



JOINT INSPECTION UNIT
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to introduce the Report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) entitled “Succession planning in the United Nations system organizations” (JIU/REP/2016/2), contained in document A/71/393.

The Unit welcomes the note of the Secretary-General reflecting his comments and those of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) on the recommendations provided in our report (A/71/393/Add.1).

The objectives of this system-wide review are to: (a) follow up and assess the progress made in developing a framework for a succession planning strategy and implementing relevant policies; (b) identify succession planning challenges and propose solutions; (c) identify and disseminate best/good practices; and (d) propose benchmarks for succession planning.

The review revealed that succession planning, important as it is, is not a priority in any United Nations system organization. However, the alarming demographics in most of the organizations across the system do not allow them the luxury to wait any longer. The organizations have to expedite their succession planning. This will enable them to prevent potential loss of institutional memory and interruption of knowledge transfer and business continuity in their leadership positions and other crucial functions.

My first finding was that the United Nations system organizations have not yet adopted any definition of succession planning, either at the organizational level or system-wide. Moreover, I found that at present, no United Nations system organization has a formal succession planning process in place. Hence, the review mapped the elements of the existing informal succession planning processes that are in line with the framework proposed in 2009 by the secretariat of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), in response to a relevant recommendation issued in 2007 by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). More precisely, the review assessed the progress made in the system-wide discussions on succession planning that were initiated in 2009 in the framework of the CEB High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) Human Resources Network.

I regret that the discussions were discontinued, resulting in a lack of progress at inter-agency level for more than six years now. Therefore, I recommend that the members of the Network consider the introduction of succession planning in the course of 2017 as a new, indispensable component of the ICSC Framework for Human Resources Management. I also invite the members of the CEB/HLCM Human Resources Network to restore the dialogue and exchange of ideas and good practices in the framework of the Network.

It is my view that in recognition of the fact that staff members are their most vital asset, the United Nations system organizations have to recognize the importance of the people who lead and manage this asset as well as the importance of those who discharge critical functions that have an impact on all staff. For the proper implementation of succession planning, I suggest the application of five benchmarks that are based on leading practices in the private and public sectors .

Mr. Chairman, I am asking the legislative/governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations to exercise their oversight role and examine the causes for the lack of, and/or the delay in, the introduction of formal succession planning in their respective organizations, including the adequacy of current funding; and request the executive heads of these organizations to develop formal succession planning without any further delay, by the end of 2017.

Mr. Chairman, I would ask that specific action be taken on the other two recommendations addressed to the executive heads aiming at ensuring that their human resources management offices: (a) adopt the benchmarks set out in the present report with a view to ensuring that their organizations have a sound succession planning process, and report on the progress made to their legislative/governing bodies; and (b) develop and implement appropriate frameworks for succession planning strategies, and devise appropriate guidelines on the succession planning process without any further delay, by the end of 2017.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would ask that the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination to ensure that succession planning is reinstated as a main agenda item of the Human Resources Network of the High-level Committee on Management, and given the utmost attention and most serious consideration in the future sessions of the Network.

I believe that the endorsement of the recommendations contained in the report will greatly facilitate the undertaking of succession planning efforts across the system, as I ask them to achieve it with the best means currently at their disposal, yet planning for the future.

I look forward to your comments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman