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## **United Nations Institute for Training and Research**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### *Summary*

The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) develops the capacities of individuals, institutions and organizations in countries and among other United Nations stakeholders through high-quality learning solutions and related knowledge products and services to enhance decision-making and support country-level action for overcoming global, national and local challenges. The Institute also engages in training-related research and advisory services to support Governments, the United Nations and other partners in the achievement of broader social and economic outcomes.

Under its 2018–2021 strategic framework, the Institute’s programme of work is guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the outcomes of other major conferences held in 2015. The results of the implementation of the strategic framework during the first two years of the quadrennium are highly encouraging, with the Institute having provided learning, training and related knowledge-sharing services to 218,322 individuals. The number of learning-related beneficiaries was also the highest ever, reaching 153,279 participants, or 70 per cent of all beneficiaries. Given the cross-cutting nature of training, the Institute’s contribution to helping Member States implement the 2030 Agenda spans many of the Sustainable Development Goals. In late 2019, UNITAR integrated the Defeat Non-communicable Diseases Partnership through a hosting arrangement, and through the Partnership contributes to helping low-income countries reduce the incidence and impact of non-communicable diseases.

In accordance with the 2030 Agenda principles of leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first, UNITAR continues to focus attention on developing the capacities of some 93 countries in special situations. In terms of geographical regions, Africa, where the largest number of distressed countries are located, continues to account for most of the Institute’s learners. Gender issues feature prominently in the priorities of the strategic framework, which include achieving gender parity among



beneficiaries by 2021. In 2020, UNITAR significantly improved its outreach to female beneficiaries and reversed the male-female gender imbalances seen in previous years.

The Institute's financial situation continues to be one of stability and growth. Total income for the biennium 2018–2019 was \$64.5 million, representing a 25 per cent increase over the 2016–2017 figure of \$51.6 million. The Strategic Framework Fund established by the Board of Trustees continues to support programming in strategic areas that contribute to helping Member States achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly with respect to beneficiaries located in the most distressed countries, although the Fund has not grown as quickly as anticipated and more support is needed.

The Secretary-General recommends that Member States request UNITAR to continue to ensure the alignment of its programming with the 2030 Agenda and to continue to grow its programming and beneficiary outreach.

It is also recommended that Member States and other stakeholders, including relevant United Nations system entities, strengthen partnerships with the Institute and provide their full support to enable the Institute and the Defeat Non-communicable Diseases Partnership to continue their efforts to meet national capacity-building, learning and other needs, and that they consider providing financial support to the Strategic Framework Fund to enable increased outreach to beneficiaries from countries in special situations.

It is further recommended that Member States recognize the Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT) as the United Nations satellite centre, with a mandate to provide United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies with satellite analysis, training and capacity development, at their request, as well as to continue supporting Member States with satellite imagery analysis over their respective territories and to provide training and capacity development in the use of geospatial information technologies, on the basis of voluntary contributions.

## I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) is a dedicated training arm of the United Nations. With the aim of strengthening the effectiveness of the Organization, the Institute's mission is to develop the capacities of individuals, institutions and organizations in countries and among other United Nations stakeholders through high-quality learning solutions and related knowledge products and services to enhance decision-making and to support country-level action for overcoming global challenges. The Institute also engages in training-related research and advisory services to support Governments, the United Nations and other partners in the achievement of broader social and economic outcomes, such as strengthened multi-stakeholder engagement, early ratification and implementation of environmental agreements, enhanced coordination of relief by humanitarian agencies in the wake of natural disasters and, as of 2019, expanded universal health coverage to combat non-communicable diseases through the hosting of the Defeat Non-communicable Diseases Partnership and reduced inequality in access to emergency and essential surgical care through the Global Surgery initiative.

2. Under its 2018–2021 strategic framework, the Institute's programme of work continues to be guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the outcomes of other major conferences of 2015, including the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. The Institute's strategic direction is also inspired by the call of the Secretary-General, contained in his report on the repositioning the United Nations development system (A/72/124–E/2018/3), for United Nations entities to be the best providers in their domain, to follow integrated approaches, to be responsive to the differentiated demands of Member States, to deliver as one in partnership with other United Nations entities and to be nimble and results-driven. Section II of the present report presents an overview of achievements to date under the 2018–2021 strategic framework, provides a brief review of responses and initiatives concerning the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis, which has had an impact on how UNITAR delivers, and illustrates how training is an integral part of responding to the pandemic.

3. Section III covers the broader planning cycle and provides an overview of the Institute's work streams under the four pillars of the strategic framework, peace, people, planet and prosperity, and its cross-cutting programme pillars, as well as the Defeat Non-communicable Diseases Partnership. It highlights various initiatives that UNITAR delivered in 2019 and 2020, including areas referred to in Economic and Social Council resolution 2019/13, in such areas as diplomatic training, mainstreaming a gender perspective and women's leadership, indigenous peoples, and the use of geospatial technologies in the field of disaster risk reduction.

4. Section IV addresses the financial situation of the Institute, which is characterized by stability and growth. Lastly, in section V, the report concludes with three recommendations: (a) that Member States request UNITAR to continue to ensure the alignment of its programming with the 2030 Agenda and to continue to grow its programming and beneficiary outreach; (b) that Member States and other stakeholders, including relevant United Nations entities, strengthen partnerships with the Institute and provide their full support to enable the Institute and the Defeat Non-communicable Diseases Partnership to continue their efforts to meet national capacity-building, learning and other needs, and that they consider providing financial support to the Strategic Framework Fund to enable increased outreach to beneficiaries from countries in special situations; and (c) that Member States recognize the Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT) as the United

Nations satellite centre, with a mandate to provide United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies with satellite analysis, training and capacity development, at their request, as well as to continue supporting Member States with satellite imagery analysis over their respective territories and to provide training and capacity development in the use of geospatial information technologies, on the basis of voluntary contributions.

## **II. Effect of the pandemic on training, and the response of the Institute**

5. The COVID-19 pandemic has severely disrupted the world for more than a year, causing economic and social upheavals, in addition to the health issues, suffering and loss that so many people around the world have had to endure. As with most organizations, the work of UNITAR was affected by COVID-19 in early 2020, as much of its programming is delivered in the field. By leveraging its virtual learning environment and other available information technology tools, UNITAR was able to maintain business continuity by converting a large number of planned in-person training activities to be delivered online. In 2020, 77 per cent of its 896 events were delivered online, as compared with 38 per cent in 2019. UNITAR also succeeded in adapting other operating modalities for programmes, such as utilizing an increased number of in-country consultants and other experts, while ensuring their welfare. Consequently, by the end of 2020, very few projects or activities had had to be cancelled.

6. In addition to ensuring business continuity with regard to planned programmes, UNITAR broadened its portfolio to increase awareness and develop knowledge of matters related to the COVID-19 crisis. During 2020, at least 59 unprogrammed training activities dealt with some dimension of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the Institute's Division for Peace published an information package on COVID-19 preparedness and response in places of detention, in cooperation with the Department of Peace Operations and the Swedish Prison and Probation Service. In conjunction with its road safety initiative, the Division for People and Social Inclusion developed an e-learning course on good practices and precautions as part of COVID-19 preparedness and response. In the field of health, the Defeat Non-communicable Diseases Partnership, in cooperation with the Rwanda Biomedical Centre, joined internationally renowned health professionals in an event to exchange information with 275 clinicians from Rwanda on treatment guidelines and protocols, emerging trends, the latest research and practical insights emanating from their own experiences in mitigating COVID-19 in France, India, New Zealand, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. At the request of South Africa, UNITAR also led the development of a COVID-19 tracking tool that allows the Government to track symptomatic patients and then identify potential hotspots, thereby allowing health agencies to target their limited resources more effectively.

7. The COVID-19 pandemic also highlighted that efforts to deal with non-communicable diseases should be a priority and should be allocated resources in emergency response plans for other pandemics or wider crises. In Rwanda, the Defeat Non-communicable Diseases Partnership worked with the Ministry of Health to ensure that patients with non-communicable diseases were prioritized for the COVID-19 vaccine. In webinars with the ministries of health of Bhutan, Ecuador, Gambia and Nepal, the Partnership advocated an integrated approach towards COVID-19 responses and non-communicable disease screening and care.

### III. Implementation of the 2018–2021 strategic framework

8. In 2019, an initial report on the work of UNITAR during the first year of the strategic framework was issued (E/2019/81). By end of the biennium 2018–2019, UNITAR had reached over 218,322 beneficiaries from virtually all Members States, with 153,279 individuals (70 per cent) benefitting from its learning services. This represented the largest outreach for any two-year budget cycle in the Institute's history and the fourth consecutive year in which the annual benchmark of 50,000 beneficiaries was surpassed.

9. In addition to training for individuals, UNITAR produced products and services, the most noteworthy being the rapid mapping imagery produced and analysis undertaken by UNOSAT, the operational, technology-intensive programme of the Institute that is focused on satellite and geographic information system (GIS) mapping and analysis. Over the course of the biennium 2018–2019, 639 satellite imagery-derived maps and reports were produced to support the international humanitarian community, covering both natural disasters and conflict situations, such as floods in Bangladesh, Mozambique and Myanmar; a tropical cyclone in Madagascar; an earthquake in Iraq; and the crises in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.

10. In early 2020, UNITAR commissioned an evaluation of the 2018–2021 strategic framework, covering the first two years of its implementation. The evaluation found that the strategic framework and its implementation are highly relevant in relation to responding to global challenges. As an autonomous United Nations entity, UNITAR is seen by donors and partners as having a clear point of difference in the training sector. While UNITAR does not have a field network, the evaluation found that it engages well in countries, particularly where there are strong partnerships with other institutions, and feedback on the Institute's effectiveness in delivering results was uniformly high. While there has been a shift towards larger, multi-year programmes, the Institute still relies heavily on smaller-scale activities as its mainstay of programming. Small-scale events are generally successful. The results are wide-reaching and more evident when such events support efforts related to institutional strengthening and/or the training of trainers. Small-scale activities of limited duration and with limited funding are difficult to monitor and assess, as data are sparse. Nonetheless, the feedback received directly from participants during the evaluation indicates that the impact of the Institute's support may be more far-reaching than expected or reported to date.

11. The steady growth witnessed in the first two years of the strategic cycle accelerated considerably in 2020, with an increase in overall beneficiary outreach to 322,410 individuals, representing an increase of 142 per cent over the 2019 figure of 133,421. This increased outreach was achieved through the delivery of 896 events, covering some 12,173 event days. In 2020, 97 per cent of beneficiaries were associated with programming under the peace, people and planet pillars. The number of learning-related beneficiaries was also the highest ever, reaching 209,881 participants, or 65 per cent of all beneficiaries.

12. Approximately three quarters of the Institute's learners continue to come from developing countries. In accordance with the 2030 Agenda principles of leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first, UNITAR continues to focus its attention on developing knowledge, skills and other capacities from the 93 countries in special situations, including fragile States and those emerging from conflict, the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. The success of efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda is ultimately measured against the progress of countries in these situations, and the Institute's

outreach to beneficiaries in these countries continues to increase in absolute terms. In total, 83 per cent of learning-related beneficiaries are from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Middle East, and almost half represent non-State sectors such as non-governmental organizations, academia and private sector, while 10 per cent work for national, state or local governments.

13. Gender issues feature prominently in the strategic framework, with the objective of achieving gender parity among beneficiaries by 2021 (excluding military and police contingents in peacekeeping-related programming), in line with the system-wide strategy on gender parity. In 2020, UNITAR significantly improved its outreach to female learning beneficiaries and reversed the male-to-female gender ratio from previous years; 44 per cent were male and 51 per cent were female (5 per cent were recorded as other genders). The 2020–2021 programme budget includes five gender-specific results areas, and UNITAR remains committed to ensuring that planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting are gender-responsive. The Institute is also working to develop staff capacity in the field of gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment and to implement human resources policies that facilitate gender parity in staffing and create an enabling work environment. Data regarding UNITAR beneficiaries is disaggregated by country development status, gender, disability and age, at the recommendation of its Board of Trustees, since 2019. In 2020, 4,541 learners (or 2.2 per cent of all learners) attested to having a disability.

## A. Peace

14. Under the strategic framework's peace pillar, UNITAR continued to pursue programming aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 16, including activities aimed at strengthening capacities to effectively support social integration and peaceful coexistence and to negotiate and mediate mutually beneficial and lasting solutions. UNITAR has strengthened its high-level engagement activities with Member States, regional organizations and the United Nations. In this vein, the Institute facilitated three high-level events: the sixteenth annual seminar bringing together the special representatives, personal representatives and special envoys of the Secretary-General; the International Conference on Peace and Investment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region, which was focused on recent security improvements and new investment opportunities in the region; and the high-level seminar on peace and security. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the seminar was conducted virtually for the first time. UNITAR has also launched a new project for high-level knowledge-sharing.

15. With recent instability in some regions and countries in Africa, the UNITAR Training Programme in Conflict Prevention and Peacemaking for French-speaking Africa provided advanced training in conflict analysis, prevention and resolution to 31 mid- and senior-level female and male officials from offices of the President, ministries of foreign affairs, staff from the African Union, subregional organizations, United Nations and African Union peace missions across the continent, and civil society. Women comprised 52 per cent of the senior- and mid-level officials trained through that programme.

16. The Fellowship Programme in Peacemaking and Preventive Diplomacy is an intensive two-week programme attended each year by senior- and mid-level professional staff nominated by the substantive departments, peace missions and agencies of the United Nations, regional and subregional organizations, as well as diplomats from foreign ministries. In 2020, online methodologies were employed to maintain the interactive nature of the Fellowship Programme, which brought together 41 participants, including ambassadors, representatives of regional organizations,

United Nations Headquarters staff and peace mission staff working in conflict situations.

17. The Institute continues to run predeployment training for police and military personnel who are to be deployed to United Nations peace operations. In 2019–2020, UNITAR, in collaboration with the Global Peace Operations Initiative, trained 8,938 military personnel from eight African troop-contributing countries prior to their deployment. One of the Institute's largest projects is the predeployment training programme for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Implemented in close partnership with the Bamako-based Alioune Blondin Beye Peacekeeping School, the project harmonizes and standardizes the knowledge and skills of the formed police units concerning the delivery of their responsibilities and roles, in order to enable them to better support stabilization and contribute to creating conditions conducive to sustainable peace. The project's key beneficiary countries include Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal.

18. The physical and mental well-being of military and police personnel deployed to United Nations peace operations is key for their high performance in challenging settings. In 2020, UNITAR strengthened the knowledge, skills and behaviours of medical and paramedical personnel to enable them to effectively address physical and psychological trauma in a gender-responsive manner. The project targets military and police personnel deployed to the five highest-risk United Nations peacekeeping operations. UNITAR is also working to improve the safety and security of members of the Malian armed forces by strengthening the capabilities of specialized medical personnel to address the symptoms and consequences of combat stress reactions and post-traumatic stress disorder. The project fosters the establishment of a supportive work culture that responds positively to the challenges faced by personnel working in the field, in alignment with the security sector reform strategy adopted by Mali in 2017.

19. To strengthen the capacities of African women peacemakers, the Institute continued its partnership with the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa). UNITAR trained 35 newly accredited members of the Network on Preventive Diplomacy and Mediation. The programme builds upon the annual regional training programme for officials across the continent and is dedicated to enhancing opportunities for women and their contributions to peace efforts in Africa.

20. In Colombia, UNITAR continued to strengthen community-based reintegration processes, conflict resolution mechanisms and community resilience and reconciliation by supporting youth-led peace efforts. In close partnership with Ciudad Don Bosco and a large network of civil society organizations and educational institutions across Colombia, the Institute trained 67 master trainers and enhanced the capacities of 5,500 other beneficiaries in 56 communities between 2019 and 2020. Owing to the success of this training, UNITAR is now looking at scaling up this initiative to include other Latin American countries.

21. To reflect the new United Nations approach to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and the new challenges faced in current conflicts, UNITAR supports the Department of Peace Operations and the Office for Disarmament Affairs in building the capacities of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration practitioners to increase the effectiveness of arms control in such contexts. In addition to holding the annual training course on effective weapons and ammunition management, in 2020 UNITAR launched an online community of practice to connect weapons and ammunition management and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration practitioners with specialists and experts, so as to enable them to exchange resources,

best practices and lessons learned, as well as to create a learning reinforcement mechanism for participants.

22. UNITAR is collaborating with the World Bank in implementing the Institute's support programme for the African Union, with a focus on the intersecting fields of conflict prevention and crisis response, using early warning systems and activities related to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. The programme aims to leverage the collective existing capacities of the African Union and the United Nations at the headquarters level and transfer them into priority operational contexts, where the World Bank and its United Nations and African Union partners are currently engaging or deploying conflict prevention instruments.

23. Following the Global Refugee Forum in 2019, UNITAR became the secretariat of the Clean Energy Challenge of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which facilitates sector-wide systematic action to enable access to clean energy for displaced communities and the sustainable use of energy infrastructure for community services. In 2020 there was a rapid increase in the number of participants in the Challenge, from 30 to 250 stakeholders, and concrete progress was made on three workstreams of the challenge: data, financing and clean energy project development. UNITAR has also established an inter-agency task force, comprising UNHCR, the World Food Programme, the International Organization for Migration, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, on a long-term agreement to purchase electricity from a third-party renewable energy system.

24. To promote democratic governance and accountability among States members of the East African Community, UNITAR and the Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training of Kenya addressed the capacity gaps of legislative assemblies and civil society organizations in the region. The aim of the project is to use targeted training in Kenya, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania, which are serving as pilot countries, so as to equip the beneficiaries with the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes necessary for the implementation of their mandates with full respect for the rule of law and to create opportunities for different actors to work together for the promotion of democratic governance in the East Africa region. The project contributes to Agenda 2063 of the African Union by advancing a universal culture of democratic values, gender equality, respect for human rights and justice for all.

## **B. People**

25. Under the people pillar, UNITAR continues to focus on promoting people's well-being, including through the protection and empowerment of groups that have been marginalized and are vulnerable. The promotion of road safety and the provision of assistance to Member States in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 11, on sustainable cities and communities, is a significant initiative under this pillar. UNITAR is committed to contributing to halving the number of fatalities and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2030 by promoting behavioural changes among road users through advocacy efforts and increased awareness of risk factors and by enhancing the capacity of government authorities and key stakeholders regarding road safety management and leadership. In 2020, UNITAR developed the knowledge and skills of 687 law enforcement officers and officials from national road safety agencies with regard to the implementation of high-visibility enforcement campaigns to help reduce alcohol-related fatalities and accidents, and 3,719 stakeholders received training on practical tools for conducting road assessments.



26. Throughout 2020, the Global Surgery initiative led by UNITAR served as an effective common platform for stakeholders working to increase access to safe surgery, obstetrics and anaesthesia, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. In collaboration with the Program in Global Surgery and Social Change of Harvard Medical School, UNITAR published a comprehensive manual to guide Governments in developing national surgery, obstetric and anaesthesia plans, which can be integrated into their national health strategies. The manual itself has been distributed to more than 750 policymakers in ministries of health and surgical care systems. The initiative reached more than 5,000 direct beneficiaries from over 100 countries, particularly through training on national surgical, obstetric anaesthesia planning, but also through training on topics related to front-line care of patients during the pandemic.

27. The International Training Centres for Authorities and Leaders Global Network continued to expand. With 20 centres located across Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australia and Europe, the Global Network contributes to the Institute's efforts to provide in-country capacity-building and training. The centres serve as hubs for the exchange of knowledge among government officials, the private sector, academia and civil society in areas related to sustainable development. The Global Network covers a wide range of thematic areas related to governance and urban development, economic development and social inclusion, environmental sustainability and the 2030 Agenda. It reached 89,060 beneficiaries in 2020, with women representing 68 per cent of the total number of beneficiaries.

28. In the field of migration, UNITAR co-organized the sixth Mayoral Forum on Human Mobility, Migration and Development, held in Quito in January 2020, hosting delegations from 47 countries. The Mayoral Forum enabled municipal and regional leaders to exchange views and information on practices on migration, development and displacement. For the first time, the programme was integrated with the annual summit of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, a State-led process to help shape the global debate on migration and development. The integration of the two forums had both symbolic and practical value. It not only reflected formal recognition of the role that local and regional authorities play in the implementation of global migration policies, but also established a precedent in city diplomacy by granting such authorities access to a State-led process. During the Forum, UNITAR also ran training workshops and co-organized a high-level session of the Global Forum to present its global knowledge platform on migration.

29. In the field of combating corruption, UNITAR partnered with the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption Center to create a training platform on anti-corruption, in order to host online courses aimed at developing countries in which corruption is hindering sustainable development. In 2020, this partnership resulted in the development of knowledge and skills on preventing and suppressing corruption for 527 beneficiaries from 34 countries, through e-learning.

## **C. Planet**

30. Under the planet pillar, UNITAR works to support the conservation, restoration and safeguarding of the planet for present and future generations by fostering a green, low-carbon and climate-resilient transition, strengthening the sound and sustainable management of chemicals and waste and undertaking research to support circular economy policies. In the area of climate action, the Institute continues to participate actively in the One United Nations Climate Change Learning Partnership, a global partnership that supports countries in the design and implementation of systematic, recurrent and results-oriented climate change learning under article 6 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Launched in 2009, the

Partnership currently includes 36 multilateral organizations and is active in more than 30 countries.

31. The Learning Partnership, whose secretariat is hosted by UNITAR, promotes global climate literacy and has an e-learning platform that serves as a global climate change learning portal. Education is crucial in addressing the existential threat of climate change, and the relevance of the Learning Partnership in this regard has been attested to by the almost 400,000 users from 195 countries registered on the platform and the almost 110,000 certificates issued as at December 2020. In September 2020, the Learning Partnership celebrated the issuance of its 100,000th certificate of completion. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the pace of the growth of the platform, with a much higher proportion of registered users completing at least one course. The platform now offers 30 courses linked to climate change and the transition to a green economy, in several languages and at no cost.

32. At the national level, the Learning Partnership continues to assist countries in taking a strategic approach to climate change learning through the development and implementation of climate change learning strategies. This includes a regional action plan on climate change education, training and awareness-raising (2017–2022) developed jointly by the eight States members of the Central American Integration System through a regional programme supported by the Partnership, the launch of new national climate change learning strategies in Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Zambia and Zimbabwe, and the extension of the Partnership's work in West Africa. The Learning Partnership continues to support implementation activities in all partner countries and resource mobilization efforts at the country level. Given the popularity of the youth climate dialogue format, the Learning Partnership expanded its youth and public awareness work through a series of radio and television broadcasts in West Africa and Southern Africa.

33. UNITAR has continued its active engagement with the Partnership for Action on Green Economy, which brings together UNEP, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and UNITAR. The Partnership now operates in 20 partner countries and delivers a range of global products, including capacity development and knowledge production. UNITAR develops the capacities of individuals and training institutions through global training products concerning an inclusive green economy, foundational and specialized training in partner countries, support for the identification of green economy learning priorities and strategy development, and the sharing and exchange of knowledge.

34. The Partnership for Action on Green Economy is now recognized as a key player in the promotion of the global green recovery plan in support of the United Nations response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specific measures have been designed to support 15 Partnership countries in developing national green recovery plans and to incentivize the adoption of stimulus packages aimed at promoting low-carbon pathways, green skills, green jobs and related entrepreneurial activities.

35. In the area of chemicals and waste management, and in response to the present COVID-19 situation, UNITAR has worked on developing comprehensive and practical online training modules in order to assist countries. It has successfully conducted training on the management, sampling and screening of polychlorinated biphenyl and, in the area of mercury management, has been providing technical assistance to countries for the development of their initial assessments under the Minamata Convention on Mercury and national mercury action plans. In addition to providing technical support to countries in relation to inventories, national-level research and document development, UNITAR is currently chairing the mercury group of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals.

36. UNITAR, with co-leads ILO and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and in close collaboration with other key partners, is leading the Global Partnership for Capacity-building to Implement the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals.

37. The UNITAR office in Bonn, Germany, is leading the Sustainable Cycles Programme, an innovative research and training programme focused on solutions for the sustainable production, consumption and disposal of products in different waste streams. In 2020, the Sustainable Cycles Programme published an advisory on the future of electric vehicles and material resources, as well as the Global E-waste Monitor, a globally recognized summary of e-waste challenges published in collaboration with the International Telecommunication Union, WHO and the International Solid Waste Association.

#### **D. Prosperity**

38. Under the prosperity pillar, UNITAR works to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth and to create decent work opportunities for all by strengthening employability capacities, developing skills for multi-stakeholder collaboration and enhancing knowledge on trade, public finance and intellectual property. Over the past two years, UNITAR has developed and implemented several regional and global training activities in partnership with other United Nations system entities, regional commissions, multilateral development banks and regional training institutions.

39. UNITAR stepped up its efforts to strengthen employability and entrepreneurial capabilities in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iraq, Kenya, Somalia and the Sudan, with a focus on vulnerable populations, such as youth and women. By giving beneficiaries tangible entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship skills, UNITAR supported participants in identifying critical issues and formulating innovative sustainable solutions built on global knowledge and tailored to the local context.

40. Enhancing multi-stakeholder collaboration is key to promoting inclusive and sustainable economic development. UNITAR is training representatives from central and local governments and civil society in Afghanistan on sustainable development leadership to deepen their understanding of key global issues and equip them with practical soft skills, so that they become change-makers and advocates for a better future.

41. The ability of public sector officials to implement sound policies to address the impact of COVID-19 is important for immediate and long-term recovery. UNITAR and the Geneva School of Diplomacy and International Relations provided support to trade and finance officials from the least developed countries and other developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa involved in local and national fiscal and trade policy to help them support their economies and businesses affected by the pandemic. The programme allowed African officials to work collectively to assess the evolving impact of the pandemic and formulate recommendations to help their Governments build back better and contribute comprehensively to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, with a particular focus on health and safety, micro- and small enterprises, food security, gender equality, the empowerment of women and youth, the informal economy and internally displaced persons.

42. In order to address the unprecedented challenges to the expansion of financial inclusion resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, UNITAR, in partnership with the Arab Gulf Programme for Development, strengthened the capacities of finance officials from the Middle East and North Africa region and sub-Saharan Africa with regard to harnessing digital technologies and innovation to deliver more accessible,

useful and affordable financial services to the unbanked and poorest populations. With an emphasis on reaching the furthest behind first, the partnership focused on financial inclusion by engaging with the Programme for Development's network of microfinance banks and other financial institutions in the region on the matter of designing financial products and services tailored to the specific needs of the poor so as to empower disadvantaged individuals to become positive contributors in their communities. UNITAR and the Programme for Development also included training of trainers to develop local champions who could continue to provide contextualized knowledge and localized expertise even after the end of project. Over 1,200 beneficiaries have completed the series of training activities, which were all delivered using mobile learning solutions.

43. The Institute's collaboration with FAO continued to grow in 2020. Together, they assisted officials and representatives of government ministries, agricultural and trade unions and export organizations in French-speaking sub-Saharan African countries and Central Asian countries in assessing trade opportunities. UNITAR also collaborated with FAO in addressing food security and nutrition; increasing understanding of the significance of non-tariff measures on international trade and the relevance of World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements with regard to national trade policies; and emphasizing the main agriculture-related obligations that countries undertake upon accession to WTO and within the framework of regional trade agreements. The situation arising from the COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity to deliver more joint online training activities than originally planned and allowed UNITAR and FAO to engage directly with policymakers to discuss recent changes in policies on the regulation of the agrifood trade and support for agribusiness in relation to the pandemic.

44. Digital technology has been causing a paradigm shift in society, changing how people communicate, work and live. Digitalization has offered tremendous opportunities for those who have access to the Internet and are digitally literate to lead better lives. Nevertheless, those who do not have access to the Internet and/or are digital-illiterate have not been able to tap into digital technologies, which has widened the digital divide. Digitalization is also causing a change in the nature of employment and the type of skills and knowledge that are in demand. It is important for people, particularly vulnerable populations, to upskill and reskill themselves in respect of digital technologies so that they have better employment capacities and better livelihoods. Against this background, UNITAR, working with partners from the academic sector, trained women in Afghanistan and Iraq on artificial intelligence and entrepreneurship skills.

## **E. Cross-cutting programme areas**

45. In addition to the thematic pillars of peace, people, planet and prosperity, UNITAR works in three cross-cutting areas, including programming aimed at accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the country level, support for evidence-based policies through technologies, including geospatial technologies, and multilateral diplomacy.

### **Accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda**

46. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of a coherent policy response further increased. As many countries are working on their recovery plans and strategies, it is important to provide training and learning support to help them design such plans in a way that takes into account both their immediate needs and a longer-term vision and provides a balanced approach across sectors in responding to economic, social and environmental imperatives. In this context, UNITAR has teamed

up with other United Nations partners, such as the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNDP to design a training programme to help strengthen the link between strategic planning and the allocation of public resources through budgeting, and to promote the development and implementation of integrated national financing frameworks.

47. UNITAR, jointly with the United Nations System Staff College, has continued steering the work of the secretariat for the “UN SDG: Learn” learning platform and has been leading the development of a new Sustainable Development Goal competency self-assessment service and a personalized interface to enable users to better construct their learning pathways. The learning platform was being used by 69,951 learners by 31 December 2020. It had 59 partners in total and had featured 280 standard courses and 151 microlearning courses. A total of 53 per cent of survey respondents who had taken a course reported that they had introduced a change or applied a good practice as a result. The platform also features the Foundational Primer on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development developed with the overall guidance of the Office of the Deputy Secretary-General and contributions from the United Nations Development Coordination Office, the United Nations System Staff College, UNITAR and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network. Since November 2020, the “UN SDG: Learn” platform provides learners around the globe who are not part of the United Nations system and would not be able to benefit from certification with an opportunity to take the Foundational Primer test and earn a joint United Nations Sustainable Development Group “UN SDG: Learn” certificate.

48. The Institute continued to deliver capacity-building and learning services to address data needs related to the Sustainable Development Goals. UNITAR, the Statistics Division and the Economic Commission for Africa launched a new course aimed at strengthening the data skills of decision makers and enabling a more effective use of data in decision-making. The Institute also upgraded StaTact, a short-term statistical planning tool. The new version of the tool was presented to 92 participants from 36 countries during online workshops for the Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America regions. A national pilot was conducted in collaboration with the Philippine Statistics Authority in December 2020. Ninety-three per cent of pilot participants found that StaTact was relevant to their work, as it could help them strengthen the planning and also the monitoring of the implementation of statistical activities in support of data production in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals. Lastly, a new project was launched in May 2020 by a consortium of several European universities, UNITAR and the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) to promote the use of citizen science data in monitoring efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda. UNITAR is researching the needs and quality considerations of national statistical offices and line ministries.

#### **Optimizing the use of geospatial technologies for evidence-based decisions**

49. UNOSAT, which celebrates its twentieth anniversary in 2021, continues to support projects and activities under the peace, people, planet and prosperity pillars of the Institute’s programme of work. In 2019–2020, the Programme developed the knowledge and skills related to geographic information systems (GIS) of 1,189 beneficiaries from the least developed countries and small island developing States, most of whom work in the government sector. On the basis of requests from United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies as well as Member States, the Programme also carried out 416 satellite imagery analyses during this period, which resulted in 1,438 products, such as maps, reports and statistics. Among its diverse activities at the country level, the Programme supported the strengthening of women’s disaster management capacities in Guyana and Dominica and provided e-learning

programmes and technical solutions to improve national flood early warning systems. The Programme teamed up with regional actors – the Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency of Thailand, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Research and Training Centre for Space Technology and Applications and ESCAP – to organize a training course on the use of geospatial big data applications for sustainable development.

50. UNOSAT continues to benefit from the strong support of CERN, which hosts the Programme’s information technology infrastructure. This allows it to have state-of-the-art computing power, data storage and data, which directly feed into other United Nations initiatives, such as the Humanitarian Data Exchange platform of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

51. The artificial intelligence satellite imagery flood detection algorithm developed by UNOSAT, with the support of the Global Pulse initiative, is being used operationally to support the Programme’s rapid mapping activities. The artificial intelligence algorithm was developed in partnership with Wuhan University, China, and CERN. The Programme’s artificial intelligence flood mapping was first used in 2020, following a request after heavy monsoon rains in Bangladesh. The artificial intelligence solution is currently being further adjusted for use in additional countries.

52. The Charter on Cooperation to Achieve the Coordinated Use of Space Facilities in the Event of Natural or Technological Disasters provides for access to free satellite imagery in support of responses to major disaster situations. UNOSAT was involved in over 30 activations of this mechanism to the benefit of United Nations agencies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and national disaster management organizations.

### **Multilateral diplomacy**

53. Strengthening the knowledge, skills and awareness of delegates to enable them to perform effectively in the United Nations arena continues to be an important and strategic dimension of the work of UNITAR. In addition to serving as the go-to entity of the United Nations for diplomats and other delegates, at both the country level and in cities where the United Nations maintains a significant presence, wishing to enhance their understanding of the dynamics of the United Nations system, organs, processes and procedures, UNITAR has launched three new master’s degree programmes: Master in Human Rights and Diplomacy with the University of Stirling, United Kingdom; Master in International Affairs and Diplomacy with École supérieure des affaires (ESA) Business School in Beirut; and Master in Development Studies and Diplomacy with the University for Peace. These programmes are designed to provide first-hand experience and a solid understanding of diplomacy and the United Nations to students who wish to pursue a career in international affairs.

54. At the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNITAR broadened its online portfolio to include online certificates and diplomas in essential professional skills, multilateral diplomacy, and international law in the twenty-first century. UNITAR also implemented a series of online training programmes aimed at fostering a spirit of international cooperation among participants and raising their awareness of the fact that the current global challenges require global cooperation. These online training programmes include the United Nations internship preparation programme, which provides participants with knowledge on entry points into the United Nations system, and the “Diplomacy 4.0” training programme, which addresses issues at the intersection of diplomacy and technology. Together with the young leaders online training programme, the online immersion programme and the Human Rights Council training programme, these online offerings have attracted over 500 participants from partner institutions in China, the United Kingdom and the United States, among others. The Institute also leveraged its

knowledge of online learning methodologies when cooperating with the United States Agency for International Development, the Government of Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, the World Wide Fund for Nature and TRAFFIC International to train Tanzanian law enforcement officials on the regulations with respect to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and on the risk of disease associated with trafficking in wildlife.

55. Recognizing the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women, UNITAR organized six virtual workshops on women's leadership, including three in partnership with the International Organization of Employers. UNITAR also developed customized training solutions for ministries of foreign affairs, including those of Bhutan, Kenya, the Marshall Islands, Myanmar, Qatar and Sri Lanka, on topics such as digital diplomacy, cybersecurity, environmental diplomacy and science diplomacy, which were also delivered successfully online, with over 90 per cent of participants considering the content of the training to be relevant to their jobs and agreeing that they would use the information in their work. The Institute's contribution to strengthening the capacities of Member States, as well as their participation in key United Nations mechanisms, has been further reinforced through a tailor-made programme to effectively prepare diplomats from the United Arab Emirates for the country's candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the term beginning in January 2022.

56. Through its New York office, the Institute continued to deliver its yearly training programme targeting the diplomatic community. The programme comprised a diverse set of briefings, courses and workshops, such as a briefing for new delegates, which coincided with the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, a briefing for new members of the Security Council and briefings on the United Nations budget system, the work of the Economic and Social Council and the structure, drafting and adoption of United Nations resolutions.

57. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, UNITAR moved all training online, which had positive unintended benefits by increasing the ability of participants from the least developed countries to participate. The New York office has also maintained its commitment to leaving no one behind through its "Levelling the playing field" initiative, which has involved significant outreach and has received positive feedback from participants.

58. In parallel to its diplomatic training, the New York office coordinated with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to organize the fifth series of "Learning, Training and Practice" workshops on the Sustainable Development Goals, during the 2020 high-level political forum on sustainable development, and has continued to expand its outreach through other means, including through the publication entitled "Guidelines for United Nations Resolutions", which is available in print and in e-book format in Arabic, English, French and Spanish, and the further improvement and dissemination of the "UN – How To" mobile application, which has now been downloaded more than 10,600 times.

## **F. Defeat Non-communicable Diseases Partnership**

59. In July 2019, UNITAR integrated the secretariat of the Defeat Non-communicable Diseases Partnership, a public-private-people partnership that includes Governments, multilateral agencies, civil society, academia, philanthropists and the private sector. It was established in 2018 to enable and assist low-resource countries to scale-up action on non-communicable diseases in order to tackle the most common gaps and constraints in the following areas: (a) national capacity-building, (b) community scale-up of services relating to non-communicable diseases, (c) the

affordability and accessibility of essential supplies and (d) financing for country-level programming on combating non-communicable diseases.

60. In 2020, UNITAR provided technical assistance to two programme countries, resulting in the development of a national costed operational plan for Myanmar covering 2021 and 2022, and a national strategy and costed action plan for Rwanda for 2020–2025. In those two countries, a programme coordinator and health economist delivered essential support for the convening of stakeholders to develop a multisectoral approach and carried out the necessary financial modelling. Through its two-year plan, Myanmar aims to support 11 million people in 2021 and 2022. Two million vulnerable people will benefit from free-of-charge care for non-communicable diseases, and overall the delivery of the plan is expected to reduce out-of-pocket expenses from the current level, 82 per cent, to 63 per cent. In Rwanda, successful delivery of the plan will directly benefit 4.8 million people and is aimed at reducing premature mortality from non-communicable diseases by 25 per cent. The Rwandan plan outlines four strategic objectives, and the identified interventions required to achieve these are projected to cost \$376.2 million.

61. UNITAR was instrumental in promoting national and global efforts to ensure universal access to health care in order to reduce premature mortality due to non-communicable diseases by one third by 2030, in line with target 3.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals. UNITAR also negotiated memorandums of understanding with the ministries of Health of Bhutan, Ecuador, the Gambia and Nepal, and with the Caribbean Public Health Agency, which represents 24 States members of the Caribbean Community.

62. The Defeat Non-communicable Diseases Partnership provided support for the development of national capacities for planning and implementing national action plans to combat non-communicable diseases, in the form of remote knowledge-sharing through webinars and online conferences, the provision of a modality for strengthening capacities to minimize carbon emissions (thereby contributing to climate change mitigation), while also reducing risks relating to the spread of COVID-19. This work culminated in a high-level panel discussion on access to sustainable treatment and care for non-communicable diseases at the World Health Summit in October 2020. The event featured 22 panellists and speakers representing Governments, multilateral institutions, development banks, humanitarian organizations, academia, philanthropic foundations and private companies.

63. Building on the Institute's strong background in fiscal capacity strengthening, in 2020 the Union Minister of Health and Sports of Myanmar announced the creation of the Myanmar Defeat Non-communicable Diseases Partnership Fund, a pooled funding facility for the treatment and care of such diseases. Other financing developments that will create optimal conditions for government and private sector collaboration to tackle non-communicable diseases were announced at the Defeat Non-communicable Diseases Partnership event at the World Health Summit in 2020. On that occasion, the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, a member of the World Bank Group, made a commitment to support the work of the Defeat Non-communicable Diseases Partnership, and the International Finance Corporation committed to support the development of structured products and social impact bonds to expand non-communicable disease care and screening facilities in low-resource countries.

#### **IV. Financial situation of the Institute**

64. The Institute's financial situation continues to be one of stability and growth. Total income for the biennium 2018–2019 was \$64.5 million, representing a 25 per cent increase over the 2016–2017 figure of \$51.6 million.



65. The Institute continues to be heavily reliant on a small number of donors; the top 10 donors provided 77.6 per cent of the total donor contributions for the year 2019. UNITAR has concluded several multi-year agreements with partners, significantly increasing its balance of receivables.

66. Overall, UNITAR remains in sound financial health. Its accumulated surpluses increased from \$23.5 million in 2018 to \$32 million in 2019, which resulted from a reported surplus for the year of \$16 million and an increase of \$7.5 million in the actuarial valuation of post-employment liabilities. Current ratios have improved, owing predominantly to the holding of only short-term investments and an increase in voluntary contributions receivable from the signing of multi-year agreements. Key financial ratios also confirm that there are sufficient net assets for UNITAR to meet both its short-term and longer-term liabilities.

67. In November 2020, at its sixty-first session, the UNITAR Board of Trustees adopted the revised programme budget for 2020–2021 of \$68.1 million, representing a 22.5 per cent increase over the programme budget for 2018–2019. The Strategic Framework Fund, established by the Board of Trustees to serve as a loosely earmarked funding facility to support programming in strategic areas that help Member States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, has enabled UNITAR to allocate funds to 50 projects since January 2019. While non-earmarked contributions to the General Fund have continued to be low and unpredictable, the Institute's management is optimistic that the loosely earmarked Strategic Framework Fund will prove to be a fruitful means to leverage support beyond the Fund's present main donors, the Government of Qatar and the Swedish International Development Agency, and provide opportunities for programme growth and increased impact.

68. The Institute received an unqualified audit opinion of its financial statements from the Board of Auditors for 2018 and 2019.

## V. Recommendations

69. It is recommended that UNITAR continue to ensure the alignment of its programming with the 2030 Agenda and continue to grow its programming and beneficiary outreach.

70. It is also recommended that Member States and other stakeholders, including relevant United Nations system entities, strengthen partnerships with the Institute and provide their full support to enable the Institute and the Defeat Non-communicable Diseases Partnership to continue their efforts to meet national capacity-building, learning and other needs, and that they consider providing financial support to the Strategic Framework Fund to enable increased outreach to beneficiaries from countries in special situations.

71. It is further recommended that Member States recognize UNOSAT as the United Nations satellite centre, with a mandate to provide United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies with satellite analysis, training and capacity development, at their request, as well as to continue supporting Member States with satellite imagery analysis over their respective territories and to provide training and capacity development in the use of geospatial information technologies, on the basis of voluntary contributions.