

IV. BUSINESS PRACTICES

Document:

- ✓ CEB/2007/HLCM/16 and Add.1 – *HLCM Plan of Action for the Harmonization and Reform Business Practices in the UN System*

22. The HLCM at its 13th session agreed to develop, with the support of its Networks, a plan of action for the Harmonization and Reform of Business Practices, based on indicative priorities and areas of interest identified during the review of a preliminary proposal by the CEB Secretariat.

23. Following endorsement of this initiative by CEB at its April 2007 session, a Steering Group led by the HLCM vice-chair (Denis Aitken, WHO) and composed by the current chairs of the HLCM Networks - Jay Karia (UN), Gary Eidet (IAEA), Martha Helena Lopez (UN), Dyane Dufresne-Klaus (UNESCO), Susana Malcorra (WFP) - with support provided by the CEB Secretariat, started the development of such plan of action, including detailed terms of reference outlining the scope, objectives, timeline and resources for each of the projects identified.

24. Two criteria were identified by the Steering Group as the inspiring principles for the development of project proposals and the assessment of priorities to be included in the plan: (1) achieving efficiencies and (2) promoting the concept of delivering as one at the country level.

25. The proposed plan was framed within the context of the current review of the role and functioning of CEB and took into consideration the management coherence requirements arising from the launching of the “Delivering as One” Pilots.

26. Following approval by the HLCM, funding and endorsement for the plan would be primarily sought through extra-budgetary mechanisms and not through the normal cost-sharing arrangements in place for jointly financed activities.

27. There was consensus on the fact that the quality of the design and, subsequently, the successful implementation of any project aimed at the harmonization and reform of business practices across the UN system would heavily depend on the commitment by organizations to contribute the time and skills of their internal resources to such effort. It was indeed understood that the availability of the necessary financial means and of human resources acquired on the external market would complement and support organizations’ own commitment to *make these projects happen*.

28. The project proposals presented to the Committee cut across all management areas: some belonged more specifically to the Human Resources domain, while others leaned more toward the interests of Financial Management or Information and Communication Technology practices. Many implied, to some degree, a deliberate effort to enhance knowledge sharing, internally - across functional borders – and externally - across organizations.

29. Some projects were already ripe for the formulation of action plans, assignment of dedicated resources, and implementation, while some others still required further investigation, and were therefore designed as feasibility studies. Some were new, others expanded on already existing initiatives and programmes that were being brought to scale through central coordination and support.

30. The Committee examined the proposed plan of action both as a complete and homogeneous package, which would serve as a reference framework for the HLCM programme of work for the next biennium, as well as in its individual components (the different project proposals).

31. The staff representatives, which had been invited by the Committee to participate in the discussion, appreciated the initiative and offered some comments, particularly in connection with the staff requirements emerging from the implementation of the “Delivering as One” Pilots; the critical need to increase staff training and development at all levels; and the tools and mechanisms required for promoting mobility, in a manner that is beneficial to both organizations and their staff.

32. It was emphasized that any initiative aimed at service off-shoring and/or outsourcing should be considered taking into the necessary account the sensitivity of the subject.

33. Concerning the mechanisms to be adopted for the channeling of contributions towards the proposal, UNDP mentioned that all options should be explored, including existing modalities such as Multi-Donor Trust Funds, with a view to identifying the most appropriate one.

34. There was consensus on the fact that the entire proposal had to be considered from an actionable and operational point of view. For this reason, a number of follow-up actions and implementation modalities were discussed and agreed upon by the Committee, as summarized below in the conclusions.

Conclusions and Action Points

35. The Committee approved the overall thrust of the document and, one by one, the nineteen initiatives outlined in Section VI, page 12 of CEB/2007/HLCM/16, with the exception of the HR project number 2 for a “Framework for the Harmonization and Coordination of Staff Mobility and Well-being Initiatives” which, given its ongoing and internal nature, would be best funded through core contributions from UN system organizations’ regular budgets; the ICT project number 6 on Common Services – Global Networks, which the Committee agreed to fund entirely from voluntary contributions already committed by organizations (see below, Section VII-C); and the ICT project number 8 “UN System Directory”, which would be pursued within the context of UNDG.

36. Input in the plan of action from the newly established HLCM Procurement and Legal Networks would be provided during the course of the fall 2007. Once ready, these proposals would be submitted to the Committee’s Steering Group for appropriate evaluation.

37. Two additional projects that had received the endorsement of both the Finance and Budget Network and the HLCM Steering Group, but whose timing and modalities were not considered and set in time for the HLCM review, would be shortly submitted to the Committee’s Steering Group for evaluation. They are:

- a) A feasibility study for putting in place "Common Treasury Services";
- b) The completion of a Comparative Analysis of Organizations’ Financial Regulations and Rules, leading to an action plan for system-wide harmonization.

38. An effort of prioritization within approved initiatives (priorities within priorities) would be carried out by the relevant HLCM Networks. This would include the definition of operational modalities and the sequencing of initiatives, given the ample diversity within their proposed timeframe for implementation and completion. Meeting the requirements of the “Delivering as One” pilots should be a driving principle for the prioritization.
39. The views of the staff should be taken in due consideration during the process of establishing priorities.
40. For each project there would be a lead agency, to be determined upon consultation within the relevant HLCM Network. The lead agency, which would carry ultimate responsibility for delivery, would set a detailed implementation plan, as well corresponding governance mechanisms. Project plans should include an assessment of expected cost savings and return on investments.
41. HLCM organizations can voluntarily commit their participation in any of the proposed initiatives (cluster approach).
42. Estimated costs and duration for each project would have to be validated before submission of the plan of action to donors. Expected timeframe would have to be determined depending on the receipt and allocation of required funding.
43. The Business Practices proposal, whose content would represent the basis for the programme of work of HLCM and its Secretariat for the next biennium, would be submitted for endorsement and approval at the fall session of CEB.
44. The final Business Practices proposal should be packaged for fund-raising in such a way it clearly conveys its inter-disciplinary nature, highlighting the high-value impact and cost-saving initiatives. It should clearly indicate that no conditions may be attached by donors to funding commitments.
45. The HLCM Steering Group, led by the HLCM Chair and Vice-Chair and composed by the Chairs of the HLCM Networks and by the Director of the CEB Secretariat, would develop a coordinated communication and fund raising strategy.
46. Concerning the proposal to establish a separate Trust Fund under the CEB Secretariat for the channeling of contributions towards this initiative, advice from the Chairs of the Finance and Budget Network would be sought to identify the best option, including the possibility of using existing modalities.
47. Concerning the proposal to establish a separate Trust Fund under the CEB Secretariat for the channeling of contributions towards the proposal, advice from the Chairs of the Finance and Budget Network would be sought for the best option, including the possibility of using existing modalities.
48. The governance mechanisms as outlined in Section IV of CEB/2007/HLCM/16, providing for the additional roles and responsibilities of the lead agency as described above, were endorsed by the Committee, as follows:
 - a) High-level endorsement of detailed project budgets (as submitted by the lead agency) by the HLCM Chair and the HLCM Steering Group (HLCM Vice-Chair, Network Spokespersons, Director of the CEB Secretariat);

- b) Formal financial authorization of expenses for each individual project by the lead agency responsible for the project;
- c) Annual reporting by the lead agency to the Plenary on the status of expenses against proposed budgets, results achieved against stated objectives, with clear indication of accountabilities.

49. Separate ad-hoc funding for the professional evaluation of activities performed within the proposed plan of action would be provided for in the overall funding requirements, together with a provision for administrative support and coordination.

V. SECURITY AND SAFETY OF STAFF

Documents:

- ✓ CEB/2007/HLCM/17 – *Report of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN)*
- ✓ CEB/2007/HLCM/23 – *Terms of Reference for a Working Group on identification and implementation of equitable and sustainable funding arrangements for the UN Security Management System*
- ✓ CEB/2007/HLCM/XIV/INF.3 – *UNDSS Provisional Performance Report – 1 January 2006–30 June 2007*

50. As is custom, the Committee received a briefing by the United Nations Under-Secretary General for Safety and Security on “Strategic development of the UN Security Management System”.

51. UNDSS briefing focused on the growingly direct and explicit threat by terrorist groups towards the United Nations.

52. The Committee was brought up-to-date with the recent propaganda campaign by Al-Qaeda, which increasingly attempts to reach a global audience through a variety of multi lingual, audio, video and textual productions, featuring its senior leaders, which are further disseminated through multiple extremist websites. It was noted that such propaganda campaigns have proven very effective.

53. In its most recent media production, Al-Qaeda expanded its anti-UN propaganda beyond its usual focus on the UN’s political and peacekeeping role, to include the UN’s humanitarian programmes and activities.

54. Based upon the fact that security is both an individual and a collective responsibility, the USG urged consideration of three opportunities for strategic development actions the UN system could take to mitigate these daunting threats.

55. The first is **visible leadership**, which needs to be based upon a clear understanding of the reality of present dangers. In this respect, UNDP plays a particularly valuable role, especially in its vital support to Designated Officials.

56. For what concerns **accountability**, HLCM member organizations collectively own a security accountability framework. Though endorsed by the Committee, this document requires wider dissemination to enhance awareness of the principles of accountability it contains, which should in turn more frequently be included in regular business and management decision making.