINDSETS

77. The goal is for the UN system to catalyze the responsible use of technology to transform all aspects of its work. Powered by shared ICT services and guided by the UN 2.0 Agenda, a new Technology Accelerator Platform will act as the system’s change engine – modernizing how the UN works internally and improving support for Member States to harness digital and AI solutions with responsibility and impact.

UN system entities are investing in ICT but can benefit from greater consolidation of efforts

Each small box represents the dollar value of a separate ICT service contract, with all contracts grouped by entity



Source: Based on UN Global Marketplace

AREAS OF ACTION

1. Pool core ICT functions within realigned common providers

78. We plan to progressively consolidate the fragmented landscape of basic cloud services, network infrastructures, office software and systems under realigned common providers that can serve the entire UN system, building on lessons from the International Computing Centre. Over time, this will deliver scale, reduce duplication and lower costs.

2. Launch a joint Technology Accelerator [Platform]

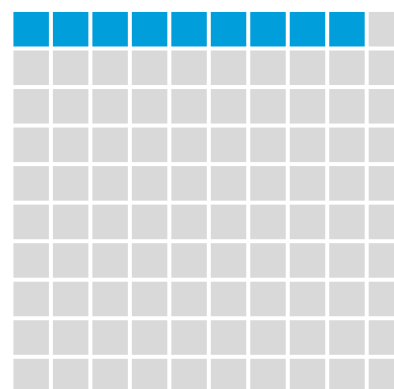
79. As shared ICT services scale up, savings will be partly reinvested in a new Technology Accelerator Platform (TAP), a lean joint programme accountable to the Secretary-General. TAP will be led by a group of entities from the Secretariat, specialized agencies, funds and programmes with advanced capabilities. It will help modernize business practices, scale up limited digital and AI expertise, offer surge capacity, and guide the transformation toward better solutions. The UN2.0 team will baseline the current innovation landscape and present a proposal to the Chief Executives Board at the end of October 2025.

Investing in new skills

Share of UN system job openings requiring data, digital, innovation, behavioural science or foresight skills

~9%

Jobs with UN 2.0 skills



Source: UN 2.0 research and analysis

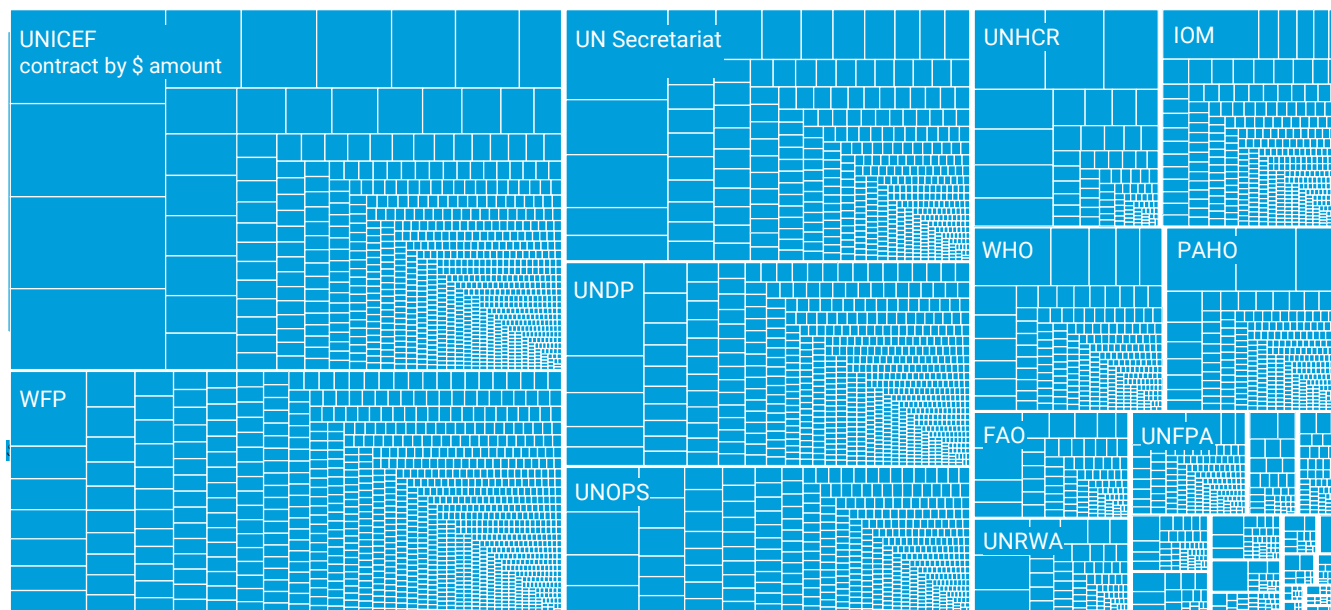
Sharing operational support services across pillars

CHALLENGE: DUPLICATIVE SYSTEMS, COSTLY INEFFICIENCIES

80. In 2023, the UN system delivered over \$60 billion in programmes and support. With resources under sustained pressure, an efficient operational backbone – ICT, payroll, HR, procurement, supply chains and facilities – is essential to maximize value. Yet entities continue to

UN system supply chains support delivery and can benefit from greater integration and scale

Each small box represents the dollar value of a separate product or service contract, with all contracts grouped by entity



Source: Based on UN Global Marketplace

run separate systems, while many country offices maintain parallel back-office functions instead of common services. Even a 1 per cent efficiency gain in these services could unlock hundreds of millions of dollars in savings.

81. Precise measurement of operational costs is difficult without full results-based management, which the Secretary-General has committed to strengthen. Programme support costs on voluntary contributions – typically between 7 and 13 per cent – offer the clearest benchmark, highlighting both the scale of administrative costs and the potential for efficiencies.

GOAL: UNIFIED SUPPORT SERVICES

82. Building on commitments in every pillar, we will drive an irreversible shift towards shared operational support services at every level. Our system-wide vision is clear: operational support will be consolidated into a smart, efficient and interconnected architecture. Instead of parallel administrative silos, we will prioritize unified global arrangements. Instead of duplicative country back offices, we will accelerate the shift to joint services. Instead of variable programme support charges, we will adopt a fair and transparent methodology. Every dollar saved can be unlocked for more impact on the ground.

AREAS FOR ACTION

83. To make this shift credible, the Secretary-General will build on existing reform commitments to align a coalition of UN system entities around a Unified Services Roadmap based on the following action areas.

1. Start an irreversible shift towards global shared services

84. To catalyse progress, we will pursue two models: some services will be provided by consolidated entities, and others through marketplaces of providers. The first wave, beginning in 2026, will progressively integrate supply chains, taking the New Humanitarian Compact as the concrete starting point. Basic information and communication technology services, as well as payroll, human resources, finance, and enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems will follow in a sequenced roadmap with milestones.

2. Accelerate the move to common country back-offices

85. We will accelerate the move toward a unified service backbone at country level. Building on the UNSDG's commitments to Common Country Back Offices, and reinforced by the New Humanitarian Compact, we will eliminate costly duplication on the ground. Core humanitarian in-country services will be at the centre of these efforts, with other entities joining in compatible areas such as fleet management, common premises, ICT, procurement, booking hubs, security and other relevant services. Progress will be accelerated by global shared services, harmonizing systems so that common services on the ground become easier.

3. Progressively harmonize programme support costs

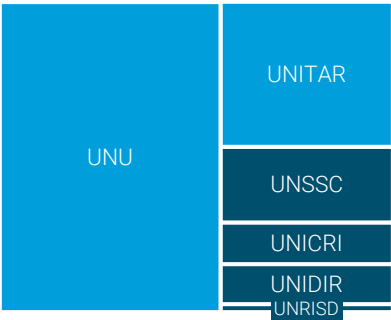
86. Contingent on progress in scaling shared services, we intend to harmonize most indirect and programme support costs. A progressive transparent rate model will create predictability and provide a strong incentive for collective action.

7% - 13%

Typical programme or indirect support cost rates for voluntary contributions across the UN system

Training and research entities at a glance

Expenditure by entity, in proportion



Source: UN Chief Executives Board statistics, 2023; UNIDIR, UNRISD

From fragmentation to coherence in training and research

CHALLENGE: FRAGMENTED TRAINING, OVERLAPPING RESEARCH

87. Training and research are vital functions of the UN system, supporting staff development, Member State capacity and evidence-based policymaking. Yet the landscape is fragmented. Many institutes and centres operate in parallel, with overlapping functions, high costs and financial vulnerabilities. This weakens coherence and reach at a time when demand for learning and research is expanding. A key challenge is to align the “inner circle” of dedicated training and research entities, while ensuring they work in stronger synergy with teams in the broader system.

GOAL: TWO PILLARS, ONE VISION

88. The UN’s training and research system should stand as a coherent, trusted source of knowledge and learning for both staff and Member States. This two-pillar model, complemented by a Joint Coordination Mechanism, will provide clarity and coherence across the UN system. This vision is the first step in a broader transformation, with other functions to be strengthened in future phases.

AREAS FOR ACTION

1. Consolidate training entities into UNITAR

89. We plan to merge UN Staff System College (UNSSC) into the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) with the goal of harmonizing governance, modernizing digital platforms and expanding training opportunities for UN personnel and Member States.

2. Consolidate research in UNU or relevant Secretariat entities

90. We plan to integrate UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) into the United Nations University (UNU). UNIDIR and UNICRI would be consolidated into ODA and UNODC, respectively, to strengthen focus and reduce fragmentation. In all cases, research independence will be fully respected.

3. Improve system-wide coordination for training and research

91. We will systematically link the training and research pillars with each other and with other relevant UN system training and research units to ensure system-wide coherence and avoid duplication. To that end, we will establish a Joint UN System Coordination Mechanism co-led by the UNU Rector and UNITAR Executive Director.

Build a UN System Data Commons to better link data, statistics, insights

CHALLENGE: FRAGMENTED DATA, MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

92. The UN system is a key steward of global public data, statistics and insights, from population and climate trends to complex risks. But its platforms remain fragmented and duplicative, just as governments and people need faster, clearer answers. Each entity has built its own systems, creating parallel capacities that too rarely connect. Without interoperability, data cannot “speak” across entities, leaving blind spots, wasted effort and missed chances to act on today’s interconnected challenges. Data grows more valuable when it is connected. This requires connected capacities, which today remain thinly spread and under-incentivized, with entities often reluctant to collaborate.

GOAL: A DATA COMMONS APPROACH ACROSS ALL PILLARS

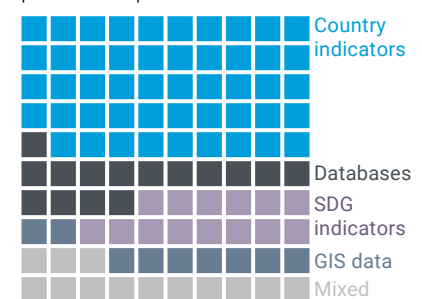
93. We will advance new data initiatives in every pillar while linking these initiatives into a UN System Data Commons initiative, grounded in shared data infrastructure. This joint backbone will be interoperable by design and capable of powering insights at local, regional and global levels. Entities will retain what must be retained, but everything that can be shared will be shared. To make this shift sustainable, we will combine interoperability with collective financing and clear governance incentives so that resources connect, systems connect better, and impact grows – all while costs fall.

Multiple public data portals

Estimated number of public data portals or similar, UN system

~90

public data portals or sites



Source: UN 2.0 research and analysis

AREAS FOR ACTION

1. Share a common data backbone

94. Hosted by a realigned shared service provider, the Data Commons initiative will connect data and statistics across the UN system into one secure backbone, interoperable by design and efficient by scale. The UN 2.0 team will prepare proposals for the Chief Executives Board at the end of October 2025 on how to guide phased implementation, leveraging the Secretary-General's Data Strategy and the Technology Accelerator Programme.

2. Scale up collective financing for data

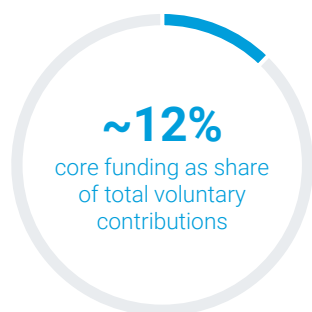
95. Building on partnerships such as the Complex Risk Analytics Fund (CRAF'd), we will scale pooled funding approaches for data to support the Data Commons, reduce duplication, and multiply value while providing incentives that overcome data-hoarding, nurture shared capacities, and encourage openness.

3. Empower the UN system

96. The Data Commons approach will pool the know-how of data analysts, engineers, and scientists to support the UN system, the new hubs, humanitarian clusters, and country teams alike, including the provision of highly specialized expertise on demand.

Championing core and pooled funding approaches

Core funding



Source: UN Chief Executives Board statistics, 2023

CHALLENGE: FRAGMENTED FUNDING, WEAKER COLLECTIVE IMPACT

97. Fragmented voluntary funding undermines coherence, raises transaction costs and limits the UN system's ability to deliver on its collective potential. Core voluntary funding accounts for less than 15 per cent of total contributions. Joint funding instruments are in place but remain underused – accounting for 10 per cent of total voluntary contributions. Current arrangements and Member State practices are not generating pooling at the scale required. Too often, contributors prefer to act bilaterally.

GOAL: ACCOUNTABLE, AGILE FUNDING ALIGNED WITH COLLECTIVE PRIORITIES

98. Core and pooled funding mechanisms should always be simpler, cheaper and more impactful for contributors than fragmented financing. Our vision is to make these mechanisms the most compelling choices. This requires funding modalities that deliver clear value, channel resources flexibly, incentivize cross-entity collaboration, and offer adequate visibility for contributors. Achieving this will require stronger incentives, as well as a simplified architecture directly linked to collective priorities.

AREAS FOR ACTION

1. Strengthen incentives for pooled funding

99. We will launch a pooled funding review, including a review of administrative agent, secretariat, governance and support cost models, as well as partnership arrangements, so that pooling is consistently cheaper and more attractive than fragmented financing.

2. Simplify pooled fund architecture

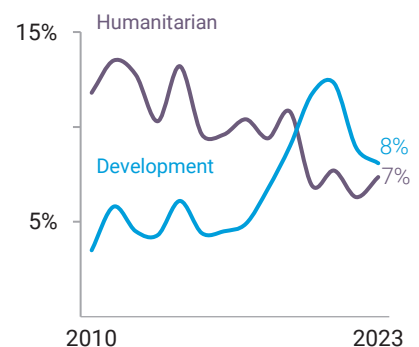
100. As part of our review, we intend to rationalize the portfolio of pooled funds, with particular focus on the Central Emergency Response Fund, the Peacebuilding Fund, the Joint SDG Fund, and the Country-Based Pooled Funds, ensuring these funds reinforce each other at country level, especially in complex, transition and crisis contexts where joined-up approaches matter most.

3. Strengthen incentives for core funding

101. Building on Funding Compact commitments, we will launch an exercise with the aim of ensuring that core funding, like pooled funding, becomes consistently cheaper and more attractive than fragmented approaches. This will include options to strengthen visibility for core contributors and partners.

Share of pooled funding down

Percentage of earmarked voluntary contributions provided via inter-agency pooled funds, trend by pillar



Source: Report of the Mandate Implementation

Information annex

UN system (Simplified)

Showing entities by type, 1 box per entity (typically USG / ASG-led)

CAAC	DCO	DESA	DGACM	DGC	DMSPC	DOS	Secretariat Departments, Offices, etc.	67+
DPO	DPPA	DSS	EOSG	OAJ	OCHA	OCT		
ODA	ODET	OHCHR	OHRLLS	OICT	OIOS	OLA		
OMS	OOSA	OSAA	PESG WS	PG	SEA	SVC		
UNDRR	UNGC	UNODC	UNOG	UNON	UNOP	UNOV		
UNROD	UNYO	VAC	VRA	Other	BNUH	CNMC	Peacekeeping Operations, Political Missions, etc.	33+
MINURSO	MINUSCA	MONUSCO	OSASG CYP	OSESG GL	OSESG Horn	OSESG MYR		
OSESG SYR	OSESG YEM	UNAMA	UNDOF	UNFICYP	UNIFIL	UNISFA		
UNMHA	UNMIK	UNMISS	UNMOGIP	UNOAU	UNOCA	UNOWAS		
UNRCCA	UNRGID	UNSCO	UNSCOL	UNSMIL	UNSOM	UNSOS		
UNTSO	UNVMC	Other	ECA	ECE	ECLAC	ESCAP	Regional Commissions, Other Bodies, etc.	7+
ESCWA	UNAIDS	Other	ITC	UNCTAD*	UNDP	UNEP*		
UNFPA	UN Habitat*	UNHCR	UNICEF	UNIDIR	UNITAR	UNOPS	Funds, Programmes, etc.	17+
UNRWA	UNSSC	UNU	UNV	UN Women	WFP	Other		
FAO	ICAO	IFAD	ILO	IMO	ITU	UN Tourism	Specialized Agencies	14+
UNESCO	UNIDO	UPU	WHO	WIPO	WMO	Other		
CTBTO	IAEA	IOM	ISA	OPCW	WTO	Other	Related Organizations	6+

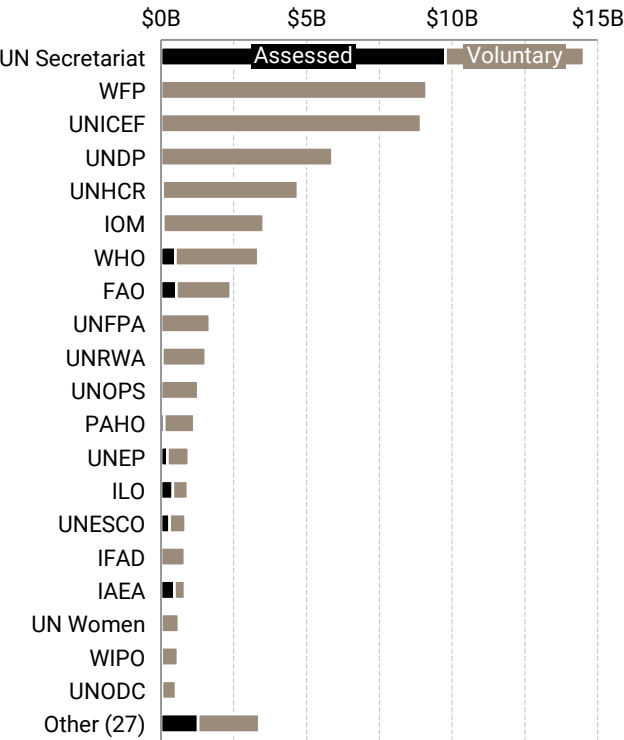
Source: Report of the Mandate Implementation Review (A/80/318).

*The secretariat of these entities are part of the UN Secretariat

Note: Entities that are subsidiary organs of General Assembly, incl. Training & Research and Other Entities, are included in "Funds, Programmes, etc." Some entities are not shown and are included in "Other". Source: The UN system chart (March 2025)

UN system revenue by entity

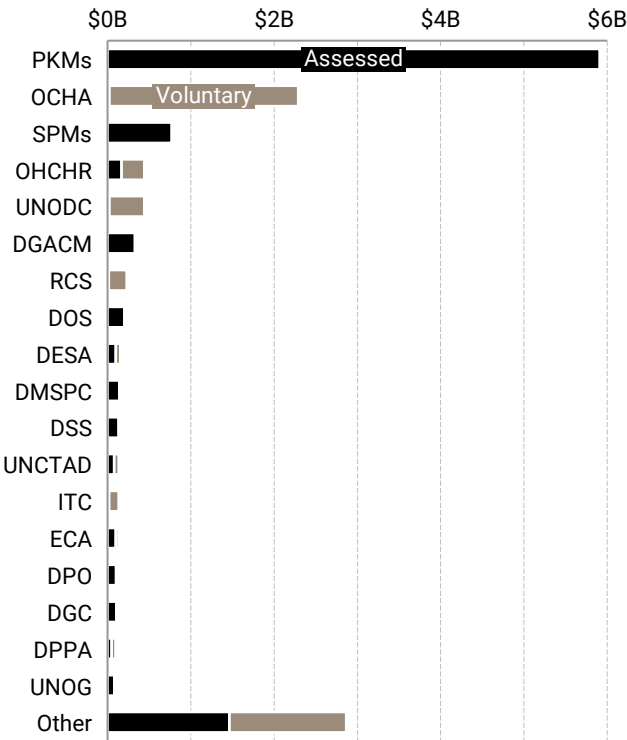
Total revenue by type (assessed, voluntary / other), 2023



Note: UN Secretariat includes Secretariat and Peacekeeping revenue
Source: UN Chief Executives Board statistics

UN Secretariat revenue by entity

Total revenue by type (assessed, voluntary / other), 2023



Source: UN Secretariat