

# UPDATE ON STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ISSUES

**Additional documents for this item:**

*A fit for purpose workforce - UNAIDS in 2019 report (UNAIDS/PCB (46)/CRP3)*

*UNAIDS Administrative Review Statistical Overview 2019 report (UNAIDS/PCB (46)/CRP4)*

*HRM-IN-2020 Disciplinary and other corrective actions 2019 (UNAIDS/PCB (46)/CRP5)*

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

72. Take note of the Update on Strategic Human Resources Management Issues

**Cost implications for the implementation of the decisions:** none

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This update provides information on human resources management activities undertaken by the Secretariat of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) during the reporting period April 2019 to March 2020, in response to the request of the Programme Coordinating Board at its 30th meeting in June 2012.

The update should be read in conjunction with the *A fit for purpose workforce—UNAIDS in 2019* report, published in May 2020, which contains data, charts and statistics about the UNAIDS workforce at December 2019, together with trend analysis on the evolution of the workforce over the past few years. The update also refers to the content of two conference papers: the 2019 annual report on UNAIDS administration of justice cases and a report on disciplinary and other corrective action taken in 2019.

The Programme Coordinating Board is invited take note of the contents of this update.

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. This update provides information on human resources management (HRM) activities undertaken by the Secretariat of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) during the reporting period April 2019 to March 2020, in response to the request of the Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) at its 30th meeting in June 2012.
2. This update should be read in conjunction with the *A fit for purpose workforce—UNAIDS in 2019* report, published in May 2020, which contains data, charts and statistics about the UNAIDS workforce at December 2019, together with trend analysis on the evolution of the workforce in recent years (UNAIDS/PCB (46)/CRP3). Attention is also drawn to the 2019 annual report on UNAIDS administration of justice cases and the report on disciplinary and other corrective action taken in 2019, both of which are available as Conference Room Papers (UNAIDS/PCB (46)/CRP4 and UNAIDS/PCB (46)/CRP5).
3. Since the last update to the PCB on Strategic HRM issues, the Secretariat has continued to move forward with its ambitious agenda across the four pillars of the 2016–2021 HRM Strategy: investing in people, strengthening our performance culture, inspiring collective leadership and ensuring an enabling workplace. Progress in each of these areas is summarized in this report.
4. Many of the initiatives in the Management Action Plan (MAP) are also the responsibility of the HRM department. As we move forward with these and other initiatives summarized in this update, we remain focused on ensuring that HRM activities align with and support ongoing efforts to uphold dignity, accountability and wellbeing in the UNAIDS workplace, and on ensuring that UNAIDS provides an environment in which staff members feel safe and happy to work, and are supported and empowered to perform to the best of their abilities.
5. It would be impossible to present this update without acknowledging the major impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on the ways in which UNAIDS staff members interact, perform their tasks and contribute to the critical work of the Secretariat. This has created challenges which, at the time of writing this report, we are collectively working to address. These challenges have also created opportunities to rethink, streamline and simplify some work practices, for example by using electronic signatures for approval purposes.

## II. OUR WORKFORCE—COMPOSITION AND DIVERSITY

6. The *A fit for purpose workforce—UNAIDS in 2019* report provides an overview of the composition of the UNAIDS workforce at 31 December 2019. In the past year, the total number of staff members increased by 16 to 696, with the percentage of staff members in the international professional (P and above) category decreasing slightly to 47%.
7. Eighty-six percent of staff members in the international professional category are graded at the Professional level (P2 – P5), and 14% at the D1 level and above. As was the case last year, the largest concentration (128) of P staff members hold a personal grade level of P5, and only 19 are graded at the P2 level. This presents an opportunity for the Secretariat to critically review the grade levels of positions as they become

vacant and to consider downgrading some in order to increase age diversity and opportunities for recent graduates to join and develop in the Secretariat.

8. Special efforts were made during the reporting period to identify and appoint the right candidates to perform the critical roles of UNAIDS Country Directors (UCDs). In 2019, a comprehensive assessment and process was undertaken with the support of an external vendor to develop a roster of staff members and external applicants who were prequalified to serve as UCDs. Following this assessment centre process, which included 18 participants, 12 UCD vacancies were advertised and candidates from the roster, as well as currently-serving UCDs, were invited to compete for each position.
9. Results were positive, both in terms of the quality of the selected candidates and their diversity. The selected UCDs comprised 8 women and 4 men, of whom 9 were from the global south and 3 from the global north, allowing UNAIDS to achieve its target of gender parity in UCDs. Ten of the selected UCDs were internal candidates, most of whom had not previously held a UCD role, and 2 were external candidates. A decision has now been taken to assess shortlisted candidates for all Director-level and UCD positions through an assessment centre and to ensure that internal participants participate in the UNAIDS coaching programme to develop their skills and address competency gaps.
10. Since 2012, the Secretariat has maintained a target of no less than 70% of staff members deployed outside of Headquarters (HQ) and it continues to meet that target. In 2019, 76% of our field-based staff worked in 1 of the 3 regions most impacted by HIV: eastern and southern Africa (32%), western and central Africa (25%), and Asia and the Pacific (19%).
11. Staff mobility remains important to maintain a versatile and flexible workforce, facilitate the development, exchange and transfer of skills and knowledge across the Secretariat, and meet our duty-of-care obligations to staff members, particularly those based in hardship duty stations. In the 2019/20 mobility exercise, 42 staff members were considered for reassignment. Twenty-five moves have been endorsed by the Executive Director (EXD) and are expected to take place during the course of 2020.
12. Last year, we reported that a mobility review would be undertaken to consider how the Secretariat utilizes mobility to meet its talent management objectives. That review is almost complete. A key finding has been that UNAIDS professional staff largely support mobility as an effective business practice for the organization, but also support greater transparency and consistency in the way that decisions are made. Several changes are expected with the aim of strengthening the mobility policy and process in the 2020/21 cycle and ensuring that UNAIDS staff members get the opportunity to serve in different duty stations, without the Organization losing critical specialist knowledge.
13. Gender parity at all levels is an important goal in the UNAIDS 2018–2023 Gender Action Plan. While the overall proportion of female staff members in UNAIDS stood at 55% for the past 5 years, the balance at different grade levels remains uneven and women remain underrepresented at the more senior managerial levels (constituting 45% of staff at P5 to D2 levels, a 2% increase on the previous year).
14. With a limited number of external recruitments, the UNAIDS Secretariat focuses its efforts to address this gap by developing internal female staff in both the national and

international categories. In April 2019, the introduction of the UNAIDS *Short-term Development Assignments* policy provided eligible staff members with an opportunity to undertake short assignments of up to 6 months in a different office to meet temporary staffing needs or undertake emergency work, with the right to return to their substantive position. In total, 6 staff members, all of them women and locally recruited, participated in the programme in 2019.

15. Included as Action Area 4 in the Gender Action Plan, the UNAIDS Secretariat commits to full compliance with the UN System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women framework. For the 2019 reporting period, the UNAIDS Secretariat's self-assessment has been validated by UN Women. For 6 performance indicators, the UNAIDS Secretariat "exceeds requirements". It "meets" 8 and "approaches" 2 of the performance indicators. Remedial action plans have been developed to improve the latter performances.
16. With regard to geographical diversity, 123 nationalities were represented in the UNAIDS workforce in December 2019, and there were 101 nationalities among its 330 international professional staff members. At the P4 to D2 levels, 60% of staff members were from non-OECD countries. In addition, our affiliate workforce comprises personnel from a range of different countries. UNAIDS remains grateful to Member States which sponsored the 13 Junior Professional Officers (JPOs) and 7 secondments in 2019, and it welcomes opportunities to further grow and diversify these programmes in the year ahead. We acknowledge, in particular, sponsorship of JPOs from the global south by Belgium and the Netherlands.
17. As an example of our efforts to increase the diversity of our workforce, a revised UNAIDS internship policy was launched in September 2019, offering eligible applicants a stipend and medical coverage for the duration of their assignment. The aim is enable candidates from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to participate. New supervising guidelines were formulated and reporting requirements were altered to enable UNAIDS to better assess the effectiveness and outcomes of internships. Over the past year, UNAIDS offered 114 internship positions (68% female) to candidates from many more countries and regions than had previously been the case.
18. UNAIDS and the United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV) signed a memorandum of understanding during the reporting period to strengthen their partnership and foster closer collaboration between the two organizations. Under the new memorandum of understanding, UNAIDS and UNV will continue to jointly identify UNVs highly committed to supporting people living with and affected by HIV. In partnership with UNV's Executive Coordinator and UNV Field units, UNAIDS has integrated qualified, motivated volunteers into its development programming in recognition of the global value of volunteerism.
19. Finally, enhanced data analysis has helped us analyse the composition of our workforce and identify which demographic groups are underrepresented or not represented at all. The strong commitment of the UNAIDS Secretariat to a diverse workforce will continue to be included in all vacancy announcements. Revised recruitment processes will help foster greater geographic diversity and gender balance, and will include enhanced outreach to potential applicants through corporate social media accounts, civil society networks and universities in programme countries.

### III. ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

20. Significant progress was made in the reporting period in resolving formal administration of justice cases. In the interest of greater transparency and in response to requests for information and annual reports pertaining to the internal justice system of UNAIDS, the Secretariat has compiled and attached as conference papers the 2019 annual report on UNAIDS administration of justice cases and a report on disciplinary and other corrective action taken in 2019.
21. The request for administrative review (RAR) is the first stage in the formal conflict resolution process. It is intended to determine whether the contested final administrative decision has resulted in the non-observance of the staff member's terms of appointment, including all pertinent staff regulations and staff rules. In 2019, 15 RARs were received (compared to 16 in 2018), resulting in 9 final administrative decisions being issued. One submission was withdrawn, and 1 case was settled amicably. Four RARs received in 2019 remained in progress as of 31 December 2019.
22. The second stage in the formal conflict resolution process involves an appeal by the staff member to the Global Board of Appeal if the staff member is dissatisfied with the outcome of the RAR. In 2019, the Global Board of Appeal received 15 new appeals with respect to UNAIDS staff members. Those appeals contested final administrative review decisions issued in 2018 and 2019, and (in 2 instances) contested final administrative decisions. One appeal was filed against a decision made pursuant to the WHO Policy on the Prevention of Harassment and Sexual Harassment, as adapted for UNAIDS.
23. The third and final stage of the formal conflict resolution process is an appeal to the International Labor Organization Administrative Tribunal (ILOAT). Two judgements concerning former or serving UNAIDS staff members were delivered by the ILOAT at its 127th and 128th sessions in 2019.
24. In one case, concerning a reassignment, the ILOAT ordered that moral and material damages be paid to the former staff member, as well as costs. The second judgment was issued in relation to the International Civil Service Commission determination of post adjustment, whereby the Tribunal decided to set aside decisions on the reduced post adjustment for the duty station Geneva, which had stemmed from a 2016 cost-of-living survey. Both judgments were fully implemented without delay. As of 31 December 2019, six outstanding personnel matters concerning UNAIDS staff remained pending with the ILOAT.
25. The 2019 report on disciplinary and other corrective measures taken by the UNAIDS Secretariat was expanded this year to include non-disciplinary measures (such as reprimands) and other corrective measures (such as termination of appointment due to abandonment of post or unsuitability for duty in the international civil service).
26. In 2019, UNAIDS concluded 5 disciplinary proceedings which led to the imposition of disciplinary measures, including written censure, fine, dismissal and summary dismissal; 1 case of unsatisfactory conduct and unsuitability for international civil service; and 1 case which resulted in a non-disciplinary measure in the form of a written reprimand. Four of the cases resulted in dismissal, summary dismissal or termination of the contract of the staff member for misconduct including fraud, misuse of funds, improper conduct and/or harassment.
27. The report makes a number of recommendations to be taken forward by the Secretariat. Firstly, in order to prevent time and resource-intensive formal conflict processes and to preserve fruitful working relations, early intervention and mechanisms to resolve matters

informally should be strengthened. In this regard, the Secretariat will continue to focus on prevention, outreach and awareness-raising activities and on the development of a revised UNAIDS policy on addressing harassment, including sexual harassment, discrimination and abuse of authority, aligned with best UN common system practices. The new policy, which is expected to be issued later in 2020, will place strengthened focus on concrete preventative measures and will aim for greater clarity and accountability.

28. Secondly, lengthy formal processes are very stressful and create uncertainty, not only for the staff members concerned, but also for other team members. The Secretariat will continue to simplify internal conflict resolution avenues for certain administrative decisions and make relevant adaptations to the Administrative Review policy in the WHO eManual for the unique needs of UNAIDS. The ongoing development of an organizational framework for delegation of authority presents a further opportunity to revise and simplify relevant processes in this regard, and to enhance transparency.
29. Thirdly, promoting knowledge of the Internal Justice System and dispute resolution process in UNAIDS is imperative if staff members are to understand and trust the system. UNAIDS will continue its awareness raising and communication with all staff on the processes and procedures of the internal dispute resolution, including through live sessions, webinars and seminars, which it will embed into relevant induction and orientation programmes for new and existing staff.
30. Finally, where mistakes are made, they must be owned and acknowledged, and processes must be reviewed to avoid similar errors which can result in reputational damage to the organization and in stress and anxiety for the staff member concerned.

### III. INVESTING IN OUR STAFF

31. In 2019, a number of new learning curriculums were launched, aligned with UNAIDS's corporate priorities and based on a "blended learning" approach of face-to-face, online, video and webinar components. In support of our commitment to invest in staff, a total of 800 participants (58% women) were trained in a variety of topics including interactive action learning and peer coaching sessions for mentors and mentees, ethics, security, project management, general managerial skills and languages.
32. Individual training plans were also supported, based on regional and departmental requirements. Over 60 staff members across the Secretariat participated in external courses to meet job-related learning objectives. In addition, Rosetta Stone continued to be a popular medium for learning languages, with 90 new licenses purchased and assigned to staff members in the past year.
33. The UNAIDS Career Management Programme was strengthened in 2019 by the delivery of a career management workshop in Headquarters. This is being extended to include sessions for national and general service staff in all regions and at all levels to help them clarify and articulate their career goals, facilitate career development conversations and develop career plans.
34. In keeping with the objectives of the Gender Action Plan, the fifth cohort of the UNAIDS Leadership Programme for women took place in 2019, with 34 staff members participating, 70% of whom were from regional and country offices. The 5-day programme in Turin was followed by individual coaching sessions focusing on developmental plans. The programme evaluation revealed a 100% recommendation rate of the programme for both years and an overall programme rating of 5.1 out of 6.



35. In parallel, pre-workshop webinars on career related topics are under development, focusing on soft skills such as competency-based interview techniques. Post-workshop individual counselling sessions will also be made available to staff members in the course of the year. An easy-to-navigate career development PALM page is under development, with resources to support staff needs.
36. The new UNAIDS coaching programme, introduced during the reporting period as a developmental tool to enhance leadership and managerial competencies, has proved very popular. Forty-seven staff members participated in the programme in 2019. To ensure geographic and gender representation, a diverse range of 41 coaches were contracted to deliver the coaching, based on criteria such as UN experience, specialty, language and location. Coaches were then selected by participants to meet their individual learning needs, using the SelectMyCoach platform, a bespoke online tool.
37. Phase two of the coaching programme will be launched during the summer of 2020. Drawing on lessons learnt, the programme is likely to include more robust linkages with assessment centre outcomes and with the performance management system, as well as the introduction of tools such as 360-degree feedback. This can help ensure that competency gaps are identified and targeted, and progress, in terms of enhanced managerial skills, is recognized and documented.
38. Efforts to strengthen UNAIDS' presence in the Resident Coordinator (RC) pool also met with considerable success. This is a testament to the calibre of our senior staff members, their suitability to perform coordinating roles among UN entities, and the enhanced process that has been implemented to prepare staff members for the RC Assessment Centre. Of the 5 UNAIDS candidates nominated to the RC Assessment Centre, 4 were accepted and 3 passed. UNAIDS ranked joint-first among UN agencies in terms of the number of successful candidates who may now qualify to compete for RC positions. Such a success rate is remarkable for a small agency. It follows the appointment, in 2019, of a UNAIDS staff member to the important position of RC Ethiopia.
39. An orientation programme for new UCDs was conducted in September 2019, which included five days of face-to-face training on the Secretariat's programmatic priorities and functional responsibilities. This was followed by a blended learning programme on effective supervisory skills. The programme included an online module which covered fundamentals of effective management of teams and conflict resolution, interspersed with customized webinars for in-depth learning on effective leadership styles. A key objective was to remind managers of their responsibilities for ensuring a workplace free of harassment, bullying, abuse of authority and misconduct.
40. Looking ahead, a major initiative to be launched in 2020 will be the rollout of a learning package focusing on UN reform. It will comprise an online, self-paced certification course, synchronized webinars and face-to-face workshops in each region. This will equip staff with the knowledge and skills needed to support UNAIDS' role within, and contribute to, the strategic and transformative UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.
41. Other planned initiatives include the development of focused learning curricula to meet target needs, such as an enhanced orientation programme for new staff, orientation modules for staff on mobility and reassignment, and courses focusing on inclusive leadership, ethics and fostering a respectful workplace.

## V. REINFORCING A PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT CULTURE

42. At the time of writing this report, compliance with the final phase of the 2019/20 performance evaluation process is lower than in previous cycles, due largely to the disruptive effect of the COVID-19 pandemic which has impeded face-to-face meetings between managers and staff to discuss performance outcomes. Nevertheless, efforts continue to finalize the 2019/20 cycle and to ensure that changes implemented in the previous year continue to ensure that the performance management system serves the Secretariat and its staff members well.
43. In the 2019/20 performance management cycle, the 180-degree feedback pilot was extended to include all managers with 6 or more direct or indirect supervisees, and all staff members at the Director level, which brought the total number of participants to 56. Performance management webinars were also delivered, covering topics such as awareness and avoidance of bias, effective conversations, respectful workplaces and psychological safety. The rebuttal process that was introduced in 2019 has helped to ensure that staff members have access to a fair mechanism for challenging performance management outcomes and ratings.
44. In addition, to reinforce the performance management culture in UNAIDS and in accordance with the Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator system at country level, UNAIDS Country Managers and Directors were evaluated by their RCs on UNSDG leadership competencies including UN system effectiveness, coordination of the joint UN system response to HIV, leadership and advocacy, and resource mobilization. In the 2020/21 review cycle, all UNAIDS Country Directors and Managers will set one work objective that contributes to UN Country Team results, to be assessed by the RC.
45. Since 2017, gender equality and women's empowerment have been mainstreamed in the performance management process of the Secretariat. All staff define gender-sensitive work objectives and set at least one learning objective to strengthen knowledge on gender issues. In addition, to enhance managerial financial accountability, in the forthcoming cycle senior managers will receive an automatically assigned individual work objective that relates to the exercise of delegated authority and achievement of pre-determined financial management results.
46. Despite the achievements, problems remain with the system, notably an excessive number of staff members who receive—and increasingly expect—exceptional ratings, which can be divisive in teams. To help alleviate this problem, and in common with other UN agencies, in the 2020/21 cycle the performance management process in UNAIDS will change to a binary rating scale, whereby staff members are either rated as successful or needing improvement. This will simplify the current system and create space for developmental-focused conversations between staff members and managers.
47. In parallel, training will be provided to encourage and institute a culture of ongoing feedback between managers and supervisees. The training will also help ensure that managers understand the importance of communicating, documenting and recognizing performance excellence through positive feedback to staff members and written comments in the performance management system. Consideration will also be given to introducing a peer-led rewards and recognition programme to recognize outstanding performers, whether individuals or teams.

48. Managers will also receive support to identify and deal with underperformance and to ensure that they identify, through communication and written comments, individual work objectives that have not been met and/or competency weaknesses which may exist despite an overall successful rating. This would help substantiate a "needs improvement" rating, and support the initiation of a performance improvement plan.

## **VI. PROMOTING STAFF WELLBEING**

49. In February 2020, efforts to support staff wellbeing were strengthened by the recruitment of a dedicated Staff Counsellor for Wellbeing and Mental Health, responsible for the development of a mental health strategy, support for employees before and during deployment, and access to counselling and psychosocial services in coordination with WHO's Staff Health and Wellbeing Services.
50. The selection proved timely, given the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected staff members in numerous ways—from coping with living and working in isolation to adapting to the different challenges posed by teleworking. To support staff members during this unique and unanticipated situation, the Staff Counsellor launched regional webinars for staff in each region on psychosocial support, developed a range of materials for coping during the crisis, and provided psychosocial first aid for staff facing critical situations.
51. Other support mechanisms during this period have included special provisions to facilitate teleworking in all offices and regions, a dedicated intranet with materials and regular updates on the pandemic. There has also been close networking within the HRM community and with other UN entities to ensure that policies and provisions are aligned, as well as regular meetings of the COVID crisis group, chaired by the Deputy Executive Director Management and Governance.
52. In addition, the HRM Department, which coordinates the Dignity-at-Work Adviser network, led 2 webinars to familiarize staff members with the support mechanism available to them and to promote a "no-wrong-door" approach. Presenters included representatives from the HRM Department, the office of the Ombudsman, the Ethics Office, the Dignity at Work network, the Staff Counsellor and the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association. Over 300 staff members participated in 1 of the 2 sessions and received information on support services.
53. Close contact with managers and staff members across the organization, and strong partnership with this network of support services remain fundamentally important as we continue our efforts to understand and respond effectively to staff concerns, rebuild trust and ensure that staff members work in an enabling environment, free of bullying, harassment and abuse of authority.

## **VII. ENVIRONMENT AND SECURITY**

54. With its approach of placing staff and their wellbeing at the centre, facilities, conference and security management, as well as environmental sustainability initiatives also fall within the remit of HRM. In the reporting period, the Secretariat commenced development of an environmental sustainability policy, which will provide overarching guidance to ensure sustainability and environmental issues are taken into consideration and monitored in all aspects of the Secretariat's activities.
55. Since 2012, UNAIDS has been climate-neutral in its operations. In accordance with the UN Climate Neutral Strategy and UNAIDS' Emissions Reduction Strategy, the

Secretariat is now taking steps to make its governance meetings “paper free”. In December 2019, for the 45th PCB meeting, for example, the Secretariat only provided printed copies of the agenda and draft decision points.

56. The UNAIDS Secretariat has also successfully removed most single-use plastic from Headquarters by working in close collaboration with its catering and facilities services providers. Final challenges remain reducing the consumption of plastic garbage bags, swapping plastic bottles for glass in vending machines, and replacing plastic-lined cups next to water fountains. Projects to achieve these challenges are in process and should be implemented by summer 2020.
57. Following the introduction of the new UN Security Risk Assessment Model, the use of Minimum Operating Security Standards has been discontinued and replaced by Security Risk Management measures. At the beginning of 2020, the Secretariat assessed the compliance rate of our offices with both Security Risk Management and Occupational Health and Safety & Wellbeing measures through an internal scoring system. Our offices are 90% compliant with Security Risk Management measures and 80% compliant with Occupational Health and Safety & Wellbeing measures globally. In the year ahead, we will work closely with offices to further improve overall compliance.
58. During the COVID-19 crisis, the HRM Department assisted our Regional and Country Offices in developing Business Continuity Plans. In 2020, these will be incorporated in an online platform that will house the Plans and ensure their alignment with the Security Risk Management arrangements.

#### **VIII: THE ETHICS OFFICE**

59. The Ethics Office (Ethics) promotes a culture of accountability in the Secretariat. As in previous years, the overview of the activities of Ethics is included in this HRM update pending the implementation of measures to make Ethics Office a fully independent function, after which it will report directly to the PCB.
60. In 2019, Ethics continued to provide confidential ethics advice to staff members across the organization through face-to-face meetings, emails and telephone contact to enable them to better conduct themselves in accordance with the standards of conduct expected of international civil servants. Ethics made referrals to HRM, the Ombudsman and the Department of Planning, Finance and Accountability as appropriate.
61. In total, Ethics responded to 151 requests for general information and 98 requests for ethics advice and guidance in matters including outside activities (84); gifts, medals and honours (9); speaking and writing publications (3); and protection against retaliation (2). This represents an overall increase of 6% of total requests to Ethics compared to 2018.
62. Of the two enquiries regarding retaliation, one filed a formal claim for protection against retaliation. In accordance with the policy on whistleblowing and protection against retaliation, Ethics conducted a preliminary review of the complaint to determine whether the complainant had engaged in a protected activity and if so, whether the activity was a contributing factor in causing the alleged retaliation. The matter was subsequently referred to the Internal Oversight Service for investigation.
63. Ethics continued to manage and respond to calls made to the integrity hotline. During the reporting period, four complaints, all filed anonymously, were received through the integrity hotline. They comprised 2 allegations of harassment, 1 allegation of engagement in outside activities without authorization and one allegation of wrongful recording of leave days. The allegations of harassment and wrongful recording of leave

were referred to and resolved by HRM, while Ethics resolved the allegation regarding outside activities. In addition, 2 outstanding complaints from 2018 were resolved during the period.

64. The UN online Ethics and Integrity Training continued to be provided as mandatory training for all staff members. In June 2019, the UN training on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN Personnel was also provided as a mandatory training for all staff members through the UNAIDS Performance and Learning Management platform.
65. In addition, face-to-face training was offered to staff members in several offices covering the values of UNAIDS, harassment (including sexual harassment), managing conflicts of interest, protection against retaliation, sexual exploitation and abuse, and the integrity hotline. Ethics also held discussions with first-time UNAIDS CDs as part of their induction. The discussion focused on the obligations to adhere to the highest standards of conduct, and the specific role of managers in addressing ethical issues and ensuring the wellbeing of their supervisees.

## **IX: THE HRM DEPARTMENT—DRIVING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE**

66. In the past 18 months, notable changes have been made to the composition of the HRM Department. They include the establishment of an HR Policy and Legal unit and the recruitment, on fixed-term positions, of a unit head and two additional staff members who respectively focus on policy and legal issues. Dedicated staff members were also recruited to lead staff counselling and welfare, and performance management services.
67. However, further changes need to be made if the HRM Department is to continue to maximize its value in support of the Secretariat and its mandate. As the Delegations of Authority framework is finalized and more responsibilities and accountabilities are progressively passed to Regional and Country Offices, the organization will need HRM experts in each region to provide advice and support close to field operations.
68. Accordingly, in 2020, UNAIDS will establish its first HR Business Partner position on a pilot basis in the regional office in Senegal, through the redeployment of a senior HQ-based recruitment and entitlements specialist. If the pilot succeeds, the aim is to establish similar positions in all regions over the next few years.
69. Concurrently, discussions are proceeding with the WHO Global Service Centre in Malaysia to explore the possibility of gradually off-shoring high-volume transactional services, such as the administration of certain benefits and entitlements. This will free HRM staff members up to focus on strategic priorities, including crucial organizational change. The use of electronic routing and document signaturing is also being enhanced, with a view to increasing speed and efficiency.
70. Many of the commitments of the Management Action Plan for a healthy, equitable and enabling workplace for all UNAIDS staff have already been translated into standard human resource management practice and the remaining commitments are being operationalized. Solid foundations now guide HRM practices, supported by comprehensive, widely available policies that are respected and followed, together with clarity as to who has the authority to take decisions.
71. The next step is to bring about transformational organizational culture change. In 2020, the Secretariat will partner with Gender at Work to implement an 18-month Gender Action Learning process that will help the UNAIDS Secretariat create space for critical reflection and build a learning culture rooted in feminist principles of equality, justice and

non-violence. During this participatory process, UNAIDS staff will think together, ask difficult questions, expose the workings of power, and challenge assumptions and norms. The ultimate goal is a transformed organizational culture that advances its mission, vision and goals through meaningful involvement of key populations and revised policies and practices that support the strategic direction of the Secretariat.

#### **PROPOSED DECISION POINT**

72. The PCB is invited to take note of the update on strategic human resources management issues.