Why we need to shift

Culture is the linchpin of success

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. Accelerating change in our culture is a critical step to position the United Nations system at the forefront of global efforts to promote peace, development and human rights – to support transformative shifts and harness the capacities of all to deliver for all.

Our goal

Becoming more forward-thinking

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. We aim to nurture a United Nations ecosystem that champions global diversity, inclusion, human rights, young people and environmental sustainability – firmly rooted in our commitments to integrity, humility and humanity.

Where we are now

Promising developments

Shifting organizational culture is a long-term journey. Since 2017, we have implemented major reforms to strengthen our culture and better deliver on our mandates. All United Nations 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. We have enhanced synergies between human rights and all pillars of our work with the Secretary-General’s call to action for human rights. 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. We have enhanced agility, given decision makers in the field more authority alongside increased accountability for decisions, improved information-sharing and made planning and budgeting more dynamic.

Our staff surveys show how these changes are yielding results. Colleagues not only take great pride in their work but also perceive tangible cultural shifts. They see greater clarity of direction, alignment, openness to ideas, inclusion, feedback and care. However, more remains to be done on all fronts.

93% of staff fully understand the objectives of the organization and are proud of their work10
75% of staff feel encouraged to share new ideas at work, up from 62% in 201910

29 United Nations system organizations have a workforce that is at least 50% female11
51% of resident coordinators are women12

30% of United Nations system organizations met or exceeded their 2021 disability inclusion targets13
22% of the electricity consumed in the United Nations system came from renewable sources14

Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 11: UN 2.0 Culture
HOW WE WILL AMPLIFY CHANGE

CRITICAL LEVERS

CURIOUSITY AND LEARNING
Guided by our vision for a UN 2.0, we will foster a safe culture for continuous learning and creative thinking. Recognizing the critical role of innovation, skills development and growth mindsets, we will encourage initiatives that promote continuous learning, stimulate fresh global perspectives and create an environment of dynamism. 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
By harnessing the Secretary-General’s existing reforms across development, peace and security, and management, we will further amplify our ability to adapt. Empowering managers with enhanced – and more accountable – decision-making authority, in particular in the field, will improve our responsiveness and reduce bureaucracy. Greater access to information will empower collaboration. 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. We will place greater emphasis on staff feedback and engagement. We are committed to simplifying our business processes, leveraging system-wide collaboration in the field and enabling everyone to focus more on impact.

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 United Nations system. Recognizing the rich perspectives that diversity brings, we will advance practices that strengthen equitable representation from all parts of the world and greater regional group diversity and achieve parity between men and women in our workforce. 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
We will accelerate the pace of change across the United Nations system, leading the world towards 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. On the basis of a shared understanding of gender inequalities and injustice, we will strengthen our focus on delivering measurable results for women and girls in every country – well-planned, operationalized, adequately financed, and informed by valued technical expertise and more staff with gender quality expertise, responsibilities and budgets. We will take decisive action to ensure that these efforts are driven by consistent leadership, accountability and aligned incentives and policies. We will amplify our work through strong networks, coordination and division of labour – in partnership with women’s civil society and feminist leaders. Moving beyond technical fixes, we will effectively address deep structural issues to enable an organizational culture that “walks the talk” – with Member State support.

OUR COMMON AGENDA POLICY BRIEF 11: UN 2.0 CULTURE
YOUNG PEOPLE
Empowering young people, in particular young women, within the United Nations system is our priority. Fully aware that new solutions must be developed side by side with young people, we will work with Member States to rejuvenate our workforce, amplify young voices and nurture their leadership potential. We commit to setting a global benchmark for youth engagement.

INCLUSION
We will fast-track our shift towards inclusive practices within United Nations entities. 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. By leveraging clear strategies, we will boost collective efforts to create places where everyone belongs and can contribute—irrespective of circumstance.

RESILIENCE AND WELL-BEING
Recognizing the profound importance of leadership, values and behaviours, and mental health, we will promote workplace cultures that build resilience, stimulate engagement and foster supportive environments. Our approach involves bolstering leadership competencies, understanding colleagues’ needs and fostering positive behaviour and well-being.

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. We are committed to measures that set the pace for global environmental responsibility and contribute to the health of our planet.

INTEGRITY
We prioritize a workplace culture founded on the highest ethical standards. 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. Through fostering respect, transparency and stringent action, we cultivate a workplace that can serve as a global example.

Learn more about ongoing UN 2.0 initiatives
un-two-zero.network
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