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United Nations Institute for Training and Research

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Item 15: United Nations Research and Training Institutes

**United Nations Institute for Training and Research
Report of the Secretary-General**

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Mr. President,

I have the pleasure to address the Council, as in 2009, with the distinct honour of representing the main training and education service providers for the United Nations: the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the United Nations System Staff College.

The thematic focus of the Annual Ministerial Review on implementing educational goals and commitments is pertinent to this agenda item, as promoting access to and ensuring quality learning opportunities are priorities of UNITAR and the Staff College. Within their respective mandates, the Institute and the College strive to meet social and economic development challenges by providing adult-centered learning, including short-term executive education and professional development courses, knowledge-sharing events and other training and training-related services.

I begin with these few words of introduction prior to sharing with you the achievements of the Institute and the College over the past two years in order to emphasize the importance of viewing education in broad terms and the role that lifelong learning plays in filling critical gaps in knowledge, skills and awareness, and contributing to meeting internationally agreed goals and commitments.

I now turn to UNITAR's activities and the report before you.

Mr. President,

Strengthening the capacities of beneficiaries through targeted training and research on knowledge systems is the Institute's main mission. In 2010, UNITAR reached out to 23,655 beneficiaries, representing a 33 per cent increase over 2009 figures, with more than 50 per cent of beneficiaries taking part in events implemented with partners. Nearly 70 per cent of UNITAR's training and training-related beneficiaries came from African, Asian and Latin American and Caribbean countries, with a 60-40 male-female gender ratio. The Institute's services and other outputs are produced by a dynamic corps of engaged and motivated professionals of one of the most gender balanced organizations in the United Nations system.

In resolution 2009/27, the Economic and Social Council acknowledged accomplishments from UNITAR's initial strategic reforms and noted as areas for progress the establishment of results-based management across the work of the Institute, the establishment of quality standards and certification, and the expanded use of technology-enhanced tools. The Council also took note of the recommendation of the Secretary-General concerning efforts the Institute could make in laying the groundwork for more efficient training and research provision within the United Nations system.

In 2010, UNITAR began implementation of a new set of strategic actions to take the reform measures initiated in 2007 forward. These new strategic areas include: identifying and responding more effectively to beneficiary needs; enhancing the quality and diversity of training products and services; strengthening efficiency, effectiveness and accountability in delivering results; and increasing the Institute's autonomy.

A number of noteworthy achievements are reflective of the Institute's efforts to become a leader in the professional training industry.

- UNITAR continues to respond rapidly to emerging thematic needs with a wide range of learning opportunities, with new training on topics as diverse as:
 - United Nations reform and the functioning of UN operational activities for development (in response to General Assembly resolution 64/289);
 - Risks stemming from nanotechnology and manufactured nanomaterials (in response to requests for action from UN regional meetings of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management);

- Strengthening ethics and governance in financial markets; and
- Enhancing access to basic services, such as water and sanitation, waste management and transport, in response to increasing urbanization trends.

These are just a few of the new thematic areas of training.

- Gender-related training now figures more prominently in the Institute's curriculum, particularly in the fields of peace, security and diplomacy, with courses on women in diplomacy and peacekeeping training on protection from sexual harassment, violence and abuse.
- With the launching of a virtual learning environment, beneficiaries are increasingly exposed to diversified methodologies which privilege non-linear learning approaches, knowledge and experience sharing, and networking.
- Outreach is broader with increased technology-enhanced learning. In 2010, the Institute delivered 25 per cent more e-courses than in 2009, and a much larger increase is projected for 2011 with the development and delivery of some 30 new courses.
- UNITAR is working to assure quality by working to align its training with internationally-recognized quality standards.
- The Institute has strengthened its managing-for-results capacities, with emphasis now being placed on the achievement of outcomes that are relevant to learning and other capacity development needs.
- UNITAR has introduced a web-based events management system, which enables potential beneficiaries to easily view and search for events, apply and/or register, and where applicable, pay online.
- Finally, UNITAR has worked to increase financial autonomy with the introduction of a new business model aiming to diversify sources of funding through the mobilization of self-generated income. The online payment facility, which is now fully operational, will enhance efficiencies in financial transactions and is expected to contribute to an increase in self-generated income in the future.

Partnerships continue to play an instrumental role in efforts to become more responsive, more effective and more efficient in addressing needs and delivering results. In addition to strengthening collaboration with a

diverse array of existing partners, UNITAR has stepped up efforts to engage new actors, such as Google and other private sector entities.

Mr. President,

The progress and achievements in programming and operations are generally reflected in the positive feedback received from compliance and oversight mechanisms. For the second consecutive biennium, UNITAR has received an unqualified audit opinion from the UN Board of Auditors, and has implemented all but one of the recommendations from previous biennia.

From a financial perspective, the Institute continues to experience overall growth. In 2010, revenue increased to \$20.9 million, representing an 18 per cent rise above 2008 figures of \$17.7 million. This growth resulted from an increase in earmarked voluntary contributions in the form of special purpose grants.

The Institute continues to struggle with weak and unpredictable non-earmarked voluntary contributions, however. In 2010, non-earmarked contributions amounted to \$879,000 (or 4.2 per cent of total income) compared to \$1.1 million in 2008, representing an alarming decrease in 20 per cent. 2011 non-earmarked contributions received to date unfortunately confirm a continuation in this decline.

Responses to the General Assembly's appeal for contributions to the newly-created Fellowship Fund, designed as a facility to enable UNITAR to reduce or waive fees to eligible beneficiaries from developing countries, also remain regrettably low with only \$80,000 in contributions to date.

While the Institute continues to make noteworthy progress in its transformations, challenges persist in meeting core institutional costs, and weak levels of non-earmarked contributions have delayed investments which are instrumental to implementing the new business model, further enhancing quality in learning and advancing other strategic reforms. Other challenges relate to severe space limitations and the increasing financial cost (in proportion to current levels of non-earmarked contributions) of the Institute's Geneva-based office headquarters. In 2010, rental costs in Geneva consumed the equivalent of 40 per cent of non-earmarked contributions.

Faced with these challenges, the report recommends that Member States provide full support, including the necessary means to address the alarmingly low levels of the General Fund and the lack of financial

resources to the newly created Fellowship Fund, as well as identify concrete actions with a view to finding a sustainable solution.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I return briefly to the remarks I made at the outset on the importance of retaining a holistic vision of education in meeting contemporary social and economic development challenges, including the achievement of Millennium Development Goals. As one of the senior experts of the UNITAR post-conflict reconstruction capacity-building initiative for Afghanistan has said, "Experts have alluded to the role of education as a pre-requisite for socio-economic stabilization, hope and opportunity because through education people can imagine what they can reconstruct." It is through adult-centered learning and education that UNITAR is working to contribute to meeting global challenges of today.

Thank you, Mr. President.