



JOINT INSPECTION UNIT
of the United Nations System

CORPS COMMUN d'INSPECTION
du Système des Nations Unies

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifth Committee, 72nd Session, 31 October 2017
Agenda Item 141: Human Resources Management
JIU/REP/2016/10
A/72/325; Add. 1

STATEMENT
by
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Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

I have the honour to introduce the Report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) entitled “Knowledge management in the United Nations system” (JIU/REP/2016/10), contained in document A/72/325.

The review of knowledge management in the United Nations system is based on the conviction that knowledge is a valuable core asset of the United Nations system organizations and their best comparative advantage. The effective utilization of knowledge both in the organizations and system-wide is critical for achieving the United Nations objectives and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The main purpose of the review was to enhance awareness about knowledge management and to identify best practices to be considered, emulated and adapted across the system, in accordance with the resources and needs of each organization. The present report is a knowledge management exercise in itself as it showcases initiatives and experiences that already exist in the United Nations system and offers several directions that can be followed to better use knowledge produced and disseminated by the system.

We have a number of reasons to believe that JIU produced a useful and timely report. Allow me to note some of them:

1. **The General Assembly** in paragraph 70 of its **resolution 71/243** on the “Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system” **recognizes formally, for the first time in its history, the importance of knowledge management.**

We welcome the clear appeal addressed therein by the General Assembly to the United Nations development system “*to introduce or strengthen knowledge management strategies and policies, with a view to enhancing transparency and improving its capabilities to generate, retain, use and share knowledge, and move towards a system-wide open data collaborative approach for a common and accessible knowledge base*”. This echoes in a nutshell the respective call of JIU

for implementation of all the recommendations contained in our report, placed in the right context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. The Secretary-General and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) expressed overall support for all of the formal and soft recommendations provided in our report (A/72/325/Add.1).

We hope that, based on this expression of support, **the General Assembly will include in its agenda an item or sub-item dedicated to knowledge management** in the United Nations system and request that a report be submitted by the Secretary-General, with contributions from CEB members, on system-wide best practices and initiatives in the area of knowledge management that support the holistic, integrated and collaborative approach of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

3. The keen interest shown and the dynamic posture that was taken by other stakeholders (academia, think-tanks, organizations and networks of the civil society) in promoting knowledge management and knowledge sharing in the service of sustainable development, in a spirit of genuine partnership.

This was made manifest in the “*Knowledge for Development: Global Partnership Conference*”, co-organized by our Unit in Geneva in April 2017, following the publication of the report, as an exercise of identifying good practices in asserting knowledge as a main driver towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

We take pride in reporting to the General Assembly that the **Joint Inspection Unit received the Knowledge Management Award 2017**, as a recognition for its contribution to the promotion of knowledge management at the United Nations system level.

Mr. Chairman,

The 14 in total - seven formal and seven soft - recommendations made by JIU in this report were based on several main observations and findings, briefly alluded to below:

As a **strategic resource**, knowledge requires ongoing continual assessment of its use by means of an effective and productive management in order to ensure that it is optimal. **Knowledge management was not yet a strategic priority** in all United Nations system organizations and there were no common practices that were accepted or shared system-wide. Knowledge management remains a challenge for the United Nations system organizations in their attempt to systematically and efficiently develop, organize, share and integrate knowledge to achieve their cross-cutting goals.

Knowledge management will help organizations learn from past failures and successes, **redeploy and reuse existing knowledge assets, solve problems or innovate, foster and develop the right competencies, update and remove obsolete knowledge and ensure that knowledge and competencies are not lost.**

In order to reduce costs, organizations — large and small — need to continuously improve the way they capture, share and deliver their intellectual capital across departments, units, sectors and functions, at headquarters and in the field. Such improvement does not happen systematically and everywhere across the United Nations system. There is no formal control of the associated

repetitive costs. **Some organizations still seem unable to extract themselves from costly functional silos and, instead, tolerate expensive duplications and reinventions of the wheel.** The proliferation of uncoordinated or difficult to access repositories has often had a negative impact on staff's and decision makers' ability to find relevant content quickly as well as on the overall cost of content.

Knowledge management benefits are both far reaching and hard to measure. **Knowledge management prevents waste of money, time and human resources.** However, it is difficult to quantify the time spent in, or the cost of, finding the right information or reproducing knowledge that already exists or using obsolete instead of up-to-date information or investing in technology without assessing its potential to improve the availability and accessibility of knowledge. Overspending money is easily detected, but overspending time is almost neglected. Knowledge management benefits are not achieved directly nor overnight. The prevention of errors and the savings that are often achieved through better use and reuse of existing knowledge are practically invisible in accounting terms.

Against this background, knowledge management helps to qualify and identify what the organization knows, where and in what form the knowledge is located, how organized the access to knowledge is and what the best ways to transfer knowledge to the right people at the right time are.

An underlying assumption of the present report is that **knowledge management can be improved within existing resources.** Without ignoring the possible need to invest financial resources in knowledge management, the review paid special attention to the role of human resources as the prevailing factor in knowledge management processes. I believe that there is a latent virtuous circle that can be activated to valorise knowledge and human resources that are currently underutilized in each organization and system-wide.

Efficient management of knowledge does not depend only on technology, but mainly on the human and managerial resources of the organization. Knowledge management is — par excellence — a participative process, in which the personal proactive attitude of knowledge workers is essential.

The United Nations system is a catalyst and a disseminator of knowledge. Knowledge management can be used as a tool for promoting interdepartmental, system-wide and multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Overall, Mr. Chairman, the recommendations are aimed at enhancing the role of knowledge management in the service of the 2030 Agenda.

I will not repeat any of them as they are all highlighted in the Executive Summary of the report at your disposal. However, I am drawing your attention to the one addressed to the General Assembly, having in mind that this particular recommendation may greatly facilitate to gradually developing a common system-wide knowledge management culture and contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I thank you for your kind attention, and would welcome comments and questions you might have.
