

Board of Trustees

Fifty-seventh Session

17 - 18 November 2016

UNITAR/BT/57/3

5 March 2017

Geneva, Switzerland

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

1. The Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) convened in Geneva from 17 to 18 November 2016 for its Fifty-seventh Session. A list of the session's main conclusions and recommendations, as orally adopted at the conclusion of the session, is attached as Annex I.

2. The following members of the Board were present or represented at the session:

Mr. Chibuiki Amaechi (Nigeria)

Mr. Alexey Borodavkin (Russian Federation)

Also represented by Ms. Natalia Oreshenkova

Ms. Diana Chavez..... (NGO)

Ms. Sara Cook(UN)

Mr. Alexandre Fasel (Switzerland)

Ms. Taous Feroukhi (Chair)..... (Algeria)

Dr. Thomas Fitschen (Vice Chair) (Germany)

Ms. Nazat Shameem Khan..... (Fiji)

Dr. Yukie Osa (Academia)

Ms. Marta Maurás Perez..... (Chile)

Mr. Vijay Kunhianandan Nambiar..... (UN)

Mr. Per Örnéus..... (Sweden)

Mr. Alfonso Quiñonez (Chair, Finance Committee) (Academia)

Ex Officio:

Mr. Nikhil Seth, Executive Director, UNITAR

Secretary of the Board:

Mr. Brook Boyer, UNITAR

Observers:

Mr. Marco Fischer, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland

Mr. Jafar Javan, Director, United Nations System Staff College

Mr. Paul Ladd, Director, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

Mr. Jarmo Sareva, Director, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

Mr. Yuriy Spirin, Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation, Geneva

United Nations Institute for Training and Research:

Mr. Einar Bjorgo, Manager, UNITAR Operational Satellite Applications Programme

Ms. Marina I. Dinca Vasilescu, Head, Operations Unit

Ms. Emily Fraser, Special Assistant, Office of the Executive Director

Ms. Katinka Koke, Associate Programme Officer, Planning, Performance and Results Section

Mr. Alex Mejia, Senior Manager, Decentralized Cooperation Programme

Ms. Akiko Perona, Chief, Communications and Information Technology Support Section

Ms. Elena Proden, Specialist, Research Department

Mr. Joel Thalla, Chief, Finance and Budget Section

3. Under item 1, Opening of the Session, the Chair welcomed the trustees to the session and extended a particularly warm welcome to the four new trustees who were recently appointed to the Board by the Secretary-General. The Chair announced that the Board had constituted quorum, with 13 of 16 members present, and also welcomed the directors from the other research and training institutes as observers. The Chair described the present time as both a challenging and promising one for UNITAR in terms of the potential for growth and for making concrete and tangible contributions to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through training and related programming activities.
4. The Executive Director thanked the Chair and the other trustees and observers for their participation and highlighted the session's importance turning to the future of UNITAR and the articulation of the next strategic framework and how this would relate to the 2030 Agenda. He invited all trustees to focus the discussion of the session around how the 2030 Agenda and the related international conferences, including those on climate change, financing for development and disaster risk reduction. He expressed hope that the session would provide for meaningful discussions on how the Agenda could provide the guiding principles for 'The UNITAR We Want' and what kind of organizational shifts would need to be made in order to position the Institute for this important task. The Executive Director concluded his remarks by thanking the Chair for devoting her time and attention to the work of UNITAR with great passion. **The Board took note of the introductory remarks.**
5. Under item 2, Adoption of the agenda, the Chair introduced the provisional agenda as proposed by the Executive Director and consulted with the Chair in accordance with rule 7 of the Board's rules of procedure and proposed that the Board consider item 12d, Programme highlights, immediately after

- item 6a, Follow-up from the Fifty-sixth Session, to enable the Board to discuss programming before budget and finance (item 7). **The Board agreed and adopted the agenda as revised.**
6. Under item 3, Organization of work, the Chair proposed that the Board conduct its business according to the schedule in the item's annotation. **The Board agreed and adopted the organization of work.**
 7. Under item 4, Membership matters, the Chair announced that the Secretary-General had appointed four new trustees to the Board and that the secretariat had circulated their respective bio notes to the Board. The Chair also announced that Her Excellency Ms. Uche Joy Ogwu and Professor Alfredo Valladao had completed their respective terms on 31 December 2015 and expressed her deep appreciation for their commitment and contribution to the Board. **The Board welcomed the new trustees and expressed its deep appreciation to the members who had completed their terms on 31 December 2015.**
 8. Under item 5, 'The UNITAR We Want': Note by the Executive Director, the Chair recalled the Board's decision at its Fifty-sixth Session for Management to produce a prototype on what the next strategic framework might look like and invited the Executive Director to introduce 'The UNITAR We Want' and Six-point Vision documents. The Executive Director summarized achievements from 2015, covering the number of events; beneficiary outreach and feedback; partnerships; and other elements of UNITAR programming, including satellite imagery analysis and mapping, the facilitation of high level seminars of the Secretary-General's special and personal representatives, peacekeeping training and new programming areas related to supporting the implementation of 2030 Agenda. He mentioned that 'The UNITAR We Want' and Six-point Vision documents as well as the ensuing discussions were intended to be a precursor to the discussions that the Board will have in November 2017 when considering the 2018-2021 strategic framework. He also referred to the annual budget of some \$26 million and the Institute's voluntary funded nature, which he mentioned had both advantages and disadvantages.
 9. Turning to the future, the Executive Director made reference to the proposed working structure in 'The UNITAR We Want' document in terms of how Management sees UNITAR contributing more effectively to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. He recalled the Agenda's various dimensions, including the crosscutting elements of integrating SDGs into national policy and planning, building statistical capacities for Member States to monitor and review progress, and the importance enhancing stakeholder engagement. He also mentioned that much of what UNITAR currently does and will continue to do will need to be closely linked to the main pillars of the Agenda, including Peace, Prosperity, People and Planet, in addition to ensuring that the Institute's crosscutting programmes, such as diplomacy, satellite imagery and the programmes of the out-posted offices, be more closely integrated with the programming under the thematic pillars. The Executive Director also highlighted the operational components of the Institute, including human resources, finance and budget, administration and procurement and communications and information technology, as well as the strategic planning, performance monitoring and evaluation and quality assurance functions, and stressed that he saw each as being crucial to the delivery of programme activities. The Executive Director also made reference to the Six-point Vision document, and outlined how the six points covering growth, modernization, innovation, quality, visibility, and openness and transparency are all important and interrelated.
 10. The Chair thanked the Executive Director for his inspiring presentation and reference to the recent communication from the Algerian Prime Minister on Algeria's continued political and financial support for the proposed programmatic vision and strategy, and then opened the floor for comments.
 11. The Board complimented the Executive Director for the clear and convincing presentation and the referenced annexes, noting that 'The UNITAR We Want'
 12. and the Six-point Vision documents were comprehensive, strategic and very much linked to the Resource Mobilization Strategy and the Communications Strategy. The Board made a number of observations and/or suggestions, including the need to:
 - engage more partners and more resources, including those from the private sector;
 - consider broadening the Group of Friends of UNITAR to include other members beyond the Geneva-based diplomatic community, such as philanthropies and the private sector;

- work to increase the Institute's beneficiary reach targeting Latin American and Caribbean countries;
- emphasize the importance of equity and inclusiveness, particularly in terms of the four thematic pillars and that inclusivity should accompany openness in the Six-Point Vision;
- focus on consolidating 'what is already there', since knowledge is often contested and that quality depends on partnerships with academic institutions and other bodies, networks and stakeholder engagement;
- include a reference to General Assembly resolution 2282 on the peacebuilding architecture and the High-level Panel on Peace Operations, in addition to the references of the major international conferences already cited;
- replace "ending violent extremism" with "preventing violent extremism", reflecting the SDG's plan of action;
- note that programming of particular interest included the promotion of sustainable industrial development, road safety, action on non-communicable diseases, combatting climate change and working to protect natural resources, expanding reliable access to basic services in the fields of energy, transportation and education;
- give priority to the implementation of the objectives of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction for 2015-2030, and place emphasis on promoting and strengthening national capacities to respond to emerging disasters, the development of early warning and disaster forecasting, as well as the exchange of information;
- create regional and global networks of crisis management as a basis for the formation of an international mechanism for disaster reduction;
- consider establishing cooperation between UNOSAT and the International Civil Defence Organization;
- exchange experiences in the implementation of national programmes to reduce emissions, introduction of new technologies, implementation of measures to improve energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources, the development of indicators of reducing greenhouse gases by sectors of economies;
- work to incorporate the human rights perspective into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda; refer to the Istanbul World Humanitarian Summit Agenda and training on humanitarian principles, humanitarian law or the functioning of the system as such; cooperate with the Human Rights Council; and
- ensure that the working structure and in particular the crosscutting dimensions can be effectively operationalized and contribute to the realization of the Agenda and be useful to the Institute's clients.

13. The Executive Director expressed much appreciation for the Board's observations and suggestions and indicated that Management would be taking them into consideration over the next number of months as the draft 2018-2021 strategic framework takes form. He addressed a number of points, noting that Management would adapt terminology where needed and include additional references to relevant international conference outcomes and resolutions. He explained that despite focusing on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), where financial assistance is required, the total share of training-related beneficiaries in Latin America and the Caribbean have increased to 25 per cent. He also agreed that engagement with all partners who will implement the 2030 Agenda will be a key element to successful programme delivery, including not only with governments, but also civil society, academia, businesses and other institutions at the country level. The Executive Director confirmed the importance of diplomatic training and the intention to continue responding to needs, but that UNITAR would also continue working in the other areas in which it is active. The Executive Director also raised a number of concerns regarding the Institute's present staffing situation and organizational chart, with some 40 staff members, the absence of a hierarchical structure and the responsibility of him supervising 12 separate programmes which is very demanding. Finally, the Executive Director provided several examples of cooperating with the private sector and businesses, including earmarked funding from MasterCard and Diageo, as well as plans to develop fee-based training for the private sector on the SDGs in a language in which they can understand. **The Board welcomed with appreciation 'The UNITAR We Want' and the Six-point Vision and requested Management to prepare a new strategic framework around these documents to cover the period 2018 – 2021, taking into consideration the observations and views expressed. The Executive Director expressed gratitude for the support received from the Institute's donors, and particularly the support received from the Algerian government to the General Fund.**

14. Under item 6, Follow-up from the Fifty-sixth Session, the Chair referred to the annotations of sub-item 6a, Update on partnerships, including exchanges with research and training institutes, and recalled the large variety of partnerships in which the Institute engages regularly, including donors, implementing partners, and other partners. The Executive Director highlighted the extent to which the Institute engages with partners and made reference to the some 82 per cent of beneficiary outputs produced through partnership-based training. He then provided a brief review of recently concluded partnerships as outlined in the item's annotation, including non-financial memoranda of understanding with other United Nations organizations and academic institutions, as well as financial agreements with both donors and implementing partners. Recognizing the presence of the invited Directors of the other United Nations research and training institutes, he highlighted several examples of recent collaborative training activities and concluded by asking the Board and the invited observers how research can help the Institute to improve the content of its training programmes with particular reference to Agenda 2030 around the issue of policy integration.
15. The Chair invited the directors from the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC) to provide views on what types of partnerships could be developed with UNITAR, particularly in the context of the 2030 Agenda. The Director of UNIDIR, Mr. Jarmo Sareva, welcomed the opportunity to interact with the Board and noted the ongoing collaboration with the Institute's Hiroshima Office in the area of disarmament training and the sharing and dissemination of policy relevant research in fields such as arms and ammunition management in UNITAR training programmes. The Director of UNRISD, Mr. Paul Ladd, suggested that the recent UNRISD report on Policy Innovations for Transformative Change could present a concrete opportunity for partnering with UNITAR on the Agenda with a view to amplifying the report's findings in areas related to e.g. climate change, care work, domestic resource mobilization and the social solidarity economy to various stakeholder audiences through the Institute's training programmes. He also elaborated on the transformational nature of the Agenda, and suggested that UNRISD's research in this area could also be translated into content for UNITAR training. Finally, Mr. Jafar Javan, Director of UNSSC, briefly reviewed the College's portfolio and suggested that the existing cooperation between UNITAR and the Staff College could be enhanced through cooperation with the newly created Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Development based in Bonn and through the UN Laboratory for Organizational Change and Knowledge (UNLOCK) which focuses on how to promote intersectoral and integrated policies. He also suggested the possibility of i) considering to create a joint advisory committee on the 2030 Agenda, ii) UNSSC joining the learning centre of HLPF and iii) having a UNITAR staff member seconded to the Bonn Centre to pursue joint 2030 Agenda-related programming with a view to avoiding duplication of efforts.
16. The Board congratulated Management for the range of partnerships, welcomed efforts to explore and strengthen partnerships and put forward a number of questions and observations, including:
 - What is the existing incidence of duplication, if any, and what is the degree of consultation to rule out any duplication?
 - What is the Advisory Board for Capacity on the Agenda 2030 and what specific functions does it perform?
 - Where is the space for UNITAR to think about convening across UN agencies to explore the research-training nexus and how can UNITAR engage with a view to tapping existing knowledge?
 - What possibilities would there be with the United Nations University (UNU) and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)?
 - Due diligence is key to determine if there may be any duplication with existing initiatives or efforts, particularly given the momentum surrounding Agenda 2030.
17. The Executive Director emphasized that cooperation and coordination had clearly surpassed any notion of or reference to consolidation. He also delineated the development of content and its delivery to stakeholder beneficiaries, noting that the Institute's primary stakeholders are government policy makers and planners, primarily from the developing world, and the Staff College's being UN staff. Regardless of the targeted beneficiaries, however, he underscored the importance of ensuring that the content conveyed the same message. Explaining that the Institute's Advisory Council on the 2030

Agenda vets the content of training material, the Executive Director questioned if secondments or joint Advisory Council would provide any added value. In connection with UNU, the Executive Director noted that the university is more related to academics and applied research, but that any SDG related research undertaken through UNU's vast network of research centres would be shared with UNITAR. The Executive Director provided a concrete example of UNITAR providing the Staff College with its '101' introductory course on SDGs, with the hope that it would contribute UNSSC's SDG foundation course for UN staff. **The Board took note of the observations and the views expressed and the exchanges with the invited representatives of the other United Nations research and training institutes, and encouraged Management to strengthen partnership with all other research and training institutes and intensify collaboration with relevant stakeholders.**

18. Under item 7, Finance and budget, the Chair invited the Board's Finance Committee Chair to introduce the Report of the Ninth Session of the Finance Committee (UNITAR/BT/FC/9/1). In introducing the report, the Financial Committee Chair indicated that the Committee addressed several issues in tandem, including items 7a and 7h; items 7b and 7c; and items 7d, 7e, and 7f.
19. Under items 7a and 7h, Financial statements for the year ended 2015 and Report of the Board of Auditors, the Finance Committee Chair presented two matters discussed by the Finance Committee, and noted that the audited financial statements indicated a healthy financial situation and that there were sufficient liquid assets to settle obligations. The Finance Committee Chair highlighted that at the end of 2015, total expenditures totalled \$23.5 million, and that the controller's overall conclusion was that the financial statements were correct in all material respects. The Finance Committee also reviewed the five main recommendations of the external audit, in addition to the several outstanding recommendations from previous audits that have not been fully implemented, including the recommendation to settle the funding question for internal audit. **The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and the financial statements for the year that ended on 31 December 2015 and the Report of the Board of Auditors, and decided to cap audit fees (inclusive of external and internal audit fees) at \$140,000 per biennium upon the recommendation of Management.**
20. Under items 7b and 7c, Report on the Application of the cost recovery approach, the Finance Committee Chair introduced the sub-item as discussed, including the Management's report on cost recovery for 2015 and the request to further amend the cost recovery policy to reduce the direct service cost (DSC) rate to 2 per cent for projects financed by the Global Environment Fund. In response to a query on why a DSC rate exception for GEF-related projects (as opposed to others), the Executive Director recalled earlier Board discussions on the matter and the particularities of GEF projects, with the GEF implementing agencies contracting executing agencies (e.g. UNITAR) to deliver the activities and that applying the full DSC rate would not be feasible since the implementing agencies also charged support costs against the GEF funds. **The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and Management's report on the application of the cost recovery approach, and further amended the cost recovery policy rate of 2 per cent to GEF-funded projects budgeted at \$500,000 and above, and requested Management to report to the Board at the Fifty-eighth Session.**
21. Under item 7d, 7e, and 7f, Independent functional analysis of UNITAR staffing and structure, Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and Proposed Revision to the Programme Budget for the Biennium 2016-2017, the Finance Committee Chair reviewed the items as presented in the Finance Committee Report, including the proposed budget increase from \$46.8 to \$51.3 million as a result of expanded programming in the areas of chemicals and waste management, peacekeeping and Agenda 2030 related initiatives, as well as the proposed abolishment of 16 posts and the maintenance of three posts at the D1 level. On the proposed three D1 posts to be maintained, the Executive Director referred to 'The UNITAR We Want' and the desired organizational structure to operationalize the framework, and the need to have some degree of senior level supervision within the thematic pillars. He emphasized that the additional three D1 posts would not be filled in addition to, but would rather replace the same number of P5 posts. **The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and the Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and adopted the Proposed Revision to the Programme Budget for the Biennium 2016-2017, and noted that 16 of the previously frozen posts have been abolished.**

22. Under item 7g, Migration to Atlas, the Finance Committee Chair reviewed the item as discussed by the Finance Committee and noted that the migration was successful and resulted in reduced processing delays and costs and consequently has increased efficiencies of UNITAR, and that Management projected additional financial gains to be made in the future. In response to a query on the financial benefits of migrating to Atlas, the Executive Director cited some \$550,000 to run IMIS annually, and that in the long run Management would be paying just over \$300,000 annually with Atlas. In response to another query on the projected timeframe for fully operationalizing Atlas, the Executive Director indicated that it would take until the middle of 2017 for Management to be fully operationalizing Atlas. **The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and Management's report on the implementation of Atlas and the comments contained in the report of the Advisory Committee, and requested Management to continue to keep the Board apprised of the matter.**
23. Under item 7i, Internal audit, the Finance Committee Chair reviewed the item as discussed by the Finance Committee, including the status of the five recommendations and that action would be completed by 31 December 2016. **The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and the report on the audit on project management, as well as Management's follow-up and implementation of the recommendations.**
24. Under item 7j, Revolving fund from non-earmarked reserves, the Finance Committee Chair reviewed the item as discussed by the Finance Committee and indicated that Management found the mechanism to be working well, despite the many challenges with the delay of receivables. **The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and Management's update on the use of the revolving fund from non-earmarked reserves.**
25. Under item 7k, UNITAR Investment Management and Review Strategy, the Finance Committee Chair reviewed the item as discussed by the Finance Committee and noted the response to the recommendation from the Board of Auditors. **The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee, commended Management on the development of the Investment Management and Review Strategy, and noted that the strategy seeks to maximize the return achieved on funds invested while at the same time safeguarding assets and the necessary liquidity at all times.**
26. Under item 8, Resource Mobilization Strategy, the Finance Committee Chair reviewed the item as discussed by the Finance Committee and the strategy's overall objective to increase revenue by 6 per cent annually through 2021. Several questions were raised on engagement with the private sector, including steps to align UNITAR products with the private sector within the broader objectives of the Institute, as well as what industry sectors to approach, taking into account the need for due diligence working with some sectors, such as alcohol and tobacco industries, and types of private sector entities, such as the small and medium sized companies and multinationals. The Executive Director noted that the strategy is quite general and that Management would be examining the particular actions that it would need to take, particularly in reference to partnerships. He noted the success with some businesses, including Diageo and MasterCard. As a starting point, he noted the importance of engagement with the Global Compact and that Management would be focusing on mobilizing revenue from fee-based courses for, and earmarked contributions from, the private sector. **The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee, commended Management on the development of the Resource Mobilization Strategy, and requested Management to report on the implementation of the strategy at the Fifty-eighth Session.**
27. Under item 9, Communications Strategy, the Chair referred to 'The UNITAR We Want' and Six-point Vision Statement and noted that a draft Communications Strategy was prepared by Management. The Executive Director noted that the draft strategy is very much linked to growth, transparency and visibility of the Six-point Vision Statement and is designed to strengthen branding and to effectively deliver our communications to the Institute's various stakeholders. Ms. Akiko Perona, Chief of the Communications and Information Technology Support Section, reviewed the strategy's various components and noted that in addition to strengthening branding and effectively delivering communications to stakeholders, the strategy also seeks to enhance internal communications and develop communication capacities. The Board congratulated Management on the strategy and raised a number of points, including recognizing the complementarity of the strategy with the other strategic documents shared at the session, emphasizing the importance of communicating results and engaging partners and targeting messages to specific stakeholders. **The Board welcomed with appreciation**

the development of the Communications Strategy, took note of the observations and views expressed, and requested Management to report on the implementation of the strategy at the Fifty-eighth Session.

37. Under item 10, Knowledge Management, the Chair referred to the recommendation of the 2015-2016 internal audit that tasked Management to develop a knowledge management mechanism which, taking into consideration its available resources, facilitates the identification, retention and sharing of relevant knowledge. The Manager of the Planning, Performance and Results Section introduced the Institute's work on knowledge management, emphasizing that UNITAR not only strives to facilitate learning of its beneficiaries, but also works to create an environment for learning to take place among staff. He mentioned that over the years, UNITAR had put in place a number of components of knowledge management, such as a learning and training wiki and a repository of narrative reports and evaluations as well as independent reviews of programme self-assessments on quality assurance. Despite these efforts, he recognized that many of the components of knowledge management were fragmented without a central location to access information and lessons learned. With the recent development and launch of the Institute's intranet, UNITARnet, the various components have been connected in a common space with a view to providing a gateway to information, knowledge and lesson learning. A brief demonstration of the knowledge management gateway on UNITARnet was made, after which it was noted that efforts are ongoing in so far as knowledge management is a continuous and dynamic process in which information technology is a necessary but not sufficient condition, and that facilitating the uptake of knowledge through creative spaces for face-to-face engagement was also required. **The Board welcomed the development of the intranet and knowledge management mechanism.**
28. Under item 11, Revised Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Framework and update on independent evaluation, the Chair recalled Management's follow-up at the Fifty-sixth Session of the Board's decision to prioritize funding for independent evaluation and noted that several independent evaluations were under implementation. The Manager of the Planning, Performance and Results Section made reference to the item's annotation and emphasized the need to promote the independent evaluation function to complement the Institute's practices in the area of self-evaluation by the programme delivering entities, as discussed earlier by the Finance Committee. He indicated that the relatively small scope and size of many UNITAR projects limited what could be done in terms of independent evaluation, but that it would be important to have mandated independent evaluations for the very large projects, as proposed now for projects budgeted at \$1.5 million and above, since there would be adequate resources to engage in a meaningful independent evaluation exercise. An update on the section's increase in staff capacity was also referenced, with the recruitment of an associate programme officer funded by Germany, and a brief update was provided on recent and/or ongoing independent evaluations. **The Board took note of the proposed changes to the Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Framework, including the proposed requirement for independent evaluation of projects.**
29. Under item 12, Programming and Performance, the Chair introduced the four sub-items. Under items 12a and 12b, 2014-2015 Programme Performance Report, 2015 Results Report and Key Performance Indicators, the Chair referred the Board's attention to the annotations and relevant annexes, as well as the Executive Director's presentation under item 5 and his brief review on the Institute's performance over the course of 2015. **The Board commended Management for the significant increase in the Institute's beneficiary outreach in 2014-2015 and for meeting the number of performance indicators in 2015.**
30. Under item 12c, 2015 Quality Assurance Report, the Executive Director recalled the very high importance that he attaches to quality and invited the Manager of the Planning, Performance and Results Section to brief the Board. The Manager introduced the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for the new trustees and underscored the framework's dual purpose to serve as a tool to validate the quality of UNITAR learning events and also provide a platform for lesson learning and quality improvement. He reviewed the application of the framework and noted that the framework's application has increased from 2014 to 2015, despite some bottlenecks that have been observed by the Quality Assurance Committee. He indicated that the committee had administered an online questionnaire to UNITAR staff during the first quarter of 2016 and, based on the feedback received, would be proposing some adjustments to the QAF, such as streamlining some of the standards to reduce the overall number from 16 to 10 or 12 and lightening the process for self-assessment and peer review by not requiring written self-assessments to be submitted prior to the event delivery. He emphasized that

these changes were intended to maintain the legitimacy of the framework and at making it more user friendly by packaging the standards, criteria and assessment and review processes in a more coherent way. **The Board took note of Management's 2015 Quality Assurance Report.**

31. Under item 12d, Programme highlights, the Chair announced that Management had prepared highlights in four areas of programming, including (i) helping countries implement the 2030 Agenda and nationally determined commitments; (ii) building statistical capacities, (iii) the road safety initiative and (iv) an update on UNITAR presences around the world: the expanding global network of CIFAL Centres and the UNOSAT regional presences. On the Institute's programming helping countries implement the 2030 Agenda, the Executive Director briefed the Board on the learning session that was organized at the July 2016 High-level Political Forum; on the development of learning toolkits and material to support national evaluation capacities, with one regional workshop taking place for Asian countries; and on the preparations for the organization of peer to peer learning conferences on SDGs for LDCs in Africa, the first of which scheduled to take place in Abuja during the first quarter of 2017.
32. On building statistical capacities, Ms. Elena Proden, Programme Officer from the Research Department, briefed the Board on the development of a programme to respond to the Agenda's call for reliable, high quality and timely disaggregated data, as well as for providing support to developing countries, including those in special situations, in their activities to strengthen national statistical offices and systems. Ms. Proden indicated that the programme is being developed in partnership with the UN Statistics Division to address the immediate needs to design national monitoring frameworks for the SDGs and strengthen capacities for data collection, with much technical guidance being provided by the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG indicators and the UN Development Group.
33. On the road safety initiative, the Senior Manager of the Decentralized Cooperation Programme, Mr. Alex Mejia, reviewed the main objectives of the initiative, including the improvement of capacities of government officials at the national and local levels to design and implement integrated road safety strategies and programmes, and the contribution to changing the behaviour of road users through advocacy and awareness raising of risk factors, particularly among youth. He mentioned that the initiative places priority on countries with the highest road traffic death rates, with a special focus on LDCs and the SIDS.
34. The Board was also briefed on the expanding global network of the International Training Centres for Authorities and Leaders (CIFAL), with 16 centres worldwide, with the most recent centres opening in Bangalore, Buenos Aires, Manila and Zurich. Over the course of 2016, the network had delivered 108 events, 35 of which were related to learning outcomes, and with a cumulative total of over 16,000 beneficiaries to date. The Board was also briefed on the physical presences in Bangkok, Nairobi and N'Djamena (Chad) of the UNITAR Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT) by the Programme Manager, Mr. Einar Bjorgo.
35. The Board made several observations on the presentations, including the importance of ensuring that the poverty – road accidents coupling is not detached, the instrumental role that partnerships with local authorities and other stakeholders can play with regard to expanding the Institute's beneficiary reach, and the efficiency and effectiveness of UNOSAT assistance to Fiji in connection with the 2016 cyclone. Recognizing the importance of highlighting programme successes, another observation was made for Management to consider including on the agenda an item on programme failures or lessons learned from programming. On this latter observation, the Executive Director acknowledged that it would be important to use the Board's sessions to discuss openly the various challenges that Management confronts in programme delivery. **The Board took note of the observations and views expressed and welcomed the work of the Institute on helping countries to implement the 2030 Agenda and nationally determined commitments, as well as building statistical capacities. The Board also welcomed the road safety initiative, the expanding global CIFAL network and the work of the UNOSAT offices. The Board looked forward to future presentations on programme highlights which elaborate on challenges faced and lessons learned.**
36. Under item 13, Dates of the Fifty-eighth Session of the Board and adoption of the Fifty-seventh Session's conclusions and recommendations, **the Board adopted the key conclusions and recommendations as contained under annex 1 and agreed to convene from 16 to 17 November 2017 for its Fifty-eight session.**

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37. The Chair recognized the longstanding commitment and support of Ambassador Quiñonez since his initial appointment to the Board, including his instrumental role as Chair of the Finance Committee. The Chair also announced that Ambassador Nambiar accepted to chair the Committee moving forward. The Executive Director joined the Chair in recognizing and thanking Ambassador Quiñonez for his hard work and dedication to UNITAR.
38. The session was adjourned.

Annex I

KEY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Item 5: 'The UNITAR We Want': Note by the Executive Director

The Board welcomed with appreciation 'The UNITAR We Want' and the Six Point Vision and requested Management to prepare a new strategic framework around these documents to cover the period 2018 – 2021, taking into consideration the observations and views expressed. The Executive Director expressed gratitude for the support received from the Institute's donors, and particularly the support received from the Algerian government to the General Fund.

Item 6: Follow-up from the Fifty-sixth Session

Item 6a: Update on partnerships, including exchanges with research and training institutes

The Board took note of the observations and views expressed and the exchanges with the invited representatives of the other United Nations research and training institutes, and encouraged Management to strengthen partnership with all other research and training institutes and intensify collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

Item 7: Finance and budget

Items 7a and 7h: Financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2015 and Report of the Board of Auditors

The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2015 and the Report of the Board of Auditors, and decided to cap audit fees (inclusive of external and internal audit fees) at \$140,000 per biennium upon the recommendation of Management.

Items 7b and 7c: Report on the Application of the New Cost Recovery Approach

The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and Management's report on the application of the cost recovery approach, and further amended the cost recovery policy rate of 2 per cent to GEF-funded projects budgeted at \$500,000 and above, and requested Management to report to the Board at the Fifty-eighth Session.

Items 7d, 7e and 7f: Independent functional analysis of UNITAR staffing and structure, Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and Proposed Revision of the Programme Budget for the Biennium 2016-2017

The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee, the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, adopted the Proposed Revision of the Programme Budget for the Biennium 2016-2017, and noted that 16 of the previously frozen posts have been abolished.

Item 7g: Migration to Atlas

The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and Management's report on the implementation of Atlas and the comments contained in the report of the Advisory Committee, and requested Management to continue to keep the Board apprised of the matter.

Item 7i: Internal audit

The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and the report on the audit on project management, as well as Management's follow-up and implementation of the recommendations.

Item 7j: Proposed revolving fund from non-earmarked reserves

The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and Management's update on the use of the revolving fund from non-earmarked reserves.

Item 7k: UNITAR Investment Management and Review Strategy

The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee, welcomed the UNITAR Investment Management and Review Strategy, and noted that the strategy seeks to maximize the return achieved on funds invested while at the same time safeguarding assets and the necessary liquidity at all times.

Item 8: Resource Mobilization Strategy

The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee, commended Management on the development of the Resource Mobilization Strategy, and requested Management to report on the implementation of the strategy at the Fifty-eighth Session.

Item 9: Communications Strategy

The Board welcomed with appreciation the development of the Communications Strategy, took note of the observations and views expressed, and requested Management to be apprised of the matter at the Fifty-eighth Session.

Item 10: Knowledge Management

The Board welcomed the development of the intranet and knowledge management mechanism.

Item 11: Revised Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Framework and update on independent evaluation

The Board took note of the proposed changes to the Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Framework, including the proposed requirement for independent evaluation of projects.

Item 12: Programming and Performance**Items 12a and 12b: 2014-2015 Programme Performance Report, 2015 Results Report and Key Performance Indicators**

The Board commended Management for the significant increase in the Institute's beneficiary outreach in 2014-2015 and for meeting the number of performance indicators in 2015.

Item 12c: Quality Assurance Report

The Board took note of Management's 2015 Quality Assurance Report.

Item 12d: Programme highlights

The Board took note of the observations and views expressed and welcomed the work of the Institute on helping countries to implement the 2030 Agenda and nationally determined commitments, as well as building statistical capacities. The Board also welcomed the road safety initiative, the expanding global CIFAL network and the work of the UNOSAT offices. The Board looked forward to future presentations on programme highlights which elaborate on challenges faced and lessons learned.