
Human resources: annual report

Report by the Director-General

INTRODUCTION

1. In addition to the WHO workforce data as at 31 December 2023 made available on the WHO website,¹ this report provides an update as of December 2023 on the trends in the workforce and related activities with respect to the three pillars of the WHO human resources strategy: attracting talent, retaining talent and fostering an enabling working environment. Major strategic initiatives in human resources are an integral part of the WHO transformation agenda.

TRENDS IN THE WORKFORCE

2. As at 31 December 2023, the total number of WHO staff members² was 9419 (see Fig. 1 of this report and workforce data, Table 1), a 4.9% increase compared with the total as at 31 December 2022 (8983). Out of the total, the percentage of staff members employed at each of the three levels of the Organization between December 2022 and December 2023 changed as follows: the percentage of staff employed at headquarters decreased from 29.3% in December 2022 to 29.2% in December 2023; the percentage of staff employed in Global Shared Services remained stable at 3.2% between December 2022 and December 2023; the percentage of staff employed at regional offices increased from 23.7% in December 2022 to 23.8% in December 2023; and at country offices the percentage increased from 43.2% in December 2022 to 43.8% in December 2023 (Fig. 2). The proportion of staff members holding long-term appointments decreased from 77.6% in December 2022 to 77.1% in December 2023. The percentage of long-term appointments out of the total staff working in the major offices as at December 2023 (and December 2022) was as follows: 71.1% (69.8%) at headquarters,³ 98% (98.9%) in Global Shared Services, 86.6% (87.3%) in the African Region, 81.2% (80.7%) in the South-East Asia Region, 63.3% (67.4%) in the European Region, 67.4% (68%) in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, and 92.9% (96.1%) in the Western Pacific Region.

3. For the period from 1 January to 31 December 2023, staff costs amounted to US\$ 1242 million and decreased as a percentage of the Organization's total expenditure: 30% of US\$ 4100 million (compared to 31% for the period from January to December 2022).

¹ Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/workforce-data> (accessed 3 April 2024).

² All figures include staff in special programmes and collaborative arrangements hosted by WHO and exclude the International Agency for Research on Cancer or other United Nations agencies that are administered by WHO. They do not include staff working with the Pan American Health Organization, and its workforce data is available at: <https://www.paho.org/en/documents/spba189-human-resources-management-pan-american-sanitary-bureau>, (accessed 16 May 2024).

³ Including headquarters, special programmes and collaborative arrangements.

4. Regarding other contractual arrangements, when comparing the period from January to December 2022 to the same period in the year 2023, the number of individuals on consultant arrangements or under agreements for performance of work increased in terms of full-time equivalents: from 2033 to 2398 for consultants and from 753 to 814 for holders of agreements for performance of work (see workforce data, Table 20).¹ In addition, the number of individuals hired on special services agreements increased from 5113 in the period from January to December 2022 to 5606 in the period from January to December 2023.

Fig. 1. Distribution of WHO staff as at 31 December 2023, by major office

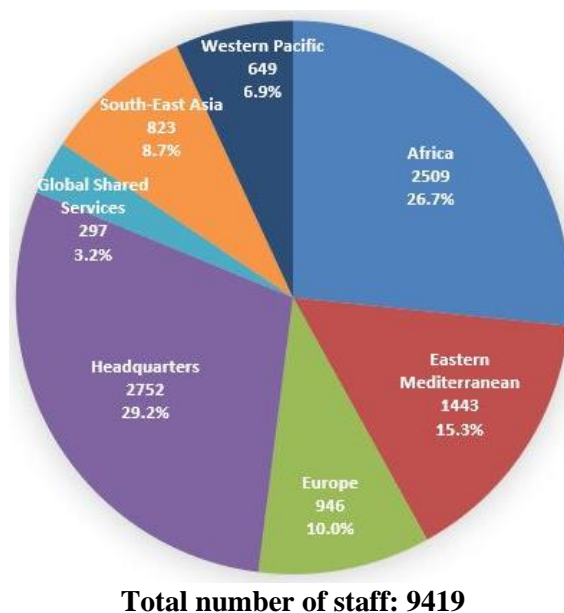
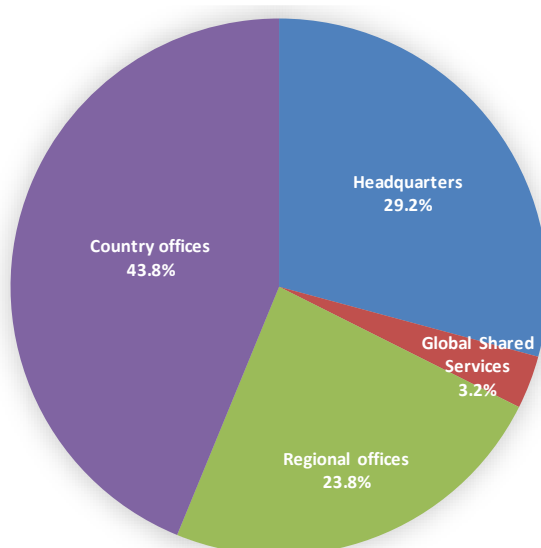


Fig. 2. Distribution of WHO staff as at 31 December 2023, by level



¹ Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/workforce-data> (accessed 3 April 2024).

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5. Effective as of 1 March 2023, the new WHO Gender Parity Policy (2023–2026)¹ replaced the WHO Gender Equality in Staffing Policy issued in January 2017. Reporting against the new targets set out in the WHO Gender Parity Policy and its corresponding implementation plan is included in this report using data as at 31 December 2023 (see workforce data, Table 3e). WHO’s reporting is aligned with the reporting under the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, which defines gender parity as being within a 47% to 53% margin.
6. From 2017 to December 2023, there was a general improvement towards achieving gender parity, as measured against all indicators. However, additional efforts and dedicated attention remain required to ensure advancement at individual grade levels and sustain the achievements to date.
7. As at December 2023, WHO continues to maintain gender parity for longer-term appointments, with 50.6% women and 49.4% men holding such appointments, noting that the proportion of female staff in the general service category is above 50%, while in the national professional officer and international professional categories it is below 50%, although the percentage of female staff in both categories has increased since December 2022 (see workforce data, Table 3a). When taking all staff contract types into consideration, as at 31 December 2023, the Organization continues to maintain overall gender parity, with 50.2% women and 49.8% men. A further breakdown by grade across all categories of staff positions and all major offices is provided in the workforce data (see Table 3b).
8. Reporting on gender parity for individual grade levels for staff members holding long-term appointments at the P4 grade and above against the targets established in the WHO Gender Parity Policy (2023–2026) is contained in Table 3e of the human resources workforce data.
9. Overall, the number of women holding long-term appointments at the P4 grade and above across the Organization increased from 44.1% in December 2022 to 44.7% in December 2023, while it is also noted that there was an increase of 3.6 percentage points during the six-year period since 2017.
10. There is overall gender parity among staff at the ungraded (UG) level across the Organization, while it is also noted that the proportion of women at the UG1 level is greater than at the UG2 level.
11. Women accounted for 34% of staff at the D1 and D2 grades as at 31 December 2023, a decrease compared with December 2022 (35.3%). However, it should be noted that there has been an increase of 4.2 percentage points since 2017 (see Fig. 3d). When including staff at the P6 grade, the overall proportion of women at the D2, D1 and P6 grades is 34.3%, with a higher proportion at the D1 and P6 grades than at the D2 grade. It is in this category where WHO is furthest from the targets for 2023 set out in the WHO Gender Parity Policy (2023–2026).
12. There has been a notable increase since 2017 in the percentage of women at the P5 grade, from 40.3% as at July 2017 and 46% as at December 2022 to 47.1% as at December 2023. WHO is close to achieving the target by December 2023 of 47.5% of women at the P5 grade; however, additional efforts are required to reach the target for 2024 of 49%.
13. At the P4 grade, there was an increase in the percentage of women from 45.1% in December 2022 to 45.5% in December 2023, which falls slightly short of the target of 46.5% for 2023.
14. The Secretariat is continuing to take steps to increase the number of qualified women on the roster for heads of country offices. As at 31 December 2023, 35.2% of heads of country offices were women, representing a decrease compared with December 2022 (36.3%).

¹ Available at: <https://open.who.int/2022-23/home> (accessed 14 March 2024).

15. The results of efforts to increase the number of female candidates on the roster for heads of country offices were demonstrated during the selection processes in the year 2022 and continue in the year 2023. As at December 2023, 36% of the candidates on the WHO Representative roster are female. For the 2023 selection process, additional outreach was conducted to high-potential female staff, who were encouraged to attend targeted briefing sessions held with each regional office to explain the roles and responsibilities and the essential requirements of the WHO Representative position. As a result, the shortlist for the 2023 selection process is at gender parity, with 53% female candidates identified to proceed to the video interviewing stage, representing an increase when compared with 2022 (33%) and 2021 (28%), respectively. Following the video interviewing stage, 50 candidates, of whom 66% are female, advanced to the final stage involving a WHO Representative assessment centre.

16. The call for proposals to select a new partner to design and manage the WHO Representative assessment centres closed in the year 2023, and a new provider is now under contract with WHO. Assessment centres are planned for the first and second quarters of 2024.

Fig. 3a. Gender parity – percentage of women in the professional and higher categories (long-term appointments), by major office

Major office	As at July 2017	As at Dec 2017	As at July 2018	As at Dec 2018	As at July 2019	As at Dec 2019	As at July 2020	As at Dec 2020	As at July 2021	As at Dec 2021	As at July 2022	As at Dec 2022	As at July 2023	As at Dec 2023	Changes between July 2017 and December 2023
Africa	29.9%	30.7%	31.9%	31.8%	32.7%	33.1%	31.6%	31.8%	32.7%	33.8%	33.7%	34.6%	35.0%	36.7%	Increase of 6.8 percentage points
South-East Asia	33.6%	34.3%	33.8%	34.4%	34.6%	36.3%	36.7%	36.8%	38.5%	38.1%	37.4%	36.3%	38.6%	39.9%	Increase of 6.3 percentage points
Europe	53.1%	51.8%	50.4%	52.1%	53.4%	52.7%	53.8%	53.1%	52.2%	51.6%	51.8%	51.2%	51.2%	50.2%	Decrease of 2.9 percentage points
Eastern Mediterranean	30.6%	31.2%	32.2%	33.7%	33.9%	34.6%	32.2%	32.6%	33.2%	35.6%	37.2%	37.1%	37.7%	37.5%	Increase of 6.9 percentage points
Western Pacific	45.3%	44.9%	45.6%	47.7%	49.7%	50.0%	53.2%	54.1%	56.2%	56.6%	58.1%	58.9%	60.7%	59.5%	Increase of 14.2 percentage points
Headquarters	49.4%	50.9%	51.1%	51.6%	50.9%	51.3%	52.4%	52.0%	52.3%	52.6%	52.5%	52.1%	52.4%	52.7%	Increase of 3.3 percentage points
Total	43.7%	44.4%	44.7%	45.4%	45.6%	45.8%	46.2%	45.9%	46.4%	46.8%	47.0%	46.8%	47.4%	47.7%	Increase of 4 percentage points

Fig. 3b. Gender parity – percentage of women at the P4 grade and above (long-term appointments), by major office

Major office	As at July 2017	As at Dec 2017	As at July 2018	As at Dec 2018	As at July 2019	As at Dec 2019	As at July 2020	As at Dec 2020	As at July 2021	As at Dec 2021	As at July 2022	As at Dec 2022	As at July 2023	As at Dec 2023	Changes between July 2017 and December 2023
Africa	28.8%	29.5%	29.9%	29.7%	30.8%	30.7%	28.9%	28.2%	28.7%	29.0%	29.1%	29.4%	29.9%	30.9%	Increase of 2.1 percentage points
South-East Asia	34.4%	35.7%	35.0%	35.5%	35.3%	36.5%	37.5%	37.4%	38.9%	37.7%	38.3%	37.0%	38.5%	39.4%	Increase of 5 percentage points
Europe	51.4%	50.3%	50.3%	51.9%	51.5%	50.6%	51.7%	50.8%	48.9%	48.4%	48.7%	47.6%	48.2%	46.5%	Decrease of 4.9 percentage points
Eastern Mediterranean	29.9%	30.1%	31.1%	31.7%	32.6%	33.1%	30.8%	31.7%	31.6%	34.3%	36.7%	36.5%	35.7%	35.8%	Increase of 5.9 percentage points
Western Pacific	39.9%	39.4%	41.3%	42.3%	44.9%	45.1%	49.6%	50.0%	53.7%	55.4%	54.3%	55.4%	55.8%	55.2%	Increase of 15.3 percentage points
Headquarters	46.3%	47.9%	48.4%	49.4%	48.9%	49.1%	50.1%	49.7%	49.7%	50.1%	50.1%	49.6%	49.9%	50.2%	Increase of 3.9 percentage points
Total	41.1%	41.9%	42.5%	43.4%	43.5%	43.5%	43.8%	43.5%	43.7%	44.2%	44.5%	44.1%	44.5%	44.7%	Increase of 3.6 percentage points

Fig. 3c. Gender parity – percentage of women as heads of country offices, by major office

Major office	As at July 2017	As at Dec 2017	As at July 2018	As at Dec 2018	As at July 2019	As at Dec 2019	As at July 2020	As at Dec 2020	As at July 2021	As at Dec 2021	As at July 2022	As at Dec 2022	As at July 2023	As at Dec 2023	Changes between July 2017 and December 2023
Africa	26.1%	23.9%	23.4%	28.9%	34.8%	31.9%	31.9%	29.8%	29.8%	27.7%	21.3%	21.3%	25.5%	25.5%	Decrease of 0.6 percentage points
South-East Asia	18.2%	9.1%	9.1%	9.1%	9.1%	9.1%	9.1%	16.7%	18.2%	18.2%	18.2%	18.2%	18.2%	27.3%	Increase of 9.1 percentage points
Europe	63.3%	58.6%	55.2%	60.0%	58.1%	54.8%	58.1%	58.1%	53.3%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	53.3%	53.3%	Decrease of 10 percentage points
Eastern Mediterranean	27.8%	31.6%	36.8%	36.8%	36.8%	36.8%	35.0%	35.0%	42.9%	47.6%	42.9%	42.9%	36.4%	27.3%	Decrease of 0.5 percentage points
Western Pacific	26.7%	33.3%	33.3%	26.7%	40.0%	40.0%	40.0%	35.7%	46.7%	50.0%	60.0%	60.0%	53.3%	46.7%	Increase of 20 percentage points
Total	35.0%	33.3%	33.1%	35.8%	39.3%	37.4%	37.9%	37.1%	38.7%	38.2%	36.3%	36.3%	36.8%	35.2%	Increase of 0.2 percentage points

Fig. 3d. Gender parity – percentage of women at the D1 and D2 grades (long-term appointments), by major office

Major office	As at July 2017	As at Dec 2017	As at July 2018	As at Dec 2018	As at July 2019	As at Dec 2019	As at July 2020	As at Dec 2020	As at July 2021	As at Dec 2021	As at July 2022	As at Dec 2022	As at July 2023	As at Dec 2023	Changes between July 2017 and December 2023
Africa	31.6%	31.6%	25.0%	25.0%	27.3%	25.0%	23.1%	23.1%	30.0%	29.0%	23.3%	20.0%	13.8%	15.4%	Decrease of 16.2 percentage points
South-East Asia	14.3%	12.5%	11.1%	7.1%	7.7%	6.7%	7.7%	7.1%	13.3%	14.3%	14.3%	17.6%	13.3%	18.8%	Increase of 4.5 percentage points
Europe	50.0%	45.5%	64.3%	60.0%	60.0%	56.3%	66.7%	58.8%	50.0%	44.4%	41.2%	38.9%	38.1%	40.0%	Decrease of 10 percentage points
Eastern Mediterranean	25.0%	23.1%	26.3%	32.0%	32.0%	30.8%	25.8%	25.8%	34.4%	37.5%	41.2%	40.6%	39.4%	35.5%	Increase of 10.5 percentage points
Western Pacific	44.4%	36.4%	46.7%	35.7%	43.8%	41.2%	41.2%	38.9%	42.9%	42.9%	43.8%	43.8%	43.8%	37.5%	Decrease of 6.9 percentage points
Headquarters	26.6%	31.3%	35.4%	37.3%	38.1%	40.6%	45.6%	42.3%	38.7%	41.3%	41.7%	40.5%	41.0%	40.5%	Increase of 13.9 percentage points
Total	29.8%	31.0%	34.9%	34.0%	35.7%	35.2%	37.1%	35.0%	35.9%	37.0%	36.6%	35.3%	34.4%	34.0%	Increase of 4.2 percentage points

17. The information presented on geographical representation for 2023 (see Fig. 4) is based on updated calculations of the ranges of representation. The updated calculations take into account the latest scale of assessments, updated population data and an updated number of total positions subject to geographic distribution. As a result, the changes in representation reported for the year 2023 are due to a combination of the updated calculations and recruitment outcomes. As at 31 December 2023, 29.9% of Member States (or 59 of the 197 Member States)¹ were either unrepresented or underrepresented (see Fig. 4 and workforce data, Table 4). As at December 2022, 28.4% of Member States were either unrepresented or underrepresented (56 of 197 Member States). The updated calculations will serve as a new baseline for reviewing progress and trends over time.

Fig. 4. Distribution of WHO Member States as at 31 December 2023, by geographical representation

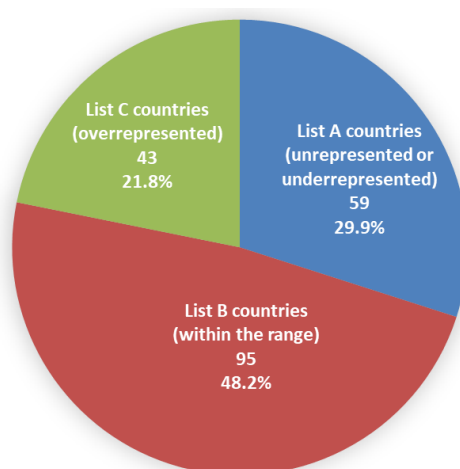


Fig. 5. Geographical representation – trends between July 2017 and December 2023

Indicator	As at July 2017	As at Dec 2017	As at July 2018	As at Dec 2018	As at July 2019	As at Dec 2019	As at July 2020	As at Dec 2020	As at July 2021	As at Dec 2021	As at July 2022	As at Dec 2022	As at July 2023*	As at Dec 2023*	Changes between July 2017 and December 2023
Percentage of Member States either unrepresented or underrepresented	32.1%	32.1%	31.6%	32.1%	31.6%	31.6%	30.6%	30.1%	29.6%	29.9%	28.9%	28.4%	30.5%	29.9%	Decrease of 2.2 percentage points
Percentage of staff in the professional and higher categories (including staff on temporary contracts) from low- and middle-income countries*	49.7%	49.7%	50.4%	50.1%	50.4%	51.3%	51.4%	51.8%	51.4%	51.4%	51.5%	52.4%	52.9%	53.7%	Increase of 4 percentage points
Percentage of staff in the professional and higher categories holding long-term appointments from low- and middle-income countries*	47.7%	47.8%	48.9%	49.1%	49.1%	50.0%	51.2%	51.7%	51.8%	52.4%	52.7%	53.1%	53.1%	53.5%	Increase of 5.8 percentage points
Organization-wide, percentage of staff members at the D1 and D2 levels from low- and middle-income countries*	35.5%	37.3%	37.0%	39.6%	41.6%	42.6%	43.5%	45.2%	46.7%	47.3%	47.0%	47.6%	48.4%	49.5%	Increase of 14 percentage points
Headquarters, percentage of staff members at the D1 and D2 levels from low- and middle-income countries*	15.6%	17.2%	20.0%	23.9%	23.8%	25.0%	29.4%	32.4%	29.3%	29.3%	29.2%	28.4%	32.1%	34.2%	Increase of 18.6 percentage points

* The classification of all data from July 2017 onwards has been updated from “developing countries” to “low- and middle-income countries” as of July 2023.

¹ Including the three Associate Members.

18. A decision was taken in 2023 to update the categorization of “developing countries” to “low- and middle-income countries”. Accordingly, the data in Table 5 of the human resources workforce data from July 2017 onwards has been recalculated on the basis of the updated categorization using historical data. The proportion of staff in the professional and higher categories on long-term appointments from low- and middle-income countries was 53.5% in December 2023 (see Fig. 5). Organization-wide, the percentage of staff members at the D1 and D2 levels from low- and middle-income countries was 49.5% as at December 2023. At the headquarters level, the percentage of staff members at the D1 and D2 levels from low- and middle-income countries was 34.2% as at December 2023, compared with 15.6% in July 2017.

19. Human resources workforce data Table 11a shows the trends in applications from female candidates, while Table 11b shows the trends in the geographical representation category of candidates. These tables show that as at December 2023 there has been an increase in percentage terms of female applicants over the past three years, maintaining the level obtained in 2020. Despite an increase in the number of positions advertised compared with previous years, there was an overall decrease in applications as at December 2023 compared with 2022, while the percentage of applications from nationals of countries within the range increased. It should be noted that the results for 2023 are influenced, in part, by the updated calculations of the ranges of geographical representation. While significant efforts have been made and results achieved across the Organization to bridge the gender gap, additional investments in sourcing and outreach efforts must be made, with a particular focus on improving geographical representation. Lessons learned in the past year on how best to reach female candidates through specific programmes, such as the Young Professionals Programme and the Global Roster of WHO Representatives, will continue to be applied to broader recruitment efforts.

20. The number of senior management staff (P6 grade and above) on longer-term and temporary appointments has increased from 275 in July 2017 to 296 in December 2023 (+8%) (see Fig. 6), in line with the strategic direction of WHO’s transformation.

Fig. 6. Comparison of numbers of senior management staff between July 2017 and December 2023, by major office

Major Office	P6/D1			D2			Ungraded			Total		
	Jul-17	Dec-23	2023 vs 2017	Jul-17	Dec-23	2023 vs 2017	Jul-17	Dec-23	2023 vs 2017	Jul-17	Dec-23	2023 vs 2017
Africa	41	33	-20%	1	5	400%	1	1	0%	43	39	-9%
South-East Asia	23	20	-13%	2	3	50%	1	1	0%	26	24	-8%
Europe	25	29	16%	1	1	0%	1	1	0%	27	31	15%
Eastern Mediterranean	28	29	4%	4	10	150%	1	1	0%	33	40	21%
Western Pacific	16	19	19%	2	1	-50%	1	0	-100%	19	20	5%
Headquarters	86	82	-5%	29	46	59%	12	14	17%	127	142	12%
Total	219	212	-3%	39	66	69%	17	18	6%	275	296	8%

ATTRACTING TALENT

Sourcing and outreach

21. Outreach initiatives continue to be implemented in collaboration with Member States to improve geographical representation and gender parity. Agreements with external service providers are used to conduct targeted outreach and recruitment campaigns in order to improve performance against diversity targets, in particular with respect to gender parity, as set out in the WHO Gender Parity Policy (2023–2026), and improving geographical representation. One particular area of focus in 2023 was to ensure that vacancy announcements receiving less than 30% of applications from women were re-advertised, as per the target established in the implementation plan for the WHO Gender Parity

Policy. Targeted efforts continue through career counselling, mentorship and leadership pathway programmes to build the capacities of female staff members at junior and mid-levels and to prepare them for higher-level managerial positions.

22. WHO vacancies continue to be shared widely by human resources and WHO technical staff, including on social media channels and platforms and through regular information updates to United Nations missions in Geneva and technical networks.

23. As reported to the Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly in 2022,¹ WHO launched the Young Professionals Programme in the second half of 2021, which targets candidates from least developed countries. The 14 candidates selected under the Programme began their respective assignments in November 2022 and the Programme was officially inaugurated in February 2023. The Programme is being further developed, incorporating the lessons learned from the selection process for the first cohort of candidates. Steps are currently being taken to plan for and select the second cohort.

Recruitment and selection

24. As part of the WHO transformation agenda, a target of 112 calendar days (or 80 working days) was set for the completion of the recruitment process for fixed-term and temporary appointments (as defined in Staff Rules 420.3 and 420.4, respectively), primarily by improving candidate screening services and the efficiency of selection processes.

25. The average time to recruit globally was 187 calendar days in both 2019 and 2020, with a range of 17 to 963 days in the year 2019 and a range of 25 to 627 days in the year 2020. The global average time to recruit decreased in 2021 to 141 days, with a range of 29 to 376 days, but increased again in the year 2022, with an average time to recruit of 163 days and a range of 9 to 405 days. Continued improvements were seen in recruitment data from the first half of 2023, with the data for the entire calendar year showing an improvement compared with 2022, with an average time to recruit of 144 days and a range of 11 to 386 days. Although performance is steadily improving, dedicated efforts are required to sustain the achievements made.

26. The main issues that impact the amount of time taken to recruit and related reporting are the screening of applicants, the availability of panel members, the timeliness of final decision-making and the availability of reliable data and dashboards. The human resources workforce business intelligence dashboard is currently under development with the aim of improving the analysis of and reporting on recruitment data and is expected to be available in the year 2024. Going forward, the use of generative artificial intelligence is being explored to improve the screening process.

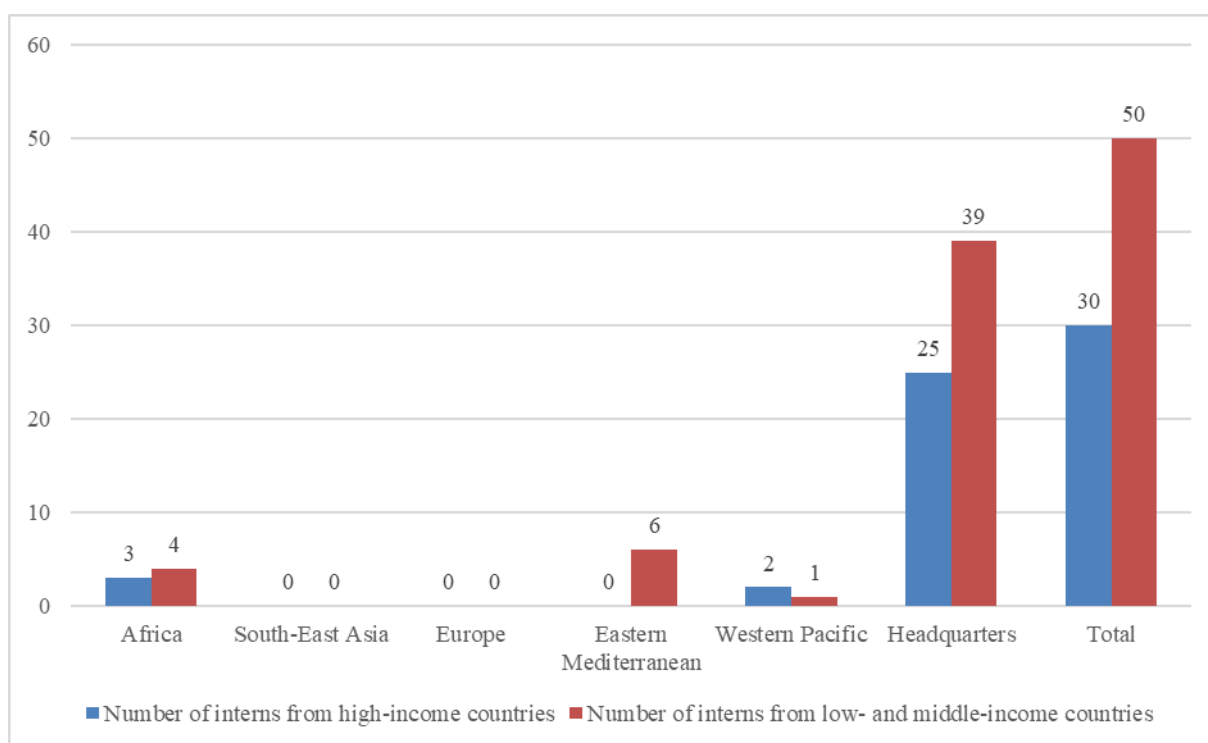
27. The Stellis tool used to support recruitment and selection presents a number of challenges, in particular due to variations in its use across major offices to advance the recruitment process in the system. Issues encountered and lessons learned are being used to inform the development of the new enterprise resource planning system, which will replace Stellis when launched, ensuring that WHO applies a consistent and harmonized approach to recruitment throughout the Organization for all contract types, with improved capabilities for reporting and assessment of performance in recruitment. Work has begun on the revision of the harmonized selection process, which will incorporate the needs identified through the new business management system.

¹ See document A75/31; see also document WHA75/2022/REC/3, summary records of the third meeting (section 2) of Committee B.

GLOBAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

28. The Global Internship Programme was relaunched in October 2022 following the Programme's suspension from July 2020 owing to the pandemic of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Between 1 January and 31 December 2023, 80 interns were selected, of whom over 75% were female. Fig. 7 below provides a breakdown of interns recruited by major office: 64 interns at headquarters, seven in the Regional Office for Africa, six in the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, and three in the Regional Office for the Western Pacific. A total of 13 372 candidates, of whom 56% were female, applied to these internship opportunities.

Fig. 7. Interns by major office and country classification, from 1 January to 31 December 2023



29. The Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly approved a revised target date of 31 December 2025 for achieving 50% of interns from low- and middle-income countries.

30. Of the 80 interns selected between 1 January and 31 December 2023, 62.5% were from low- and middle-income countries. Candidates from low- and middle-income countries represented 60.9% of all interns based at headquarters, 57.1% in the Regional Office for Africa and 33.3% in the Regional Office for the Western Pacific. In the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, all candidates were from low- and middle-income countries. The average duration of internships across all regions was four months. The Secretariat continues to monitor the trends and progress against the target in resolution WHA71.13 (2018) of at least 50% of selected interns from low- and middle-income countries. It should be noted that the target has been exceeded for 2023.

31. The WHO Intern Board at headquarters resumed its monthly meetings with the Human Resources and Talent Management Department in December 2023, providing a forum to support the intern community and take on board matters that can improve their experience and ultimately the Global Internship Programme. The Human Resources and Talent Management Department also organizes an informal monthly breakfast for interns at headquarters as a further opportunity for exchange.

RETAINING TALENT

Performance management

32. An assessment of WHO's performance management system was conducted by an external contractor from May 2022 to January 2023. Recommendations were made for the improvement of related policies, systems and processes based on best practices in the industry and the specificities of WHO. The assessment took into account the opportunities presented by the introduction of the new business management system to build on the performance management functionality of the new system and achieve business process optimization, as well as to address the specific challenges to performance management presented by large-scale teleworking.

33. In line with the recommendations from the assessment of WHO's performance management system, a performance management module will be launched in 2025 in Workday, the new business management system that will replace the existing tool (eWork). WHO is also reviewing the Recognizing Excellence Programme to make it more impactful and integrated with performance management. In addition, a new 360-degree feedback option will be introduced that will be aligned with the introduction of the performance management module in the new business management system. The introduction of a calibration system is similarly being explored following consultation with other United Nations agencies: a suitable model will be considered on the basis of WHO specificities.

34. Other recommendations from the assessment included clarifying roles and responsibilities in the performance management process and articulating accountabilities more clearly; improving consequence management; investing in culture change and a performance-management mindset; defining clear roles for human resources performance management experts and enhancing their capacities; upskilling supervisors; and designing and implementing an internal communication campaign.

35. One modification concerning the involvement of second-level supervisors has already been incorporated into the current system. As of 2023, first-level supervisors have the option of involving second-level supervisors in the electronic performance management and development system (ePMDS) cycle at the mid-year review stage if required. In such cases, if the performance of the staff member concerned is rated "fully satisfactory" at the end-of-year evaluation stage, the involvement of the second-level supervisor at that point becomes optional. However, if the first-level supervisor wishes to award a rating that is above or below "Fully Satisfactory", the first-level supervisor must first consult the second-level supervisor before providing or committing to this rating with the staff member.

36. The Regional Office for Africa continues to implement the Team Performance Feedback system, which is designed to collect and assess stakeholders' feedback on a team's performance across six key domains: WHO values; team effectiveness; quality of deliverables; cost management; collaboration; and adaptability to change. Using 36 performance data points, the feedback from team members, partners, governments and WHO colleagues at the regional and headquarters levels are analysed. The insights gathered not only strengthen relationships with technical partners, Member States and WHO colleagues, but also identify specific training needs within teams. The Team Performance Feedback system has been widely and effectively employed by over 30 units, clusters and WHO country offices. This broad application of the system underscores its instrumental role as a management tool in consolidating transformational achievements and facilitating organizational change at the unit level.

Staff learning and development

37. The biennium 2022–2023 has seen an increased collaboration with the United Nations System Staff College on numerous projects catering to a broader spectrum of internal audiences, targeting senior leaders, women senior leaders, junior leaders, middle management and administrative staff. More recently, such offerings have also been made available more broadly to the entire workforce.

38. The Pathways to Leadership Programme, led by the Regional Office for Africa, has continued to be implemented across major offices throughout the biennium, as shown in the following examples:

- In 2023, 20 participants from the Regional Office for Europe and 27 women from francophone countries in the African Region benefited from the Pathways to Leadership Programme. Following the first joint Regional Office for Africa/Regional Office for Europe cohort launched in 2022, a second joint cohort was launched in 2023 targeting 30 Regional Office for Africa and Regional Office for Europe WHO Representatives or staff on the WHO Representative roster. A joint Regional Office for Africa/Regional Office for Europe/Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean cohort for unit managers was launched in October 2023 and ended in January 2024. Based on the five main characteristics most demanded by staff, the Regional Office for Africa piloted an initiative that helps leaders to develop managers' coaching skills. Through the initiative, four managers in the African Region have been certified as coaches by the International Coaching Federation. The development of internal coaching capacity is key to consolidating a transformational leadership style.
- The Regional Office for Africa conducted the second round of 360-degree feedback for 52 participants in the Pathways to Leadership Programme (47 WHO Representatives and five operations officers), enhancing their awareness of their personal development. The 360-degree feedback process used in the Programme informed the headquarters 360-feedback exercise launched in 2022.
- Leveraging both WHO's experience of the Pathways to Leadership Programme and the United Nations System Staff College's experience of the Executive Management Programme for WHO, a collaboration with the Staff College was formed to develop the next iteration of the Pathways to Leadership Programme, which will ultimately be rolled out to all regions. Two cohorts were launched in the third quarter of 2023: one in the Regional Office for the Western Pacific and one at headquarters, each including between 30 and 35 participants. The Department of Human Resources and Talent Management is also working with the WHO Academy on plans for a sustainable approach to the delivery of leadership and management training within the Organization.

39. Building on the successful experience in the biennium 2020–2021, when over 200 staff members were enrolled in individual courses organized by the United Nations System Staff College, WHO's collaboration with the Staff College continued in the biennium 2022–2023. Following a competitive expression of interest process in May 2022 leading to 1051 expressions of interest, 245 members of staff were enrolled in individual Staff College courses in the first half of the biennium, including:

- 39 senior managers at the P5 grade and above in the United Nations Executive Management Programme;
- 34 female staff members at the P4/P5 level in the Leadership, Women and the United Nations course;

- 27 staff members at the P2 and P3 levels in the United Nations Emerging Leaders e-curriculum;
- 24 staff members at the G5 grade and above in the Leadership Skills for Support and Administrative Functions course; and
- 31 administrative assistants in the Skills for Administrative Assistants course.

40. As evidenced by the large number of expressions of interest received in May 2022, the requests for individual United Nations System Staff College courses were considerably greater than the funding available, with many members of staff unable to enrol. Fortunately, this coincided with the roll-out of the United Nations System Staff College Blue Line platform that provides access for the entire WHO workforce to over 50 self-led individual courses through one single corporate subscription. Given the considerably lower costs associated with the Blue Line platform and the absence of a cap on the number of people who can enrol, a corporate subscription offering free enrolment for the entire WHO workforce was established at the start of 2023. As at 31 December 2023, 1154 unique staff enrolments have been recorded by the platform.

41. A total of 23 global and 35 regional learning initiatives were approved by the Global Learning and Development Committee for the biennium 2022–2023. The global learning initiatives include courses for human resources professionals by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development; project management courses; access to more than 5000 short courses on the LinkedIn Learning platform; global procurement courses; performance management courses; coaching for managers; and disability awareness and inclusion courses. Regional initiatives covered areas such as capacity-building for WHO Representatives; resource mobilization and donor engagement; country strategic planning; and conflict management.

42. For current WHO mandatory training, the completion rates per course are indicated below. Regular reminders are issued to staff to complete mandatory training as part of efforts to increase completion rates. New revisions to the mandatory training policy are being considered to link compliance to the overall performance assessment rating.

- **Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse training:** assigned as of November 2021 to all members of the WHO workforce. Current completion rate: 92%.
- **United to respect – preventing sexual harassment and other prohibited conduct (general and managers’ version):** assigned as of March 2022 to all members of the WHO workforce: general version (for staff with no supervisory role); managers’ version (for staff with a supervisory role). Current completion rates: 92% for the general version, 92% for the managers’ version.
- **WHO Ethics Empowerment:** assigned as of May 2023 to all members of the WHO workforce. Current completion rate: 83%.
- **United Nations BSAFE security awareness training course:** assigned as of November 2022 to all members of the workforce. Current completion rate: 93%.
- **Cybersecurity essentials and preventing phishing training course:** assigned as of February 2020 to all members of the workforce. Current completion rate: 92%.
- **Cybersecurity refresher training course:** assigned as of August 2021 to all members of the workforce. Current completion rate: 93.5%.

43. In 2023, around 2500 staff members participated in the Global Language Programme, which provides Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish language courses: 32% of participants were based in the African Region, 10% in the South-East Asia Region, 6% in the European Region, 12% in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, 6% in the Western Pacific Region, and 34% at headquarters. The language course catalogue has been expanded to include new topics and delivery formats. A total of 539 staff members have been selected to take part in special training courses focusing on writing and communication-related soft skills.

44. The Global Language Programme has provided financial support for 137 candidates for the 2023 United Nations Language Proficiency Examination and other external language proficiency examinations recognized by WHO. As of 2021, WHO has served as a screening centre of the United Nations Language Proficiency Examination for all WHO, United Nations International Computing Centre, Unitaaid, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and International Agency for Research on Cancer candidates at headquarters and in the six regional offices. As a screening centre, WHO manages the process from the initial communication with applicants to the thorough verification of their eligibility in terms of contract and language proficiency, applying both United Nations policy and the relevant criteria of the Global Language Programme when performing the assessment. Such a process has ensured coherence when processing requests from WHO candidates and has reduced the overall cost to the Organization of language proficiency testing since administrative fees are no longer charged.

45. In 2023, approximately 580 staff members were invited to participate in the online headquarters induction programme. With the programme adjusted to a virtual environment, there is no limit on the number of invitees, and participants can easily access the recordings of the sessions if they are unable to participate live.

46. The first phase of development of the new global induction programme is currently being finalized. The programme, which is being developed in partnership with the United Nations System Staff College, has been designed to ensure that all newly recruited staff members at any WHO location receive the same information about working for the Organization. Its modular e-learning pathway will be implemented globally in addition to the existing induction programmes in each major office. The global induction programme will be launched in 2024.

47. The WHO Academy will play a key role in building the capacity of health workers globally, as well as WHO's own staff. It will contribute not only to building an even more experienced, qualified and talented WHO workforce, but also to creating a workplace that allows WHO staff to be and do their best. The Academy will be WHO's main learning centre, bringing together all WHO learning products and services. In addition to internally produced courses, the Academy learning offer will incorporate a curated selection of high-quality external programmes. The catalogue of courses will respond to major global health challenges and to the needs of health workers. The gateway, hosting and co-production of courses with partners, which will include the international academic community and WHO collaborating centres, will accelerate the pace of production, while attracting "brands" that ensure high quality, credibility and international visibility. The curation of training products produced by partner organizations will be subject to quality control processes put in place by the Academy, under the guidance of its Quality Committee and WHO's Quality Assurance of Norms and Standards Department.

Mentoring

48. The WHO global mentoring programme is part of an organizational development approach to support staff in career development, on-the-job learning, knowledge sharing and capacity-building. The number of mentors currently available is 240; these are staff of all grades and from all WHO regions, as

well as some WHO retirees. Training and briefing sessions for mentors and mentees in support of career development have continued through face-to-face and virtual modalities.

49. Since January 2022, staff have continued to benefit from mentoring while also receiving training and guidance through online and face-to-face workshops offered by the Career Management and Development team. A new online training programme on coaching skills for managers and mentors has been developed and was launched in February 2023. It saw the participation of 40 mentors and managers from across the three levels of the Organization. A newly created structured mentoring initiative was launched on 17 January 2023 for a duration of six months. This brought together 127 staff members, including some retirees, from all levels and regions. The high level of interest generated by the initiative across the three levels of the Organization resulted in 52 newly formed mentor–mentee pairs. Three global sessions, including a celebratory closing event, were organized for mentoring pairs, which provided information on how to best start a mentoring relationship and how to sustain momentum over time. Other support made available included coaching skills training for mentors and group coaching sessions and complementary workshops for mentees to encourage them to define their purpose, direction and goals in the mentoring context and enhance their skills and careers in general. To keep staff updated, a mentoring newsletter was created with key information and tools made available to all staff through the online career portal. Finally, mentors’ forums were offered on a monthly basis in order for mentors to connect and share skills and lessons learned. An evaluation mechanism was prepared in September 2023 and lessons learned from the structured mentoring programme informed the new edition of the programme, launched in February 2024.

Career pathways and career development

50. A high-level career management framework and architecture have been established and updated, focusing on two main career streams in WHO: technical and operational. A total of 45 in-depth interviews were finalized with Directors at the headquarters level, Directors of Administration and Finance and Directors of Programme Management in regional offices, enabling the definition of career development principles and the collection of practical input for the definition of career pathways across all areas of work and levels. The revised career management framework is currently being used to inform the job architecture and job catalogue in the new enterprise resource planning system. Thirty-five career paths have been developed for different job families. The job catalogue, which was initially focused on core predictable country presence (CPCP) job profiles, is now being expanded to include all job profiles across the three levels of the Organization, so as to facilitate mobility and ensure alignment and consistency in terms of key requirements. A toolkit on using the catalogue of CPCP job profiles has been developed and shared with all country offices. An online career development booklet bringing together learning opportunities and tools, career development offerings and mobility has also been developed and communication activities on this new initiative rolled out to reach the entire WHO workforce.

51. In 2023, career management activities, coaching, mentoring, career counselling, emotional intelligence training and team-building sessions continued to be offered both virtually and face to face. The new career development programme entitled “Advance” was delivered three times in 2023 to promote women’s leadership while addressing the specific career development needs and challenges of national professional officers and general service staff. The programme is complemented by coaching support provided by a group of WHO internally qualified coaches. A new edition of the EMERGE programme, co-developed with 11 other international organizations, was launched in October 2023 and saw the enrolment of WHO national professional officers from country offices in a leadership development path aimed at supporting their career development. Masterclasses on emotional

intelligence with renowned international speakers were organized throughout 2023 and offered to all staff online.

52. The business process optimization phase of the new talent management platform, which is integrated into the new enterprise resource planning system, has started with the definition of the key requirements, technical features and process steps.

Mobility

53. The number of staff members in the professional and higher categories holding long-term appointments who moved from one duty station to another in the period from January to December 2023 stands at 216, compared with 252 at the same time in the year 2022 (see workforce data, Tables 14 and 15). At the same time, the percentage of moves from one major office to another decreased slightly from 41.3% for the period from January to December 2022 to 41.2% for the period from January to December 2023.

54. WHO's Global Geographical Mobility Policy was finalized based on the outcome of the mobility simulation exercise, as well as additional inputs from senior leadership, management and staff. It came into effect in June 2023.

55. The first phase of implementation of the Global Geographical Mobility Policy was launched in June 2023 and comprised a voluntary mobility round. Several information sessions were organized for all staff as well as a call for volunteers from the group of eligible staff members. Out of a total of 443 volunteers, 259 were eligible. The compendium for the voluntary mobility exercise comprised 205 positions at different levels of the Organization from P2 to D1 level. During the exercise, 83 positions were removed from the compendium, mainly due to funding issues. A total of 183 eligible applicants applied to the positions in the compendium. For this voluntary phase, special measures were applied that enabled volunteers to apply to up to five positions, of which a maximum of two could be at a higher grade provided that volunteers also applied to the same number of positions at their current grade. During August and September 2023, placement panels, including the respective hiring managers, reviewed the applications received and prepared reports with recommendations. A total of 122 reports were prepared, of which 59 contained recommendations for placement. The reports were approved by the Director-General in January 2024, following which the respective candidates were contacted and reassignments initiated to take place during the first half of 2024. To date, 41 of the 59 positions approved for placement have been reassigned.

ENABLING WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Human resources agenda for diversity, equity and inclusion for the workforce

56. In addition to the launch of the newly developed WHO Gender Parity Policy described in paragraph 5 of this report, the human resources agenda for diversity, equity and inclusion for the workforce also provides for inclusive employment measures for people with disabilities. Newly introduced reasonable accommodation services assist employees and job applicants with disabilities to access requested resources. The first formal selection of UN-GLOBE coordinators resulted in the selection of six coordinators. In addition to those efforts, the Organization-wide culture survey and exit survey templates were updated and the process to select a service provider to administer regular Organization-wide surveys was concluded.

Human resources analytics

57. The human resources business intelligence dashboard was launched in early 2023, providing users with workforce data, new human resources data analysis tools and human resources performance measurement services. The first version of the external human resources portal for Member States was rolled out in May 2023 and has been updated on the basis of feedback received.

58. The business management system will be used as an opportunity to: introduce diversity, equity and inclusion features; adopt disaggregated parameters; and introduce voluntary disclosures for additional demographics. Further leveraging of such technology will reduce the time spent on collecting workforce data and replace certain manual knowledge-sharing processes.

Prevention of abusive conduct excluding sexual harassment

59. Following the adoption on 8 March 2023 of the WHO Policy on Preventing and Addressing Sexual Misconduct, sexual harassment, which was previously covered by the WHO Policy on Preventing and Addressing Abusive Conduct, now falls under the WHO Policy on Preventing and Addressing Sexual Misconduct. As a result, the WHO Policy on Preventing and Addressing Abusive Conduct was revised and a new version of the policy covering harassment (excluding sexual harassment), discrimination and abuse of authority (collectively, “abusive conduct”) was issued on 20 June 2023.

60. The implementation plan for the WHO Policy on Preventing and Addressing Abusive Conduct continues to be rolled out and includes a robust communication campaign and the dissemination of communication materials and resources that regularly remind the members of the workforce of their duties in preventing and addressing abusive conduct. Training sessions, both optional and mandatory, tailored to the needs of different audiences, have been delivered across the three levels of the Organization.

61. Particular emphasis is being placed on background verification through, in addition to other tools, the use of Clear Check, a United Nations system-wide electronic database that permits the screening of candidates and the sharing of, among other things, information on former personnel against whom allegations of sexual harassment or sexual exploitation and abuse were substantiated. Moreover, a system was established to ensure implementation of the policy’s prevention measures in all offices. New approaches to further expand and strengthen verification and screening services are being explored.

Internal justice system

62. The Secretariat continues to monitor the reform of the internal justice system launched in 2016; the resulting improvements have included a greater emphasis on the informal resolution of disputes, which has significantly reduced the number of appeals. Following the review of the internal justice system in 2022, the Human Resources and Talent Management Department prepared an implementation plan to address the recommendations covering the period from 2023 to 2024 in close coordination with all stakeholders. In line with the implementation plan, an internal justice system outreach mission was conducted in the Regional Office for the Western Pacific in Manila in May 2023, where personnel were made aware of the recourse mechanisms available to them. In June 2023, induction training on the internal justice system was provided to newly recruited staff members from the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. The internal justice system outreach missions have been extended to other regional offices, including the Regional Office for South-East Asia, where an outreach mission was conducted between 27 November and 1 December 2023. Furthermore, senior management staff are

assessing the most effective means of implementing the external consultant's recommendation that the Organization provide legal assistance to staff members in their grievances before the internal justice system.

63. In addition, the Joint Inspection Unit has conducted a review of the internal justice systems of organizations within the United Nations system for the period from September 2021 to December 2022, with a view to mapping approaches to internal justice mechanisms and assessing the adequacy and capacity of such mechanisms to deliver on the objectives set out in the applicable regulatory frameworks. The Joint Inspection Unit issued its report in October 2023¹ and concluded, among other things, that WHO has one of the most effective and progressive internal justice systems within the United Nations system. In particular, the establishment of a dedicated resource within the human resources function tasked with ensuring impartiality in reviewing contested decisions was noted as a good practice that should be explored by other organizations of the United Nations system.

Parental leave

64. As part of WHO's strategy to create an enabling environment and further to the approval of Staff Rule amendments,² WHO implemented unified parental leave effective as of 1 January 2023. The unified parental leave, which is available to all parents, promotes equality, contributes to equity and gender parity, recognizes the role of all parents, and enhances WHO as an employer of choice.

Flexible working arrangements

65. WHO implemented a flexible working arrangements policy in September 2022 and continues to survey best practices within the United Nations common system. Enhancements to the flexible working arrangements policy may be considered on the basis of lessons learned through its implementation.

Contractual modalities

66. Following the establishment of the three-level global task force in 2020, a review was conducted on the use of WHO's existing contractual modalities and their impact on staff. This concluded with a final report issued in December 2022, containing six overarching recommendations and 27 sub-recommendations. The recent commitment by Member States to ensure sustainable financing for the Organization is critical to the full implementation of the recommendations. In particular, a successful first investment round will be essential to enable WHO to provide improved contractual modalities and conditions to the workforce.

67. In line with the recommendations, a new contractual landscape is under development that will take into account the new affiliate position and contract type, while recognizing the opportunities the Organization has to leverage the functionalities that will be available in the new business management system. This new contract type is being designed to function seamlessly within the new proposed operating environment. Planning guidance will be provided on the full range of contract types available to ensure greater clarity on which one is appropriate for a given function and role.

¹ Available at: https://www.unjiu.org/sites/www.unjiu.org/files/jiu_rep_2023_2_english_0.pdf (accessed 14 March 2024).

² Document EB152/49; see also document EB152/2023/REC/2, summary records of the seventeenth meeting, section 1.

68. Of note is the planned move away from the term “non-staff”, which has until now been used to identify the part of the workforce that does not hold staff appointments. Going forward, this terminology is being changed to “affiliates”, and references to “non-staff” will be discontinued during the biennium 2024–2025. The respective policies, documents and templates will be updated accordingly.

Human Resources Global Operations

69. WHO’s Global Shared Services includes the Human Resources Global Operations team, which is an integral part of the Human Resources and Talent Management Department and consists of a dedicated human resources unit operating from the Global Service Centre in Kuala Lumpur. Human Resources Global Operations plays a significant role in the Secretariat’s efforts to modernize and standardize WHO’s human resources services.

70. The Human Resources Global Operations team provides centralized services to the workforce and handles more than 130 types of human resources transactions. These transactions encompass staff contract management, statutory travel, self-service human resources, incident management, master data management, and annual compliance exercises. In 2023, the Human Resources Global Operations team expanded its services to include handling staff teleworking application administration and offering employee verification services to hosted United Nations agencies. The introduction of employment verification services has further enhanced the uniformity and accuracy of submitted employment details.

71. In 2023, the Human Resources Global Operations team took steps to decrease the transaction rejection rate and ensure complete transaction submissions. To achieve this, the team developed audiovisual aids for various human resources-related transactions and entitlements. These aids are proving beneficial for human resources transaction administrators and initiators, assisting them in making informed decisions, navigating the system, and initiating complete transactions with all the required supporting documents.

72. Conference staff appointments constituted the highest volume of transactions administered by the Human Resources Global Operations team in 2023. In order to enhance efficiency and accuracy for managing such a substantial volume of transactions, the team implemented several intermediate automation processes for data extraction, letter preparation, and implementation verification in 2023. These measures significantly reduced processing times, achieving a nearly 50% improvement in delivery speed.

Staff health and well-being

73. Since January 2023, the Staff Health and Well-being Department has taken various physical and mental health promotion measures, including signing up for a one-year subscription to a health and well-being platform for the workforce; launching a joint health promotion and screening campaign with the Noncommunicable Diseases Department for World Hearing Day; holding regular first aid training sessions; organizing pre-deployment and travel consultations, as well as maternity health consultations, including on the promotion of breastfeeding; organizing blood donation campaigns; providing COVID-19 and seasonal influenza vaccination; launching “Mental Health Mondays”, with a series of webinars on selected mental health topics by experts; and launching a mental health at work app.

74. The Staff Health and Well-being Department continues to provide support prior to, during and after deployment to Grade 2 and Grade 3 emergencies with regional medical services, including staff physicians, nurses and counsellors. The staff psychologist and staff counsellors at WHO headquarters and regional offices continue to provide specialized support to promote mental health at work and offer

ongoing individual and team support for the workforce. They also organize support groups and provide webinars and trainings to the workforce on topics such as psychological first aid, mindfulness, and mental health at work for staff and managers.

75. In addition to in-house mental health support services, external counselling options have been enhanced. Counselling services under the Employee Assistance Programme continue, making remote counselling support available to the entire workforce and eligible dependants. Furthermore, Staff Health Insurance Rules have been amended in relation to mental health, including changes to ensure that a prescription is no longer required to access up to 24 sessions of psychotherapy per year.

76. Globally, the Staff Health and Well-being Department has committed to hiring a Workforce Mental Health and Well-being Taskforce coordinator to support WHO's commitment to implementing the United Nations Workplace Mental Health and Well-being Strategy. WHO's strategies in this area are aligned with those of the United Nations system, and include a workplan for engaging all global stakeholders, with a focus on the prevention and promotion of mental health in addition to the provision of direct support. WHO has continued to provide staff counselling support at the regional and country office levels (including in Türkiye, Uganda and Ukraine) in response to emergencies. The regional and country-level staff counsellors provide counselling services and support the coordination of the WHO Workplace Mental Health and Well-being Strategy implementation plan.

ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

77. The Health Assembly is invited to note the report.

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