BULLETIN NO. 14:

Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 11 – UN 2.0

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Policy Brief 11 – UN 2.0 Forward-thinking culture and cutting-edge skills for better United Nations system impact

ABOUT: *Building on the proposals presented in Our Common Agenda report, the Secretary-General (SG) is publishing a* [series](#) *of Policy Briefs over 2023 to serve as inputs into the preparations for the Summit of the Future (SOTF). The Policy Brief on* [UN 2.0](#) *is the last one in that series.*

The workstream for UN 2.0 falls within my *(the SG's)* authority, and implementation in the wider UN system is underway within existing regulatory frameworks and in support of existing mandates. The purpose of the present policy brief is to keep Member States *(MS)* informed of our UN system-wide efforts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

THE VISION – UN 2.0 encapsulates the Secretary-General's vision of a modern UN system, rejuvenated by a forward-thinking culture, and empowered by cutting-edge skills fit for the twenty-first century. Leveraging our diversity, we are striving towards this vision with a powerful fusion of data, innovation, digital, foresight and behavioural science expertise – a dynamic combination that we call the "quintet of change". Grounded in a stronger organizational culture, UN 2.0 signifies our transformation towards more agile, diverse, responsive and impactful UN entities to accelerate systemic shifts that deliver for all, including women and girls.

THE APPROACH:

1. **Upgrading skills –** Central to achieving the vision of UN 2.0 is a quintet of modern skills that have tremendous potential to enhance the work of UN entities in support of MS.
2. **Adapting cultures** – Stronger technical solutions alone will not deliver the change envisioned for UN 2.0. We see the faster adaptation of our culture as the critical step to bring the quintet elements to life.
3. **Shifting, not adding** – On the journey towards stronger expertise, our goal is not to add but to shift internal capacities. We carefully recalibrate, retrain and realign expertise to better respond to the needs
4. **Internal change, greater external impact** – The UN 2.0 vision is firmly focused on driving internal change because, stronger internal UN system capabilities will result in better programmatic and operational support to MS.

Each UN entity will pursue its own journey towards the UN 2.0 vision, progressing along its own path. Every element of the "quintet of change" will have a unique footprint in every entity – tailored to mandate and context.

FORWARD-THINKING CULTURE:

Why we need to shift – By fostering a forward-thinking culture, we create an environment in which the cutting-edge skills of the "quintet of change" can flourish and amplify impact. In a rapidly evolving world, culture is the linchpin of every successful organizational adaptation.

Where we are now – All UN entities are committed to achieving gender parity at all staff levels by 2028. We have advanced strategies for geographical diversity, disability inclusion and youth empowerment. New tools and initiatives have improved transparency in our work and accountability for results. Our environmental footprint continues to decrease. We have implemented robust frameworks to support leadership, whistle-blowers, the prevention of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, and the fight against racism.

Our Goal – Placing gender equality, women's rights and equitable geographical representation front and centre, we strive to create a forward-thinking culture that values agility, learning and curiosity.

How we will amplify change

- ❖ **Curiosity and Learning** – Guided by our vision for a UN 2.0, we will foster a safe culture for continuous learning and creative thinking. Mindful that cultural change is not a quick fix, our approach is focused on enhancing leaders' skills, supporting critical thinking, addressing new educational needs and nurturing positive attitudes towards collaboration, openness, knowledge exchange and experimentation to sustain our collective curiosity in the long term.

- ❖ **Agility** – Empowering managers with enhanced – and more accountable – decision-making authority, in particular in the field, will improve our responsiveness and reduce bureaucracy. We will continue to increase the focus on results with more agile planning and budgeting and consistently strive to meet targets for equitable geographical representation and gender equality.

- ❖ **Geographical Diversity** – Rooting our approach in Article 101.3 of the Charter of the United Nations, we will bolster geographical diversity, hand in hand with gender parity, throughout the UN system. Our approach includes scaling outreach, reinforcing recruitment strategies, removing bias and obstacles in selection, strengthening accountability, fostering an inclusive environment and upholding the value of global diversity to amplify our collective impact and be truly representative of the world that we serve.

- ❖ **Gender Equality** – In our vision for a UN 2.0, achieving gender equality – and consistently delivering for women and girls – will be a strategic priority, indivisible from our goals and mandates. we will strengthen our focus on delivering measurable results for women and girls in every country.

- ❖ **Young People** – Empowering young people, in particular young women, within the UN system is our priority.

- ❖ **Inclusion** – Recognizing the transformative impact of inclusion, we will enhance accessibility, representation, participation and equality for those left behind and those who experience discrimination, including Indigenous Peoples, minority groups and persons with disabilities.

- ❖ **Resilience and well-being** – We will promote workplace cultures that build resilience, stimulate engagement and foster supportive environments.

- ❖ **Environmental Sustainability** – We will infuse environmental sustainability into every facet of our operations. Acknowledging the urgency of climate action, we will reduce our ecological footprint, promote sustainable practices and collaborate with partners to embed sustainability in our organizational fabric.

- ❖ **Integrity** – Our resolute stance against misconduct, including sexual exploitation, abuse, racism, harassment, discrimination, fraud, corruption and abuse of power, drives us to implement robust accountability measures.

DATA:

What building data capacity means – Nurturing modern data capacities is about making shifts in expertise, processes and technology so that entities improve how they collect, handle, govern and use data from more diverse sources to generate deeper insights for better decisions – powered by advanced analytics, machine learning and visualization techniques.

Ways in which data expertise can improve the UN and support MS

- ❖ Enhancing the safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers through data-driven risk models.
- ❖ Improving supply chain visibility for the $16 billion in annual United Nations system goods procurement through real-time tracking.
- ❖ Powering anticipatory humanitarian action for the 360 million people in need with predictive analytics.
- ❖ Transforming agriculture with data-driven crop selection to better support the 900 million people facing severe food insecurity.
- ❖ Improving support for the 670 million people in extreme poverty with nowcasting of statistics.

Where we are now – Around 67% of UN entities have formulated a data strategy. Basic capabilities are in place. However, advanced expertise, for example in machine learning, is scarce. Less than 5 per cent of staff work in modern data roles. Only 0.3% of $350 billion in development assistance goes to data projects – and financing for gender statistics is at a new low.

Our Goal – Our vision is a whole-of-United Nations data ecosystem that unlocks our full data potential – grounded in our essential role as stewards of global statistics. We will master modern data management, analytics and machine learning approaches – so that we can deliver with impact and integrity across the data and statistics value chain. We intend to accelerate this change with shifts in training and hiring, women's empowerment, data-savvy leadership and cultures, smarter data governance, new global partnerships and user-focused technology.

How we aim to change

A. **Improve our offer to MS**
    ❖ Design data-driven programmes and projects, with gender equality as a core priority and disaggregated data methods front and centre.
    ❖ Develop advisory capacities to assist Member States in building inclusive, sustainable and effective data strategies, governance and ecosystems for impact.
    ❖ Support international data cooperation in line with the policy brief on a Global Digital Compact.

B. **Nurture data capabilities**
    ❖ Prioritize data-driven approaches in all programmatic and operational areas, taking a "whole-of-organization" approach to the data-driven transformation.
    ❖ Curate use cases that create proven value for beneficiaries and entities – starting with underserved regions and groups, including women and girls.
    ❖ Deepen core strengths in primary data collection and descriptive and diagnostic analytics to improve stewardship of high-quality gender-disaggregated statistics for global stakeholders.
    ❖ Invest in predictive and prescriptive analytics, enhanced with machine learning and artificial intelligence, to help users to better understand what may happen next and how to respond.
    ❖ Invest in responsible data management and governance to help colleagues to access and share the data that they need in ways that prioritize quality, security, privacy and human rights.
    ❖ Explore responsible data-sharing with non-United Nations partners to leverage a broader range of data.

C. **Shift foundations and cultures**
    ❖ Training and culture – invest in data literacy, training, and knowledge communities to foster data-savvy cultures grounded in UN values, principles, human rights and gender equality.
    ❖ Joint centres of excellence – scale up joint centres of data excellence to boost data sharing, collaboration, and change management support.
    ❖ Partnerships – forge geographically diverse university, civil society and business partnerships to enhance data capabilities and expertise.
    ❖ Technology – shift to cloud-based platforms to enhance accessibility, collaboration and sharing.

INNOVATION:

What building innovation capacity means – Fostering innovation capacity is about learning to generate, test and scale up novel ideas, processes, products or services that create value. It requires supportive and inclusive environments, open minds and diverse skills.

Ways in which innovation expertise can improve the UN and support MS

    ❖ Reducing the 1.2 million tons in annual UN system carbon emissions with alternative energy and circular economy solutions.

- ❖ Improving digital and physical access to health care for UN personnel and people in remote areas.
- ❖ Facilitating digital participation in UN-supported peace processes in local languages and dialects.
- ❖ Opening access to markets and credit for female entrepreneurs with peer-to-peer platforms.
- ❖ Using hydroponics to grow food in order to improve food security where fertile soil is scarce.

Where we are now – Innovation teams are present in 90% of UN entities, with 60% implementing dedicated strategies. Globally, development assistance for innovation has grown tenfold in the past decade to almost $3 billion but is still only 1 percent of total flows in 2022.

Our Goal – Our vision is an agile United Nations innovation ecosystem capable of rapidly and sustainably scaling up novel solutions that benefit everyone, everywhere. Our approach spans the full innovation value chain, leveraging our ability to convene and connect globally. This shift will be amplified by key enablers, such as robust innovation leadership, diverse teams, cultural change, strategic partnerships, enhanced financing mechanisms and our global innovation network.

How we aim to change

A. **Improve our offer to MS**
- ❖ Make innovation approaches integral to UN programmes and projects.
- ❖ Identify promising solutions on the ground and help to scale up or adapt them to underserved regions.
- ❖ Assist in building national innovation ecosystems, with a focus on women innovators.

B. **Nurture Innovation Capabilities**
- ❖ Develop a diversified portfolio approach to innovation, encompassing a range of use cases.
- ❖ Strengthen innovation methods along the value chain, from idea generation (e.g. in hackathons) to prototyping (e.g. pilot versions for early feedback) to the roll-out of basic product versions, with the goal of continuous improvement.
- ❖ Leverage new technologies to support all steps in the innovation process.
- ❖ Prioritize high-impact innovations that benefit marginalized regions and groups, including women, girls and others left behind – in ways that responsibly manage risks and potential harms.
- ❖ Foster the sustainable scale-up of proven solutions via multi-stakeholder partnerships, knowledge-sharing, grass-roots investments, multi-partner funding instruments, capacity and policy support or other methods.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT:

What building foresight capacity means – Fostering strategic foresight capacity means cultivating structured methods that help to navigate uncertainty, imagine better futures and chart new paths forward already today. It is about nurturing proactive mindsets and exploring possible futures, with tools such as horizon-scanning, trend analysis and scenario development, desired futures approaches to make better choices today – in the face of an uncertain tomorrow.

Ways in which foresight can improve the UN and support MS

- ❖ Helping vulnerable countries to adapt to climate change with system dynamics modelling.
- ❖ Anticipating demand for safe water with trend analysis, including to reach the 2.2 billion people worldwide who lack access.
- ❖ Preparing for natural disasters, including droughts, floods or fires, through predictive analytics.
- ❖ Enable early action around risks of social tensions or conflicts with forward-looking situational analysis of systemic shifts.

Where we are now – 34% of UN entities have designed a strategy for enhancing and using strategic foresight. Fewer than one third of UN entities believe that they have advanced foresight capabilities.

Our Goal – Our vision is a UN system adept at understanding, navigating and shaping futures. We aim to foster sophisticated futures thinking to empower improved planning and cultivate better decisions amid uncertainty. With a hub-and-spoke model, a new network will connect the UN system to accelerate shifts in training, mindsets, partnerships and methods.

How we aim to change

A. **Improve our offer to MS**
   ❖ Support foresight-informed decision-making on global priorities and agendas.
   ❖ Leverage UN foresight laboratories and networks to help MS in using foresight for their strategies.
   ❖ Incorporate foresight into the development of UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.
   ❖ Inform global analysis of and debates on potential and desired futures and paths forward.

B. **Nurture foresight capabilities**
   ❖ Curate use cases that create value for beneficiaries, Member States and United Nations entities.
   ❖ Master foresight methods, from helping stakeholders to scan the present for trends to developing future scenarios and linking them to necessary changes in policies and programmes today.
   ❖ Leverage practical tools to support foresight, including applications that support trend analysis, scenario development and the visualization of desired futures.
   ❖ Integrate diverse perspectives into foresight methods for stronger strategic planning, decision-making, policy development, programme design, resource allocation and risk management, including to understand and mitigate biases.

C. **Shift foundations and cultures**
   ❖ Job profiles – integrate foresight expertise into relevant job descriptions.
   ❖ Processes – equip teams with user-friendly foresight tools, with access to help from shared expert teams.
   ❖ Technology – introduce software to enable the efficient processing and interpretation of trends and scenarios.

DIGITAL:

What building digital capacity means – Building modern digital capacities means transforming an organization's technologies, skills and processes towards digitally enabled solutions that improve connectivity, service delivery, stakeholder collaboration, engagement and decision-making – in ways that are secure, responsible and inclusive.

Ways in which digital expertise can improve the UN and support MS

   ❖ Strengthening the transparency and accountability of UN entities via public dashboards.
   ❖ Employing digital tools for simplified, automated drafting and formatting of documentation.
   ❖ Enabling learning via online platforms for the 244 million out-of-school children and young people.
   ❖ Facilitating financial inclusion for the 800 million women without accounts via better digital public infrastructure.
   ❖ Providing better services for refugees through mobile payments and digital registration.

Where we are now – Only around 40% of UN entities assess that they have the capacity to optimally assist Member States in their digital journeys, and advanced expertise remains scarce. This is partly because global development assistance for digital transformations was almost non-existent before 2019, is still not a recognized "purpose code" in most aid sectors and makes up less than 0.4% of the $350 billion in official flows.

Our Goal – Our vision is a digitally fluent UN system with the right talent, as well as human-centred digital systems, processes and tools to improve and reshape our work: more efficient, agile, trusted, scalable, accessible, ethical, resilient and inclusive – and ready to assist MS in building their own digital public infrastructure and ecosystems in ways that protect global values, human rights and gender equality.

How we aim to change

A. **Improve our offer to MS**
   - ❖ Develop scalable digitally enabled solutions for all UN system programmes.
   - ❖ Provide MS with blueprints for a "whole-of-society" digital transformation approach.
   - ❖ Support MS in building inclusive, sustainable and resilient digital ecosystems that support underserved regions, close digital divides and protect human rights.
   - ❖ Support international digital cooperation in line with the policy brief on a Global Digital Compact.

B. **Nurture Digital Capabilities**
   - ❖ Prioritize digital approaches in all programmatic and operational areas, taking a "whole-of-organization" approach to the digital transformation of our work.
   - ❖ Design human-centred digital solutions tailored to context and user needs, prioritizing the needs of women, girls and persons with disabilities.
   - ❖ Identify and safeguard against the risks associated with digital technologies, including in areas such as privacy, misinformation and technology-facilitated gender-based violence.
   - ❖ Leverage automation and the Internet of things (connected devices that exchange data) to make processes more efficient and free up staff time.

C. **Shift foundations and cultures**
   - ❖ Leadership – leaders to pursue a "whole-of-organization" vision for a digital rethink of their entities, translated into clear strategies backed by direct leadership engagement.
   - ❖ Job profiles – integrate digital expertise into every job and introduce new roles such as app developers, user interface designers and chief digital officers, promoting equitable geographical representation and the participation of women in the roles.
   - ❖ Governance – adopt governance approaches to enable decentralized action while ensuring resilient and secure access to shared digital resources.

BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE:

What building behavioural science capacity means – Nurturing behavioural science capacity is about building our knowledge of how people act, make decisions and react to policies, processes and incentives, in order to create better choices and positive change – in particular in the areas of inequality, exclusion and discrimination.

Ways in which behavioural science expertise can improve the UN and support MS

   - ❖ Reducing administrative hurdles with behavioural insight-informed process simplification.
   - ❖ Reinforcing UN action on zero tolerance for sexual harassment with implicit bias training.
   - ❖ Addressing unconscious bias in staff recruitment, management, and stakeholder engagement.
   - ❖ Increasing uptake of social security with behavioural science-informed outreach campaigns.
   - ❖ Reducing stigma for the 39 million people living with HIV/AIDS through better community engagement.
   - ❖ Changing social norms that lead to gender-based violence affecting up to 730 million women.

Where we are now – Currently, only one fifth of United Nations entities have pursued a strategic approach to building behavioural science expertise. Fewer than 10% rate their abilities as advanced.

Our Goal – Our vision is a UN system that integrates behavioural science seamlessly into the fabric of our work: evidence-based, science-based, responsible, inclusive, gender responsive, context-adapted and effective. We see a future in which the UN system helps MS in harnessing the power of behavioural science to craft interventions that tangibly improve outcomes and fast-track sustainable development progress for all.

How we aim to change

A. **Improve our offer to MS**
   ❖ Offer programmes informed by behavioural science and insights.
   ❖ Assist MS in integrating behavioural science into public policy and administration.
   ❖ Broaden outreach of UN behavioural science groups and networks to diverse global partners.

B. **Nurture behavioural science capabilities**
   ❖ Cultivate a broad set of behavioural science methods, such as randomized controlled trials, field experiments, journey mapping and long-term studies to better understand real-life behavioural patterns, biases and factors.
   ❖ Integrate consideration of unconscious biases into all areas of work, including evidence-based demonstrations on how they affect effectiveness, as well as context-informed measures to address them at every stage.
   ❖ Infuse planning, decision-making and policy development with behavioural science to optimize programme impact, improve resource allocation and reduce bias and administrative burdens.

C. **Shift foundations and cultures**
   ❖ Leadership – leaders will champion behavioural science in planning, policy design, budgeting, administration and programming
   ❖ Know-how – empower teams with access to behavioural science publications and tools, guided by experts and informed by the principles of human rights and gender equality.
   ❖ Governance – incorporate an ethical understanding into the application of behavioural science.

UN 2.0 ACCELERATOR:

To better assist MS in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, we intend to pursue a robust change management effort. This will entail joint UN system action, combined with entity-level changes, to improve shared and individual capabilities.

Joint Accelerator Programme

The UN 2.0 transformation needs to engage all entities, leaders and colleagues. Starting in 2024, a UN 2.0 Accelerator programme will drive coordinated efforts and initiatives to bring the "quintet of change" to life. This will be supported by a time-bound cross-functional task team coordinated by the Secretary-General's Office – ready to accompany UN entities, leaders and colleagues as they chart their own paths over the next three years (see the UN 2.0 road map below). The High-level Committee on Management of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, in cooperation with the High-level Committee on Programmes, will monitor progress and provide overall guidance for the UN 2.0 process.

The UN 2.0 Accelerator will focus on the following objectives

1. Supporting UN system entities in designing strategies and plans. A pool of coaches from across the UN system will support leaders in initiating change, informed by frameworks such as the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action for Everyone, Everywhere, the Secretary-General's Guidance Note on Behavioural Science, the forthcoming Strategic Foresight Guide and the United Nations innovation toolkit, as well as strategies for cultural change

2. Empowering colleagues with training to help everyone to unlock the potential of UN 2.0 skills. Taking advantage of the digital transformation in learning worldwide, we will also scale up access to professional

online learning platforms, tailored learning pathways for UN 2.0, collaboration with universities and other learning institutions on learning programmes and options for coaching support, as well as learning incentives.

3. Assisting in talent management, we plan to support UN system entities in developing new job descriptions, advising on talent acquisition, encouraging staff exchanges and enhancing performance management by incorporating UN 2.0 goals into workplans and senior management compacts.

4. Scaling up UN system communities of practice, where members exchange know-how, best practices and solutions in thematic events, online platforms and use case portfolios.

5. Supporting high-impact initiatives – high visibility programmes that demonstrate the benefits of UN 2.0 at the country level and generate tangible evidence for the impact of the cutting-edge expertise and forward-thinking culture that we envisage.

6. Aligning for greater inclusion, building on the geographical diversity strategy of the United Nations.

7. Advancing shared centres of excellence where colleagues from different entities work together daily on joint projects, collaborate with external stakeholders, offer shared services or harmonize business practices. Ongoing initiatives such as the Futures Lab network, the Joint Facility for Digital Capacity Development, the Global Pulse innovation laboratory, the Humanitarian Data Exchange, the United Nations International Computing Centre, the OneHR Centre and many others exemplify the potential of such inter-agency collaboration.

8. Prioritizing shared financing instruments, including pooled, thematic and joint funding mechanisms that amplify collective impact, minimize duplication, distribute innovation risks, integrate clear gender equality markers and foster shared governance. The digital transformation window of the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund and the new Complex Risk Analytics Fund for smarter crisis action are pioneering ways of translating the UN 2.0 vision into impact.

9. Sustaining momentum in and tracking the progress of the UN 2.0 transformation through frequent UN system-wide events. The UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, through its high-level committees, will periodically discuss the resulting scorecards prepared by the UN 2.0 Accelerator task team.

HOW MEMBER STATES CAN ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT UN 2.0

- **Talking** to United Nations leaders about opportunities in data, digital, innovation, behavioural science and foresight.
- **Supporting** training, fellowships, talent pipelines and staff development initiatives for UN 2.0.
- **Considering** proposals for rejuvenation and shifts in the United Nations system workforce towards UN 2.0 expertise.
- **Encouraging** the development of system-wide strategies to guide progress on UN 2.0 goals.
- **Advocating** the integration of UN 2.0 approaches into United Nations system programmes and processes.
- **Connecting** the United Nations system sustainably to new research, private and civil society partners.
- **Supporting** initiatives and prioritizing pooled, thematic and joint funding mechanisms.
- **Supporting** shared centres of excellence to catalyse UN 2.0 progress across the United Nations system.
- **Revising** global aid classifications to enable digital and data assistance across all sectors.
- **Dedicating** more development assistance to innovation, data, digital, foresight and behavioural science initiatives.

RESOURCE:

1. Policy Brief on UN 2.0

UN 2.0 ROAD MAP: WHO, WHAT AND WHEN

2024 (first half) → **2024** (second half) → **2025** → **2026** →

UN 2.0 Accelerator task team

- Support entities defining and implementing their strategies and action plans
- Scale up UN 2.0 communities of practice, platforms and use case portfolios
- Organize events and communicate progress to sustain the momentum
- Support metrics and scorecard development to track UN 2.0 progress

2024 (first half)	2024 (second half)	2025	2026
• Support curation of learning paths and training offers • Begin identifying high-impact initiatives	• Launch talent management playbooks • Organize UN 2.0 learning days and weeks	• Launch UN 2.0 excellence awards	• Organize a UN 2.0 Fair

United Nations system entities

- Identify and engage UN 2.0 champions, in particular among leaders and managers
- Refocus programmatic offers to Member States to provide more UN 2.0 support
- Prioritize shared funding instruments, including pooled, thematic and joint mechanisms
- Foster harmonization and adoption of best practices, systems and initiatives
- Jointly organize thematic events

2024 (first half)	2024 (second half)	2025	2026
• Define transformation plans and targets – in line with UN 2.0 recommendations • Designate a focal point as the UN 2.0's interface	• Report progress to the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) • Encourage colleagues to access training resources	• Report progress to CEB • Refocus talent management processes • Advance joint centres of excellence	• Report progress to CEB periodically

Leaders and managers

- Become champions and lead teams through the transformation, including with coach support
- Engage with the UN 2.0 Accelerator taskforce to mobilize know-how and support
- Rethink workforce planning and learning strategies
- Reshape business practices and ways of working

Colleagues

- Engage in the communities of practice and become a UN 2.0 champion
- Take a proactive stance towards training and self-development for new skills
- Participate in events, challenges and UN 2.0 excellence award initiatives
- Contribute use case, ideas and best practices to shared knowledge portfolios