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United Nations System Staff College

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution [60/214](#). The report details the progress of the United Nations System Staff College in the biennium 2015-2016 in terms of outreach and the impact of its services, substantive course portfolio and strategic orientation.

In the period under review, the Staff College's courses, services and products reached over 30,000 beneficiaries, equipping them with the knowledge and tools required to work towards the common goal of making the United Nations more coherent, efficient and effective. This figure represents an increase of 29 per cent over the previous biennium.

In the period under review, the Staff College positioned its own learning programmes and services at the forefront of learning and knowledge-sharing for United Nations staff in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. By building on its unique position as the only United Nations organization mandated to provide inter-agency learning, training and knowledge-sharing within the system, the College worked towards boosting its potential to act as a change agent for the United Nations system as a whole.

The Staff College developed a dual programme of support to harmonize and connect the entire United Nations system in capacity-building for the 2030 Agenda. First, since the 2030 Agenda became the overarching framework guiding the work of the entire United Nations system, the Staff College has focused on becoming a centre of excellence for knowledge and learning on sustainable development. The newly created Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Development in Bonn, Germany is the result of its efforts in that respect. The Knowledge Centre also acts as a second Staff



College campus, away from Turin, Italy, and is close to a large number of United Nations staff, providing a cost-effective location for the delivery of other regular Staff College courses.

Second, since staff members' commitment to and capacity for managing change at work are critical to the ability of the United Nations to adapt in the context of the 2030 Agenda, the Staff College has strived to position itself as a centre of excellence for mainstreaming change and innovation into United Nations work and practices through its learning offerings. To that end, in addition to incorporating the concepts of the 2030 Agenda into all its courses, it has developed dedicated learning interventions to foster change and innovation through the United Nations Laboratory for Organizational Change and Knowledge. A diverse suite of initiatives are offered by the Laboratory, targeting various audiences at multiple levels within the United Nations system. They include providing advisory services on issues relating to change and innovation to United Nations entities to assist them in implementing organizational transformations; providing staff involved in change processes in various United Nations entities with opportunities to learn from and support each other in creating a common culture of innovation in the United Nations system; and providing learning opportunities to staff at various levels to increase their managerial and leadership ability.

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution [60/214](#), in which, inter alia, the General Assembly reaffirmed the role of the Staff College as an institution for system-wide knowledge management, training and continuous learning for the staff of the United Nations system, in particular in the areas of economic and social development, peace and security and internal management. The report describes the progress made in relation to Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/9, in which the Council welcomed the increased role of the Staff College as a catalyst for organizational change and transformation within the United Nations system.

2. Created by the General Assembly in 2002, the Staff College offers residential courses in Turin, Italy, and in Bonn, Germany, and also deploys its mobile team of experts to deliver training in over 50 countries annually. In addition, the College offers a growing portfolio of distance learning courses and knowledge-sharing platforms. The College's programmes benefit from its close relationship with United Nations decision-making bodies, allowing the College to identify the particular training demands of the agencies, funds and programmes and respond to the far-reaching reform agenda that cuts across the United Nations system. In developing and implementing its programmes, the College collaborates with renowned experts, academic institutions and United Nations partners. That allows the College to bring to bear innovative thinking, academic rigour and contextual relevance in building staff capacity to address the most critical issues facing the United Nations.

3. Section II of the present report highlights the added value of inter-agency learning in the context of the sustainable development framework and the critical role that the Staff College can play as a change agent for the entire United Nations system. Section III provides an overview of the key programmatic achievements of the College during the biennium 2015-2016, while section IV emphasizes that the College should be considered a strategic player by both the United Nations system entities and Member States in support of the ambitious goals set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It contains a recommendation that Member States and United Nations entities should continue to provide full support to the Staff College.

II. Inter-agency learning: a critical pathway to implement the 2030 Agenda

4. The United Nations plays a crucial role in supporting governments as they implement their commitments under the 2030 Agenda. To effectively assist Member States efforts to realize this transformative and holistic agenda, the United Nations needs visionary leaders and outstanding technical and managerial staff. To this end, the United Nations system must be transformed to ensure that it has a workforce with the right skills and mindset to truly deliver at the system level.

5. As emphasized by the Secretary-General in his report on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review for development of the United Nations system ([A/71/292/Rev.1](#)), progress towards sustainable development requires integrated

thinking, transcending individual mandates and structures and exploring linkages between different thematic issues. It entails fostering new partnerships to identify key problems and opportunities, leveraging diverse methods of implementation and facilitating joint action to ensure progress and maximize results. Furthermore, a systematic and integrated approach must be taken to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals since no single Goal should be considered the exclusive mandate of any particular entity and none of the Goals is extraneous to the work of any entity. Providing full support for the efforts of Member States to implement the 2030 Agenda calls for a shared understanding within the United Nations system that inter-agency and system-wide collaboration and coordination are a prerequisite for success.

6. At present, the United Nations system lacks a common internal organizational culture that can bring greater clarity and cohesion to its work at the global level or develop solid leaders and competent managers who share a common understanding of the system's role, values and mission. Instead, each United Nations entity has its own organizational culture, one that often supersedes the "One United Nations" culture.

7. The lack of a common leadership and management culture, in turn, has helped create a disjointed United Nations system that encourages competition rather than collaboration between the many system entities and exacerbates the dysfunctionality perceived by some across the globe.

8. Capacity development programmes and the innovative learning strategies associated with them can influence staff thinking and behaviour. The learning environment provides a safe, non-political and non-threatening space that allows staff to prioritize collaboration over competition and can help shift the mindset of United Nations staff towards thinking and delivering as one cohesive and integrated system.

9. Spending time with colleagues from other organizations in a classroom setting can help staff to appreciate the work difficulties faced by others, develop an appreciation for leadership and management challenges and discover ways to deliver as one. Alternatively, through online learning opportunities, staff can share professional experiences, lessons learned, good leadership and management practices, find joint solutions to common problems and bond with peers from different professional backgrounds and organizational affiliations, all to the benefit of the wider system.

10. In the period under review, the College positioned its own learning programmes and services at the forefront of learning and knowledge-sharing for United Nations staff in support of the 2030 Agenda. By building on its unique position as the only United Nations organization mandated to provide inter-agency learning, training and knowledge-sharing within the system, the College worked to utilize the power of learning as a conduit for change and transformation across the United Nations system.

III. Overview of activities and key programmatic achievements

11. Over the reporting period, the Staff College's courses, services and products reached over 30,000 beneficiaries from throughout the United Nations system, equipping them with the knowledge and tools required to work towards the common goal of making the United Nations more coherent, efficient and effective.

12. As the main driver for its work, the Staff College developed a dual programme of support to harmonize and connect the entire United Nations system in capacity-building for the 2030 Agenda. Through the Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Development, alongside the United Nations Laboratory for Organizational Change and Knowledge, the Staff College offers the first United Nations vehicle to build the technical, managerial and leadership capacities of the staff to address the Sustainable Development Goals. While the Knowledge Centre is largely focused on the "what" of sustainable development learning (substantive and technical knowledge), the Laboratory prioritizes the organizational "how" by focusing on organizational change and innovation for greater efficiency. Technical capacities are crucial to meeting expectations regarding the substantive contribution of the United Nations to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. However, those technical capacities would be less effective without the leadership and managerial competencies needed to promote change and innovation and stimulate the radical organizational and systemic transformation that the system needs to face the new context.

13. The Staff College incorporated elements relevant to the 2030 Agenda (in particular Goal 16) into courses relating to peace and security in the existing portfolio of course offerings. In addition, the College continued to invest in technology-enhanced learning as a cost-effective means to reach large numbers of staff.

A. Building substantive knowledge on the 2030 Agenda: the Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Development

14. In 2015, the Staff College conceptualized and established the Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Development in Bonn, with the generous support of the Government of Germany. The Centre was officially inaugurated and became fully operational in March 2016. Its mission is to respond to the learning, training and knowledge management needs of United Nations staff and partners in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

15. The portfolio of the new Centre builds not only on the College's existing expertise, but also on the wealth of knowledge on sustainable development present in Bonn-based United Nations entities, academic institutions and think tanks. It constitutes the first College campus away from Turin, providing a new, cost-effective location to deliver other regular courses.

16. In 2016, the Knowledge Centre held more than 30 learning events. Key deliverables included the foundational course on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which had over 240 participants; the United Nations "reflection

series” 2016 on development cooperation, policy advice and middle-income countries; and the programme on stakeholder engagement and consensus-building for sustainable development. In addition, it launched two pilot courses on United Nations catalytic support to South-South and triangular cooperation in implementing the 2030 Agenda and on leveraging big data for sustainable development. The Staff College was invited to organize a side event during the high-level political forum in New York on leveraging capacities for the 2030 Agenda, which was well received by participants. The learning opportunities piloted in 2016 will be systematically replicated, increasing the learning impact on the United Nations system as a whole.

17. Maintaining the multi-stakeholder approach of the 2030 Agenda at the core of its learning and training work, the Knowledge Centre expanded its partnerships base by forging substantive collaborations with a range of partners, including organizations and institutions from governments, civil society, the business community and academia. Such partners included the Sustainable Development Solutions Network and its Academy; the Consensus Building Institute; the Data-Pop Alliance; Impact 2030; the Simpleshow Foundation; the Collaborating Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production; and the Foreign Service Academy of the German Federal Foreign Office. The Centre collaborated with those partner institutions on designing and developing a diverse set of learning products on the Sustainable Development Goals and the broader 2030 Agenda. Following the same principle, the College’s courses were attended by a variety of participants including United Nations staff, government officials and representatives of academia, the private sector and civil society.

B. Changing the work culture of the United Nations system: the United Nations Laboratory for Organizational Change and Knowledge

18. Established in 2015, the United Nations Laboratory for Organizational Change and Knowledge provides a comprehensive set of learning interventions and advisory services designed to promote a culture of change and innovation across the United Nations system. The services that the Laboratory offers aim to shift how staff in the United Nations system learn, think and work, building the capacity of a new generation who are committed to delivering effectively in the new collaborative spirit of the 2030 Agenda.

19. The initiative was conceived during a workshop on capacity-building for United Nations reform, organized in 2014 by the Staff College, with the active participation of senior representatives from United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, as well as interested Member States. The Laboratory receives regular contributions from the Governments of Germany, Italy, Switzerland and the United States of America.

Learning

20. Through the Laboratory, the Staff College offers a rich learning portfolio that ranges from leadership and management development to innovation and change management. The interventions transcend hierarchies and agency boundaries to

contribute to a culture of change and innovation across the United Nations system. Highlights of the new learning activities designed and delivered during the period under review include the Geneva Leadership Exchange for senior United Nations officials at the Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General levels, the Change Management Peer Exchange, the Innovation Programme for Leaders and the Change Managers Programme. The Staff College also partnered with the Head of Innovation and Creativity at Google's Creative Skills for Innovation Lab design and test content for a new joint programme. The first Google Innovation Sprint Training of Trainers for United Nations staff was delivered jointly by the College and the Head of Innovation and Creativity at Google. Such events seek to boost internal capabilities to foster creativity and innovation in United Nations processes and activities.

21. Since 2011, the Staff College has held leadership and management development programmes for professional staff from entry level to senior management. Its programmes bring together a mix of staff from headquarters and field locations, who spend an average of five days with peers from different professions and United Nations entities with a view to breaking the silo mentality. They share experiences, learn the latest leadership and management development trends and develop a common United Nations leadership culture. Participants are exposed to public and private sector theories and practices that are crucial to effective leadership and management. Feedback provided and various evaluations have shown that the Staff College's learning offerings for leadership and management development are considered highly effective and extremely relevant to the realities of the United Nations.

22. A key achievement in 2015 was the signing of an agreement with the United Nations Secretariat establishing the College's United Nations Leaders Programme as the exclusive leadership development programme for all Secretariat staff at the Director level. Also in 2015, the College launched a new course on leadership, women and the United Nations to offer valuable opportunities for mid- to senior-level female staff from across the system to develop leadership skills while networking and learning from each other's experiences.

23. With a view to further building the capacities of top-level United Nations country officials in relation to the role and results of the United Nations at the country level, the College continued to offer its popular United Nations Country Team Leadership Skills Course, which is designed specifically for resident coordinators and agency field representatives. The training remains a mandatory part of the induction programme for newly appointed resident coordinators and continues to be highly recommended for strengthening country teams' leadership capacity. It provides direct support to the "One leader" pillar of the United Nations Development Group standard operating procedures, building the capacity of resident coordinators and country team members to deliver as one, work together on programming and resource allocation and foster a results-driven team aligned towards a common purpose.

24. Developing managerial capacity across the United Nations system is also at the core of the Laboratory initiative. In 2016, the Staff College developed a new executive management development programme aimed at middle management. This innovative executive education programme comprises three interrelated and

complementary elements: an online distance learning component (16 weeks), a five-day residential period and personalized coaching to guide individual learning transfer plans. It was delivered for the first time as part of an executive management development programme designed for almost 100 staff members from the Department of Safety and Security and will become a regular feature of the College's portfolio from 2017.

25. Efforts were made to design new learning products and diversify the College's traditional offerings. In this respect, the Executive Master in Management of International Organizations, developed in partnership with Bocconi University in Milan, Italy, and the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization, was the first ever College programme to lead to an accredited graduate degree from a leading university. The Executive Master was launched in September 2015 with 22 students, 19 of whom work in the United Nations system in 11 different entities, including the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Intellectual Property Organization and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, at 16 different duty stations. The College is currently exploring new academic partnerships with institutions from Africa and Asia to replicate and expand this offering.

Advisory services and case studies

26. In addition to learning programmes, the Laboratory provides advisory services on change management to United Nations teams, departments and organizations, and maintains communities of practice among change agents across the United Nations system. The overall intention of such activities is to develop, coordinate and nurture networks of change agents at different levels of the United Nations system that could become the critical mass necessary to drive institutional transformation in the most cost-effective manner.

27. To encourage better coordination across the system, the Staff College has established a consortium with the management consulting team of the United Nations Development Programme, which provides internal change management consulting services to the United Nations system. The consortium is expected to expand to include other United Nations entities.

28. Within this framework, the Laboratory provided advisory services to a number of United Nations partners in 2016, including the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management with regard to its strategic vision and planning; the United Nations Volunteers programme in relation to its management review; the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation; and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

29. The Staff College produced case studies on change management with a view to disseminating lessons learned through various institutional reform initiatives that could be of interest and replicated across the system. A repository of case studies on change processes and other good practices in the system will be maintained at the Laboratory and accessible as a system-wide resource. Of the three case studies produced in the second half of 2016, the first included analysis on the "Delivering as one" survey results, which provided a data-driven starting point for discussions

on leadership styles and cultures within the United Nations. The second, on innovation, drew attention to the untapped potential of innovative approaches and techniques in the context of United Nations reform and change. The third focused on the implementation of enterprise resource planning and change at the United Nations.

30. The Laboratory team is planning to accelerate case study production in the future in an effort to further enable the United Nations system to reflect on how best to bring about positive change for greater effectiveness and efficiency.

C. Sustaining peace and strengthening staff safety

31. A continuing trend of deteriorating peace and increasing violence in the world, including in areas not directly affected by armed conflict, has led the Staff College to broaden its programme on peace and security with attention to issues such as conflict analysis and prevention, decentralization and peacebuilding, and prevention of electoral violence, as well as learning initiatives aimed at understanding a new generation of non-State armed groups.

32. A new programme was designed in partnership with the Human Security Unit on applying the human security approach for the 2030 Agenda and is expected to start in 2017.

33. Strengthening staff capacity in peace operations has also been a priority: new training has been designed in cooperation with the analysis and planning team of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General to address gaps in the strategic planning capacity of peace operations. Discussions are also currently under way with the Government of Germany to support a comprehensive package of learning interventions aimed at increasing the capacity of the United Nations system to prevent conflict and sustain peace. Building on the findings of the 2015 review of United Nations peace operations (see [A/70/95-S/2015/446](#)) and in line with the spirit of the 2030 Agenda, the College will focus on enhancing the capacity of United Nations staff members to understand the multidimensional and multidisciplinary nature of the challenges faced by the United Nations, while increasing their ability to work in a more integrated manner that brings together the development, humanitarian and peace and security pillars of the system's work. In particular, this will be achieved by enhancing the capacity of United Nations peace operations and United Nations country teams to jointly conduct strategic planning.

34. In 2016, six tutored online courses and 24 face-to-face courses were delivered in Turin, New York, Geneva, Washington, D.C. and in a number of other locations, including Bamako, Nairobi, Istanbul (Turkey), Addis Ababa, Bogota, Amman, Entebbe (Uganda), Dakar and Tunis, in both English and French. Support was provided for three training courses on addressing gender-based violence conducted for the United Nations Population Fund and a representative of the College co-chaired the annual meeting of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Security Training.

35. In addition, learning and training assistance was provided to United Nations entities in Libya by delivering facilitation services and a comprehensive set of in-country thematic courses, including in conflict analysis, knowledge management,

administrative skills, information management and communication skills, as well as the College's foundational course on the Sustainable Development Goals.

36. The growing need for United Nations staff to be equipped to "stay and deliver" in contexts of increasing violence on the ground has resulted in an increased emphasis by the United Nations on training of civilian United Nations personnel on staff safety and security. The College became an active member in the Inter-Agency Working Group on Security Training and, as a result, created an expanded partnership with the Department of Safety and Security in various joint-certification mandatory training courses.

37. Efforts in knowledge creation and sharing led to the publication in 2016 of the conflict analysis handbook, a field and headquarters guide to conflict assessments. The booklet capitalized on the College's experience in conducting conflict analysis and was developed over a one-year period, using a multitrack methodology. It includes an extensive literature review, an inventory of conflict analysis tools, a research component, a documentation process and a staff survey.

38. Innovation was fostered further through the development of a web-based peacebuilding training game to help prepare professionals for the challenges they might encounter in the complex world of peacebuilding. Through the game, players learn to conduct ongoing conflict analysis; identify and analyse other parties' perspectives, objectives, interests and constraints; build trust through dialogue; engage local actors and adapt theories of change. The training game was developed by a consortium comprising the Staff College, PeaceNexus, the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, the United States Institute of Peace, the Geneva Centre for Security Policy and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research. A beta version will be available in 2017.

39. Furthermore, the first step was taken towards developing a new learning initiative designed to analyse non-State armed groups (such as terrorist groups, criminal networks, youth gangs, drug cartels and vigilantes) at the field level with the launch of a scoping phase. An inter-agency working group has been established to develop training and learning packages and a knowledge portal, as well as to commission specific academic research papers and field accounts to further inform the learning agenda of this initiative. The scoping report complemented the outcomes of the 2016 edition of the Dialogue Series for Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, which focused on understanding a new generation of non-State armed groups. Currently in its sixth year, the event takes place annually, in partnership with the Centre for International Peace Operations in Berlin and supported by the Government of Germany.

D. Providing relevant, high-quality learning opportunities to a wide spectrum of United Nations staff through e-learning

40. During the reporting period, the Staff College played a key role in fostering the effective use of web-based technologies to create innovative and cost-effective learning solutions. As a result, the College has been able to reach more staff at a much lower cost to the learner and the College at a time when the scarce financial resources available for training and staff development have clearly driven up the

demand for web-based learning. Innovative instructional design methods, better connectivity and greater access to learning opportunities have significantly contributed to a greater use of technology-supported interventions by the College's faculty and learners.

41. In addition to its growing portfolio of over 20 online, tutored courses, the Learning Lab of the College was responsible for developing and maintaining a wide range of web-based platforms and tools to facilitate access to and dissemination of knowledge through peer-to-peer collaboration. These include the management of numerous virtual environments, learning portals, websites and mobile applications.

42. In 2015, the Staff College released the "United Nations facilitator's cookbook", its first mobile learning application available on the commercial market. The deployment of an open and free learning platform for United Nations staff, known as "Portals@UNkampus", is of particular significance in increasing the accessibility of knowledge. The platform has distributed learning content to over 5,000 staff members.

43. In addition, the Learning Lab consolidated an e-learning curriculum as the backbone of its learning portfolio during the reporting period, with online tutored courses representing over 85 per cent of its fee-based offerings. Instructional design for online courses successfully combined a wide range of synchronous and asynchronous learning activities, drills and assignments, compendiums of best practice, case studies and discussions in webinar and virtual classroom environments. The Lab's online courses focused on strengthening the core skills and managerial competencies of staff.

44. Building on its growing reputation, the College increased its capacity to serve as a trusted provider of customized e-learning solutions to United Nations system entities, which have demonstrated increased interest in offering such opportunities to their staff. In the reporting period, the Learning Lab provided services ranging from the instructional design and development of customized e-learning modules to the development of tailor-made e-learning platforms. As an example, it released, through the dedicated eLearning Portal of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), several modules on results-based management and gender mainstreaming to build the capacity of UNEP personnel to design and deliver projects that make sustainable and measurable positive impacts on the environment while contributing to gender equality.

45. The Learning Lab continued to play a role in enabling the College to respond to increased demand for customized support through face-to-face and blended processes, particularly in the areas of management and strategic planning. For example, such support was provided in relation to two consecutive senior management programmes at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa; a course on collaborative learning for the United Nations Volunteers programme in Bonn; and a workshop for the UNEP gender focal points based in Europe, held in Turin. The Learning Lab also organized the annual Learning Managers Forum for United Nations learning professionals, as well as the orientation programme for Junior Professional Officers. The Learning Managers Forum remains a strategic tool to strengthen inter-agency collaboration and networking in the area of learning and training.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

46. With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations needs, more than ever, leaders, managers and professionals who share a collective understanding of the strategic, valuable contribution that the United Nations can make to supporting global efforts in implementing the commitments set forth in the 2030 Agenda.

47. Building the ability of the United Nations workforce to learn and adapt to new ways of working should be a top priority in the efforts to further boost staff capacity and competence. Those in leadership positions should no longer work to defend narrow organizational interests, but should align their efforts in the best interests of the entire United Nations system. The 2030 Agenda obliges United Nations leadership to adopt a “Delivering as one” vision that goes well beyond specific agency perspectives. The College, through its learning portfolio, communicates this message to staff and ensures that United Nations managers and experts are trained accordingly.

48. The Staff College is well positioned as a strategic ally for both Member States and United Nations system entities interested in developing capacity-building initiatives that make integrated thinking and change a core objective.

49. It is therefore recommended that United Nations entities coordinate their learning and training activities with the Staff College, encourage their staff to take part in the College’s programmes and support the efforts of the College to facilitate organizational transformation by sharing their experiences in implementing positive change and transforming the cultures of their organizations to be more effective, efficient and innovative.

50. Member States are encouraged to recognize the crucial role of learning in general, and system-wide learning in particular, as one of the central pillars to deliver on the commitments set forth in the 2030 Agenda.
