



General Assembly

Distr.: General
27 September 2023

Original: English

Seventy-eighth session

Agenda item 134

Proposed programme budget for 2024

Improving service delivery in the United Nations: development of the Secretariat's global operational support architecture

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

As the United Nations reaches the halfway mark for implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the world faces unprecedented challenges, efforts to improve the effectiveness of the Organization remain as important as ever for effective mandate implementation. Continuing the steps in implementing the Secretary-General's vision of creating a more effective Secretariat that delivers better on its mandates, the present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [77/262](#), provides information on the Secretariat's development of an improved service delivery concept.

The support provided across the Organization through the Secretariat's global operational support architecture, with dedicated structures in place for the peace and security pillar, has been strengthened with the more recent transition of the resident coordinator system into the Secretariat. The Secretariat continues to explore ways to improve service delivery across the Organization, including the incremental adoption of a shared services approach, especially for high-volume location-independent support services.

In the report, the Secretary-General acknowledges the complexity that comes with the diversity of Secretariat entities and emphasizes that efforts to improve the effectiveness of service provision will be a continuous process requiring increased integration, harmonization and improvement in support operations at various levels and across all stakeholders.

* Reissued for technical reasons on 30 October 2023.



I. Introduction and background

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [77/262](#), and provides information on the Secretariat's development of an improved service delivery concept.
2. As part of his reforms, the Secretary-General proposed a vision for transformational change to enable the Organization to better respond to contemporary challenges and create a more effective Secretariat that delivers better on its mandates. The reform consisted of three closely related streams: repositioning the development system, restructuring the peace and security architecture and shifting the management paradigm. The effort to reinvigorate the development system aimed at ensuring that the United Nations is able to successfully deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with more empowered, impartial and independent resident coordinators, supported by a new generation of country teams, while building on a stronger "One United Nations" approach on the ground (see [A/72/124-E/2018/3](#) and [A/72/684-E/2018/7](#)). The realignment of the peace and security architecture prioritized prevention and sustained peace and enhanced the effectiveness of peace operations. In so doing, it became a single, integrated peace and security pillar, and strengthened cross-pillar coordination with the development system and human rights pillar (see [A/72/525](#)). The reform of management frameworks and structures set the foundation for a more effective and efficient United Nations Secretariat by, inter alia, improving the internal provision of operational support services and fostering interoperability across the United Nations system (see [A/72/492](#) and [A/72/492/Add.2](#)).
3. The initial report of the Secretary-General on the management paradigm ([A/72/492](#)) identified a number of challenges that hindered the Secretariat from achieving, in the most optimal manner, the purposes set out in the Charter of the United Nations in the current global environment. Challenges included slow and unresponsive service delivery, fragmented management structures, weak performance management, resourcing gaps, a lack of transparency and accountability and a trust deficit between Member States and the Secretariat. The reform endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolutions [72/266 A](#) and [B](#) brought about core changes to address these concerns. By decentralizing and simplifying the delegation of authorities available to the Secretary-General, decision-making was shifted closer to the point of programme delivery. Ongoing efforts to simplify and harmonize rules, policies and procedures increasingly enable a more nimble and effective response on the ground and foster interoperability across the United Nations system. New accountability frameworks and enhanced analytics better guide decision-making and allow for more transparent and accountable operations.
4. A reorganization of Headquarters structures to facilitate the new management paradigm shift took effect in 2019. In place of the former Department of Management and Department of Field Support, the General Assembly, in its resolution [72/266 B](#), approved the establishment of two new departments: the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, responsible for the policy framework of the Secretariat and for monitoring compliance with that framework; and the Department of Operational Support, which, in assuming operational and transactional functions previously performed by the former departments, became responsible for providing guidance to entities across the Secretariat and for delivering services of global scope.
5. The report of the Secretary-General reviewing progress in the implementation of management reform ([A/75/201](#)) provided an update on progress made in achieving expected benefits. This included simplified policies, streamlined procedures, empowered managers and strengthened operational support in the areas of information and communications technology (ICT), human resources administration,

medical services and supply chain management, with regard to both improving support to mandate delivery and enabling action to respond to escalated situations. Efforts to improve policy advice and operational support are part of the continuous improvement, which is integral to improving the effectiveness of support to Secretariat mandate delivery.

6. By utilizing the existing support structures and locations at Headquarters, offices away from Headquarters and regional commissions, as well as those for peace operations, the Secretariat aims at further improving service delivery and operational support to all client entities. Key objectives in improving the Secretariat's support arrangements, as part of wider efforts to strengthen its global operational support, include:

- (a) Increased economies of scale and reduced duplication in capacities and footprints in insecure and remote locations;
- (b) Interoperability that is underpinned by standardized processes and common support arrangements;
- (c) Enhanced responsiveness through access to service providers that offer comparative advantages in specific elements of operational support;
- (d) Strengthened resilience and adaptability in the face of evolving operational demands and challenges;
- (e) Operational continuity in enabling those best placed to make decisions and sustained availability of remotely delivered support services.

7. Efforts to develop, or strengthen, the Secretariat's existing global operational support structure, under the stewardship of the Department of Operational Support, are intended to better enable the full realization of the benefits of management reform. The present report outlines the initiatives of the Secretariat to further improve existing operational support and service delivery as key aspects of the shift in the management paradigm welcomed by the General Assembly.

II. Global operational support architecture of the Secretariat

8. The Secretary-General's reform proposals envisaged an integrated operational support architecture for the Secretariat that would provide operational and transactional functions for and support to staff in the field, regional commissions and offices away from Headquarters, and at Headquarters. As the Secretariat consists of approximately 235 entities with full delegated authority, deployed across at least 175 countries and significantly varying in presence and mandates, ensuring the provision of effective, efficient, responsive and responsible operational support is a complex undertaking, both organizationally and functionally. This includes support in the areas of supply chain management, ICT, finance, human resources management, health care, wider campus and facilities management and situation response.

9. In this context, the Department of Operational Support, including the United Nations Global Service Centre in Brindisi and the United Nations Information and Communications Technology Facility, Valencia, as well as the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, Uganda, was established as the primary operational arm of the Secretariat in order to work in close partnership with the Secretariat's offices away from Headquarters and regional commissions, as well as with the support elements of peace operations ([A/72/492](#), para. 84, and [A/72/492/Add.2](#), para. 29) (see map 1).

Map 1

Major support service providers across the United Nations Secretariat

Abbreviations: DOS, Department of Operational Support; ECA, Economic Commission for Africa; ECLAC, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; ESCAP, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; ESCWA, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; GSC, Global Service Centre; KJSC, Kuwait Joint Support Office; RSCE, Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, Uganda; UNHQ, United Nations Headquarters; UNOG, United Nations Office at Geneva; UNON, United Nations Office at Nairobi; UNOV, United Nations Office at Vienna.

10. The Global Service Centre in Brindisi, the United Nations Information and Communications Technology Facility, Valencia, and the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, as well as the Kuwait Joint Support Office, have been essential in providing shared support services to peace operations for a number of years. In tandem, the Secretariat's long-standing regional commissions and offices away from Headquarters have also become major elements of the Secretariat's global operational support architecture, in addition to pursuing their own mandates. Each has become a major hub for Secretariat support, providing both local and remote services, including common facilities for Secretariat and other United Nations system entities and support for major conferences. Furthermore, most have their own major support clients headquartered at their location, including temporary offices used for operational reasons.

11. Through this operational support architecture, managers in Secretariat entities who are entrusted with the appropriate authority to make programmatic and operational decisions, but who lack the needed support capacities, are assigned a Secretariat service provider by the Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support, in consultation with the Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, as well as with the head of entity concerned ([ST/SGB/2019/2](#), para. 2.3). These service providers are tasked with providing corresponding administrative or other support to inform and execute decisions of the Secretariat entity receiving operational support. This approach is also adopted in cases that involve specialized support requirements or to avoid or reduce duplication in Secretariat support capacities. Examples in which service providers might be used include a smaller Secretariat entity with limited support capacities of its own, or an

effort to consolidate an administrative role or process to streamline the Secretariat's global operational support, such as consolidating payroll operations.

12. The introduction of the Umoja enterprise resource planning system led to a major shift in the ability of the Secretariat to rely on shared service providers among its own entities, whether globally, regionally or locally. While more can be done, the assignment of service providers to avoid or reduce duplication in similar support capacities across the Secretariat has underpinned the establishment of support arrangements for new Secretariat entities or for Secretariat entities pursuing options to reduce their reliance on non-Secretariat support services.

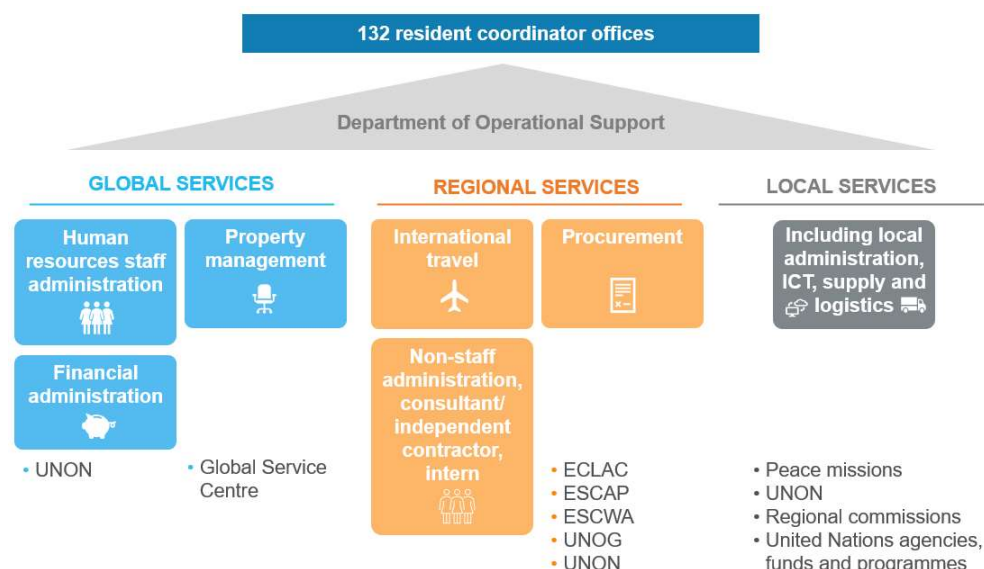
A. Support to the United Nations resident coordinator system

13. A key element of the Secretary-General's development system reform, as approved by the General Assembly in its resolution [72/279](#), was a reinvigorated and independent United Nations resident coordinator system. Along with the establishment of the Development Coordination Office, 132 resident coordinator offices, with a presence across 162 countries and territories, were shifted to the Secretariat in 2019.

14. An extension of Secretariat support arrangements to the resident coordinator system, where viable, was essential to ensuring cost-effective support arrangements, aligning practices with the rest of the Secretariat and emphasizing the independence of resident coordinators. In turn, the transition to support the resident coordinator system provided a platform for the Secretariat to both define and develop its operational support arrangements on a truly global basis.

15. In leveraging roles and relationships already available within its global operational support structure, the existing capabilities of a number of the Secretariat's regional commissions and offices away from Headquarters, along with the Global Service Centre in Brindisi, offered an opportunity to provide resident coordinators with specialized administrative support on a cost-recovery basis. In particular, offices away from Headquarters have a lengthy history of mandated responsibility for providing administrative and support services to Secretariat entities at their locations, at their field offices and to other organizations of the United Nations common system. Together with the regional commissions, each of which is also responsible for support to its own programmatic responsibilities, the role of offices away from Headquarters has increasingly expanded to support a diversity of client entities, both locally and in their respective regions (see figure).

Major support services and providers for United Nations resident coordinator offices



Abbreviations: ECLAC, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; ESCAP, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; ESCWA, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; UNOG, United Nations Office at Geneva; UNON, United Nations Office at Nairobi.

16. Shared location-independent financial and human resources services, including payroll, are delivered globally through the United Nations Office at Nairobi across the resident coordinator system, while global property management services are delivered through the Global Service Centre in Brindisi. At the same time, procurement, international travel and non-staff personnel administration services are provided centrally, on a regional basis, through the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations Office at Nairobi. A full suite of local, in situ services is provided to resident coordinators at 16 locations in which the Secretariat has a substantial support operation or, more specifically, in the developing countries in which there is a regional commission, office away from Headquarters or an integrated peace operation. Furthermore, regional commissions and offices away from Headquarters located in developing countries are also exploring opportunities to provide location-dependent local support services to other Secretariat entities and the United Nations country teams operating in those countries as part of the system-wide common back office initiative. In locations where the Secretariat lacks sufficient local support capacities, the resident coordinator system receives local services through an appropriate United Nations agency, fund or programme.

17. With the installation of Secretariat support arrangements across all resident coordinator offices, through a phased roll-out starting in 2019, significant efficiencies have been realized that have further contributed to the vision of an empowered and independent resident coordinator system. This transition to Secretariat support allowed a stronger focus on the resident coordinator's core functions, facilitated better integration within the Secretariat, including with United Nations information centres, and provided greater access to specialized, capable support elements that strengthened the resident coordinator's role as the intersection between the Secretariat and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes at the country level.

Assistance Mission for Iraq; UNDOF, United Nations Disengagement Observer Force; UNFICYP, United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus; UNGSC, United Nations Global Service Centre; UNHQ, United Nations Headquarters; UNIFIL, United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon; UNISFA, United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei; UNITAD, United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant; UNITAMS, United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan; UNMHA, United Nations Mission to Support the Hedaydah Agreement; UNMIK, United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo; UNMISS, United Nations Mission in South Sudan; UNMOGIP, United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan; UNOAU, United Nations Office to the African Union; UNOCA, United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa; UNOWAS, United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel; UNRCCA, United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia; UNSCO, Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process; UNSCOL, Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon; UNSMIL, United Nations Support Mission in Libya; UNSOM, United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia; UNSOS, United Nations Support Office in Somalia; UNTSO, United Nations Truce Supervision Organization; UNVMC, United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

Global Service Centre in Brindisi and United Nations Information and Communications Technology Facility, Valencia

21. The Global Service Centre in Brindisi and the United Nations Information and Communications Technology Facility, Valencia, are mandated to provide technology management, supply chain management, and technical engineering and environmental services and solutions to peace operations from their two locations. In line with the Secretary-General's envisaged shift in the management paradigm, the Global Service Centre and the United Nations Information and Communications Technology Facility serve as key arms of the Department of Operational Support. Within a single organizational structure, they leverage a mature service-level management framework and reliable track record to provide Secretariat-wide services in technology and supply chain management, in other specialized areas, such as occupational safety and health, and training facilities.

22. Among its specialized functions, the Global Service Centre maintains reserves of equipment that can be made available to United Nations entities and other partners on an urgent basis, especially when other suitable sources are not immediately available when needed, such as during a crisis response. This requires a substantial investment in strategic deployment stocks of new equipment that can be deployed, on a cost-recovery basis, to meet urgent needs, including the establishment of a new peace operation, as well as reserves of excess equipment recovered from peacekeeping missions, especially upon their closure.

23. While the Global Service Centre and the United Nations Information and Communications Technology Facility each provide both centralized and remote technology support services and solutions, together they also maintain a specialized risk mitigation and parallel load-sharing approach for Secretariat ICT networks across the two locations. This reflects the significance of the Global Service Centre and the United Nations Information and Communications Technology Facility in maintaining critical ICT connectivity and data storage across the global Secretariat.

24. In fully leveraging opportunities readily available within the Secretariat's global operational support architecture, further consideration could be given to broadening

the use of the strategic deployment stocks managed by the Global Service Centre.¹ While the strategic deployment stocks and reserves of excess equipment remain essential to United Nations peacekeeping efforts, they represent a significant investment that the Secretariat could also call upon, on a cost-recovery basis, for support for the implementation of other Secretariat mandates, as well as potentially the mandates of non-Secretariat partners, such as regional and other multilateral organizations.

Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, Uganda

25. The Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, Uganda, was established in 2010 to provide shared services to participating missions located in Africa, with the goal of moving transactional, non-location-dependent administrative functions to the Centre from field missions located within the region.² Today, its range of services includes payroll and payment of other benefits, such as education grants, as relevant, for staff and uniformed personnel; human resources administration, including onboarding and separation; travel and claims; vendor and cashier services; and accounts and financial reporting; as well as the provision of training facilities.

26. The Regional Service Centre currently provides the full suite of its support services to six United Nations peacekeeping operations and nine special political missions operating in Africa, as well as to the United Nations Support Office for Somalia and the United Nations Office to the African Union. The Centre also hosts a number of other specialized operational support capacities on behalf of other elements of the Department of Operational Support, including coordination of ICT initiatives in the region, as well as the Forward Support and Deployment Hub and the Global Procurement Support Section.

27. The support provided by the Centre is especially valuable during the initial establishment of a peace operation, as well as during its closure, first by providing remote surge support during the start-up or drawdown and liquidation phases, and subsequently by resolving residual administrative matters. This latter role leverages the Centre's existing relationship with and knowledge of a closing mission.

Kuwait Joint Support Office

28. In its resolution [65/259](#), the General Assembly noted the intention of the Secretary-General to establish a support office in Kuwait for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and requested that possibilities be explored for cost-sharing between the Mission in Afghanistan and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. As a result, the Kuwait Joint Support Office was launched in December 2012 to provide shared, location-independent support services to the two peace operations (see [A/67/346/Add.4](#)). Key services provided by the Support Office include payroll and the payment of other benefits, such as education grants, as relevant, for staff and uniformed personnel; human resources administration,

¹ The concept of developing a strategic reserve of stocks was initially proposed in 2002 (see [A/56/870](#)) and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution [56/292](#). The Secretary-General presented a revised concept in 2022 (see [A/76/730](#), annex IV) designed to provide a more responsive, reliable and resilient supply of goods, related services and expertise as integrated solutions to support current and emerging United Nations supply chain requirements. The revised concept foresees a centrally supplied inventory held at the Global Service Centre in Brindisi, regional inventory hubs (the first of which would be located in Entebbe, Uganda), and vendor-managed inventory (also known as "stockless inventory").

² The General Assembly decided in 2015 to grant the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe operational and managerial independence, including the establishment of its own annual budget from the 2016/17 financial year.

including onboarding and separation; travel and claims; vendor and cashier services; and accounts and financial reporting.

29. In its support to peace operations, the Kuwait Joint Support Office is a critical element of the Secretariat's global operational support architecture. Because of the opportunity offered by its existing capacities, as well as the efficiencies of economies of scale, the Kuwait Joint Support Office has been called upon to provide support services for at least five special political missions newly mandated outside of Africa since the Support Office was first established. These arrangements have continued as each mission reached full operational capability. Separately, the consolidation of payroll services across the Secretariat that necessarily accompanied the roll-out of the Umoja enterprise resource planning system led to the designation of the Kuwait Joint Support Office as the provider of payroll and education grant services for six peacekeeping operations and four additional political missions, as well as for the Global Service Centre in Brindisi and the United Nations Information and Communications Technology Facility, Valencia.

30. The Office has also proven to be essential to the Secretariat's support for peace operations faced with crisis situations, maintaining remote support, at times at surge levels, during the uncertainty surrounding the change in regime in Afghanistan and the security challenges more recently faced in Haiti.

C. Headquarters operational support structures

31. In addition to its global role in guiding operational support, the Department of Operational Support is mandated to provide, through its Division of Administration, integrated campus management and transactional services to New York-based Secretariat departments and offices. While a number of Headquarters departments and offices maintain their own executive office capacity, and rely on the Department of Operational Support's Division of Administration for facilities, travel and visa administration and for more specialized human resources and financial transactional requirements, a number of smaller entities, in the absence of internal capacity, depend on the Division for a full suite of administrative services.

32. This delineation of and focus within the role of the Division of Administration of the Department of Operational Support provides a sound foundation for the dedicated day-to-day service delivery required by its clients in New York, similar to the approach mandated for offices away from Headquarters. It also allows other elements of the Department to focus upon the strategic role of guiding support across the global Secretariat.

33. In its resolution [77/262](#), the General Assembly agreed to continue efforts to consolidate operational support functions that remain located at Headquarters. Because of their mostly global focus across the Secretariat, operational responsibilities related to payroll and accounts payable, as well as to commercial insurance, were transferred from the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance to the Department of Operational Support.

34. The integration of Headquarters procurement and logistics functions within a single structure since 2019, as facilitated by the Department of Operational Support, demonstrably strengthened supply chain operations across the global Secretariat. Further alignment of capacities in supply chain management, which are available across the Secretariat, allowed for the application of more localized knowledge and also enabled products to be rapidly advanced, including with regard to the use of a category management approach. The synergies between these functions within the Department's Office of Supply Chain Management and the use of a Secretariat-wide approach, which also leverages the services of the Centres in Brindisi and Entebbe,

as well as Secretariat-wide support capacity, has better facilitated the delivery of the right goods and services in the right place, at the right time and at the right cost.

35. Across key support functions, the development of capacities needed to improve and maintain support operations also remains a priority for the Department of Operational Support. The Department conducts regular, data-driven analyses of learning needs to facilitate the development of tailored training solutions that are intended to address gaps and emerging needs in support capacities across the Secretariat. It is also working with major service providers within the Secretariat to leverage the Department's Knowledge Gateway platform as a centralized hub for knowledge-sharing and standardized business processes in support functions.

36. With regard to ICT, dual reporting lines to the Under-Secretaries-General for Operational Support and Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance (see resolution 72/266 B) provide for technology capacities and services to be streamlined and scalable, modernized and robust, and fit-for-purpose for the benefit of Secretariat entities, as well as for clients across the United Nations system. Key objectives for the Office of Information and Communications Technology and the Enterprise Resource Planning Solution Division³ include the effective, efficient, secure, interoperable and innovative use of technology to provide strong and reliable ICT infrastructure and services for direct mandate delivery purposes; the use of digital transformation and innovation to extract the maximum benefit of technology, including by leveraging the power of data for informed decision-making; and the maintenance of safeguards for Secretariat information and digital assets. In pursuing these objectives, the Office of Information and Communications Technology continues to focus on strong communities of practice across the Secretariat to enable reductions in duplication and unnecessary redundancy, while at the same time strengthening interoperability and collaboration in order to optimize the use of technology resources across all Secretariat entities.

III. Continued strengthening of the service delivery concept across the Secretariat

37. Advantages and options are being examined to further leverage the Secretariat's global operational support architecture to best support Secretariat entities, including entities located at headquarters and others with predominantly field-facing mandates, beyond the arrangements already in place or being implemented to support peace and security and development pillars, in a manner that is both responsive and cost-effective.

38. Some Secretariat entities have a legacy commitment to establish strong stand-alone support capacities. However, a multitude of separate capacities that provide support services can complicate efforts to achieve simplification and harmonization and lead to unnecessary business and process risks. Other Secretariat operations continue to rely on limited internal support arrangements and/or the capacities of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes for support requirements. Options are being developed that could reduce operational support costs for these Secretariat entities and allow for their enhanced focus on core operations and mandate delivery, while also facilitating stronger integration and recognition within the Secretariat and greater access to specialized support capacities.

³ Dual reporting lines for the Office of Information and Communications Technology and the Enterprise Resource Planning Solution Division were established to the Under-Secretaries-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and Operational Support by the General Assembly in resolutions 72/266 B and 75/253 A, respectively.

39. Opportunities include shared support services, such as those that could leverage the advantages offered by the Umoja enterprise resource planning system. These could be extended remotely by the Secretariat to its operations in locations where an in situ Secretariat support capacity is not available. Instances of current support arrangements for Secretariat entities, especially with regard to the administration of personnel, are in fact already provided by agencies, funds and programmes, at a cost, on a remote shared-services basis. In other cases, options are available for Secretariat field activities to comprehensively leverage in situ support capacities from other, nearby Secretariat entities, including neighbouring peace operations. Initiatives to enhance the use of existing support capacities also provide an opportunity to strengthen the service performance culture and service management systems of the Secretariat.

A. Guiding principles

40. Informed by lessons learned from past initiatives, advances in technology and changes in work practices as a result of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, efforts to develop the Secretariat's global operational support architecture continue to be guided by the following core principles endorsed by the Management Committee of the Secretariat in March 2022.

Mandate for the Department of Operational Support to lead the partnership to develop the Secretariat's existing operational support architecture

41. The Department of Operational Support, as the relevant operational arm of the Secretariat, facilitates the delivery of operational support across the Secretariat, in partnership with other service providers. Through global stewardship, the Department has the responsibility to review and strengthen the Secretariat's operational support architecture as well as to foster increased operational collaboration within the Secretariat and with the wider United Nations system as part of that architecture.

Commitment to increasingly provide shared services through the Secretariat's existing structures and locations

42. Further progress in identifying opportunities for shared service delivery, on a global and regional level, that builds on comparative advantages offered through existing Secretariat locations, should be an imperative with regard to reducing duplication and fragmentation in support services and expert capacities, and will enable greater economies of scale and interoperability/standardization across the Secretariat and reduce the United Nations footprint (and risks to operational continuity) in remote and insecure locations.

43. The global network of existing Secretariat providers underpins a strong foundation that works towards greater emphasis on shared, location-independent services. In this context, emerging workplace practices and processes may provide an opportunity for the Secretariat to better collaborate across its entities by providing services without relocating staff.

44. Opportunities also remain to share support capacities at a local level. These include the relatively small number of locations globally where the Secretariat has a major support capacity, including New York, offices away from Headquarters and regional commissions, as well as the much larger number of countries where there is a small presence of a number of Secretariat entities, each with its own separate, but limited, administrative functions.

While shared services should be optimized across the Secretariat, whether through global or regional service providers, steps should be taken, where beneficial, to locate support services closer to primary decision makers

45. While the centralized provision of location-independent services on a shared basis provides significant benefits beyond the avoidance of unnecessary duplication of independent service capacities, often in insecure and remote locations, the Secretariat should ensure that due regard is given to proximity as a factor when assigning service providers.

Strengthened collaboration with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes at the global, regional and local levels

46. The Secretary-General has committed the Secretariat to full participation in the development system efficiency agenda. It remains equally important that the Secretariat regularizes and consolidates agreements with non-Secretariat United Nations service providers and limits such arrangements in cases where the Secretariat is well placed to provide its own support on a cost-effective basis. This includes location-independent transactional services that could be provided centrally from the Secretariat to field-facing Secretariat offices.

Integrated, collaborative approach across the Secretariat in developing its global operational support architecture

47. In a partnership approach, the success of efforts to develop the Secretariat's global operational support architecture relies on close collaboration and support among all major Secretariat service providers, with the aim of improving and optimizing service delivery by the Secretariat. The Department of Operational Support is working closely with all major providers and client groups as needed to ensure a joint, integrated approach to service provision by the Secretariat.

B. Enabling workstreams

48. Efforts continue to further strengthen Secretariat service delivery across its entities in line with the aforementioned principles. A road map endorsed by the Management Committee of the Secretariat in 2022 to guide the development of the Secretariat's global operational support architecture focuses on priority initiatives across three key areas, namely integration, harmonization and improvement.

Integration

49. Further streamlining support responsibilities and capacities provides a key opportunity to drive service excellence and build economies of scale by solidifying and expanding on the specific competencies of selected service providers within the Secretariat's support architecture. Enhanced process integration also minimizes the number of handover points between service providers and increasingly helps institute end-to-end accountability with regard to improving client services.

50. To ensure continuous enhancement and attention at appropriate levels, an inclusive governance framework across operational support has been put in place within the Secretariat. The Secretariat's Management Committee considers progress reports on the development of the Secretariat's global operational support architecture on a semi-annual basis. In addition, heads of administration of offices away from Headquarters and regional commissions participate in leadership meetings of the Department of Operational Support on a periodic basis to contribute to deliberations

on key planning and performance concerns with regard to Secretariat operational support.

51. Furthermore, underscoring the implementation of client-centric service delivery, including end-to-end service delivery, regardless of the assigned Secretariat service provider, the Board of Auditors recommended that the Secretariat prioritize the implementation of a Secretariat-wide, modern client relations management system to optimally fulfil the service delivery responsibility of the Headquarters support structure (A/75/5 (Vol. I), para. 360).

Harmonization

52. Harmonization of service delivery methods and of the underlying process and systems is a core tenet in strengthening the Secretariat's global operational support architecture. It constitutes an important enabler to address fragmented service delivery, interoperability or transferability across Secretariat entities, facilitating a "one Secretariat" approach with regard to external clients and partners and maximizing the benefits of economies of scale and process efficiency.

53. In this regard, a template for a common service level agreement has been designed to facilitate service provision across the Secretariat. A common service catalogue is also under development to align nomenclature, and an initial set of global performance measures applicable to all service providers has been developed in the form of minimum service standards, with efforts under way to operationalize the required data capture and related performance analytics. The latter initiative will be complemented by the development of a common client service satisfaction survey, as a step towards establishing a continuous feedback mechanism between major service providers and clients. As key enablers of any expanded shared support structure, as well as drivers of service excellence, the set of global performance measures and the common client satisfaction survey will together form key parts of a performance framework that will be applied globally within the Secretariat, mature over time and provide rich input to facilitate further improvement to support service arrangements, with the aim of ensuring that quality services are delivered and the concerns of clients are identified and addressed.

Improvement

54. Operational support services are ultimately meaningful only if they deliver what is needed to implement mandates. The role of the Department of Operational Support to provide stewardship across the Secretariat's global operational support framework, and in close partnership with major service providers, is being facilitated by an incremental and agile approach to continuous improvement, with strong attention paid to client perspectives.

55. In 2022, a global capacity-building training programme that focused on client-service excellence was designed and launched. The programme was offered across all major Secretariat service providers, and approximately 1,000 client-facing operational support staff were trained globally.

56. Furthermore, a review has been undertaken to enhance the role and work of a process improvement advisory group, led by the Department of Operational Support, to facilitate business improvement across Secretariat support functions. Within this framework, a practical list of process "pain points" is being further developed, and various functional areas across the Secretariat's support architecture are engaged in addressing identified needs, including with regard to the Secretary-General's objective of process simplification. As an adjunct to areas in which the Secretariat is utilizing the principles of mutual recognition, the Department of Management

Strategy, Policy and Compliance and the Department of Operational Support also continue to examine Secretariat policies to ensure their relevance.

IV. Conclusion

57. The reforms of the Secretary-General place particular emphasis on the requirements of United Nations field activities, including development, the delivery of humanitarian assistance, human rights monitoring, reporting and investigation, and peace operations ([A/72/492](#), para. 84). As the United Nations reaches the halfway mark of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, efforts to improve the effectiveness of the Organization remain as important as ever.

58. With a dispersed structure of delegated authority to match the Secretariat's wide-ranging mandates, large number of locations, diverse stakeholder and beneficiary groups and increasing need to ensure that operational support is modern and fit-for-purpose, improving service delivery and operational support to client entities remains a core objective of the Secretariat. In its decision to provide clarity and focus in management and support responsibilities at Headquarters, the General Assembly established the Department of Operational Support as the lead operational arm to guide and facilitate support for Secretariat mandate delivery, including transactional services, process simplification and support for surge, transition and other special activities, across all the Secretariat's entities and operations.

59. Tangible results have been achieved, but more remains to be done to ensure the Secretariat's operational support architecture provides an appropriate platform to further improve the effectiveness, efficiency and responsiveness of operational support to mandate delivery. Further strengthening of Secretariat support capacities, by eliminating unneeded duplication and emphasizing the role of remote service delivery, especially with regard to streamlining support arrangements, remains a key aspect of improvements to the service delivery concept to be delivered under the stewardship of the Department of Operational Support. The increased adoption of a shared services approach, especially for high-volume, location-independent support services, and between co-located Secretariat entities, will lead to the realization of further benefits from the Secretariat's enterprise resource planning systems, such as Umoja. The continuous improvement of the Umoja system can in fact provide added opportunities for shared service delivery by the Secretariat.

60. At the local level, peace operations have traditionally played an important, but often ad hoc, role in the provision of operational support services to other Secretariat and United Nations system entities. In paragraph 1 of its resolution [2594 \(2021\)](#), the Security Council emphasized the need for peace operations to engage at the earliest possible stage in integrated planning and coordination on transitions with the resident coordinators, United Nations country teams and other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. The comparative advantages in support operations and capacities often held by a peace operation in a post-conflict setting are critical to the efficiency and interoperability needed to facilitate and realize the benefits of programmatic integration. Experience demonstrates that collaboration in support arrangements also provides a critical "head start" to mission transition.

61. An integrated global operational support architecture across the Secretariat is critical to the task ahead. Addressing challenges such as those mentioned above will remain a journey of change management and cross-functional enhancement, through increased integration, harmonization, improvement and simplification, in support operations at various levels and across all stakeholders. Guiding and coordinating this process, in support of and in close partnership with service providers and service recipients alike, will remain one of the key goals of the Department of Operational

Support, in cooperation with the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, regional commissions and offices away from Headquarters.

V. Action to be taken by the General Assembly

62. It is recommended that the General Assembly take note of the continuing work within the Secretariat outlined in the report of the Secretary-General in connection with the development of the Secretariat's global operational support architecture.
