

WIPO Coordination Committee

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HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) STRATEGY 2022-2026

Document prepared by the Secretariat

1. The World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) Medium-Term Strategic Plan for 2022-2026 (MTSP) forms the basis for the Human Resources (HR) Strategy during this period. The Human Resources Management Department (HRMD) is a key part of the foundation that enables the Organization to achieve its strategic goals.
2. The four pillars and foundation of the MTSP Strategy House underpin the Organization's Vision and Mission and articulate the strategic focus from which its work program will be derived. All four pillars have human resources management implications, both targeted and cross-cutting, calling for HRMD to deliver strategic business impact, while the foundation articulates the type of culture which is needed for the Organization to achieve its Vision and Mission.
3. Partnering with the business units, HRMD will strive to ensure that the Organization has the talent required to successfully deliver its work program and that it can be deployed flexibly to meet the continuously evolving business needs. Further, HRMD will support improved organizational performance through management of people performance with a greater focus on continuous feedback, talent development and appropriate incentives. This requires investing in management development and taking a more strategic view on organizational learning as an instrument for targeted skills development. HRMD will also actively contribute to the development of a more open, dynamic and collaborative organizational culture, essential to creating a healthy, inclusive workplace where high performance and innovation can thrive.

4. In addition to the above core priorities, HRMD will further support the achievement of MTSP goals and aspirations by better aligning the HR policy framework with WIPO specific business needs, while keeping within the United Nations (UN) common system strategic HR framework. HRMD will continue to streamline and automate the attendant HR processes to enhance efficiency and to enable appropriate delegation of HR decisions, coupled with managerial accountability. Furthermore, the ongoing efforts to enhance the accuracy and accessibility of HR data and to improve workforce analytics will continue. Timely, high quality HR analytics is essential to underpin decision-making both at the corporate and unit level.

5. Moving beyond the pandemic, towards the “new normal” in work life, HRMD will champion human-centric work-life policies and staff wellbeing as part of its core mandate. Recognizing that some form of “hybrid work environments” are likely to be part of the future of work, and applying lessons learned during the pandemic, HRMD will support business units in creating new ways for staff to collaborate and contribute productively.

6. The previous HR Strategy emphasized the role HRMD needs to play in ensuring that WIPO is future-ready. While much has been achieved, as reported in the HR Annual Reports, this work must continue. The current HR Strategy seeks to respond to remaining, specific issues identified in broad consultations with business units to be critical in achieving the vision articulated in the MTSP. It provides the underpinnings of HRMD’s strategic work program for the next five years around the following, inter-related objectives:

- Contribute to the development of a vibrant organizational culture that encourages open dialogue, collaboration, knowledge sharing and teamwork;
- Improve organizational agility, create adequate flexibility and increase mobility to meet the evolving staffing needs of the business units while also enhancing diversity and inclusion;
- Ensure that management of people performance adds value by improving organizational performance and developing staff skills;
- Take a more strategic view of learning and career development as integral parts of talent development;
- Invest in leadership and management development;
- Enhance staff engagement and wellbeing; and
- Develop a “one stop shop” service model for HRMD adapted to the needs of the business units.

7. The following sections develop each of these objectives and explain how they will be translated into a strategic work program for the HR function. Implementation progress will be reported in the HR Annual Reports.

Contribute to the development of a vibrant organizational culture which encourages open dialogue, collaboration, knowledge sharing and teamwork

8. All four pillars of the MTSP express the intent for the Organization to work proactively in leading the development of a balanced and effective global IP ecosystem. Leading proactively means improving accessibility, reaching out, bringing people together, partnering, supporting users at all levels and becoming a sought-out source of global knowledge and policy advice. For the Organization to be able to expand its capabilities in response to change and to develop a way of working which goes beyond providing high-quality services, it must create a supportive internal culture.

9. The current culture, with its roots in the Organization's history and how it has evolved over the years, harbors hierarchical features that support the "*status quo*" rather than change, silos rather than collaboration and top-down communication rather than open dialogue. Like in many UN common system organizations, the current culture also seems to accommodate a legalistic entitlement mentality. All these features have affected the way human resources have been managed and contributed to eroded trust between management and staff. The need for culture change was acknowledged in the MTSP as a key feature of the foundation of the Strategy House, and again affirmed across the Organization in the recent consultations on the HR Strategy.

10. A culture supportive of the strategic goals articulated in the MTSP embraces breaking organizational silos, engaging staff and building trust. It encourages open dialogue and productive exchange of ideas and perspectives. It supports innovation, and it values teamwork, collaboration across organizational boundaries and knowledge sharing. The Organization is ready to embark on this journey, and the HR function will play a key role in moving the work forward.

11. HRMD's contributions to this work will include organizational development aspects, such as working closely with the News and Media Division to strengthen internal communications, including providing appropriate forums for discussion and two-way dialogue, and developing adequate leadership structures and incentives to support cross-sector and cross-unit teams. The HR function will also play a lead role in implementing culture-related management development activities and in measuring staff engagement through periodic Employee Surveys. Further, HRMD will contribute to building trust by ensuring that HR processes are implemented fairly and transparently and by making sure that areas of concern expressed in the Employee Surveys are addressed in a timely manner.

Improve organizational agility and create adequate flexibility to meet the evolving staffing needs of the business units while also enhancing diversity and inclusion

12. Agile organizations are both steady and dynamic at the same time. They incorporate stable core features that evolve slowly, such as a clear vision, compelling mission, shared values, adequate core competencies and effective knowledge management, while also building dynamic capabilities that help them adapt quickly to new challenges and opportunities. Examples of such capabilities include the ability to shift resources, both financial and human, to where they are most needed, ability to quickly mobilize teams from across the Organization, and empowering the operational teams to make decisions.

13. The implementation of the Organization's work program derived from the MTSP requires organizational agility and flexibility to adapt its workforce composition and capabilities to the evolving business needs and new ways of working. Currently, the business units do not feel they have this flexibility. The analysis of workforce dynamics conducted in June 2021 confirms this view:

- 71 per cent of the 1579 employees are on regular staff contracts, 4 per cent on temporary staff contracts and 25 per cent on non-staff contracts. With the increasing business demands for new skills and the current restrictions on the number of positions, it is to be expected that the proportion of non-staff contracts will increase. While an increase in the contingent workforce is in line with the current developments in the broader labor market where career expectations are changing and the desire to build career portfolios rather than work for a single employer is

gaining ground among the younger generations of workers, WIPO must ensure that it secures within the regular workforce the specialized skills critical to meeting new business needs. Bringing these in on a short-term basis, or through external providers, would increase business risks and result in an overall increased cost. It will therefore be important to attain the right balance;

- Of the regular staff, about two thirds are on permanent/continuing contracts, one third on fixed-term contracts. This is different from most UN and other international organizations where the fixed-term contracts are more prevalent, allowing for more flexibility in adapting their staffing to changing business requirements;
- Regular staff stay in the Organization considerably longer than in most other international organizations. About one third of regular staff have a tenure over 20 years in the Organization, compared to less than 10 per cent in the UN overall and an even lower share in some other international organizations. Consequently, the numbers of more recent entrants to the Organization are significantly lower than in other comparable organizations;
- As a result of the contractual stability and long tenures, the regular staff in the Organization are older, in many cases by about 10 years, than in most UN organizations. The median age is 51 years;
- The external mobility among regular staff is low, staff turnover rates varying between 4-6 per cent annually in recent years. Unlike in most international organizations, retirement is the main reason to leave the Organization, corresponding to almost half of all departures. In other comparable organizations, the two leading reasons to leave the organization are typically “end of contract” and “resignation”.

14. Another notable difference in workforce dynamics compared to many UN and other international organizations is the fact that restructuring of business units has been used very sparingly in the past to adapt the Organization, in particular the unit level staffing structures, to changing business needs.

15. All these factors taken together have also slowed down the achievement of the Organization’s diversity goals. Although considerable progress has been made, as shown in the latest Annual Report on Human Resources, increased efforts are required. More workforce flexibility, combined with targeted outreach and internal support programs, could contribute to achieving the Organization’s diversity targets.

16. Looking forward, provided that the turnover rates do not change significantly and the exit trends from the last few years continue during the MTSP period, the Organization will have limited opportunities to renew its skills base in response to the evolving work program needs. Hence, there will be a need to increase flexibility through proactive HR programs, such as creating windows for incentivized voluntary departures, better utilization of secondments in/out and developing programs for staff exchanges, which could include more frequent exchanges with the broader IP network, where appropriate. It is also likely that the Organization will need to restructure some business areas where the work programs and subsequent needs for skill profiles are changing markedly. To a degree, changing business requirements can also be met by internal mobility. This will be discussed more in-depth in connection with career development enhancements.

17. Increased agility, flexibility and speed in adapting to evolving business needs can also be achieved by streamlining the decision-making and implementation of HR actions. HRMD has already started a review of the decision-making processes for several HR areas with the view to delegating HR decisions to the appropriate management levels, either to the HR Director or to the line manager accountable for budgets and business results. This review is in line with current developments in many comparable international organizations and will continue during the MTSP period.

18. Further, the ability of business units to adapt their staffing patterns to changing work programs and evolving business environments is impacted by the ability to find flexible HR solutions. Currently, the Organization's HR policy framework is overly prescriptive, over and above what is required by the UN Staff Regulations and Rules. HRMD will commence a review of the HR policies with the view to gradually adapting them better to the business requirements and articulating the organization-specific policies in a more principle-based manner rather than attempting to regulate every exception.

19. The current position management system does not facilitate organizational agility. Instead, it makes it more cumbersome for the Organization to respond flexibly to new challenges, shift strategic priorities and take advantage of emerging, new opportunities that would benefit its stakeholders. Some international organizations, notably some of the financial development institutions and large global non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have already moved away from managing their human resources in this way. Several other organizations, including some in the UN system, are currently looking for ways to move from position management to staffing budgets managed at the institutional level and distributed to the sector/region/department level based on the organization's business priorities. Managing staffing within a budgetary envelope would add much needed flexibility for the Organization to react to external developments in their business environment and to implement changes in business strategy. If implemented with appropriate accountability measures, it also has the potential to strengthen results-based management. HRMD, together with the Department of Program Planning and Finance, will initiate an internal dialogue with the view to identifying exactly what a shift from position management to staffing budgets would entail for the Organization and how it could be implemented both from a governance perspective and from an internal resource planning and management perspective.

Ensure that management of people performance adds value by improving organizational performance and developing staff skills

20. The current performance and development management system (PMSDS) is similar to that of most UN organizations. However, recent internal consultations confirm that, as currently implemented, the system is not adding much value in terms of improved organizational performance nor as a tool for staff development. The annual performance evaluation process is time consuming and yet it does not result in tangible outcomes, in terms of rewarding the best performers who carry the bulk of the workload or of managing underperformance. Staff development is often treated as an afterthought and the need to develop new skills tends not to be seen as a natural responsibility for everyone in the Organization.

21. Overhauling and streamlining the PMSDS will be a key priority for HRMD during the MTSP period. The Internal Oversight Division (IOD) has initiated a review of performance management and development that is currently ongoing. Its results and recommendations will provide further guidance on developing the system, which may include:

- Ensuring that everyone understands performance expectations, the results to be achieved during the performance year and the behaviors to be exhibited in achieving those results;
- Providing continuous feedback, including from multiple sources, through a performance dialogue during the year, not only at the time of the annual evaluation;
- Bringing development of skills and behaviors back to the forefront of the performance dialogue;
- Calibrating the performance evaluations at department, sector and organizational levels; and
- Linking the performance management policy and process more closely to other related HR policies and processes, such as learning, career progression, internal mobility, succession planning, rewards and recognition and performance improvement.

22. The review includes, in addition to reviewing the system and attendant processes, a benchmarking exercise to learn from available best practices at the front end and an extensive learning phase at the back end before implementation.

Take a more strategic view of learning and career development as integral parts of talent development

23. Achieving the strategic goals articulated in the four pillars of the MTSP will require continued technical excellence in all the traditional fields of the IP ecosystem. However, it is also clear that skills and competencies in several areas will need to be strengthened and new skills will need to be acquired and/or developed. Following best practices in workforce planning, an organization-wide exercise with business units is currently being conducted to determine the skill gaps. It is evident so far that several skill areas related to key components of the strategic work program need to be strengthened; these include, among others, commercialization of IP, policy dialogue, digitalization and artificial intelligence (AI), outreach and partnering, program development and project management. Once this exercise has been completed, the Organization will determine to what extent the identified skills can be developed internally and to what extent they will need to be brought in from the external labor market through targeted recruitment strategies.

24. Developing specific skills internally has the potential to enhance career development and become a key motivator for staff. However, while the internal learning activities currently offered to staff cover subjects and topics aimed at improving skills relevant to the Organization's work program, the learning program is not specifically targeted nor prioritized to address skill development areas most critical to the Organization's needs at any given time.

25. Going forward, HRMD will take a more strategic view of learning. This means developing a corporate Learning Strategy using the information on skill needs and skill gaps (1) resulting from the ongoing, periodic workforce planning exercises conducted by HRMD and business units across the Organization; (2) entered in the PMSDS as specific skill development areas; and (3) discerned from the ongoing HR - business unit dialogue on staffing needs. This Learning Strategy, translated into a prioritized, targeted learning program each year, will determine the use of the annual learning budget, now corresponding to about 0.9 per cent of staff costs in 2022 and 2023 (excluding the costs of decentralized training), to ensure it supports the strategic work program and adds maximum value to the Organization and its staff.

26. Developing talent internally also includes providing other career enhancement opportunities. Limited workforce flexibility resulting from long tenures and low staff turnover, combined with no substantial growth of the Organization in recent years and the need to bring in different skills from the outside market from time to time, have left existing staff with fewer opportunities for career growth. In fact, about one third of the regular staff have stayed at their current grade level for 11 years or longer. The recent consultations revealed some frustration over this issue, including the low internal mobility overall, both among managers and staff.

27. Learning from best practices elsewhere, HRMD will work jointly with business units on developing options to address these concerns. This work will include, among other things, developing new programs to enhance internal mobility, such as institutionally funded developmental assignments, rotational programs for suitable roles, and making experience in multiple units an added merit when applying to higher management positions.

28. In conjunction with the review of the HR policy framework, HRMD will also consider options for multi-grading certain positions in the G and P grade spans, a practice that has been successfully implemented in some comparable international organizations. This would allow for career progression within the range of the position based on merit. HRDM will also initiate discussions with business units on the potential of re-establishing the technical career stream at levels P6. This would support the growth of world-class technical excellence in the Organization by selectively providing career progression opportunities for globally recognized technical talent outside the managerial stream. The technical stream would be cost neutral as it would be managed within the current D-level complement.

Invest in leadership and management development

29. Enhancing the organizational culture, developing new ways of working and managing the Organization's human resources optimally to achieve the strategic goals of the MTSP also creates a management challenge. Like in many other organizations, staff who have demonstrated excellent results in technical positions are oftentimes promoted into management roles with little or no preparation. They are expected to shift, almost overnight, from an individual achiever to someone who skillfully balances individual responsibilities with managing, motivating and empowering others. In addition to mastering the operations they are entrusted to lead, managers need to understand the policy frameworks that regulate their decision-making, and they will need to develop skills in the challenging area of human behavior as applied to organizational management, such as listening, communicating, coaching, giving and receiving feedback, building and empowering effective teams, etc. Development of strong managerial skills encompassing both the leadership and management facets of the job, will need to be supported by the Organization, especially at the time when culture change and new strategic directions are envisioned.

30. HRMD will invest in leadership and management development using a multi-pronged approach:

- Identifying leadership and management potential as a part of the PMSDS process and supporting staff in developing their potential through training, participation in/contribution to voluntary mentoring and coaching programs, acting assignments, leadership workshops, etc.;
- Providing comprehensive leadership and management training to all current managers, focusing on building strong people and resource management skills;

- Ensuring that all new managers are trained within the first year of assuming their management role;
- Introducing a periodic 360-degree feedback program for managers to enhance self-awareness essential for continued development in any leadership /management role and critical for success in the more senior roles; and
- Providing executive coaching, as needed.

Enhance staff engagement and wellbeing

31. Staff engagement levels are measured using employee surveys designed to measure defined engagement outcomes, to find out what is important to staff and to pinpoint what, specifically, drives engagement in an organization. Such a survey will be implemented towards the end of 2021. The results will be analyzed, shared with staff and used to guide the actions to be taken at unit and organizational level to enhance staff engagement. It is expected that such surveys will be repeated every two to three years, with short follow-up surveys (Pulse surveys) to assess progress implemented as needed.

32. The Organization is continuing the implementation of the UN Common System Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Framework and the related Mental Health Strategy during the MTSP period. This means that the Organization's duty of care, staff safety, security and occupational health, will continue to be strengthened. Staff wellbeing, including mental health, and related prevention, care and support measures have been key priorities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lessons are continuously learned and integrated into the HRMD work program and, as appropriate, into the broader OSH implementation efforts and resource considerations.

33. The pandemic has also necessitated putting in place exceptional remote work arrangements. These have overall been successful and key to ensuring business continuity. HRMD is currently benchmarking best external practices and working closely with business units to distill best internal practices. These findings will guide the development of policies on flexible work arrangements to serve the business needs as well as provide staff appropriate work-life flexibility upon return to the office.

Develop a "one stop shop" service model for HRMD adapted to the needs of the business units

34. In developing the HR Strategy, the HR management needs of the business units were discussed in extensive consultations. In this context, it became clear that the way of providing HR services can be further enhanced by adopting the concept of a "one stop shop", where integrated strategic HR solutions are provided/brokered in a continuous dialogue with an HR partner familiar with the business, managers and staff in a particular client area. This client-centered service model is backed up by HR specialists in the Department and by efficient implementation of HR processes/transactions with high level of self-service and adequate automation.

35. During the past five years, variations of this service model have been implemented across HR functions globally. HRMD has already been moving in this direction by providing focal points to the business units, and a full-fledged "one stop shop" service model, adapted to the Organization's specific needs and HR capabilities, will be developed and implemented during the MTSP period.

Implementation

36. This HR Strategy will be translated into annual work programming for HRMD during the MTSP period. It will be implemented in close collaboration and continuous dialogue with the Organization's leadership, managers and staff in the business units. The new service model will be implemented gradually through realignments, reallocation of resources and economies achieved through additional automation and simplification of HR processes.

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