

Board of Trustees

Fifty-sixth Session
19 - 20 November 2015

UNITAR/BT/56/2

19 January 2016

Geneva, Switzerland

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FIFTY-SIXTH 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 19 to 20 November 2015 for its Fifty-sixth 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. Alexey Borodavkin (Russian Federation)
Also represented by Ms. Natalia Oreshenkova
 - Ms. Kathleen Cravero-Kristeroffersson.....(NGO)
 - Ms. Sarah Cook(UN)
 - Mr. Alexandre Fasel(Switzerland)
 - Ms. Taous Feroukhi (Chair)(Algeria)
 - Mr. Thomas Fitschen(Germany)
 - Ms. Martà Maura Perez.....(Chile)
 - Ms. U. Joy Ogwu.....(Nigeria)
 - Mr. Alfonso Quiñonez (Finance Committee Chair) (Academia)
 - Mr. Carsten Staur(Denmark)
 - Mr. Alfredo Valladão(Brazil)

Mr. Hailong Wu(China)

Ex Officio:

Mr. Nikhil Seth, Executive Director, UNITAR

Secretary:

Mr. Brook Boyer, UNITAR

Observers

Mr. Max Bond, United Nations University
Mr. Paul Ladd, Director, United Nations Research Institute on Social Development
Ms. Claire Messina, Deputy Director, United Nations System Staff College
Mr. Jarmo Sareva, Director, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

United Nations Institute for Training and Research

Mr. Armands Cakss, Finance and Budget Officer
Ms. Marina I. Dinca Vasilescu, Chief, Operations Unit
Mr. Rabih El-Haddad, Manager, Multilateral Diplomacy Programme
Mr. Francesco Pisano, Director, Research Department

3. The Chair welcomed trustees to the session and extended a particularly warm welcome to the trustees who were recently appointed by the Secretary-General and to the incoming Executive Director, Mr. Nikhil Seth. The Chair announced that the Board had constituted quorum, with 12 of 14 members present or represented. In accordance with the rules of procedure, the Chairman extended full powers to the designated representatives of the members who had notified the secretariat. The Chair also extended a warm welcome to the representatives of the other United Nations research and training institutes.
4. The Executive Director thanked the Chair and other trustees for their participation in the session and expressed his honour to lead the Institute at this juncture, with the recent adoption of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the need to move from the conceptualization of the 2030 Agenda to implementation. In observing the satisfactory reports that would be discussed at the session, the Executive Director emphasized that it was his hope that UNITAR would move from a period of stability to one of growth and diversification in programming. He looked forward to receiving guidance from the Board on how to promote growth at UNITAR and broadening and deepening partnerships with governments, UN system entities, academia and the business sector. The Executive Director concluded his remarks by emphasizing that he hoped that UNITAR would be able to demonstrate concrete achievements in terms of 'leaving no one behind' and 'reaching the furthest first.' **The Board acknowledged the leadership exercised by the outgoing Acting Head and Executive Director, Ms. Sally Fegan-Wyles; welcomed the incoming Executive Director, Mr. Nikhil Seth; and took note of the observations and comments under this item.**
5. Under item 2, Adoption of the agenda, the Chair introduced the provisional agenda and proposed that the Board consider item 8, Programming and Performance, after item 5, Follow-up from the Fifty-fifth Session, to enable the Board to discuss research and other components of programming and reporting in sequence. **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 six new trustees in 2015 as announced in the session's opening remarks. She also announced that Ms. Shirin Ebadi, Ms. Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, Ms. Radha Kumar, Ambassador Henri Lopes, the Most Honorable Portia Simpson Miller and Ms. Anne Kristin Sydnes had completed their respective terms on 31 December 2014 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 2014.**
8. Under item 5, Follow-up from the Fifty-fifth Session, the Chair referred to the annotations of the two sub-items. Under sub-item 5a, Update on opportunities for collaborative initiatives with outside partners, the Chair recalled that Management regularly reports to the Board on various partnership initiatives and that the Board expressed its support for Management to further develop opportunities for collaborative initiatives that enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of UNITAR programming and requested Management to report at the Fifty-sixth Session.
9. The Executive Director noted that the Institute had many different partnerships and highlighted recent initiatives undertaken since the Fifty-fifth Session, including UNITAR observer membership in the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), in addition to ongoing partnership initiatives with other research and training entities of the United Nations, including the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC) and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). With respect to UNDG, he highlighted the importance of the partnership taking into consideration work that the Institute is undertaking to support the implementation of Agenda 2030 with training modules to be delivered at the country level as well as with the development of other training-related activities. With regard to UNEG, the Executive Director indicated that partnership with this inter-agency network aimed to help UNITAR further professionalize its own evaluation capacities and also eventually contribute to efforts to strengthen national evaluation capacities in countries where there is particular need. In addition to partnership activities with UNSSC and UNIDIR, the Executive Director noted two new partnerships under development, including UNAIDS with regard to working to promote social inclusion and reduce stigma related to HIV/AIDS and with United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) to support road safety actions aimed at reducing casualties and injuries from traffic accidents. He underscored that UNITAR would focus on supporting countries in special situations, including the LDCs particularly in Africa, the small island developing states (SIDS) and the landlocked developing countries (LLDCs).
10. The Board took note of its observations on coordination with other bodies and praised Management for these developments. On the subject of road safety, it was suggested that Management seek cooperation with the UN Special Envoy on Road Safety as well as with other UN entities, including the World Health Organization (WHO). On the Executive Director's remarks on moving from stability to growth, it was noted that a partnership strategy should begin with Member States. Trustees put forward several questions, including how initiatives of this nature are linked to research, how partnerships are prioritized and used, and how a particular thematic area (e.g. road safety) is prioritized over other areas. It was suggested that some sort of strategic horizon scanning may be needed so that the results of the Institute's initiatives lead to a high impact for development, and that it would also be important to take into consideration elements of flexibility and speed when engaging in particular areas to respond to training needs and availability of funding.
11. The Executive Director acknowledged that it would be important to reflect on where the Institute is heading with partnerships and programming as the implementation process of Agenda 2030 moves forward and that, as a priority, it would be important to help countries ensure that Agenda 2030 becomes part of national planning and policies. He also emphasized the issue of supporting the creation of national mechanisms of engagement for diverse sectors of society, including government, business, civil society and academia, to help promote the integration process. Recognizing the challenges for UNITAR related to taking action on the conceptual breakthroughs of Agenda 2030, the Executive Director asked the Board for its support and guidance for the Institute's contribution to the Agenda's implementation. On road safety, the Executive Director made reference to the high number of casualties and felt that the Institute had a clear role to play, based on consultations with UNECE, WHO and the UN Special Envoy on Road Safety. **The Board took note of its observations and commended**

Management for the development of recent partnerships further to the Board's recommendation at the Fifty-fifth Session.

12. Under item 5b, Enhancing partnerships with research entities, the Chair recalled the Board's recommendation for Management to enhance partnerships with research entities, including non-governmental sectors, and recognized the importance to focus on research where UNITAR has a comparative advantage. The Executive Director briefed the Board on the broad areas in which the Institute is undertaking research, including research on training methodologies, research on geospatial technologies and satellite imagery analysis and research related to mass communication through crowd sourcing. The Executive Director then invited the Director of Research, Mr. Francesco Pisano, to provide further details on the Institute's research activities.
13. Mr. Pisano briefed the Board on the Institute's research objectives, which were to add value through the testing of applications, the development of solutions and knowledge sharing; and to broker change by keeping the UN system exposed to and involved in technology and innovation. He then presented several initiatives under the Knowledge Systems Innovation Section and the UNITAR Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT), in addition to several programme areas managed under the department, including building capacities for Agenda 2030, resilience and risk reduction, and citizen cyber science in cooperation with the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) and the University of Geneva.
14. The Directors of UNRISD and UNIDIR provided an overview of their work and welcomed possibilities for strengthened partnership with UNITAR. The Director of UNRISD indicated that the recent adoption of Agenda 2030 presented new opportunities for collaboration, particularly given the UNITAR's focus on supporting the implementation of the SDGs and UNRISD's research programme on the social dimensions of sustainable development and the need for both institutes to work closely with UNDG at the country level.
15. The importance of identifying possible collaborative initiatives in the early stages of planning and budgeting was mentioned, and trustees commended Management for having invited the representatives from the other research and training institutes. Several suggestions were made, including engaging in some sort of collective initiative, better articulating research in the strategic framework and planning documents, enhancing cooperation with the regional commissions, and designing cooperation around research issues. Other observations included recognizing the commonality of the institutes in terms of considering examining how knowledge is applied and that cooperation with the research and training institutes could extend beyond UNITAR's programming dimensions.
16. The Executive Director emphasized the fundamental link between research and training, and noted that training works only if it is demand driven. He also recognized the small size of UNITAR and stated that it was not possible for UNITAR to be the repository of all required expertise given the wealth of issues on national and international agendas. It was important, in his view, that UNITAR could convert knowledge and expertise into effective training with sound methodology. **The Board took note of the presentation on research and the observations made, welcomed the engagement at the session with the other research and training institutes and recommended that such engagement and exchanges continue at future sessions.**
17. Under item 6, Proposed revision to the 2014-2017 Strategic Framework, the Chair recalled that the Board approved the 2014-2017 Strategic Framework at its Fifty-fourth Session, and that the framework covers two budget cycles and includes a set of five high-level programme and functional objectives. The Executive Director recalled discussions that Agenda 2030 should be the organizing work for UNITAR and mentioned that in the immediate term, Management proposed to add a sixth high-level programme objective area to the framework, although he felt that further work would need to be undertaken for a more comprehensive alignment between the Institute's strategy and Agenda 2030, perhaps by the next session.
18. The Board agreed on the proposal to add a sixth high-level programme objective area, with several members questioning if there would be sufficient time to produce an entirely new framework by the next session and suggesting that it may be better to produce a prototype

after which a more comprehensive strategy could be developed for the subsequent budget cycle beginning in 2018. **The Board approved the proposed revision of the 2014-2017 Strategic Framework with the inclusion of a sixth high-level programme objective related to building capacities for the 2030 Agenda and took note of management's plans to produce a prototype of a new framework for future consideration by the Board.**

19. Under item 7, Finance and budget, the Chair invited the Finance Committee Chair to introduce the Report of the Eighth Session of the Finance Committee (UNITAR/BT/FC/8/2). In introducing the report, the Finance Committee Chair recognized the support received from the Executive Director, the secretariat and the other committee member, Mr. Alexandre Fasel, and encouraged other trustees to join the committee.
20. Under item 7a, Financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2014, the Finance Committee Chair indicated that committee discussed the sub-item in tandem with sub-item 7i, Update on the 2015 external audit. The Finance Committee Chair summarized the report, including the favourable conclusion of the audit exercise, the soundness of the overall financial position of the Institute, and the report's unqualified nature. One member, recognizing the overall financial situation of the Institute, suggested that Management explore ways and means to mobilize financial resources, including resources from the private sector. **The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee, the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2014 and the Report of the Board of Auditors.**
21. Under item 7b, Report on the application of the cost recovery approach, the Chair recalled that the cost recovery approach is an item that is regularly discussed by the Board and reported that the implementation of the approach has not had any visible implications with regard to resource mobilization. The Finance Committee Chair noted that the committee had discussed exceptions to the approach, and that it recommended that any exception be well documented and justified. The Finance Committee Chair made reference to the updated information provided by the secretariat on amounts recovered in 2015, noting that the amount is less than what was recovered for the same period in 2014. The Executive Director indicated that this was largely due to the implementation of Umoja, as some UNITAR partner agencies have been affected by the Umoja migration process and consequently have had to delay payments. The Executive Director was confident that by December the situation would be remedied. **The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and Management's report on the application of the cost recovery approach.**
22. Under item 7c, Report on consultations with the Global Environment Facility executing agencies on cost recovery, the Finance Committee Chair recalled the importance of the GEF as a donor and the Board's past discussions on the cost recovery matter. The Finance Committee Chair summarized the request made by Management to amend the approach with an exception for GEF-funded projects (i.e. PSC at 7 per cent and DSC at 2 per cent), including the recommendation for establishing a minimum project budget threshold for such exceptions. He indicated that the committee recommended a GEF exception as proposed. **The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and agreed to amend the cost recovery policy to account for a reduced direct service cost rate at 2 per cent (in addition to the 7 per cent indirect support rate) for GEF-funded projects under consideration and moving forward, and applicable initially to projects budgeted at \$1 million and above. The Board requested management to report to the Board at its Fifty-seventh Session.**
23. Under item 7d, Funding for independent evaluation, the Finance Committee Chair recalled the Board's recommendation at its Fifty-fifth Session that Management prioritize identifying funding for independent evaluation in 2015 and indicated that the committee had discussed actions that Management had undertaken, such as increasing the activity budget of the Planning, Performance and Results Section; recruiting a junior professional officer to be funded by Germany; and reviewing the current Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Framework to consider mandating independent evaluations at a certain budgetary threshold. Management invited trustees to provide any comments on the framework as a follow-up to the session. **The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and Management's follow-up on the Board's recommendation to prioritize the identification of funding for independent evaluation, welcomed the increase reflected in the budget and the**

contribution from Germany to fund a junior professional officer and took note that the Institute's evaluation policy framework is undergoing review and that a proposed revision will be submitted to the Board at the Fifty-seventh Session.

24. Under item 7e, Independent functional analysis of UNITAR staffing and structure, the Finance Committee Chair recalled the Board's decision at its Fifty-fifth Session for Management to commission an independent functional analysis prior to submitting the proposed Programme Budget for the Biennium 2016-2017. He indicated that the committee considered that it would be reasonable for Management to postpone the functional analysis taking into consideration the recent change in UNITAR leadership. **The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and agreed to postpone the independent functional analysis of UNITAR staffing and structure pending the submission of a proposed revision to the Programme Budget for the Biennium 2016-2017 at the Fifty-seventh Session.**
25. Under item 7f, Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, the Finance Committee Chair noted that the Advisory Committee report (AC/1920) was both balanced and positive. He noted several of the committee's comments, including the Board of Auditors' recommendation concerning the timely closure of projects and settlement of refunds to donors and that UNITAR had put into place a system to ensure the timely financial closure of projects, the recommendation for the proposed changes in the post requirements and the need to clarify the need for the posts which have been frozen for several years. **The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and the Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.**
26. Under item 7g, Proposed Revision to the Programme Budget for the Biennium 2016-2017, the Finance Committee Chair informed the Board that the committee welcomed the addition of the sixth high level programme area on supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the initial work done during the present biennium. He also noted the committee's request for Management to update the income expectations for the current biennium, and noted the update provided by the Executive Director on his recent mission to Algeria as well as his expectations that the expected level of funding would be maintained following consultations with other donors. The Finance Committee Chair informed the Board of its recommendation that the Board take note and adopt the proposed budget for the biennium. **The Board welcomed the Report of the Finance Committee and adopted the Programme Budget for the Biennium 2016-2017 as proposed.**
27. Under item 7h, Migration to Atlas, the Finance Committee Chair recalled the Board's decision at the Fifty-fifth Session to migrate to Atlas as opposed to Umoja and that Management had reported that the migration was successfully implemented in July 2015 and is running smoothly. He briefed the Board on its discussions, including matters related to the payment of arrears to the United Nations Office at Geneva, resource requirements for the system's operations and unexpected challenges with the Atlas migration. In response to a query whether the decision to migrate to Atlas had received any adverse reaction from New York or other sources, the Executive Director indicated that he did not know of any particular issue and that Management felt that the flexibility with Atlas translated to the right system for UNITAR. He acknowledged that any transition does not go without challenges particularly considering that with Atlas, Management would be processing financial transactions in-house. In response to another query on whether Atlas would post any challenges working with other research entities using Umoja, the Executive Director indicated that it should not matter. The Executive Director confirmed that the certification of UNITAR accounts would continue to be done by United Nations Controller on the basis of Atlas. **The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee, welcomed the reduction in costs with the migration to Atlas, recommended that the Board continue to monitor the implementation of Atlas and requested Management to report to the Board at the Fifty-seventh Session.**

Under item 7j, Internal audit, the Finance Committee Chair recalled the Board's decision at its Fifty-fifth Session that an internal audit exercise would need to be undertaken in 2015 and briefed the Board on exchanges with the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), emphasizing that the internal audit should avoid duplication with the external audit exercise, that the internal audit should be a zero cost, that any unexpected costs arising from the exercise should be communicated to Management prior to OIOS incurring such costs, and that the committee should be consulted on the final terms of reference of the audit. The

Finance Committee Chair also informed the Board that the committee recommended that an audit sub-committee be established under it. With regard to the Board's rules of procedure, the Finance Committee Chair indicated that the committee discussed rule 28bis which at present requires the Finance Committee to approve the terms of reference of the services performed by OIOS. He reported that the committee considered that it was not its role to approve the terms of reference (TOR), but rather to be informed of the TOR and the audit's work plan. **The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and the terms of reference of the internal audit on project management. The Board amended rule 28bis of its rules of procedure to read as follows: "The Board through the Committee on Finance shall be consulted on the terms of reference for the internal audit services provided by the Office of Internal Oversight Services."**

28. Under item 7k, Proposed revolving fund from non-earmarked reserves, the Finance Committee Chair recognized the positive development in the increase of non-earmarked reserves over the past several years and noted Management's proposal to create a revolving fund from non-earmarked reserves that would enable the Executive Director to lend funds in exceptional circumstances to special purpose grant projects with certain conditions. He informed the Board that the committee had agreed to the proposal.
29. The Board expressed appreciation to the committee for the care that it had given to the matter and noted that the proposal was sound given the precautions and safeguards in place. It was suggested that ceiling be established so that no single project would receive more than \$250,000. In response to one query, the Executive Director indicated that the period of time for reimbursement of borrowed funds was not discussed by the committee but that he expected that funds would be returned within six to eight months. **The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and agreed on the establishment of a revolving fund of \$1 million that would be ring-fenced from non-earmarked reserves in the General Fund and used by the Executive Director to lend funds to projects under the following conditions:**
- a. **An agreement has been signed with a donor, a formal pledge letter has been received from a donor, or there is a very strong, established track record of funding the project/activity in question by the donor and that a verbal commitment by the donor has been made;**
 - b. **Circumstances preclude the rescheduling of the activity/activities to a later date pending the arrival of funds;**
 - c. **The funds to be used temporarily from the ring-fenced fund have been budgeted / included in a project cost plan and will be reimbursed to the revolving fund;**
 - d. **No single project would receive more than \$250,000; and**
 - e. **The temporary use of funds from the revolving fund would not endanger the financial sustainability of the operations of the Institute.**
30. Under item 7l, "Policy Guidelines for Agreements with Financial Implications", the Finance Committee Chair drew the Board's attention to the proposed guidelines under Annex 8 of the Board's documentation and noted the purpose of the guidelines to ensure consistency and clarity with agreements having financial implications, both for funds received from donors and for grants disbursed to implementing partners. On the proposed guidelines for the receipt of voluntary contributions, the Finance Committee Chair noted the committee's discussions regarding the need to have flexibility with regard to any deviation between actual and budgeted costs of earmarked projects, and that there was need to have clarity with the donor at the time of signing agreements. He indicated that the committee recommended that the Board take note of its discussions and for Management to determine on a case by case basis the maximum level of deviation permitted between actual and budgeted costs without a formal amendment or an exchange of letters. He also indicated that the committee recommended that the permitted level of deviation be agreed with the donor at the time of signing an agreement or receiving a pledge, and that the Board approve the proposed policy guidelines for agreements with financial implications with this revision.
31. Clarification was requested whether agreement with a donor is a requirement. The Board discussed the matter at length with a view to ensuring that as much flexibility as possible would apply. The Finance Committee Chair indicated that some donors may not have any particular preference, and that it should be the authority of the Executive Director to have the flexibility on the judgment and that this be discussed with the donor. The Executive Director

understood the recommendation as flexibility unless otherwise determined by the donor. **The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and approved the Policy Guidelines for Agreements with Financial Implications, with the provision that Management may agree with donors on a case by case project basis on the maximum level of deviation permitted between actual and budgeted costs.**

32. Under item 8, Programme planning and performance, the Chair announced that there were three sub-items. Under item 8a, 2014 Results Report, key performance indicators and the 2015 Report of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council, the Executive Director reviewed the positive output figures for 2014, with more than 36,000 individuals benefitting from training and knowledge sharing related events, with the majority of beneficiaries coming from developing countries. The Executive Director noted the gender imbalance of the training-related beneficiaries and the reasons due primarily to the increase in peacekeeping related personnel from Africa. He mentioned that UNITAR is working to increase its role in gender equality and empowerment of women and in this context has had consultations with some Member States and UN agencies on organizing training targeting women delegates prior to major international conferences in Geneva. The Executive Director also confirmed that some 95 per cent of respondents from training events expressed satisfaction with UNITAR training services, and a large majority of respondents sampled confirmed application of skills and knowledge as a follow-up to the training. He also drew the Board's attention to the key performance indicators and indicated that Management would be reviewing the indicators in order to include additional information on the extent to which UNITAR training services are reaching the furthest first in connection with the priorities and guiding principles of Agenda 2030. Finally, the Executive Director made reference to the 2015 Report of the Secretary-General and the support received from Member States when the report was presented to ECOSOC in June 2015.
33. The Board congratulated Management on the quality of the reports and it was suggested that UNITAR disaggregate all data by gender. In making reference to the quantity of beneficiary outputs, a suggestion was made for Management to better articulate the results from the different research-related functions, including research performed on knowledge related services. Acknowledging that UNITAR is donor funded, it was suggested that Management consider ways to increase outreach to regions such as Latin America and the Caribbean where the proportion of beneficiaries was reportedly smaller in comparison to the other regions. Trustees expressed encouragement that UNITAR is taking steps to improve gender balance and congratulated the outgoing Executive Director and the UNITAR staff for undertaking the strategic change process as recognized in the Report of the Secretary-General. Finally, it was recommended that Management identify relevant KPIs related to monitoring and reporting UNITAR performance on supporting the implementation of 2030 Agenda. **The Board took note of its observations on the 2014 Results Report, the 2014 key performance indicators and the 2015 Report of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council.**
34. Under item 8a, 2014 Quality Assurance Report, the Chair made reference to the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for learning-related events that UNITAR established in 2012. The Executive Director underscored that quality assurance and evaluation are key pillars on which UNITAR programming can grow, recognizing that donors need assurances that results are delivered effectively and efficiency. The Executive Director requested the Chair of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) to introduce the report. The QAC Chair indicated that the purpose of the framework is to validate quality and serve as a tool for organizational learning and quality improvement. He mentioned that the framework is serving its purpose, although the rate of the framework's application needed to be improved. He indicated that the QAC had undertaken eight independent peer reviews of self-assessments in 2014 and issued 40 some recommendations. With a view to addressing the low application rate of the framework, the QAC Chair indicated that the committee was planning to undertake an assessment of the framework in early 2016 and discuss measures to strengthen its application.
35. Trustees praised Management on the framework. The importance of ensuring that mechanisms of this type are in place given UNITAR's voluntary-funded nature was recognized. The need to strengthen the framework was noted, in addition to the observation that the framework was of value not only to UNITAR but also to other organizations providing training. In response to two observations related to programme evaluation, the Executive

Director noted that the matter was discussed in more detail under item 7d, Funding for independent evaluation. The QAC Chair added that in addition to the QAF, UNITAR also participates on a voluntary basis in a more robust external quality assurance scheme for e-Learning programming. He also noted that the QAC had discussed possibilities to export its framework in the form of providing 'horizontal training services' to entities on a request basis and that in 2015 it had piloted one such collaboration in 2015. While the collaboration was positive, he indicated that the matter needed to be discussed further since the framework's underlying purpose was to serve as a validation and learning tool for UNITAR programming. **The Board took note of its observations on the 2014 Quality Assurance Report.**

36. Under item 8c, Programming highlights, the Chair made reference to three programming areas that Management wishes to highlight, including the International Network of Affiliated Training Centres for Local Actors (CIFAL), the Executive Diploma in Diplomatic Practice and the Agenda 2030 Programme Strategy. The Executive Director briefed the Board on the CIFAL network, which brings together local government, sometimes in association with universities and other local actors, with centres located on all continents. He indicated that the resources of the centres are raised locally, with fees paid to UNITAR for coordination and other support services. The Executive Director emphasized the importance of the network since much of the work required to implement Agenda 2030 would need to be undertaken locally.
37. The Board expressed satisfaction with the network and highlighted the importance of the Institute's engagement with local governments, citing road safety as one example in which UNITAR programming would necessarily need to work closely with local government. In response to one question related to the interface between the Institute and the centres, the Executive Director noted the administrative circular in the Board's documentation describing the services that Management performs and reported that the centres found the interaction with UNITAR as highly satisfactory.
38. The Manager of the Multilateral Diplomacy Programme briefed the Board on the Executive Diploma in Diplomatic Practice that was launched in 2015. The diploma programme forms part of the Institute's programming targeting the diplomatic communities of the United Nations and consists of a series of core diplomatic training events coupled with a research assignment. The Manager noted that 17 participants were enrolled in the diploma in 2015, and that Management intends to launch a similar diploma programme in New York and possibly Vienna.
39. The importance of multilateralism was underscored and a suggestion was made that UNITAR may wish to consider replicating the programme at all multilateral venues of the United Nations, given the need to respond to gaps in skills and knowledge of many country delegations. In response to a question on approaching diplomatic academies, the Manager indicated the Institute regularly reaches out to diplomatic academies, citing plans to develop a Masters degree programme with the University of Geneva on the United Nations system and European institutions. The Executive Director underscored the importance of extending the diploma programme as there was a clear need to support the diplomatic communities at other multilateral venues.
40. The Director of Research briefed the Board on the Institute's Agenda 2030 programme strategy and mentioned that the strategy builds on the first phase of activities designed to support the Post-2015 development process through a series of briefings targeting diplomats in Geneva and New York, and the second phase on the development of training packages for use at the country level. Looking forward, the Director of Research indicated that the Institute would provide guidance on mainstreaming the agenda in each country, develop training packages on statistics and data in close cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, roll-out a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on the agenda to diverse stakeholders, and develop in-depth training programmes on a goal-by-goal basis, accompanied with on-request customized training at the country level.
41. The usefulness of the briefings in phase I in terms of bringing delegations to the same level of knowledge on the Post-2015 process was acknowledged. In response to one query, the Executive Director emphasized that the Institute's focus would be on training and converting

the domain knowledge on issues into training programmes. He acknowledged that at least initially, the demands would be very different from country to country and from region to region, and success would be based on how well UNITAR would be able to respond to demand. **The Board welcomed the presentations and acknowledged the work of the Institute on the International Network of Affiliated Centres for Local Actors, the Executive Diploma in Diplomatic Practice and the Agenda 2030 Programme Strategy.**

42. Under item 9, Finance Committee elections, the Chair announced that the term on the Board of one of the Committee's members had expired at the end of 2014 and that it would be desirable for at least two members to be elected. **The Board elected Mr. Vijay Nambiar and Ms. Kathleen Cravero-Kristerofferossion to the Finance Committee.**
43. Under item 10, Adoption of the report and setting of the dates of the Fifty-seventh Session, **the Board agreed to adopt the report of the Conclusions and Recommendations of the Fifty-sixth Session as a follow-up to the session and on the basis of a draft report to be circulated to members for their endorsement. The Board approved the key recommendations and conclusions as attached as Annex I. The Board agreed that the Fifty-seventh Session shall take place from 17 to 18 November 2016 and that Management would announce the venue in due time.**
44. The Chair recognized the dedication and commitment of two trustees, Ambassador U. Joy Ogwu and Professor Alfredo Valladão, who would be completing their respective terms at the end of the 2015. The Chair and the Executive Director expressed much appreciation to all members for their participation in the session.
45. The session was adjourned.

Annex I

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

Item 5, Follow-up from the Fifty-fifth Session

Item 5a, Status update on opportunities for collaborative initiatives with outside partners

The Board took note of its observations and commended Management for the development of recent partnerships further to the Board's recommendation at the Fifty-fifth Session.

Item 5b, Enhancing partnerships with research entities

The Board took note of the presentation on research and the observations made, welcomed the engagement at the session with the other research and training institutes and recommended that such engagement and exchanges continue at future sessions.

Item 6, Proposed revision of the 2014-2017 Strategic Framework

The Board approved the proposed revision of the 2014-2017 Strategic Framework with the inclusion of a sixth high-level programme objective related to building capacities for the 2030 Agenda and took note of Management's plans to produce a prototype of a new framework for future consideration by the Board.

Item 7, Finance and budget

Items 7a and 7i, financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2014 and Report of the Board of Auditors

The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee, the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2014 and the Report of the Board of Auditors.

Item 7b, 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.

Item 7c, Report on consultations with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) executing agencies on cost recovery for GEF financed projects

The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and agreed to amend the cost recovery policy to account for a reduced direct service cost rate at 2 per cent (in addition to the 7 per cent indirect support rate) for GEF-funded projects under consideration and moving forward, and applicable initially to projects budgeted at \$1 million and above. The Board requested management to report to the Board at its Fifty-seventh Session.

Item 7d, Funding for independent evaluation

The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and Management's follow-up on the Board's recommendation to prioritize the identification of funding for independent evaluation, welcomed the increase reflected in the budget and the contribution from Germany to fund a junior professional officer and took note that the Institute's evaluation policy framework is undergoing review and that a proposed revision will be submitted to the Board at the Fifty-seventh Session.

Item 7e, Independent functional analysis of UNITAR staffing and structure

The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and agreed to postpone the independent functional analysis of UNITAR staffing and structure pending the submission of a proposed revision to the Programme Budget for the Biennium 2016-2017 at the Fifty-seventh Session.

Item 7f, Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and the Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

Item 7g, Proposed Programme Budget for the Biennium 2016-2017

The Board welcomed the Report of the Finance Committee and adopted the Programme Budget for the Biennium 2016-2017 as proposed.

Item 7h, Migration to Atlas

The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee, welcomed the reduction in costs with the migration to Atlas, recommended that the Board continue to monitor the implementation of Atlas and requested Management to report to the Board at the Fifty-seventh Session.

Item 7j, Internal audit

The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and the terms of reference of the internal audit on project management.

The Board amended rule 28bis of its rules of procedure to read as follows: "The Board through the Committee on Finance shall be consulted on the terms of reference for the internal audit services provided by the Office of Internal Oversight Services."

Item 7k, Proposed revolving fund from non-earmarked reserves

The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and agreed on the establishment of a revolving fund of \$1 million that would be ring-fenced from non-earmarked reserves in the General Fund and used by the Executive Director to lend funds to projects under the following conditions:

- a. An agreement has been signed with a donor, a formal pledge letter has been received from a donor, or there is a very strong, established track record of funding the project/activity in question by the donor and that a verbal commitment by the donor has been made;
- b. Circumstances preclude the rescheduling of the activity/activities to a later date pending the arrival of funds;
- c. The funds to be used temporarily from the ring-fenced fund have been budgeted / included in a project cost plan and will be reimbursed to the revolving fund;
- d. No single project would receive more than \$250,000; and
- e. The temporary use of funds from the revolving fund would not endanger the financial sustainability of the operations of the Institute.

Item 7l, Policy Guidelines for Agreements with Financial Implications

The Board took note of the Report of the Finance Committee and approved the Policy Guidelines for Agreements with Financial Implications, with the provision that Management may agree with donors on a case by case project basis on the maximum level of deviation permitted between actual and budgeted costs.

Item 8, Programming and Performance**Item 8a, 2014 Results Report, key performance indicators and 2015 Report of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council**

The Board took note of its observations on the 2014 Results Report, the 2014 key performance indicators and the 2015 Report of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council.

Item 8b, Quality Assurance Report

The Board took note of its observations on the 2014 Quality Assurance Report.

Item 8c, Programme highlights

The Board welcomed the presentations and acknowledged the work of the Institute on the International Network of Affiliated Centres for Local Actors, the Executive Diploma in Diplomatic Practice and the 2030 Agenda Implementation Strategy.