



FOR INFORMATION

EIGHTEENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Preliminary update on the implementation of the revised Human Resources Strategy

Introduction

1. In endorsing the revised Human Resources (HR) Strategy 2006-09 (“the Strategy”) in November 2005, the Committee requested the Office to provide a preliminary implementation report to its March 2006 session. Given the short period of implementation, there has not been sufficient time to produce tangible results. However, a more detailed progress report will be provided at the November 2006 session and annually thereafter.

Implementation of the Strategy

2. The Office has focused its initial efforts on: (I) creating “buy-in” among managers and staff; (II) laying the foundation for achieving the targets; (III) establishing the baseline data for its monitoring and reporting system; (IV) identifying benchmarks and good practice examples; and (V) consulting with the External Auditor. These are discussed in turn.

(I) Creating “buy-in” among managers and staff

3. A series of information sessions was held with line managers at headquarters as well as in the regional departments of Africa, Asia and Europe to present the Strategy and discuss their role in its implementation. Within the context of results-based management (RBM), managers are delegated with increased responsibility and accountability for programme results and the management of resources, including staff resources. Particular attention was drawn to the contribution that the Strategy will make to promoting management for results through the introduction of the enhanced staff performance management system as well as to providing managers and staff with the tools to adopt sound practices through increased investment in staff development.
4. The discussions with the managers of the departments in Africa and Asia (the latter also included field specialists and staff of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific) were particularly useful in helping to identify how the HR policies of the Office could provide

more effective support to field managers who have the primary responsibility for the implementation of decent work country programmes. They also illuminated some of the crucial HR issues to be considered in enhancing the role of the ILO as a team player at the country level within the context of United Nations reform. As such, they are timely in helping to clarify some of the specific issues that should form part of the agenda for the review of the field structure scheduled for the current biennium.

5. Formal staffing reviews have been held with the regions, and also, at the time of writing, with two departments at headquarters. These reviews, which are intended to promote close partnership and accountability between HRD and department managers in achieving overall HR policy priorities, provided an opportunity to assess each department's performance against the key HR policy targets and identify specific follow-up action required within an agreed timetable. In addition to the reviews, HRD and PROGRAM conducted meetings with all sectors at headquarters towards the end of 2005 in order to compare staffing forecasts against the budget allocations for 2006-07.

(II) Laying the foundation for meeting targets

6. The Office has adopted a phased approach to achieving the various targets. This will allow the associated costs to be spread over the life of the Strategy. Consequently, it is expected that the costs for 2006-07 will be absorbed within existing allocations. At the same time, measures are being taken to improve internal administrative efficiency with a view to freeing additional resources to support more broadly based "upstream" policy support and advisory services. The specific actions taken in respect of each component of the Strategy are identified below.

(a) *Sound and effective policies and procedures for recruitment, placement and career progression*

7. In early 2006, HRD reviewed internal workflows to identify ways to further reduce the average recruitment time in line with the target. HRD is working closely with line managers and with the Staff Union to continue to streamline processes without compromising strict adherence to procedures. At the same time, it is also reviewing the organization and timing of recruitment so that the pool of applicants can be widened, account is taken of family responsibilities (particularly of school-year requirements) and the Office can have an overall view of recruitment needs.
8. The Office has taken steps to encourage applications from persons with disabilities in its recruitment strategies. As an initial step, its recruitment web pages and all vacancy announcements now make specific reference to its policy of welcoming applications from people with disabilities.
9. In order to widen the diversity of the staff of the Office in terms of its gender and geographical distribution, HRD is working closely with line managers and other members of technical panels to ensure that they understand fully the policy of increasing gender and regional diversity and apply it in the selection process.
10. A database of "prospection sources" in non- and under-represented countries, including ministries of labour, employers' and workers' organizations, universities and training and research institutions, is being established to facilitate targeted prospection. HRD will organize missions to selected target countries to provide information about the ILO's needs and identify potential candidates.

11. To ensure in the longer term that women will occupy an adequate share of senior positions, steps have been taken to develop training activities specifically targeted at strengthening the management and leadership skills of women officials. Learning modules of the Management and Leadership Development Programme (MLDP) are being utilized in this regard.
12. Efforts continued to rebalance the grade structure. During the 2004-05 biennium, measures taken to do so resulted in the review and reclassification of 15 positions from P5 to P4. The policy of regrading one-third of the P5 positions becoming vacant through retirement has been put into place as of January 2006 and will be fully implemented. Targets set for all other categories of Professional and General Service staff in headquarters will be reported on in the November 2006 implementation report. They will be refined according to organizational needs in light of the comparable data expected from the JIU (see section IV below). The targets for local staff in the field will be examined and targets set in 2007 after the field structure review mentioned above.
13. Following the announcement of the new mobility policy in November 2005, an operational framework is being drafted which will form the basis for its implementation. Key actions will include: information sessions for staff to explain the modalities of the mobility policy and address practical issues; notification to staff of positions likely to become vacant in the coming year; and receipt and processing of expressions of interest by individual staff members. In this context, the staffing review process is being utilized to significantly improve human resource planning.
14. The Office has put in place the policy on the exchange of staff between the Office and the International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin. It became operational on 1 January 2006.
15. The review of the collective agreement on the procedures for recruitment and selection did not lead to a revised agreement and therefore the present agreement remains in force.

(b) *Integrated, motivating and rigorous staff performance management and development systems*

16. Work continued on the design of the new staff performance management and measurement system. In early 2006, a number of examples of good practice from similar types of organizations were identified and contacts have been initiated with some member States to tap into national public and, where relevant, private sector experiences. Initial discussions with consultancy firms with experience of introducing performance management systems in other United Nations agencies have been held.
17. In February 2006, a set of guidelines was issued to staff throughout the Office, outlining the principles, responsibilities and modalities for utilizing the funds set aside for staff development activities at the sector, department and field office levels. These have been informed by the review of the learning strategy conducted in 2005. A key feature of the new staff development approach is the establishment of a consultative mechanism between managers and staff, at the level of the work unit to ensure that all staff are included in the learning plan based on an assessment of their training needs in line with overall organizational goals. Apart from management and leadership training (mentioned below), attention will be given inter alia to training to support the implementation of decent work country programmes; and training designed to bridge core and generic, as well as functional and technical competency gaps.

18. At the same time, the implementation of the MLDP continued to support the change management process. Of 540 persons between the P4 and D1 levels targeted for participation in the structured MLDP, some 105 (20 per cent)¹ have begun doing so. In all, approximately 40 per cent of all Professional staff in Geneva and the field have participated or are participating in either the structured MLDP or the various “spin-off” activities.
19. An independent evaluation of the MLDP, which has been funded by the 2000-01 cash surplus, is being organized and will provide guidance for the future direction of the programme. At the time of writing, a review committee was considering submissions made from interested firms.

(c) Essential staff welfare and security arrangements

20. The Office conducted a regional workshop on staff safety and security in Addis Ababa in February 2006 for the directors of offices and staff union representatives in Africa. It continued its work with the United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG) and other United Nations system organizations in Geneva to implement measures to strengthen the security management system. In line with United Nations Department of Safety and Security (DSS) policy to establish a security structure in headquarters duty stations similar to that which exists in field duty stations, a designated official has been appointed and Security Management Team set up. Internal consultations have started regarding further training and information measures to be implemented during 2006 to enhance security awareness at headquarters.
21. The Office has been preparing for the possible influenza pandemic resulting from avian flu. A Crisis Management Team has been established and, in accordance with the “UN Medical Services Staff Contingency Plan Guidelines for an Influenza Pandemic”, a purchase order has been placed for anti-viral medication and personal protection equipment. Essential functions and the associated staff needed to maintain them are also being identified in the event that the Office has to be closed. In order to provide information on the possible pandemic to staff, information sessions are being organized and a special web site created. The Office’s response efforts are being coordinated with those of other organizations across the United Nations system.
22. Terms of reference for the new ILO Medical Service are being finalized, following the dissolution of the Joint Medical Service. This is a prerequisite for the Office’s occupational safety and health policy. Consultations within the Advisory Committee on Safety and Health (ACOSH), which inter alia monitors the safety and health conditions in the building, will take place during the first half of 2006.
23. The arrangements governing leave without pay have been revised. The related amendments to the Staff Regulations are reported in a separate document.²
24. The Joint Negotiating Committee decided to establish a joint working group to examine the issues and recommend action related to work-life balance as mentioned in the revised HR strategy paper.
25. A mediator was appointed ad interim pending the filling of the position of mediator. This was considered by both the administration and the Staff Union Committee to be the most

¹ For the structured MLDP this is the participation rate and not necessarily the completion rate

² GB.295/PFA/6.

practical way to ensure that the services of the Office of the Mediator would continue to be available.

26. The 60th Session (autumn 2005) of the General Assembly decided to postpone the consideration of the revision of the contracts policy to its 2006 spring session. Therefore work on a revised contracts policy for the Office has not advanced as had been expected. However, in view of the importance of this element of the Strategy, the Office intends to initiate the necessary work in anticipation of the General Assembly decision. The Committee will receive an update in November 2006 and, if possible, the revised contracts policy will then be submitted for its approval.

(III) Establishment of baseline data for a monitoring and reporting system

27. HRD has begun developing the databases in IRIS that it will need for monitoring its progress on the implementation of the Strategy. An important aspect of this work has been the conversion of multiple HR legacy systems into IRIS. IRIS has data retrieval and analysis features that will provide managers and HRD with better information on staff generally and the capacity to monitor progress towards the HR policy goals.

(IV) Identifying benchmarks and good practice examples

28. As a follow-up to their report on results-based management in the ILO, and to support the implementation of the HR Strategy, the Office has requested the collaboration of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) in the preparation of comparable data on staffing in the United Nations system, taking account of contract types, grade structures and other parameters related to sources of funding, etc., and in the identification of good practice examples related to the major components of the Strategy both within and outside the United Nations system.

(V) Consultations with the External Auditor

29. Initial consultations were held with a representative of the External Auditor to brief him on the main components of the revised Strategy for 2006-09 and the approach that the Office intended to adopt in its implementation. Attention was drawn to the ways in which the revised Strategy takes account of the recommendations of the External Auditor vis-à-vis the earlier Strategy. He confirmed that the upcoming external audit report, which will be presented in June 2006 would include, inter alia, an update on the revised Strategy.

Geneva, 27 February 2006.

Submitted for information.