



United Nations Institute for Training and Research



unitar



Board of Trustees

Special Session

UNITAR/BT/SS/2015

13 April 2015

23 April 2015

Geneva, Switzerland

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OF THE 2015 SPECIAL SESSION

1. The Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) convened in special session on 13 April 2015.

2. The following members of the Board were present at the session:

Mr. Alexey Borodavkin (Russian Federation)

Mr. Alexandre Fasel(Switzerland)

Ms. Taous Feroukhi (Chair).....(Algeria)

Mr. Thomas Fitschen(Germany)

Ms. Marta Maurás Perez.....(Chile)

Mr. Per Örénius(Sweden)

Mr. Alfonso Quiñonez (Intergovernmental organization)

Mr. Alfredo Valladão(Brazil)

Ex Officio:

Mr. Michael Møller, Acting Director-General, United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG)
Represented by Mr. David Chikvaidze, Chef de Cabinet, UNOG

Ms. Sally Fegan-Wyles, Acting Head, Executive Director, UNITAR

Secretary:

Mr. Brook Boyer, UNITAR

3. Under item 1, opening of the session, the Chair welcomed trustees and in particular the new trustees recently appointed by the Secretary-General to the Board, announced that the special session was convened in accordance with rule 3 of the rules of procedure and confirmed that the Board had established quorum with 8 of 11 members present.
4. Under item 2, adoption of the agenda, the Chair introduced the provisional that was adopted by the Board as proposed.
5. Under item 3, draft Report by the Secretary-General on Consultations on research, training and library services, A/70/xx-E/2015/xx, the Chair indicated that she had received the draft report on 9 March 2015 and requested the Secretary to clarify the difference between the present draft report and the Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Institute for Training and Research to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) which had also been circulated to the Board. The Secretary indicated that the Report of the Secretary-General on UNITAR (E/2015/12) is a report that the Secretary-General issues every two years on the work of UNITAR and is presented to ECOSOC, and that the draft Report by the Secretary-General on Consultations on research, training and library services is an update report on the consultations between the Special Advisor to the Secretary-General and the concerned research and training institutes.
6. The Chair recalled that the report on consolidation which was issued previously was thoroughly discussed at the Fifty-fifth Session of the Board in November 2014, that there was no value added in re-opening the matter and that the circulation of the draft Report was the main reason for the decision to convene the special session. One member, in recalling the Board's decision that it did not support consolidation, thought that the draft Report and the accompanying letter of the Assistant Secretary-General and Special Advisor to the Secretary-General of 9 March 2015 reflected the fact that consolidation was indeed a closed matter. The Chair then presented a number of elements of possible concern with the draft Report that was circulated to trustees during the meeting (as annexed).
7. In responding to the Chair's concerns, one trustee found the draft Report to be a positive development, underscoring that there would be no structural changes and that the mandate and governance of UNITAR would be preserved. On the autonomous nature of the Institute, the member remarked that while UNITAR enjoys much autonomy, it remains an entity in the UN system and that it would be important for the Institute to pursue strengthened forms of collaboration and synergy particularly in light of the Sustainable Development Goals. In concluding, he thought that it would be important to read the report together with the accompanying letter of the Special Advisor. In acknowledging the member's comments, the Chair observed that the Institute has already been cooperating with many UN agencies and indicated that there could be concern that the coordinating arrangements mentioned in the draft Report, namely, the Advisory Group on Learning and Training, and the Learning Steering Committee, could impede the Institute from freely pursuing different forms of cooperation. The Chair also added that discussions should focus on the draft Report that would be circulated to Member States, as opposed to the letter by the Special Advisor which was addressed to the Board.
8. Another member recalled the Board's position that any administrative restructuring of different institutions was not needed and that more collaboration among the research and training institutes was desirable with enhanced synergy and complementarily while avoiding unnecessary duplication. The trustee understood the draft Report as addressing

how this enhanced collaboration could be managed in terms of structure, and how more cooperation and synergy could be addressed at an early stage in preparing and formulating the programme budget and priorities, prior to the Board approving work programmes and adopting budgets, or the governing bodies of other organizations approving their respective work programmes and budgets.

9. The Chair raised the concern that the voluntary nature of the coordination arrangements applied more to the research entities and those institutes focusing on training. One member, in sharing the views expressed by other trustees, observed that the arrangements such as the Learning Steering Committee as an organizational structure intended to support better collaboration and synergy, and that the Board's decisions would not be supplanted by such a committee. In expressing his views that consolidation appears to be a dead issue, another member thought that the voluntary arrangements would help drive business for UNITAR, observing that funds, programmes and agencies often create their own training mechanisms, formats and events rather than working in collaboration with UNITAR.
10. Another member observed that the letter by the Special Advisor was clear that there would be no consolidation and that the Secretary-General could establish bodies under his authority, and that this would not diminish any autonomy. With regard to the two bodies to be established, the member observed the voluntary basis of the arrangements, as stated in the draft Report and the important role that the Board would have to ensure that UNITAR collaborates in the two bodies to maximize benefits. The member cautioned, however, that it was not entirely clear what the Learning Steering Committee would do or how it would function, and suggested that the Board should seek some clarification.
11. Another trustee recalled the context of the discussions over the past two years and that the Board had acknowledged that more coordination and collaboration among the institutes would be desirable. The member supported the suggestion that the Board request clarification on the Learning Steering Committee's functions.
12. Another member observed that the concerns expressed by the Chair could be justified in so far as the draft Report could be interpreted differently in the Secretariat. He suggested that the Board convey its position clearly on the draft Report.
13. In relation to the libraries board, one ex officio member was not entirely clear on the value added of a new management layer and its terms of reference and membership.
14. **The Board understood the draft Report on Consultations on research, training and library services, A/70/xx-E/2015/xx, as an update on the selective consultations; that the existing legal status, mandate and governance structure of UNITAR would be maintained in their entirety; and that envisaged efforts would be undertaken to further enhance synergies and collaboration with other entities on a voluntary basis. The Board understood the bodies mentioned in the draft Report and in particular the Advisory Group on Learning and Training, and the Learning Steering Committee to be voluntary arrangements. The Board requests to be consulted in the development of the terms of reference of the Learning Steering Committee.**
15. Under item 4, Appointment of the next Executive Director, the Chair announced that pursuant to the provisions under Article IV, paragraph 2 of the UNITAR Statute, the Secretary-General has engaged with the Board on the appointment of the Institute's next Executive Director, and that the Secretary-General intends to appoint Mr. Nikhil Seth of India as communicated in the Secretary-General's letter to the Chair of 9 April 2015. Recognizing that trustees may not have had ample time to review the candidate's profile ahead of the special session, the Chair proposed that trustees submit their views to her

by email until Monday, 20 April 2015, prior to her conveying the views of the Board to the Secretary-General. **The Board agreed.**

16. Under item 5, Any other business, one Member made an observation on the current composition of the Board and expressed his desire that the Board re-establish a broad-based composition of trustees across government, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental and private sectors. The Executive Director announced that the process was underway to appoint several additional trustees, and that it was the Institute's desire to have a broad profile of members, including ensuring balanced gender and geographic representation.
17. The Executive Director briefed the Board on the ongoing migration to Atlas, noting with appreciation the excellent cooperation and support UNITAR is receiving from UNOG and the United Nations Controller on this issue.
18. The session was adjourned.

Annex

DRAFT REPORT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE CONSULTATIONS ON RESEARCH, TRAINING AND LIBRARY SERVICES:

ELEMENTS FOR DISCUSSION CIRCULATED BY THE CHAIR

- i) The draft report refers to a “*new collaboration model (...) on entities which are under the authority of the Secretary-General (...)*”. In accordance with its Statute, UNITAR is an autonomous institution within the framework of the United Nations.
- ii) According to the draft report, two bodies will be created – an Advisory Group on Learning and Training and a Knowledge and Learning Steering Committee. I would like to seek clarification on the establishment of bodies under the authority of the Secretary-General, which would relate to an autonomous institution and interfere in its functioning, without any prior consultation with its governing body.
- iii) Previous deliberations and decisions of UNITAR’s governing body (2013 and 2014), concerned an attempt to consolidated training and research Institutes. This “new model of collaboration” appears now as a new concept, which had not been presented before UNITAR’s Board of Trustees. I would like to emphasize that I first learned about this proposed “new model of collaboration” through the draft report, which was sent to me on 9 March 2015.
- iv) The concept of “voluntary collaboration” appears to be applicable to research entities, where collaboration is recognized as a long time endeavor, dependent on the will of individuals and subject to the support of Member States, whereas for training services it must be imposed and controlled with the creation of new structures under the leadership of the Secretary-General. On this point, it is important to recall that it is UNITAR’s governing body that has the statutory role to formulate and approve principles and policies that govern the activities and operations of the Institute.
- v) The draft report attempts to disrupt UNITAR’s statutory mandate, as established by the General Assembly. It also generates a number of doubts when indicating that “The two streams of training services will be *linked together* to ensure that *knowledge and IT resources* that are relevant to both work streams are *shared*” (emphasis added). I seek clarifications on the real meaning of sharing IT resources, which involves structural changes that are subject to UNITAR’s governing body’s decision.
- vi) The draft report calls for a “holistic and coherent approach for the process of planning and developing learning (...)” , without taking into account UNITAR’s governing body statutory role to consider and approve the work programme and adopt the budget of the Institute.
- vii) The draft report refers to “under-utilization of existing training services and over expenditure of resources”, raising doubts about the efficiency of UNITAR and about the effective role of its governing body in approving its finances, without presenting facts. In this sense, the authority and integrity of UNITAR’s Board of Trustees is threatened.

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- viii) **Last but not least, surprisingly the draft report attempts to introduce a concept of shared responsibility between the Knowledge and Learning Steering Committee, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, and UNITAR's governing body. It suggests that UNITAR's Board of Trustees would share its statutory role with a Committee that has no legal authority to interfere on the functioning of the Institute.**

Algiers, 13TH April 2015