

United Nations Nations Unies

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM
OFFICE OF INTERNAL OVERSIGHT SERVICES · BUREAU DES SERVICES DE CONTRÔLE INTERNE
MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR
INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION · DIVISION DE L'AUDIT INTERNE

TO: Ms. Catherine Pollard, Under-Secretary-General
A: for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance

DATE: 28 October 2025

Mr. Atul Khare, Under-Secretary-General
for Operational Support

FROM: Byung-Kun Min, Director 
DE: Internal Audit Division, OIOS

REFERENCE: OIOS-2025-02144

SUBJECT: **Report 2025/053 on an audit of implementation of the People Strategy in the Secretariat**
OBJET: **(Assignment No. AH2023-512-01)**

1. Please find attached the final report on the above-mentioned audit.
2. Kindly note that OIOS will follow up on the progress made to implement its recommendations and will regularly report on the status of implementation through its online dashboard, as well as through annual and other reports to the Secretary-General and the General Assembly.
3. Please also note that OIOS will post a complete version of the final report on its website 30 days after its issuance in line with General Assembly resolution 69/253.
4. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of DMSPC and DOS for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

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INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2025/053

Audit of implementation of the People Strategy in the Secretariat

While advances were made in implementing the People Strategy, further improvements are needed to achieve sustainable and measurable results

28 October 2025

Assignment No. AH2023-512-01

Audit of implementation of the People Strategy in the Secretariat

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of implementation of the People Strategy in the Secretariat. The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of the management of the implementation of the Strategy. The audit covered the period from January 2021 to March 2025 and focused on implementation of 3 of the 11 components in the Strategy's results framework: (a) workforce planning; (b) talent acquisition; and (c) geographical diversity, and related monitoring and oversight mechanisms.

There was progress in workforce planning from the Headquarters perspective, however, the main barriers to entity-level workforce planning needed to be addressed for it to be effective. The Staff Selection 2.0 programme has been guiding talent acquisition efforts to attract and acquire diverse talents, but there was a need for improved project management of the programme to further enhance these efforts. The strategy for geographical diversity and its support drove progress, but there was a need to prioritize activities that address identified challenges. On the other hand, OIOS noted that the Global Strategy and Policy Division in the Department of Management Strategy, Policy, and Compliance (DMSPC) consistently communicated with stakeholders on strategic goals and progress on implementing the People Strategy, helping to maintain transparency and alignment.

OIOS made three recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, DMSPC needed to:

- Develop, in coordination with the Department for Operational Support, solutions to the main barriers impacting entities' effective implementation of workforce planning;
- Develop detailed plans for each of the Staff Selection 2.0 programme's projects and a shared system for documenting progress, prioritize the programme's implementation, and review the centralization and/or coordination of outreach efforts; and
- Finalize the new United Nations strategy for geographical diversity.

DMSPC accepted the recommendations and has begun implementing them. Actions required to close the recommendations are indicated in Annex I.

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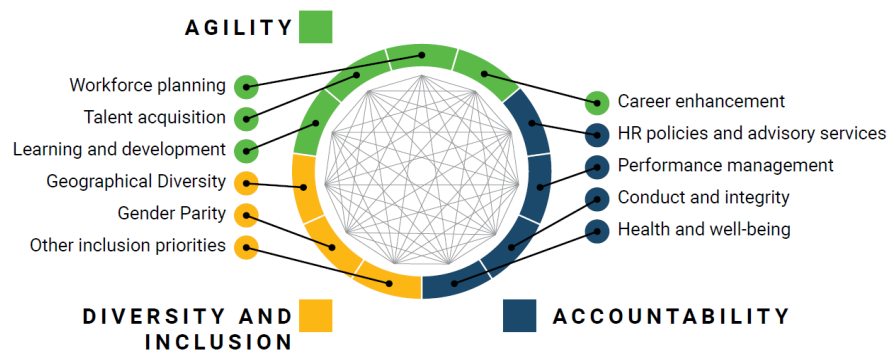
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Audit of implementation of the People Strategy in the Secretariat

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of implementation of the People Strategy in the Secretariat.
2. In 2017, the Secretary-General introduced a new management paradigm to make the United Nations Secretariat more nimble, effective and accountable. This vision required human resources (HR) reforms anchored on two main priorities: (a) a culture that is more focused on results than on processes; and (b) equipping the Organization to evolve to address present and future challenges. The Secretary-General's report (A/72/492) outlined several HR actions for improving operational effectiveness, such as simplifying HR policies, enhancing workforce planning, reinforcing diversity initiatives, and improving recruitment processes. These priorities were integrated into the Global HR Strategy 2019-2021 and the subsequent People Strategy 2021-2025, emphasizing the Organization's commitment to transforming HR systems for future needs.
3. Launched by the Secretary-General in 2018, the Global HR Strategy 2019-2021 aimed to create a more effective, transparent, and accountable United Nations. The Strategy was built around three main components: (a) establishing an enabling policy environment for people management, characterized by simplified, decentralized, and flexible HR policies that are more responsive to field operations; (b) enhancing talent acquisition and management by improving recruitment processes and actively managing the workforce; and (c) transforming the organizational culture to promote staff well-being and foster an engaged workforce within a supportive work environment.
4. The People Strategy 2021-2025, issued in August 2021, builds on the foundation set by the Global HR Strategy. In support of the report of the Secretary-General on Our Common Agenda issued in August 2021, the People Strategy aims to strengthen the United Nations Secretariat's capacity to support its entities in fulfilling their mandates, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by modernizing HR functions to make them forward-looking, responsive, and integrated. It prioritizes gender parity and diversity and emphasizes collaboration across the United Nations system to foster a unified global workforce (One UN). The People Strategy's results framework highlights three long-term outcomes—agility, diversity and inclusion, and accountability—with key components detailed in figure I.

Figure I - Long-term outcomes and key components of the People Strategy



Source: People Strategy 2021-2025: Our road map for the future

5. Subsequently, a report entitled Ways forward in the implementation of HR management reforms for the period 2023-2026 (A/77/590) further built on the People Strategy. It sets out the organizational HR management framework and proposes ways forward to achieve the three long-term outcomes with specific, tangible deliverables and a sample monitoring indicators.

6. The following stakeholders collectively contributed to the development and implementation of the People Strategy:

- (a) United Nations Secretariat staff, who are directly affected by HR policies and reforms.
- (b) Global Strategy and Policy Division (GSPD) in the Office of Human Resources (OHR), Department of Management Strategy, Policy, and Compliance (DMSPC), responsible for developing HR policy, strategy, and compliance to support the overall HR framework.
- (c) Human Resource Services Division (HRSD) in the Office of Support Operations, Department of Operational Support (DOS), provides HR advisory, staffing services and operational support to ensure that entities can effectively exercise their HR delegated authorities, accurately interpret HR policies and effectively implement HR initiatives across the Organization.
- (d) HR practitioners, who execute HR services and programmes within various departments, missions, and offices, ensuring that HR strategies and policies are effectively applied at the operational level.
- (e) Senior leadership ensures that HR strategies are aligned with organizational goals and holds accountability for the successful implementation and outcomes of these strategies.

7. A key enabler of the Strategy is the systematic use of data and business analytics to offer insights into business functions and assist in developing plans and solutions that optimize talent investments and monitor performance effectively. Enterprise resource planning systems like Umoja and Inspira serve as the primary data sources for the enterprise data warehouse (e.g., SAP Hana). Stakeholders use data visualization tools built on a third-party analytics platform integrated with SAP Hana to track progress on global indicators. HRSD and GSPD, as joint business owners and subject matter experts, define the business requirements for data models, which are then developed by the Enterprise Resource Planning Solution Division. Both divisions certify the data models after testing them and confirming that they meet the business requirements and can be used to provide accurate and reliable information for reporting and decision-making.

8. Table 1 shows the composition of the Secretariat's workforce as of 31 December 2023.¹

Table 1 - Composition of the Secretariat's workforce as of 31 December 2023

Category	No. of staff
General service and related	19,143
Professional	12,832
Director level and above	950
Field service	2,915
Total	35,840

¹ Source: A/79/584. The composition as of 31 December 2024 is yet to be published

9. Comments provided by DMSPC are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

10. The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of the management processes for implementation of the People Strategy in the Secretariat.

11. This audit was included in the 2024 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the strategic, operational and financial risks related to the HR management function of the United Nations Secretariat.

12. OIOS conducted the audit from April 2024 to March 2025. The audit covered the period from January 2021 to March 2025. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit focused on the implementation of 3 of the 11 components in the People Strategy's results framework: (a) workforce planning, (b) talent acquisition, and (c) geographical diversity, and related monitoring and oversight mechanisms. These three components were selected for detailed review due to their strategic significance.

13. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with Chiefs of Services and Sections of GSPD and HRSD and other HR staff; (b) focus group discussions with a sample of Chiefs of HR and other HR practitioners of 10 entities² to identify areas requiring attention and challenges in implementation of the People Strategy; and (c) review of management procedures and supporting documents, including strategies, meeting agendas/minutes, progress reports, key performance indicators, and data/information used to measure performance.

14. The audit relied on previous OIOS assessments of the reliability of data related to the business intelligence and data warehouse systems in the United Nations Secretariat,³ which included: (a) electronic testing; (b) review of existing information about the data and the Umoja and Inspira systems that produced them; and (c) interviews of personnel knowledgeable about the data. Based on the results of that audit, and ongoing actions by the client to implement the recommendations (such as the development of standard operating procedures for creation and certification of data models), OIOS determined that the data was sufficiently reliable for the purpose of this audit.

15. The audit was conducted in accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Workforce planning

Strategic workforce planning has progressed

16. Strategic workforce planning (SWP) is the process of developing a medium- to long-term plan (three to five years or more) that aligns workforce needs with the Organization's strategic goals. The Strategic Workforce Planning Section (SWPS) in GSPD serves as the Organization-wide lead to drive a comprehensive approach to SWP, with guidance from the SWP working group. Established in 2021 and

² Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Development Coordination Office, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, United Nations Mission in South Sudan, United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, United Nations Office at Geneva, United Nations Office at Nairobi

³ Report no. 2022/008

composed of representatives nominated by the Management Client Board⁴ (MCB) from all parts of the Secretariat, the SWP working group was formed to ensure that the objectives of strategic workforce planning can be met by incorporating different viewpoints and influencing SWPS' analyses and priorities based on their insights.

16. The SWP framework, developed after the 2019 management reform, was updated in 2023 to align the organizational strategy with workforce needs. The framework follows a six-step cyclical process to ensure continuous improvement and adaptability. The status of planned activities to implement the framework was as follows: (a) completed - strategy alignment (2020); workforce demand analysis (2020); internal/external analysis and scenario planning (2021, updated 2022); and gap analysis (2022); and (b) ongoing - talent management actions (from 2023 to 2025).

17. As a result of the internal/external analysis and scenario planning and in accordance with the Secretary-General's vision for a "UN 2.0", 10 workforce capabilities were defined as cross-cutting priorities to be developed in the workforce and highlighted in the "Quintet of Change" for delivering impact, in which 5 were initially prioritized, namely: data analytics and management, digital transformation, innovation, strategic foresight and behavioural science.⁵ In support, GSPD developed, in coordination with subject matter experts, 45 new generic job profiles (GJPs) for data-specific jobs, which included skills to be assessed during recruitment and for upskilling of staff. To close gaps in workforce capabilities, the effort to update and develop new GJPs has since been scaled up to ensure all jobs in the Organization are covered.

18. Entities were supported in various ways to implement workforce planning:

- (a) GSPD and HRSD developed several guides and toolkits. Also, HRSD developed a Workforce planning for everyone online course in coordination with the Capacity Development and Operational Training Service, and GSPD provided annual workforce profiles for each entity with demographic breakdowns and retirement projections up to 2030, indicating opportunities to rejuvenate the workforce.
- (b) HRSD also provided advice, operational guidance and feedback on strategic workforce analysis to support continuous improvement and realignment, and guided peacekeeping operations in conducting workforce planning and organizational design to meet current and future workforce requirements across diverse operational contexts. This included aligning staffing structures with decentralized management and supporting civilian staffing reviews.
- (c) Dashboards were made available to provide real-time metrics to support monitoring, decision-making, and performance analysis. These included: (i) the Management Dashboard, developed by the Business Transformation and Accountability Division to provide insights to all Secretariat entities on various performance measures and help monitor and assess overall performance against established targets including equitable geographical representation, gender parity and recruitment; and (ii) the United Nations Secretariat workforce portal for Member States, based on Umoja data, showing Member States representation, workforce demographics and retirement projections.

⁴ MCB was established in 2019 as a key mechanism for facilitating communication between DMSPC, DOS and Secretariat entities. Co-chaired by the Under-Secretaries-General of DMSPC and DOS and comprising rotating representatives of Secretariat entities at the head of entity level, MCB role is to gather input on client needs and challenges to ensure that diverse perspectives are considered in HR strategies and their implementation. Staff who support these representatives, e.g., Directors of Administration and Directors/Chiefs of Mission Support, also attend their meetings.

⁵ Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary-General - A/75/982

- (d) As part of the effort to fully digitalize access to workforce data, a workforce movements dashboard was under development and expected to be available by the end of 2025. This dashboard includes data on appointments, separations, promotions, and other details on staff movements by gender, nationality, age range and other variables.

Barriers to effective operational workforce planning needed to be addressed

19. Typically, entities conduct workforce planning in conjunction with the annual budget process. While administratively expedient, this approach may limit workforce planning to a short-term focus, missing opportunities to identify workforce development needs in support of entities' long-term strategic goals.

20. In addition to the annual budget exercise, 6 of the 10 entities represented in the focus group took steps to integrate data analytics skills into their workforce by updating job profiles, tracking attrition, managing vacancies early, reclassifying posts, and/or upskilling/reskilling staff. Two of the six entities conducted civilian staffing reviews in 2023, with the assistance of HRSD. However, the focus group members identified the following challenges/barriers to fully executing entity-level workforce planning:

- (a) Low perceived value – staffing needs identified from reviews were unlikely to be approved; for example, one civilian staffing review identified the need for approximately 100 additional posts, but only 11 were ultimately requested and approved.
- (b) Limited resources – (i) competing priorities such as outreach, recruitment, and performance management activities diverted attention and resources from workforce planning; and (ii) inability to effectively upskill/reskill staff, especially given the entities' low training budgets.
- (c) Lack of guidance – limited understanding on how to assess staff skills.
- (d) Low staff turnover rates – ranging from zero to 3.6 per cent⁶ per entity per annum (1.2 per cent on average), low staff turnover rates limited ability to address workforce gaps and/or evolve the workforce to meet changing needs through attrition.

21. Lack of formal long-term strategic planning by many entities, staff resistance to adopting new processes, and/or inadequate senior management support/prioritization further impeded workforce planning. To ensure the workforce planning framework is realistic, adaptable and achievable, barriers should be identified and comprehensive solutions incorporated into the implementation process. Possible solutions may include the following:

- (a) Training provided to heads of entities and other stakeholders on how workforce planning helps decision-making in areas such as talent management and operational efficiency, and share realized gains.
- (b) Guidance for the entities on breaking down the workforce planning cycle into manageable phases to execute incrementally.
- (c) Emphasis on a long-term strategic planning focus, adapting roles to meet evolving needs rather than simply filling existing vacancies and emphasis on talent development.

⁶ OHR provided figures for 2023 based on the proportion of resignations relative to the staff population under analysis at the beginning of the reporting year. The number excludes temporary staff resignations and staff who are reappointed during the reporting period.

- (d) Develop and encourage the use of additional data-driven workforce planning tools to streamline the process and encourage cross-entity collaboration to share knowledge to reduce redundancy.

(1) DMSPC should, in coordination with DOS, develop comprehensive solutions to the main barriers impacting entities' effective implementation of workforce planning, prioritizing those determined to be the most impactful in supporting the achievement of their strategic and operational goals.

DMSPC accepted recommendation 1 and stated that, in collaboration with DOS, it would seek confirmation from client entities on whether the strategic workforce planning guidance sufficiently supports their needs. The guidance should enable entities to effectively address capability gaps and implement structural changes as part of their budgetary preparation process.

B. Talent acquisition

The Staff Selection 2.0 programme is guiding talent acquisition efforts to attract and acquire diverse talent

22. The People Strategy indicated that client-focused talent acquisition is built upon a framework that helps the Organization to efficiently identify, attract, and acquire diverse talent, leveraging advanced technologies and client-driven processes to meet current and future needs with shorter recruitment timelines. In support, GSPD, in coordination with HRSD, developed the Staff Selection 2.0 programme. Its vision, as detailed in the draft programme initiation document dated September 2022, is for a streamlined system that is effective, fair, efficient, agile and enables the Organization to have a diverse and inclusive workforce that delivers on its evolving mandates, in support of the Secretary-General's priorities and vision of a United Nations "2.0".

23. The programme included nine projects developed in response to shortcomings identified by HRSD-led analyses of the previous system. The projects were organized around three workstreams: (a) job analysis and skill identification; (b) redesign of the application process and development of assessment methods and tools; and (c) ensuring accountability and agility in staff selection. Full implementation of the Staff Selection 2.0 programme is expected in 2026, despite GSPD indication that resource constraints delayed progress. As of January 2025, eight projects were in progress, and one had not yet been started.

24. In support of the programme, the administrative instruction on the staff selection system (ST/AI/2010/3/Rev.3) was overhauled and replaced by new administrative instruction ST/AI/2025/2, effective 1 August 2025. Additional supportive tools developed included: (a) United Nations careers outreach package and careers portal, both launched in 2023 to enhance global outreach and attract diverse talent; (b) talent pipelines for engaging potential candidates; and (c) United Nations mutually recognized roster introduced in 2022, which streamlined recruitment by promoting inter-agency collaboration. In addition, some focus group members reported that their entities received support from GSPD and HRSD to assist them in developing tailored recruitment pipelines, leveraging networks, utilizing tools like Inspira⁷ to improve applicant reach, and expanding talent pools (e.g., to include candidates from under- and unrepresented Members States and females).

25. The programme was introduced at HR conferences, which resumed in 2022 after a five-year break. While focus groups were generally familiar with the programme, understanding of its impact on their work was limited. According to GSPD, broad communication and engagement with staff and entities were pending, awaiting the establishment of project management and governance mechanisms. Temporary

⁷ The United Nations IT system supporting talent management, introduced in March 2010.

resources for project managers (P-5 and P-4) were only approved for 2024, with recruitment completed but onboarding delayed due to financial limitations.

26. Focus group participants also reported that resource constraints hindered their entities' ability to efficiently identify, attract and acquire diverse talent. Entities' reliance on manual tracking of recruitment-related processes, fragmented outreach, and competing priorities, in addition to the inability to assess the impact of outreach efforts, resulted in recruitment inefficiencies. In part, these challenges may be addressed through the full implementation of Staff selection 2.0, which aims to professionalize the sourcing and assessment functions and redistribute recruitment roles and responsibilities; analyze recruitment data, define metrics and develop a data model; and build capabilities and solutions to provide enhanced monitoring data to entities. According to GSPD, efforts are underway to increase the availability of data from transactional systems and develop business intelligence tools for deeper analysis, including tracking applicant diversity and monitoring how candidates progress through the recruitment process. Further to these projects, centralization and/or coordination of certain outreach efforts should be evaluated.

Need for improved project management for full implementation of the Staff Selection 2.0 programme

27. While the Staff Selection 2.0 programme initiation document detailed project objectives and general deliverables, there were no centrally developed and managed project plans to enable its progress to be tracked effectively, including: (a) assigned leads, milestones, start and end dates for each phase and resource allocation; (b) clearly mapped interconnections of work of the different divisions/sections; and (c) a shared system for documenting progress.

28. The projects were managed mainly through the HR commitments⁸ mechanism of GSPD and HRSD, with individual divisions/sections managing their contributing activities in their respective work plans. For example, the 2023 SWPS work plan included three key products associated with two projects: (a) implementation of the GJP format in Inspira, (b) a job analysis and GJP methodology, process and governance, and (c) an ongoing project to use artificial intelligence for scaling up the GJP project.

29. The delays in full implementation of the respective projects, partly due to resource constraints, and the lack of centralized project management further hindered progress of the Staff Selection 2.0 programme.

(2) DMSPC should: (a) develop detailed plans for each of the projects in the Staff Selection 2.0 programme, specifying assigned leads, milestones, resource allocation, clearly mapped interconnections, and a shared system for documenting progress; (b) prioritize the full implementation of the programme; and (c) review centralizing and/or coordinating certain outreach efforts.

DMSPC accepted recommendation 2, stating that detailed plans were being developed in alignment with the iterative deployment and phased approach to the delivery of the Staff Selection 2.0 programme. For Workstream 1, for instance, the plan includes the phased development of GJPs, with a defined timeline extending through 2026.

⁸ HR commitments, introduced in December 2021, aligned activities with the three strategic outcomes of the People Strategy and were reviewed quarterly to track progress. The commitments were defined by GSPD and HRSD to advance reform initiatives and to help ensure coordination across departments and stakeholders.

C. Geographical diversity

The strategy for geographical diversity and its support drove progress, but further improvements were needed to achieve sustainable and measurable progress

30. Building on the efforts on workforce planning and talent acquisition, the United Nations strategy for geographical diversity, launched in 2020, aimed to further enhance diversity across the Organization by focusing on improving representation from under- and unrepresented Member States. The strategy was built around three key streams: (a) internal direction, awareness and knowledge; (b) attracting new talent with renewed focus; and (c) leveraging partnerships and networks.

31. In alignment with the strategy's goals, which guided the mandate, objectives, and deliverables of the Staffing Diversity and Outreach Section (SDOS) in GSPD, key initiatives were implemented and are ongoing, including: (a) developing partnerships with under- and unrepresented Member States to build capacity and understanding of the United Nations recruitment process; (b) collaborating with United Nations Information Centres through agreements with the Development Coordination Office and Department of Global Communications; (c) utilizing outreach tools such as the United Nations Global Talent Pool, global campaigns and events, social media and geographical diversity toolkit; and (d) developing entity-specific action plans with access to the Management Dashboard for tracking geographical representation progress.

32. Monthly reports on desirable ranges and representation status by Member State were circulated by the Strategic Talent Management Service (STMS) in GSPD, though there were still challenges in automating the link between outreach efforts and recruitment results, as previously mentioned. In December 2024, as a result of feedback received from entities, monthly emails sent by STMS on the status of equitable geographical distribution included summarized changes in the previous month, while detailed data, both new and historical, became accessible via a dedicated iSeek⁹ page.

33. Table 2 shows the representation of Member States under the system of desirable ranges¹⁰ as of 31 December 2020 to December 2024.

Table 2 - Representation of Member States under the system of desirable ranges as of 31 December 2020 to December 2024

(Population: 193 Member States)

Category	Unrepresented	Underrepresented	Within range	Overrepresented
December 2020	20	37	109	27
December 2021	21	36	106	30
December 2022	20	37	105	31
December 2023	21	39	103	30
January 2024	18	29	123	23
December 2024	17	31	122	23

Sources: A/78/569, A/79/584 and Umoja

⁹ https://iseek.un.org/system/files/desirable_ranges_of_member_states_and_representation_status.pdf

¹⁰ The system of desirable ranges determines the number of geographical posts funded by the regular budget that are allocated to nationals of Member States, to ensure that each Member State is adequately represented in the Secretariat's staffing at professional and higher categories.

34. The number of geographical posts increased from 3,813 on 31 December 2023 to 5,102 on 31 January 2024 due to the inclusion of peace operations as required by General Assembly resolution 77/278, which became effective on 1 January 2024. This adjustment improved the representation of Member States. However, true progress towards equitable geographical distribution showed mixed results over the five-year period.

35. In 2023, a 26-member working group revisited the strategy for geographical diversity, engaging in consultations and data-driven discussions, with findings regularly presented to the MCB for further refinement and action. The working group evaluated challenges and proposed improvements, including the need for sustained outreach and collaboration with external partners in underrepresented regions. These findings were compiled in a report endorsed by the MCB in January 2024, outlining 93 indicators for 28 high-level actions, though lacking specific targets or clear prioritization methods. GSPD indicated that a new strategy, planned for issuance in 2025, will prioritize these actions.

(3) DMSPC should finalize the new United Nations strategy for geographical diversity, prioritizing actions to address identified challenges and identifying specific targets to further enhance geographical diversity and improve representation from under- and unrepresented Member States.

DMSPC accepted recommendation 3, stating that the updated strategy was being finalized and expected to be launched by the first quarter of 2026.

D. Monitoring and oversight mechanisms

36. Successful implementation of the Organization's People strategy requires comprehensive monitoring and oversight mechanisms to ensure alignment with goals, effective implementation, and achievement of set outcomes. The mechanisms should include governance structures, measurable performance indicators, monitoring and evaluation systems, clear communication, and continuous improvement.

Human Resources commitments were prepared and progress reviewed regularly

37. GSPD, in coordination with HRSD, prepared annual HR commitments outlining specific tasks, initiatives, and actions. First introduced in December 2021, the HR commitments prioritized GSPD and HRSD activities necessary to contribute to the achievement of the three strategic outcomes of the People Strategy. For example, activities to achieve: (a) agility included refining and progressing the implementation of the strategic workforce planning framework, advancing mutual recognition and implementing the new United Nations Values and Behaviours Framework; (b) diversity included launching disability inclusion training and providing guidance on reasonable accommodation for applicants and staff; and (c) accountability included establishing strategic policy imperatives based on guidance from the MCB and promulgating an updated flexible working arrangements policy based on COVID-19 lessons learned.

38. Leads for the various activities were identified at the office and division levels, and the activities were subsequently included in individual division/section-level work plans. However, although reviews of progress towards achieving commitments were conducted quarterly, they were not consistently recorded. GSPD and HRSD explained that progress was being coordinated and monitored through an agile approach, and communicated to Member States through established reporting channels, including human resources management overview reports.

Ability to better align indicators in the Human Resources management framework with Organizational objectives was impacted by system and resource constraints

39. The People Strategy did not include quantifiable targets, benchmarks, and timelines for measuring the strategy's impact. In August 2023, upon request by the General Assembly,¹¹ OHR developed new global indicators, which were introduced in the People Strategy: HR management framework.

40. The new indicators allowed measurement of each key component of the Strategy (see figure 1), and identified the baseline, target and source(s) of data for measurement. However, the indicators did not cover all aspects of some components' objectives. For example, while the strategy indicated that the strategic workforce planning framework aims to ensure "an optimum mix of skills, posts and people available at the right place and at the right time, at present and in the future," the only indicator to assess achievement, change or performance in this area was "increased percentage annually of job openings that include 'data analytics' capabilities needed for future workforce." Although this indicator measures the integration of future-focused skills, such as data analytics, into job openings, it does not directly assess the broader effectiveness of workforce planning. OIOS provided OHR with several examples of other areas where additional indicators were needed to measure achievement of objectives more effectively.

41. In addition, the HR management framework indicated that if targets/measurements were found to be unrealistic or if exogenous factors prevented meeting the targets, entities may adjust the measurements as needed. While the ability to adjust measurements or targets allowed the framework to be flexible and adaptable to different and changing circumstances, it made it difficult to track progress and alignment with the broader Organizational goals. GSPD commented that the primary challenge to improving the quality of indicators was the difficulty in obtaining relevant data, given resource constraints and the investment required to enhance data capacity and information systems. They also stated that as data capabilities evolve, efforts would be made to develop clear protocols for adjusting targets and measurements, ensuring consistency and alignment with organizational goals, and this would enable more robust, evidence-based indicators. Therefore, no recommendation is made on this issue.

GSPD regularly communicated with stakeholders on strategic goals and progress

42. Successful implementation of the People Strategy requires clear and consistent communication of its goals and progress to stakeholders to ensure alignment, accountability, and engagement across the Organization. GSPD regularly communicated information on the strategy through several channels, including an iSeek article in 2021,¹² global HR and heads of administration conferences, working groups and communities of practice, and meetings and briefings with various stakeholders. GSPD also provided the Secretary-General, Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and the General Assembly with updates on progress, challenges and strategic changes. In addition, the MCB served as an effective communication mechanism between DMSPC, DOS and other Secretariat entities. While there was no evidence that the People Strategy was explicitly mentioned during the MCB meetings, its key components were integrated into the agendas and incorporated in broader strategic discussions.

43. OIOS reviewed meeting minutes, agendas, presentations and reports related to these mechanisms, for the period under review, and determined that they generally well informed the work of GSPD and HRSD with regard to the implementation of the People Strategy. OHR indicated that feedback from meetings with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General drove their priorities and were reflected in the HR commitments, individual work plans, and delivery reporting in Umoja.

¹¹ A/RES/77/278

¹² <https://iseek.un.org/article/people-strategy-2021-2025-our-road-map-future>

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

17. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of DMSPC and DOS for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of implementation of the People Strategy in the Secretariat

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹³ / Important ¹⁴	C/ O ¹⁵	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ¹⁶
1	DMSPC should, in coordination with DOS, develop comprehensive solutions to the main barriers impacting entities' effective implementation of workforce planning, prioritizing those determined to be the most impactful in supporting the achievement of their strategic and operational goals.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of actions taken to address the main barriers impacting entities' effective implementation of workforce planning.	31 March 2027
2	DMSPC should: (a) develop detailed plans for each of the projects in the Staff Selection 2.0 programme, specifying assigned leads, milestones, resource allocation, clearly mapped interconnections, and a shared system for documenting progress; (b) prioritize the full implementation of the programme; and (c) review centralizing and/or coordinating certain outreach efforts.	Important	O	Receipt of detailed plans for each of the Staff Selection 2.0 programme's projects and a shared system for documenting progress, evidencing prioritization of the programme's implementation, and review of the centralization and/or coordination of outreach efforts.	31 December 2026
3	DMSPC should finalize the new United Nations strategy for geographical diversity, prioritizing actions to address identified challenges and identifying specific targets to further enhance geographical diversity and improve representation from under- and unrepresented Member States.	Important	O	Receipt of the updated strategy for geographical diversity.	31 March 2026

¹³ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

¹⁴ Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

¹⁵ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

¹⁶ Date provided by DMSPC in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Management Response

APPENDIX I

Management Response

Audit of implementation of the People Strategy in the Secretariat

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹⁷ / Important ¹⁸	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	DMSPC should, in coordination with DOS, develop comprehensive solutions to the main barriers impacting entities' effective implementation of workforce planning, prioritizing those determined to be the most impactful in supporting the achievement of their strategic and operational goals.	Important	Yes	Chief of Section, Human Resources Management, OHR/DMSPC	31 March 2027	DMSPC, in collaboration with DOS, will seek confirmation from client entities on whether their strategic and operational workforce planning guidance sufficiently supports their needs, including enabling entities to effectively address capability gaps and reflect structural changes as part of their budgetary preparation process.
2	DMSPC should: (a) develop detailed plans for each of the projects in the Staff selection 2.0 programme, specifying assigned leads, milestones, resource allocation, clearly mapped interconnections, and a shared system for documenting progress; (b) prioritize the full implementation of the programme; and (c) review centralizing and/or coordinating certain outreach efforts.	Important	Yes	Senior Programme Management Officer, OHR/DMSPC	31 December 2026	DMSPC notes that detailed plans are being developed in alignment with the iterative deployment and phased approach to delivery of Staff Selection 2.0. For Workstream 1, for instance, the plan includes the phased development of generic job profiles, with a defined timeline extending through 2026.
3	DMSPC should finalize the new United Nations strategy for geographical diversity, prioritizing actions to address	Important	Yes	Chief of Section, Human	31 March 2026	The updated strategy is being finalized and is set to be launched by the first quarter of 2026.

¹⁷ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

¹⁸ Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

Management Response

Audit of implementation of the People Strategy in the Secretariat

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹⁷ / Important ¹⁸	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
	identified challenges and identifying specific targets to further enhance geographical diversity and improve representation from under- and unrepresented Member States.			Resources Management, OHR/DMSPC		