

UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

Additional documents for this item: UNAIDS/PCB (46)/CRP2

Action required at this meeting—the Programme Coordinating Board is invited to:

31. *Take note* of the update and welcome progress on implementation of the Management Action Plan.

Cost implications for the implementation of the decisions:

None

BACKGROUND

1. As the UNAIDS Executive Director emphasized in her report to the 45th meeting of the Programme Coordinating Board (PCB), the *Management Action Plan for a healthy, equitable and enabling workplace for all UNAIDS staff* provides a foundation for transformative change for the UNAIDS Secretariat, by ensuring that we have a workplace culture that ensures the safety and dignity of all. Senior management is committed to its full implementation.
2. The Management Action Plan (MAP) was developed in early 2019 through an inclusive process involving staff and close dialogue with a Working Group of the PCB.¹ The PCB endorsed the MAP at its 44th meeting in June 2019. Decision point 6.4 at that meeting requested the UNAIDS Secretariat “to report to the next session of the PCB on the implementation of the MAP”. The PCB Bureau at its meeting in August 2019 decided to postpone the report until after the 45th meeting of the PCB, given the scope of the agenda for that meeting, including consideration of the Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the Management and Administration Review of UNAIDS, and the UNAIDS management response (UNAIDS/PCB (45)/19.30).
3. In the Joint Inspection Unit’s (JIU) report and recommendations, JIU inspectors affirmed the importance of the MAP and its full implementation. Given its relevance to the consideration of the report and management response, the Secretariat provided the PCB with a conference room paper which outlined interim progress on the implementation of the MAP (UNAIDS/PCB (45)/CRP2).
4. The present report provides an update on implementation of the MAP, focusing on developments since December 2019, efforts to deepen its cultural change agenda and feminist leadership principles, and the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and response.
5. The MAP, with its focus on staff engagement and wellbeing at work, has guided the Secretariat’s operational response to the COVID-19 pandemic and has been critically important for maintaining business continuity. The operational implications of COVID-19-related measures, however, have delayed implementation of some MAP activities and deliverables. A detailed description of implementation progress, as well as revised target dates and approaches (such as “virtual” rather than face-to-face meetings), is outlined in an accompanying conference room paper (UNAIDS/PCB (46)/CPR7), which will be available to the PCB at end of May 2020.

OVERVIEW OF KEY DEVELOPMENTS SINCE DECEMBER 2019

6. Staff engagement has been critically important to the development of the MAP, and staff remain at the centre of implementation and UNAIDS’s transformation. The Secretariat’s senior leadership has prioritized the strengthening of internal communication and the creation opportunities for staff to voice their views, needs and concerns as the organization enters a crucial year of supporting progress towards 2020 Fast-Track

¹ Working Group of the Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) to strengthen the PCB’s monitoring and evaluation role on zero tolerance against harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and abuse of power at UNAIDS.

targets, in the midst of the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating effects. The Executive Director has also created opportunities for broad staff engagement in the development of the next UNAIDS Strategy, looking ahead to 2030 with partners, and galvanizing commitment and action to end the AIDS epidemic.

7. The Executive Director has emphasized her commitment to creating a healthy, safe and inclusive workplace where all UNAIDS staff can find reward in their work—maximizing the positive difference staff make individually and collectively for the health, dignity and security of people around the world.
8. The Executive Director has carried out a series of virtual meetings with regions and departments, familiarizing herself with the work of colleagues across the Secretariat, as well as engaging in dialogues on priorities and expectations. This has provided an opportunity to reinforce improved horizontal and cross-departmental working, breaking down silos (for example, vis-à-vis intensified support to closing programmatic gaps in western and central Africa).
9. The Executive Director has engaged with the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association and UN Plus, the network of United Nations staff living with HIV. She and the Deputy Executive Director for Management *a.i.* have met with internal consultative, advisory and peer-support bodies to discuss how they can contribute to change. This includes discussions with UNAIDS' Dignity-at-Work Advisers and the Gender Action Plan Challenge Group. The Diversity Task Force has continued its work under the overall leadership and coordination of the Deputy Executive Director for Management *a.i.* An internal working group will soon be established to support implementation and reporting on the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy across its four pillars: leadership, strategic planning and management; inclusiveness; programming; and organizational culture.
10. As part of deepening the MAP and its focus on an inclusive organizational culture, the Secretariat is initiating an 18-month gender-action learning programme that draws on successful experience in other mandate-driven organizations. The Secretariat will enlist the support of external expertise, using feminist tools and methodologies to assess UNAIDS as an institution.
11. The gender-action learning programme will engage staff across the Secretariat in dialogue and a deep examination of how we work, and in particular how power is shared and used in the workplace. The aim is to catalyze transformative actions. The inception phase will focus on generating common understandings and commitments to feminist leadership values and approaches, key role-modelling behaviours and overall tone of conduct from senior management levels. During the 18-month programme, using cocreation approaches, staff will build skills and have opportunities to lead projects that advance a healthy, safe and more equal organization that makes best use of the skills, experience and passion of the UNAIDS workforce.
12. The Secretariat has strengthened internal communications and support to collaboration and knowledge sharing. Dedicated staff capacity has been redeployed internally. In February 2020, the Secretariat launched the internal @Workplace by Facebook platform which will enable staff across the organization to more easily share information and engage with one other. Internal Communications and Information Technology teams

have conducted trainings on the Microsoft Teams platform, which facilitates deeper substantive collaboration, cocreation and support across locations. Planning for strengthening virtual collaboration and communication was already underway in January 2020. In the context of COVID-19 that new capacity has proved especially important to support work continuity and collaboration among colleagues during the teleworking arrangements.

13. The Executive Director has created opportunities for staff engagement to support the UNAIDS Strategy development process. An internal application process was launched, inviting applications from colleagues across Regional, Country and Liaison Offices. The Cabinet selected a group of 20 staff, as part of assembling a "virtual" team that will dedicate up to 30% of working time to supporting the Strategy process. This approach reflects the key principles and objectives of the MAP—enhancing staff engagement and enabling the organization to fully benefit from the diversity of knowledge, skills and experience across the Secretariat. An inclusive strategy process is of vital importance to the HIV response and to UNAIDS, and it presents a valuable opportunity for colleagues to deepen and further develop as professionals.
14. The principle of care and action to strengthen support to staff wellbeing is central to the MAP. A new Staff Counsellor for Mental Health and Wellbeing began working in February 2020. Her priority has been to set up a confidential counselling service and meet with individuals and teams, including through "virtual" sessions with field-based staff. This new professional counselling capacity has been especially important in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the associated disruptions to working routines, effects of isolation, additional pressures of home schooling and care for dependents.
15. Initial consultations have taken place with the Staff Association towards the establishment of a consultative task force to advise on and support the elaboration of a UNAIDS Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which would be aligned with the overall UN system-wide strategy. Timelines for this work will be revised, however, due to the immediate need to provide direct support to staff in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Human Resources Management and the Staff Association jointly convened webinars on internal support services for staff and key UNAIDS offices, which provided staff with opportunities to learn more and ask questions directly to Ethics, Office of the Ombudsman, the Staff Counsellor, Human Resources Legal and Policy, and the Staff Association.
16. Work has also continued with regard to optimizing delegations of authority, streamlining internal processes, enhancing accountability, and empowering staff and managers. Revised delegations of financial authorities for Regional and Countries Offices were issued at the beginning of May 2020 and are now being implemented.
17. A new electronic platform and simplified approval processes have been developed for travel planning and will be launched later this year. The Secretariat has also accelerated the use of e-signatures for internal document clearance and approval in the context of COVID-19 business continuity planning. This will be helpful in the Secretariat's operations generally, beyond the current teleworking arrangements, for streamlining and increasing the efficiency of review/approval processes and enabling the expansion of electronic workflows.

18. Delegations of authority in human resources matters have been mapped and reviewed, and work is underway to progressively move responsibility and accountability for a large proportion of locally-recruited staff selections to the regional level.
19. Senior management has closely applied the current staff mobility policy, improving elements of the process (such as waiver application forms, instructions and communications to staff) for clarity, transparency and standardization, while undertaking a broader review of the programme. Several changes are expected to be made to strengthen the mobility policy and process in the 2020/2021 cycle. Those will be aimed at ensuring that UNAIDS manages staff reassignment between duty stations in ways that retain specialist knowledge while enabling staff members to serve and develop in different roles, thereby enhancing the versatility and flexibility of our workforce.
20. As part of several steps to reorganize the Executive Office and optimize reporting lines to the Executive Director, matrix line management has been introduced for Regional and Country Offices to enable more seamless support to the field. These changes are intended to strengthen programmatic leadership and coordination, and UNAIDS overall support to communities, countries and regions to achieve the Agenda 2030 goals.
21. Effective as of 1 April 2020, Regional Support Team Directors now report to the Deputy Executive Director, Programme, for all programmatic and day-to-day management issues. Those Directors continue to report to the Executive Director directly on high-level engagement in their regions. A new Field Support Team is being established at Headquarters under the Deputy Executive Director, Programme, as a one-stop shop for support and problem-solving, and for enhancing our coordination, focus and impact.
22. Several key initiatives under the leadership of Human Resources Management are described in further detail in the *Strategic human resources issues update* report (UNAIDS/PCB (46)/20.16). As noted in previous reports to the PCB, Human Resources Management's legal and policy capacity was strengthened in 2019. This is enabling improved policy communication and support to staff and managers across the Secretariat, as well as strengthened accountability for the organization's duty-of-care responsibilities. Work is being optimized across human resources operations, staff learning and development, and legal and policy divisions. Key developments pertaining to the MAP include:
 - selection of 12 UNAIDS Country Directors following completion of a rigorous assessment-centre process that was conducted in December 2019;
 - continued production of anonymized summaries of disciplinary action taken by management, and analysis of appeals and requests for administrative review to promote transparency and accountability;
 - cabinet review of the zero draft UNAIDS policy on the prohibition of harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination and abuse of authority, and plans to launch a dialogue with staff on the zero draft and invite external review to build shared expectations of inclusive, respectful behaviour across the Secretariat;
 - steps taken towards modernizing UNAIDS' staff mobility programme, informed by an external assessment and internal consultative process; and
 - initiation of planning for an externally-administered staff survey, focusing on staff engagement and wellbeing at work.

MOVING FORWARD: TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE, STRENGTHENING UNAIDS FOR THE FUTURE

23. With the new UNAIDS leadership, new initiatives to take forward and deepen the MAP and culture change, follow-up to the recommendations of the UN Joint Inspection Unit,² and UNAIDS overall support to ongoing reforms to the UN Development System, the Secretariat is developing a unified programme of change that will strengthen UNAIDS for the future and ensure its relevance to countries and people most affected by HIV.
24. In relation the recommendations of the JIU (a full update on implementation progress will be provided to the PCB in December 2020), the PCB now has a stand-alone agenda item to address audit and accountability topics, and directly engage with independent offices and functions that support oversight (such as Internal Oversight Services and the external audit).
25. To strengthen the Ethics Office and its independence, and to conform with the standards recommended by the UN Joint Inspection Unit³, the Ethics Office is now a standalone office, reporting to the Executive Director through the Chief of Staff. Plans are underway to have a Director of the Office in place by second quarter 2021, following a competitive recruitment process open to both internal and external candidates. Term limits will apply to the appointment, up to two consecutive appointments of four years.
26. The Secretariat has reviewed its corporate legal service needs and will be strengthening internal capacity as well as revising its arrangements with the WHO Office of Legal Services. Compliance and oversight capacity have been increased through the recruitment of a new Compliance Officer to the Department of Planning, Finance and Accountability. Risk management and related assessment and reporting processes have been strengthened during the recent biennium work-planning process, including by integrating those processes into online work-planning platforms, and by providing training webinars and direct support to staff who do internal control assessments.
27. The Executive Director has provided a statement of internal control, and UNAIDS' Risk Management Committee is being revitalized to support strategic review and management of the organization-wide risk register, including by advising the Executive Director and Cabinet on significant risks that are identified, and enhancing overall organizational awareness and capacity in risk management.
28. UNAIDS continues to closely follow UN reform developments and use opportunities to benefit from system-wide efforts to align and harmonize business operations. Approximately 65% of UNAIDS field offices already are part of UN common premises. UNAIDS largely uses the administrative and regulatory framework of WHO, and many key services are provided by WHO's Global Service Centre in Kuala Lumpur. As a signatory to the UN's mutual recognition framework, UNAIDS recognizes the policies and procedures of other signatory entities and is able to make use of inter-agency service

² See decision point 9.3: "Takes note with appreciation of the Management Response and requests the Executive Director to respond, in close collaboration with the cosponsors as relevant, to the JIU recommendations directed at the Secretariat and the Joint Programme as part of a single programme of change, and provide an update on progress made in this regard to the 47th meeting of the Programme Coordinating Board in December 2020".

³ As set out in JIU/REP/2010/3

provision. Practical guidance is being elaborated for the Secretariat's Regional and Country Offices and will be made available to staff in the weeks ahead.

29. As noted in the Executive Director's remarks at the opening of the 45th meeting of the PCB, the next UNAIDS strategy will provide a bridge to new 2025 targets and the Agenda 2030 goals. It is anticipated that the structure of UNAIDS will be realigned after the Strategy is adopted, ensuring that the organization is fit for purpose, with staff and resources in the right places, so we can galvanize action and best support countries and communities to end the AIDS epidemic.
30. The Secretariat's unified programme of change will ensure that capacities, structures and working methods of the Secretariat and Joint Programme keep evolving to be relevant and fully responsive to the opportunities and challenges which countries will face in the next decade of the HIV response, including the unprecedented social and economic implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. The full implementation of the MAP is vitally important to the Secretariat's operations and activities. It will continue to evolve in this broader context to ensure that all staff enjoy safety, dignity and wellbeing at work, thereby maximizing the collective impact of UNAIDS staff around the world.

PROPOSED DECISION POINT

31. The Programme Coordinating Board is invited to: take note of the update and welcome progress on implementation of the Management Action Plan.

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