

**Executive Committee of the  
High Commissioner's Programme**

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**Standing Committee  
53<sup>rd</sup> meeting**

**Update on modernization/innovation and  
simplification**

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*Summary*

This paper provides an update on progress and achievements in respect of the management priorities announced at the 52nd meeting of the Standing Committee in the *Update on UNHCR's structural and management change process (EC/62/SC/CRP.29)*.

Under Chapter II, a proposal is being presented on reducing the consumption of paper during meetings, on which UNHCR wishes to seek the advice of the Committee.

## I. Introduction

1. Following the Global Representatives meeting in February 2011, the High Commissioner requested the Deputy High Commissioner to take the lead in pursuing a number of overriding management priorities including ways to modernize/innovate and simplify UNHCR's systems and processes. The goal is to reinforce UNHCR's commitment and capacity to deliver assistance, protection and solutions to people of concern more efficiently and effectively.

## II. Modernization/innovation

### A. Innovation initiative

2. With the aim of providing refugees with innovative products, services and systems that will help improve their lives, UNHCR is introducing a multi-year collaborative initiative on innovation, harnessing the creative potential of beneficiaries and local communities, together with staff and partners, including private-sector donors, and academia.

3. The "UNHCR Innovation" initiative will provide a space for discussing problems and creative solutions; encourage staff to think differently; reach out to a wider community for support; and help design and develop innovative and tangible solutions. Key building blocks of the initiative will include:

- Innovation projects: Field staff will be encouraged to work with communities to design projects based on concrete problems and possible solutions identified at the local level, which may be then applied to other operations. They could include for example, innovative approaches to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), shelter, and livelihoods, or the use of modern technologies to further improve supply, emergency response and communications.
- Private-sector partnership: Central to the innovation initiative will be private-sector engagement. Significant efforts have already been made with corporate partners, to bring new opportunities to refugees and host communities. The intention behind this new initiative is to develop these strategic relationships further, and maximize the benefits of such partnerships through innovative projects that address real problems for refugees.
- UNHCR Coordination Group: A coordination group composed of staff from across the organization (Headquarters and Field) will help guide the strategic direction of this initiative; determine priority projects; establish linkages with ongoing programmes; share problems and ideas, and propose solutions.

4. The initiative, to be launched in April 2012, will be run on a modest budget and will be coordinated by the Office of the Deputy High Commissioner.

### B. Paperless meetings

5. Many organizations are seeing the benefits of getting rid of paper documents and running meetings electronically. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have already done so and others are following a similar path. The potential savings in paper, hardware and maintenance costs, and the reduced footprint on the environment are substantial.

6. UNHCR organizes six statutory meetings every year (three Standing Committee meetings, one Executive Committee (ExCom) plenary session, the annual Planning meeting, and the Pledging Conference). In addition, each year a number of informal

consultative meetings (ICMs), informal preparatory consultations (IPCs), and briefings are arranged by the Secretariat, as well as the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges which takes place annually in December.

7. To give an idea of how much paper is used, at the June 2011 Standing Committee meeting, it is estimated that copies of core documents made available at the back of the room totalled well over 13,000 pages. This does not include copies of presentations, statements, flyers, and other documents circulating in the room. For three Standing Committee meetings and one ExCom session alone, a conservative estimate would be that more than 52,000 sheets of paper are used.

8. UNHCR has already moved to an online registration system for its meetings, and would now like to propose that delegations consider using laptops or tablet computers to view documents during the meetings, in order to minimize the number of hard copies required. As electrical outlets are not yet available in meeting rooms at the Palais des Nations at each individual seat, tablet computers would be more convenient in terms of battery capacity. All documents for UNHCR's meetings are already made available electronically.

9. The Office proposes initiating this step at the June Standing Committee. Any delegations without the technical capacity still wishing to receive a set of hard copies of the documentation during the meeting could indicate this preference when they register online.

10. As a further step, UNHCR is prepared to look at developing a paperless conferencing system, to facilitate online access to all meeting and background documents during the meeting. This would allow delegations to work online, including possibly to prepare and submit proposals, share and discuss documents in contact groups, communicate with the Secretariat, etc. Through such a system, delegations would also be able to receive document updates and be informed of events. Both conference room XVII and XIX have the capacity to support up to about 120 simultaneous WiFi users.

11. UNHCR would be grateful to receive the advice of the Executive Committee members on this proposal to move towards paperless meetings.

### III. Simplification

12. On the basis of inputs and suggestions from UNHCR Representatives and staff globally<sup>1</sup>, a number of priority areas have been identified for simplification under the "Cut Red Tape" initiative announced in the *Update on UNHCR's Structural and Management Change Process* (EC/62/SC/CRP.29). These range from overarching systems and procedures to specific processes. Some of the areas identified can be addressed relatively quickly, while others are still under review and action plans are being developed. Progress has been made during the second half of 2011 and the first quarter of 2012 in the following areas:

#### *Operational reporting*

- End-of-year reporting: though work is still underway on this issue, considerable attempts to streamline reporting and reduce the overall scope of the Year-End Report for 2011 have been made. In particular, while the stand-alone Standards and Indicators Report (SIR) remains a crucial requirement for the 2011 reporting, in the course of 2012, there will be a move to standardized indicator reporting in *Focus*. This will imply that Field offices will be asked to report on achievements and indicators' related data only once and in direct relation to their Operations Plans.
- Moreover, a number of adjustments have been made to simplify the narrative reporting. To facilitate the work of field operations, narrative reporting has been

<sup>1</sup> The Global Staff Survey, concluded in November 2011, helped in identifying a number of areas for improvement.

reduced to avoid duplication. Reporting will be more focused and will continue to mirror key elements of the Operations Plans. This will facilitate the analysis of the operations' performance undertaken by Managers in the Field and in HQs.

#### *Human resources management*

- Simplification of posting process: a preliminary mapping exercise has identified a number of areas of the Policy and Procedures on Assignments which require improvement and/or simplification. An action plan is being developed to make the process leaner and more efficient, so as to enable the Division of Human Resources Management (DHRM) to complete the end-to-end posting process in the shortest possible time-frame for both compendia and fast-track positions.
- Performance Appraisal and Management System (PAMS): PAMS provides a mechanism for assessing the performance of all UNHCR staff, using criteria developed through an ongoing dialogue between staff and their managers. DHRM has invested considerable effort in the review and improvement of the performance appraisal cycle in order to address gaps in the assessment process. Work on the simplification of the Performance Appraisal Document (ePAD) includes: an assessment of the workload that the ePAD engenders for managers and reviewing officers; modification of the ePAD cycle to 15 months to accommodate staff movements; measures for non-compliance by managers leaving the organization; and delegation of reports to the Field to monitor compliance. Further refinements will be introduced in the coming months.

#### *Personal accountability reporting*

- Managers Annual Report on the Code of Conduct and refresher sessions: to reinforce the ethics and accountability functions in UNHCR, the Ethics Office has simplified the reporting requirement by making the Senior Managers Annual Report form shorter and more user-friendly. Managers remain responsible for organizing, conducting and reporting on refresher sessions.

#### *Travel arrangements*

- Self-booking tool: drawing on lessons from best practices in other UN organizations, UNHCR is preparing for the introduction of a self-booking tool to cover the most frequent destinations for staff travelling from Geneva. Travellers will be responsible for making their own bookings within policy parameters and controls. This will make the system more efficient by reducing paperwork as well as the cost of booking fees, which are currently charged by the travel agency for every ticket purchased.

## **IV. Conclusion**

13. The process of modernization/innovation and simplification is ongoing and will need to remain a long-term management priority. It will ultimately enable the Office to address long-standing challenges through the use of modern technologies and resources, and be proactive in finding solutions to new challenges. UNHCR is committed to increasing efficiency and providing the best possible results for people of concern, through this endeavour. The Office will keep the Standing Committee informed of progress being made.

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