General Assembly

Fiftieth session
Agenda item 99 (a)

TRAINING AND RESEARCH: UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR
TRAINING AND RESEARCH

Report of the Secretary-General

1.   At its fiftieth session, the General Assembly considered matters pertaining to the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). In adopting resolution 50/121, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General duly taking into account the deliberations of the Board of Trustees, to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session on possible ways to strengthen the training activities of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and to better define its role. This report is submitted in response to that request.

2.   The Secretary-General wishes to recall his often expressed view that training represents a valuable investment in the future of the Organization. This applies to programmes geared to meeting the training requirements of Member States, as well as to those of United Nations system staff, which also ultimately aim at responding to Member States' needs by enhancing the capacity of the system to meet effectively the evolving demands of the membership. With these considerations in mind, and taking into account the invitation to UNITAR contained in General Assembly resolution 50/121 to "further develop its cooperation with United Nations institutes and other national, regional and international institutes", the Secretary-General's response to this resolution has focused in the past several months on identifying, and building on, commonalities of need and approach in the delivery of training programmes for Member States as well as United Nations staff that would serve to enhance their coordination and meet overall requirements in the most cost-effective way possible.

3.   In this regard, the Secretary-General has ensured that the United Nations Staff College (UNSC) project is a system-wide venture, developed with intensive input from United Nations system organizations and a number of Member States. The project has received the support of the Executive Heads of the United

Nations system of organizations in the context of the Administrative Committee
on Coordination and its CCAQ's subsidiary body on system-wide training
activities. The Secretary-General envisages that the training activities of
both UNITAR and the United Nations system-wide Staff College project would
benefit from association, in terms of yielding mutual benefits in strengthening
and rationalizing respective curriculum development in areas and disciplines of
shared interest and activity. Such association would also enhance the
cost-effectiveness of programme development and delivery, and have the added
benefit of avoiding "donor fatigue" when approaching contributing governmental
and non-governmental organizations. In this regard, it is noted that the United
Nations Staff College project is funded in its entirety by extrabudgetary
resources. Moreover, joint training and learning opportunities for government
representatives and United Nations system staff will go far in building
operational partnerships for more effective action in areas of shared concern.
Programme content would reflect matters of shared interest, while adjusting to
meet the specific needs of respective target programme participants. Designed
with these goals in mind, joint training and learning opportunities for
government representatives and United Nations system staff in areas of common
interest can only contribute to enhancing overall operational effectiveness and
responsiveness.

4.   In its report entitled "Feasibility study on the relocation of UNITAR to
the Turin Centre", the Joint Inspection Unit notes, inter alia, that "there is a
general consensus on the need to find concrete and implementable ways to
coordinate the United Nations system training activities in order to use
resources more rationally, avoid duplication and overlap, and consolidate
activities to the extent possible. There also appears to be general agreement
to tackle this question in a comprehensive manner and not to follow a piecemeal
approach. The Secretary-General's efforts to find a comprehensive and lasting
solution for a better coordination and a potential regrouping of the United
Nations system training activities is a key element in this regard. Therefore,
the United Nations Staff College Project (UNSCP) should be regarded as part of
these efforts". 1/

5.   To this end, the Secretary-General has actively pursued over the past year
all possible avenues for increased cooperation between UNITAR and UNSC,
including participation by UNITAR in UNSC curriculum development workshops.
Priority areas identified for such cooperation include: peacekeeping and
peacemaking; the provision of humanitarian assistance and management of complex
emergencies; and the management of development activities. The Secretary-
General notes with appreciation the recognition of the UNITAR Board of Trustees
of the importance of this initiative and its instruction to its Acting Executive
Director "to strengthen cooperation with the Turin Centre and with the Staff
College project, taking into account present resources and activities ..." 2/

6.   At a time when resources are scarce and the system is increasingly called
upon to assume new or different tasks in response to the evolving needs of the
Member States, it is important that optimal use is made of all available
resources and facilities. Moreover, it is considered that the United Nations
Staff College project offers the opportunity to take optimum advantage of the
system-wide capacities and facilities available at the ILO Training Centre in
Turin, in strengthening United Nations system capacity in bringing together

governmental, non-governmental and United Nations system partners in effective training and learning opportunities.

Notes

1/   JIU/REP/96/6.

2/   Conclusions and recommendations of the Special Session of the Board of Trustees, United Nations Institute for Training and Research, Geneva, 2-4 September 1996, para. 16 (e).