

Management Response: Evaluation of UNITAR's joint master's degrees and other postgraduate non-degree programmes

January 2024

Geneva, Switzerland

Programme undertaking	Multiple (see below)		
Name of project focal point	Reference Group members' unit and divisions		
Name of project undertaking	UNITAR's joint master's degrees and other postgraduate non-degree programmes	AGB # N/A	N/A (multiple)
Name of evaluation	Independent evaluation of UNITAR's joint master's degrees and other postgraduate non-degree programmes		
Date:	January 2024		

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SECTION I – For information or for action		P r o g r a m m e D i v i s i o n / U n i t						
		Peace	People	Planet (SCYCLE)	New York Office	Multilateral Diplomacy	UNOSAT	Office of the Executive Director --> Prosperity
	For action	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	For information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recommendation 1: Increase alignment of the joint programmes with the Institute's results-based programming and strategic objectives.		Accepted	Partially accepted	Yes, considered	Accepted	Rejected	Rejected	Rejected
Recommendation 2: Undertake/strengthen market research when selecting partners.		Accepted	Partially accepted	Yes, considered.	Accepted	Accepted	Accepted	Partially accepted
Recommendation 3: Enhance inclusion of participants from groups made vulnerable and countries in special situations through financial support.		Partially accepted	Partially accepted.	Considered partially	Accepted	Partially accepted	Partially accepted	Partially accepted
Recommendation 4: Improve UNITAR's visibility and programme of study value proposition through an effective communication campaign and leverage external partnerships.		Accepted	Partially accepted.	Considered partially	Accepted	Accepted	Accepted	Accepted
Recommendation 5: Explore the potential of institutional accreditation for the programmes' portfolio on offer.		Accepted.	Accepted	Yes, considered	Accepted	Accepted	Accepted	Accepted

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	Peace	People	Planet (SCYCLE)	New York Office	Multilateral Diplomacy	UNOSAT	Office of the Executive Director --> Prosperity
Recommendation 6: Establish a feedback mechanism, such as a set of procedures and tools established across the programmes for effective and timely communication between the university and participants, to facilitate effective communication between universities and participants and incorporate participants' experiences in both the programme and instructional design, including implementation.	Accepted	Accepted	-	Accepted	Accepted	Accepted	Accepted
Recommendation 7: Establish a cross-division working group on joint programmes.	Accepted	Partially accepted.	Considered partially	Partially accepted	-	Accepted	Partially accepted

SECTION II – Comments on Findings, Conclusions	
Peacekeeping Training Programme Unit (PTP)	
Multilateral Diplomacy Programme Unit (MDP)	-
New York Office (NYO)	The recommendations are conditionally accepted. It is necessary to define clear steps and focal points respectfully for each of the recommendations. Additionally, there can be more conclusions and specific recommendations made from the research undertaken, and we shall look into those as well.
Social Development Programme (SDP)	The recommendations are partially accepted. Nonetheless, it's important to clarify that SDP is actively implementing many of these improvements in alignment with UNITAR's policies and frameworks, as well as in line with the nature of the CIFAL Global Network. Regarding the CIFAL Global Network, the affiliated centers within this network are associated institutions, and as such, UNITAR policies are applicable to them in a partial manner. Nevertheless, our commitment remains determined to align these centers as closely as possible with UNITAR frameworks, while always respecting the restrictions and limitations outlined in the cooperation agreements between UNITAR and the host institutions.

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Green Development and Climate Change Programme Unit (GCP)	
SCYCLE	See above
United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT)	
Office of the Executive Director (OED) --> Division for Prosperity	The recommendations are accepted partially.

SECTION III - RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation		Management Response and Planned Action					Update on status in 2024 – six months (planned, under implementation, implemented)	Update on status in 2025 – one year (planned, under implementation, implemented)
		Programme Unit	Accepted Partially Accepted Rejected	Proposed action	Budget allocated (if necessary)	Status (planned, under implementation, implemented)		
1.	Increase alignment of the joint programmes with the Institute's results-based programming and strategic objectives. UNITAR's programme of work and results framework flow from its strategic objectives, which are closely aligned with the	PTP	Accepted	The Masters are offered in partnership with these universities, and it is their quality assurance and standards that apply since it is	NA	Implemented		

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<p>2030 Agenda, the SDGs and other development frameworks. While the joint programmes align with the Institute’s core functions (training and learning solutions) and are more loosely aligned with the strategic objectives, it is important to also ensure alignment with the principles of results-based programming, with clearer alignment to the UNITAR results framework and, to the extent possible, clearer contributions to the intended development results of other projects or initiatives, with a view to also strengthening coherence.</p>			<p>their award qualification. In addition, these universities have subject project and programme committees who provided content in all programmes. PTP has already 5 masters in place and the curriculum of validated and approved programmes cannot be changed unilaterally.</p>				
	MDP	Rejected	<p>Masters are offered in partnership with universities, which had a say in the joint development of the curriculum. MDP has already 15 masters in place and curriculum cannot be changed for ongoing Programmes.</p>	N/A			
	NYO	Accepted	<p>Given UNITAR’s volume of knowledge and experience, clearer contributions to the intended</p>	N/A	Under implementation		

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				development results of other projects or initiatives is crucial. All the programs have to be in line with the 2030 Agenda.				
		SDP	Partially Accepted	The programs currently offered by SDP and CGN are closely aligned with the strategic objectives of UNITAR, as outlined in the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. These programs address crucial topics including sustainability, migration, health, disaster risks reduction, and more. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the importance of continuously refining our offerings. Moving forward, we will ensure that future programs incorporate this recommendation into their framework.	NA	Under implementation and planned. The existing programs currently available cannot be modified. However, for upcoming master's programs, this recommendation will be duly considered. In such instances, detailed information regarding the implementation of this recommendation will be communicated to the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) team.		

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		UNOSAT	Rejected	<p>The Master is managed by the University of Copenhagen including the pedagogic programme. The course covered by UNOSAT is fully aligned with the UNOSAT strategy and results to engage with students who are planning in the future to be professionals in humanitarian domain.</p> <p>This is currently the only course under a master programme which UNOSAT is delivering since several years and it is difficult to change the structure as it follows a logic with some other courses in the master.</p>	NA			
		OED --> Prosperity	Rejected	<p>The activity is already underway. Changing curriculum at this point is not realistic.</p>	NA			

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Comments:

PTP: Yes, but some of UNITAR's results-based programming is specific to short training and development programmes.

SDP: Yes. We are continuously enhancing the alignment of our joint programs with the Institute. Particularly those offered by the CGN.

SCYCLE: Yes, we have a lot of in-house high-class expertise in SCYCLE which could be utilized.

NYO: Yes. This can be achieved through regular assessment (curriculum, lecturers, evaluations by students etc). Additionally, evaluate and increase alignment of the evolving needs of the field with the Institute's goals.

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Recommendation	Programme Unit	Accepted Partially accepted Rejected	Proposed action	Budget allocated (if necessary)	Status (planned, under implementation, implemented)	Update on status in 2024 (planned, under implementation, implemented)	Update on status in 2025 – one year (planned, under implementation, implemented)
<p>2. Undertake/strengthen market research when selecting partners. It is important that UNITAR uses strategic thinking and undertakes/strengthens its market research to better understand the joint programmes’ competitors, its competitive edge and the calculation of tuition fees with the target audiences of the joint programmes in mind. Moreover, prior to entering into new partnerships, it would be useful to carry out capacity assessments of partners, so whenever there is a need to initiate a new joint programme, the assessment can be a good reference point, making future programmes cost-efficient, sustainable and effective. Cost-effectiveness should also be considered in assessing the comparative advantage of potential partners, and exploring the</p>	PTP	Accepted	<p>PTP Undertakes/strengthens market research when selecting partners. On the second point, acceptec but we must embrace partners who hold institutional and programme accreditation.</p>	Depending on the joint Programme and partner.	Under implementation		

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<p>option to diversify the geographical representation of university partners may help in achieving this. UNITAR could also work with African, Asian, Latin American and other universities in developing countries or the least developed countries to reach more participants with fewer costs and allow the programme room for scalability. According to the academic partners consulted, covering their costs, let alone reducing costs in the future, appears unlikely. Therefore, it is recommended that UNITAR explores partnering with universities located in other geographic regions as this may help to reduce overall fees, create more access and improve the programmes’ effectiveness and efficiency.</p>							
	MDP	Accepted	MDP currently Undertakes/strengthens market research when selecting partners.	Depending on the joint Programme and partner.	Under implementation		
	NYO	Accepted	UNITAR NYO works closely with African, Asian, Latin American and other regions, hence, we believe that collaboration with the universities in developing countries	N/A	Under implementation		

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				is fundamental. This can broaden the range of programs offered and reach more target audiences. NB: such partnerships have to take into considerations the Recommendation #3 and provide substantial support to the vulnerable groups.				
		SDP	Partially Accepted	SDP, through CGN, has established its presence in over 25 countries spanning all continents, and keep growing. Presently, master's programs are underway across various regions worldwide, including Australia, Asia (Philippines), Europe (Madrid and Switzerland), and Latin America (Mexico). Additionally, new programs are actively being developed to further expand our reach participants in diverse regions. This expansion demonstrates our commitment to broadening access and fostering development across the globe.	N/A	Under implementation		
		UNOSAT	Accepted	Undertake more communication actions. University of Copenhagen has already its communication channels to advertise the course but we can improve the dissemination and enrolment through our social media network and also our partners.	NA	Under implementation		
		OED --> Prosperity	Partially accepted	This recommendation would be effective if partnership is for a new area (e.g., new partner, new region, new topic, etc). If partner is already known for UNITAR and there are limited new elements, assessment may not be so relevant or useful.	NA			

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<p>Comments: People: Yes. We are actively committed to enhancing our partner selection process, particularly for the CIFAL host institutions, ensuring they have the recognition and technical capacity aligning with our policies, frameworks, values and goals, maximizing the potential for successful collaborations and impactful outcomes. SCYCLE: Yes, but we should focus on partners which are also accredited in the EU, USA etc. NYO: Yes, perhaps defining strong criteria for selection of the partners, which would be in line with our priorities, is the best way forward.</p>							
Recommendation	Programme Unit	Accepted Partially accepted Rejected	Proposed action	Budget allocated (if necessary)	Status (planned, under implementation, implemented)	Update on status in 2024 (planned, under implementation, implemented)	Update on status in 2025 – one year (planned, under implementation, implemented)
<p>3. Enhance inclusion of participants from groups made vulnerable and countries in special situations through financial support. To bring about more inclusivity of vulnerable groups and participants from countries in special situations, the current training costs and study trips must be reviewed. Reduced fees or other forms of financial support will not only allow UNITAR to achieve one of its own inclusion objectives, but will also increase enrolment rates and attendance, reduce dropout rates and increase the programmes’ competitive edge. To ensure that vulnerable groups and others can access the joint programmes, it is</p>	PTP	Partially accepted	PTP have schemes in place with partner universities (UoC, Scuola and OBU)	We may offer some discounts based on funding applications received from students from low-income countries. We offer an extended course fee instalment options/possibilities	Under implementation		

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	<p>imperative to develop and deploy a robust fundraising strategy through donor funding, not only to reduce the costs and burden on participants but also to finance research initiatives within the Institute intended to ensure quality, accountability and continuous improvement of future programming. Furthermore, UNITAR needs to improve its communication methods to reach out to many participants, particularly those from countries in special situations who have limited Internet access to sign up to joint master's degrees.</p>							
		MDP	Partially accepted	MDP already has schemes in place with partner universities (LUISS, IACA and UPeace)	Upeace: 60'000 USD IACA: the partner has secured external funding LUISS: fully funded by partner	Under implementation		
		NYO	Accepted	Absolutely necessary improvement. As we offered additionally, special basis could also be granted to international students from developing countries, as it would be in line with the UNITAR's global perspective.	N/A	Under implementation		

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		SDP	Partially Accepted	The majority of SDP and CGN programs operate on a no-fee basis, and some of our partners may offer special rates for participants facing specific financial challenges or vulnerable circumstances. However, such accommodations are subject to the policies of the host institution. Nonetheless, it is always encouraged, particularly within the CIFAL Global Network, to strive towards offering learning programs at minimal or no cost whenever feasible. This approach aligns with our commitment to accessibility and inclusivity in education.	N/A	Under implementation		
		UNOSAT	Partially accepted	In the Master with University of Copenhagen those aspects were addressed under the University of Copenhagen rules and regulation (see link below) https://di.ku.dk/english/diversity-and-inclusion/ However, UNOSAT has also encouraged in the selection of students to our course to have a gender balanced audience.	NA	Under implementation		
		OED --> Prosperity	Partially accepted	The recommendation is highly valid to promote the principle of "leave no one behind" of SDGs. Note that majority of non degree programmes offered by Prosperity Division aim at people in vulnerable situations such as youth and women in fragile states. For degree programmes, fees are often high, thus it would be necessary to raise funding for scholarships.	Multiple projects	Under implementation		
<p>Comments: PTP: Yes, and this could be done by creating a UNITAR Trust Fund. At present, we offer various payments via extended installments for learners who do not have the financial means.</p>								

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<p>SDP: SDP and the CGN focus on specific thematic areas that include migrants, elderly people, LGBTBI+ population, and currently is expanding geographically and reaching more people from LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDs. However, financial contributions are evaluated case by case, and all our programs are aimed to be free for participants in almost all regions.</p> <p>NYO: Yes. Special basis could also be granted to international students from developing countries, as it would be in line with the UNITAR's global perspective.</p> <p>SCYCLE: Yes and no, because for many the principal does also apply "What does not cost anything is also not worth it...". A certain financial contribution of all participants also shows commitment.</p>

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4. Improve UNITAR’s visibility and programme of study value proposition through an effective communication campaign and leverage external partnerships. To increase the sustainability of the joint programmes, increasing UNITAR’s visibility is essential and urgent. With so many courses to choose from, by proactively promoting and advertising itself, the joint programmes can not only attract more participants but also support them in making sure their degrees/diplomas/certificates are widely recognized. To achieve this, a comprehensive communication campaign, developed and implemented with the academic partners, will contribute to supporting the sustainability of the programmes.	PTP	Accepted	PTP are currently implementing this element with several challenges based on the limited amount of social media postings available. We also need to move towards a social media strategy that moves beyond simply posting content.	On a case-by-case basis.	Under implementation		
	MDP	Accepted	We are currently implementing this element.	On a case-by-case basis	Under implementation		

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		NYO	Accepted	Yes. UNITAR NYO has several experienced communications experts who have unprecedented knowledge when it comes to social media presence and public relations and can be of great help when it comes to this recommendation. It is key to focus on promotions and see it as a way not to increase visibility but have degrees/diplomas/certificates more widely recognized.	N/A	Under implementation		
		SDP	Partially Accepted	SDP keeps promoting UNITAR programs and activities’ visibility through various channels, leveraging the outreach of the CGN. By combining the outreach efforts of UNITAR, CGN, and our academic partners, we aim to enhance the visibility of our programs and attract a wider audience.	N/A	Under implementation		

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		UNOSAT	Accepted	UNOSAT will engage a communication campaign for the next courses through its website and social medias. The University of Copenhagen has also its own channels to promote the course. Discussions are engaged with the university of Copenhagen on the possibility of joint funding to increase the visibility of the course including from UN and Governmental institutions from member states.	NA	Under implementation		
		OED --> Prosperity	Accepted.	There are clear needs to enhance the visibility/brand of UNITAR. Prosperity Division is stepping up efforts for communications/marketing. Communication strategy should be tailored to the audience, thus cannot be a one-size-fit-all approach.	There is a communications team in Prosperity Division	Under implementation.		
<p>Comments: PTP: We need a clarity from the leadership if these programmes and partnerships will be integrated into its strategic priorities. A clear distinction needs to be made between training and development and Level 7 (Master Programmes). SDP: SDP consistently promotes all UNITAR programs through various channels, leveraging the expansion of the CGN. We combine the outreach of UNITAR, CGN and the partners to make our programs more visible. SCYCLE: Yes and no. First, UNITAR has to decide whether it is a high-priority strategic area for possible growth. If so, UNITAR has also to amend its business, because accredited high-level education differs substantially from training. NYO: Yes. Increasing visibility is crucial, however, for a specific Targeted Outreach. We need to identify key stakeholders, including potential students, alumni, industry partners, and policymakers, and tailor communication efforts to their interests and needs through various channels.</p>								
	Recommendation	Programme Unit	Accepted Partially accepted Rejected	Proposed action	Budget allocated (if necessary)	Status (planned, under implementation, implemented)	Update on status in 2024 (planned, under implementation, implemented)	Update on status in 2025 – one year (planned, under implementation, implemented)
5.	Explore the potential of institutional accreditation	PTP	Accepted	All collaborative partners and programmes hold both	None	Implemented		

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<p>for the programmes’ portfolio on offer. The lack of institutional accreditation of some programmes is a major concern raised by some evaluation stakeholders, including academic partners, UNITAR and participants. The value of UNITAR’s joint programmes can be further enhanced by ensuring a clear pathway between existing programmes and participants accessing further education, as well as recognition by making the master’s programmes equal to any master’s level degree. With accreditation, UNITAR and the joint programmes model will appeal to high-ranking and well-known universities and attract more participants, thus increasing its sustainability and growth opportunities. International accreditation of joint master’s degrees and other non-degree postgraduate diploma programmes, conducted through various forms of delivery modality (online, blended/hybrid, in-person), would significantly support participants, including those who have already graduated, in accessing the next level of their learning opportunity as well as providing recognition of their training achievement with employers world-wide.</p>			<p>institutional and programme accreditation</p>				
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<p>Exploring the potential of accreditation for the Institute should be done carefully and perhaps on a pilot basis, bearing in mind that UNITAR is above all a training institute established within the framework of the United Nations and that it embraces collaborative partnerships with institutions of higher dedication and universities focusing on themes related to the 2030 Agenda. In fact, accreditation by whom and to whom can be further explored by a cross-division working group on joint programmes.</p>							
	MDP	Accepted	All ongoing joint MDP Masters are accredited by the partner university	N/A	Implemented		
	NYO	Accepted	It is fundamental for the development of existent and future programs. Accreditation validates the quality and credibility of its programs, enhances our reputation, ensures compliance with standards, and fosters trust among stakeholders.	N/A			
	SDP	Accepted	Each of the ongoing joint master programs holds accreditation from the partner university. Keeping the master programs accredited will continue to be one priority when developing master programmes.	N/A	Implemented		
	UNOSAT	Accepted	In general students are selected by the university however, UNOSAT has opened the course to other partners to the	NA			

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			course. Externals with fees to pay were outside the master programme but only for the UNOSAT’s course under this master programme.				
	OED --> Prosperity	Accepted.	It would be good to explore possibility.	NA	NA		
<p>Comments: PTP: Institutional accreditation needs to be a priority for UNITAR. SDP: This recommendation will undergo thorough review and adaptation. SCYCLE: We should learn from UNU in this regard. It took UNU long to get the General Assemblies decision to award MAs and PhDs and being accredited. NYO: Yes, as it fundamental for the development of existent and future programs. Accreditation validates the quality and credibility of its programs, enhances our reputation, ensures compliance with standards, and fosters trust among stakeholders.</p>							

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<p>6. Establish a feedback mechanism, such as a set of procedures and tools established across the programmes for effective and timely communication between the university and participants, to facilitate effective communication between universities and participants and incorporate participants’ experiences in both the programme and instructional design, including implementation. To enhance participants’ experience of the joint programmes, communication between academic partners and the participants, administration and course coordination must be improved as this remains a major concern for a large percentage of participants. Focusing on the participants’ experience will not only further align the programmes to the</p>	PTP	Accepted	PTP and partner universities already implementing these as part of the quality assurance, programme management, and teaching, learning, and assessment evaluations.	None	Under implementation		

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	participants’ needs, but it will also attract more participants and help to distinguish UNITAR’s joint programmes from the many programmes in the increasingly competitive global education market. In this regard, a humanized pedagogy approach that develops a teaching and learning interface that enables agency to own the knowledge and be empowered by it would truly allow UNITAR’s programmes to reach its objectives of inclusivity.							
		MDP	Accepted	MDP and partner universities already implement this	N/A	Under implementation		
		NYO	Accepted	The joint programs are lacking clear body that would serve as a mechanism of in-between clear management, so that the feedback from the students is always responded to and taken into account. This will improve the level of satisfaction with the programs.	N/A			

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		SDP	Accepted	SDP, as most of our partners, use various communication and feedback mechanisms with participants. However, our primary focus is on improving and establishing even more effective channels. This ongoing effort is aimed at facilitating communication among all three parties involved: UNITAR, the partner institutions, and the participants.	N/A	Under implementation		
		UNOSAT	Accepted	Quality assurance is already fully integrated in the process of the master’s course. Evaluations from both UNITAR and the university are collected before and after each course and are used to improve the course for the next year.	NA	Under implementation		

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		OED --> Prosperity	Accepted	Prosperity division has already established mechanism to facilitate communications between participants, partner organisations, and UNITAR.		Under implementation		
<p>Comments: PTP: Yes, but again e need to clear indication from leadership about the clear articulation of the value of these collaborative partnerships and programmes. SDP: Yes, most of our partners, same as SDP does already use various communication mechanisms with participants, our focus remains on enhancing and establishing even more effective channels. This ongoing effort aims to facilitate seamless communication among all three parties involved: UNITAR, the partner and the participants. NYO: Yes, as this pain point has been brought up by multiple respondents in the research, this should be a priority to ensure effective communication and organization. UNITAR can serve as a responsible body for the in-between system of feedback exchange.</p>								

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<p>7. Establish a cross-division working group on joint programmes. A cross division working group, perhaps co-convened by representatives from the two programme units accounting for the largest participant outreach of joint programmes) would facilitate the sharing of lessons, provide a venue for addressing bottlenecks and proposing actions that require whole-of-UNITAR responses, such as development of a strategic approach to joint programmes, development of quality standards specific to master’s degree programmes, communication campaigns, accreditation opportunities, reviewing the fee structure, development of common content to cross-cutting topics, including gender and human rights; promote better synergies between divisions/programme units; and possibly increase resource efficiencies, for instance, by sharing content and experts, including how UNITAR can explore a pool of experienced scientists</p>	PTP	Accepted	This needs to move forward only if leadership decides to integrate the master programmes and collaborative partnerships with universities as a strategic priority and objective.	None	NA		

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	steering UNITAR work in the area of science-based research. Convening such a working group would also reduce the challenges that currently exist with the high turnover of focal points, increase the effective communication flows and strengthen the joint programmes’ partnership model.							
		MDP						
		NYO	Partially accepted.	The only concern is that it has to be done with consideration of the unique backgrounds and unique roles that each of the divisions can offer. Hence, there should be a clear division of the functions of the representatives from each division in the working group. Perhaps, the involvement of only a few divisions is enough.	N/A	N/A		
		SDP	Partially accepted.	Coordination and leadership by UNITAR (PPME, i.a.) are necessary for	NA	NA		

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				this initiative. It's essential that UNITAR evaluates the real need, feasibility, and potential impact of this recommendation.				
		UNOSAT	Accepted	UNOSAT is interested to implement if there are synergies between the topics covered by UNOSAT	NA	NA		
		OED --> Prosperity	Partially accepted	UNITAR has established various cross-programme/ cross-divisional working groups. Some were successful while some with limited results. Such working group should have clear targets with set timeline so that members have clear expectations.	NA	NA		
<p>Comments: PTP: Yes, but it must be informed by (i) articulated as being of strategic importance (ii) UNITAR's leadership decides to establish such a working group and publish the guidelines. SDP: Coordination and leadership by UNITAR (PPME, i.a.) are necessary for this initiative. It's essential that UNITAR evaluates the real need, feasibility, and potential impact of this recommendation. SCYCLE: Only, if it is really of strategic relevance for UNITAR and UNITAR decides also high-level to develop in this direction. It must impact the way of business at UNITAR substantially.</p>								

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	NYO: It has to be done with consideration of the unique backgrounds and takeaways that of each of the divisions can offer. Perhaps, the involvement of only a few divisions is enough.
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