15th Meeting of Senior Fellowships Officers of the United Nations System and Host Country Agencies

Final Report

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1. Executive Summary

The year 2004 was a commemorative year for fellowships services and programmes of the United Nations system. It marked the 30th anniversary of the Meeting of Senior Fellowships Officers. In early 70s, training and fellowship activities of the UN agencies were on the rise in response to pressing development needs of many member states. In order to promote the exchange of information and to reach a common position on various issues pertaining to fellowships, training and fellowships services system-wide were in need of a main organizational framework with an appropriate coordination machinery which provided for the designation of a Secretary in one agency to serve as focal point. In 1974, the Administrative Committee on Coordination approved the convening of the First Meeting of the Senior Fellowships Officers of the UN system. Since then, this forum has met biennially 15 times.

For three decades now, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and its predecessors have served as Secretary and Focal Point for inter-agency fellowship coordination. UN/DESA has played a major role in streamlining and harmonizing the fellowship practices among the UN agencies. Senior Fellowships Officers have continuously commended the serious commitment and dedication of DESA. Based on the results achieved by each meeting, they have acknowledged that never before had UN/DESA put in place a stronger inter-agency fellowship coordination mechanism than in the last two meetings in 2002 and 2004.

In this anniversary, the Senior Fellowships Officers came up with a series of major accomplishments:

- The Joint Inspection Unit has ranked Fellowships as one of the best coordinated activities in the United Nations system;
- The 14th Meeting at IAEA Headquarter in Vienna in 2002 reached a breakthrough: It harmonized all the policies, procedures and entitlements on Fellowships and agreed on a common definition of fellowships;
- The 15th Meeting at WHO Headquarter in Geneva in 2004 harmonized all the policies, procedures and entitlements on Study Tours and Group Training and agreed on the common definitions of these activities. They are reproduced in Annexes IV and V of this report. Recommendations with financial implications are being sent for approval to the CEB High Level Committee on Management;
- Agendas have included major items which have had a significant impact on the training activities of the UN agencies. “Transparency in the Fellowships Selection Process” (2002); “Quality of Fellowships Programmes” (2004); and “South-South Cooperation” (scheduled for 2006) are cases in point.
- UN/DESA has established its own Website which has been linked to the websites of several UN agencies and serves as a common site to post stipend rates and other documents of common use.

The Meeting of Senior Fellowships Officers has served as a framework not only to tackle problems of common concern, but also to share the best practices among the agencies. It has developed a sense of responsibility and togetherness. Agencies have expressed a genuine willingness to make available to one another their best accomplishments and practices.
In this anniversary, fellowships services and programmes are more coordinated and consolidated than ever. However, looking into the future, they are conscientious that the new trends in international development cooperation pose new challenges, which can be overcome only through concerted efforts and continuous coordination.

2. Introduction

1. This report comprises the deliberations of the 15th Meeting of the Senior Fellowships Officers of the United Nations system which convened at the Headquarter of the World Health Organization in Geneva from 13 to 15 October 2004. The Meeting was organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA), as Focal Point for inter-agency fellowship coordination, with the support of the World Health Organization as the host. This Convocation marked the 30th Anniversary of the Meeting of the Senior Fellowships Officers of the United Nations System. Coincidentally, it was again the World Health Organization which hosted the First Meeting back in 1974.

2. In this Anniversary, UN/DESA extended invitations to all the UN agencies, funds, programmes, and Secretariat Departments, which had training and fellowships programmes. With 40 representatives from 26 organizations of the UN system and some leading national agencies, the 15th Meeting marked the largest participation ever in such an important event the Senior Fellowship Officers. UNDP Headquarters, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the International Trade Centre (INTRACEN) attended for the first time. The list of participants is attached as Annex III.

3. The Representatives elected Dr. Abdul-Monem Al-Mashat, Scholarship Administrator in the World Bank, as Chairman of the Meeting. Ms. Jeannette Dias, Associate Expert in UN/DESA, was elected as Rapporteur. Mr. Furio De Tomassi, Chief, Personnel Service, Technical Cooperation and Management Services, UN/DESA, served as Secretary of the Meeting.

4. The Agenda of the Meeting had an ambitious programme of work which is detailed in Annex II. The main item on the Agenda was the Quality of Fellowships Programmes which was prepared by the Peer Review Group headed by WHO/EURO.

5. The Meeting adopted a series of conclusions and recommendations which are reproduced in Annex I. Most importantly, the Meeting agreed on the common definitions of a Study Tour and Group Training as well as on the harmonization of all the policies and procedures governing the administration of Study Tours and Group Training in the United Nations system detailed in Annex 4 and Annex 5 respectively.
3. Opening Statements

A. Opening Address by Dr. Tim Evans, Assistant Director-General, WHO.

6. In his Opening Address the Assistant Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr. Tim Evans, pointed out that the World Health Organization (WHO) was a specialized agency of the United Nations whose objective was the “attainment by all people of the highest possible level of health”. Under its Constitution, the World Health Organization is required to assist governments in the strengthening of health services, to enhance cooperation among scientific and professional groups which contribute to the advancement of health, to promote improved standards of teaching and training in the health, medical and related professions and thereby to help national administrations to raise the level of health.

7. From the time of its establishment, the World Health Organization acknowledged the need for every country to develop and maintain a workforce of skilled, knowledgeable people within the health care system. The education and training requirements of such a workforce are varied and often complex. The WHO fellowships programme was set up in order to assist countries to meet those requirements.

8. The WHO fellowships programme provides opportunities through individual or group training for: (a) training and study in health matters which might not be available in the candidate’s own country (such training would be provided abroad or through a distance learning); (b) the international exchange of scientific knowledge and transfer of technology and; (c) specialist training in the candidate’s own country where suitable facilities exist. Provision for fellowships are made under each area of work within the Programme Budget. Fellowships might be included in the work plan as one of several different forms of assistance to governments, or, if they are the only form of assistance being provided, they are considered as an activity in themselves.

9. Fellowships administered by the World Health Organization might be financed from its regular funds, the United Nation Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Bank, the Voluntary Fund for Health Promotion or other public or private sources of funding.

10. The facilities of the World Health Organization are placed at the disposal of governments for the administration of fellowships in the framework of their national health programmes. Such facilities are also made available to the United Nations, its specialized agencies, other intergovernmental or nongovernmental organizations, for the administration of fellowships in the field of health. The World Health Organization might request the same facilities from other organizations, too, in order to implement its own fellowships and training activities.

11. Global WHO fellowships programme facilitate, coordinate and monitor fellowships policies and activities in all WHO regions and guide policy directions and changes to respond better to country priorities. The fellowships programme continues to be an important activity at global, regional and national level. Today, a WHO Fellowships is defined as a significant component of human resources development, as a productive and direct tool of training of human resources, which remains an essential part of WHO cooperation with, and capacity building in, countries.
12. Speaking about the Meeting of Senior Fellowships Officers of the UN system, Dr. Evans emphasized that the Meeting was a unique forum, which promoted harmonization, encouraged discussions of issues of mutual interest among specialized agencies and enhanced the sharing of information and the exchange of ideas. He anticipated a tremendous amount of work during the deliberations of the meeting but also a lot of opportunities for strengthening the fellowships not only within WHO but across the UN family as a whole. He looked forward to hearing the results and outcomes of the Meeting.

B. General Introduction by Mr. Furio De Tomassi, Secretary of the Meeting and Chief, Personnel Service, UN/DESA.

13. Mr. De Tomassi made a general introduction in his capacity as Secretary for Inter-Agency Fellowships Coordination. To begin with, he congratulated Mr. Abdul Al-Mashat on his election as Chairman of the 15th Meeting of the Senior Fellowships Officer of the UN system organizations and expressed his confidence that with his personal skills and professional experience, Mr. Al-Mashat would preside over the deliberations of the Meeting with competence and efficiency. He also expressed his profound gratitude to the World Health Organization for hosting the 15th Meeting of the Senior Fellowships Officers of the UN system and major National Placement and Supervising Agencies. He noted that WHO was also the host of the first meeting of the Senior Fellowships Officers (SFOs) back in 1974. Over the years, WHO made a great contribution to the strengthening of the inter-agency fellowships coordination. Mr. De Tomassi also paid tribute to the outgoing Chairperson, Ms. Farida Abou-Shady, for the excellent manner in which she conducted the proceedings of the 14th Meeting at IAEA Headquarter in Vienna in November 2002.

14. The Geneva Meeting marked the 30th anniversary of the Meeting of Senior Fellowships Officers. In this regard, Mr. De Tomassi briefly outlined the history of this Forum. He recalled that in 1973 the then Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Sub-Committee on Education and Training noted that the growing share of UNDP-financed operations and the existence of common problems concerning fellowships called for an exchange of information among agencies and a common stand on various questions. The Sub-Committee recommended that the Administrative Committee on Coordination authorized the convening of a meeting of Fellowships Officers of the UN system (COORD/R.975). The meeting took place in 1974 at the WHO Headquarters in Geneva under the auspices of the ACC Sub-Committee on Education and Training.

15. The coordination machinery for fellowships began in 1976 on the basis of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit contained in the report on fellowships in the United Nations system as adopted by the ACC in 1976 (JIU/REP/76/1). The Preparatory Committee approved the arrangements proposed by the Sub-Committee on Education and Training concerning inter-Secretariat coordination of activities relating to fellowships. These arrangements provided for the designation of a Secretary in one organization to serve as focal point with the following specified functions: a) promote the exchange of information on matters concerning fellowships; b) help to identify the interests and needs for further fellowships coordination; c) carry out consultations as may be required to deal with specific and urgent problems; d) prepare the agenda for regular meetings of Fellowships Officers; and e) ensure that
reports of these regular meetings were made available to the Sub-Committee on Education and Training.

16. For three decades now, the Meeting had served as the main framework for inter-agency coordination on system-wide issues relating to the management of training and fellowships. Over the years, it has grown in scope and strength. It has become an all-inclusive Forum, which covers the entire spectrum of the UN system organizations as well as major National Placement and Supervising Agencies. While the first meeting started with 16 agencies, today the number of participating agencies has almost doubled. The agenda has also evolved from a few selected topics of an organizational and administrative nature to administrative, financial, operational and substantive issues, as well.

17. Mr. De Tomassi drew a balance-sheet of the accomplishments of the Meeting of the Senior Fellowships Officers over the past 30 years. The results were quite tangible. No fellowships issue had remained untackled. Policies and procedures on fellowships, study tours and group training were well in place. Fellowships issues had been fully harmonized without affecting the specific nature and the peculiarities of the fellowships programmes of the agencies. Stipend rates have been established for most of the countries and were reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Agencies are applying these rates across the board. A consensus has also been reached on the definition of a Fellowship in the UN system. The administrative charges levied on our programmes by the National Placement and Supervising Agencies are uniform. UN/DESA has created a fellowships website which serves all agencies.

18. Then, he touched briefly upon the recent developments and trends in technical cooperation activities which had given additional importance to the coordination of fellowships in the UN system. South-South cooperation was becoming the mainstream model in the developing world. All the agencies of the UN system and the regional commissions have included South-South cooperation in their activities. The UN system is one of the principal pillars of international support for the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). To that effect, UN agencies are aligning their activities with the priorities of NEPAD. The North-South cooperation has assumed additional impetus with a new compact reached between the developed and the developing countries in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. He emphasized that these developments have brought about another form of technical cooperation – the triangular cooperation – which is gaining new significance. The Report of the High Level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries has concluded that the most frequently noted activities in South-South cooperation were training and the provision of experts to the developing countries (A/58/39, p.19). These training activities appear in the form of study tours as well as individual and group training programmes.

19. In this context, Mr. De Tomassi presented a challenging meeting agenda, which aimed at maximising the use of education and training as means of transferring knowledge and skills in all directions. The main item on the agenda was the Quality of Fellowships Programmes. He reminded representatives that in the last meeting in Vienna a Peer Review Group was set up in order to collect and analyze the best existing practices among the agencies and to present the results at this meeting. The Coordinator of this Group was the Representative of WHO/EURO, Dr. Jibek Karagulova. The presence of some leading National Placements and Supervising Agencies would facilitate the discussion. These agencies had been working closely with various organizations of the UN system. Over the years they had made a valuable contribution to the effectiveness of the training programmes.
20. Mr. De Tomassi underlined the importance of having at the meeting the representative of the Conditions of Service Section of the UN Secretariat. That entity had the mandate, among others, to review and approve the fellowships stipend rates, be they regular or ad hoc, as well as the ad hoc DSA for study tour and meeting participants when training circumstances so warranted. Agencies would be briefed on the global review of the fellowships stipend rates which was already underway.

21. Mr. De Tomassi expected an interesting discussion on the new requirements of UNDP country offices resulting from the introduction of Atlas and People’s Soft as well as the impact of such changes on the work of the fellowships services and programmes. As custodian of the resident coordinator system, the UNDP was the largest service provider at the programme country level to all UN organizations. For each administrative transaction, the UN organizations were assessed an implementation support service fee by UNDP, based on harmonized cost definitions.

22. Another item on the agenda was the IAPSO annual statistical report, particularly the section on training and fellowships. IAPSO promoted harmonization and coordination among many operations of the UN. This harmonization and coordination would be better served when the agencies would get acquainted with the latest IAPSO requirements and would follow the same format of reporting on their training programmes, as recommended by the Joint Inspection Unit (A/53/154).

23. A comprehensive review of the entitlements for study tour and meeting participants was planned for the second day. Mr. De Tomassi reminded the agencies that this item was on the agenda of the last meeting but, due to time constraints, was not considered. The standardization of the procedures and entitlements for these two categories of trainees had become a must. Cost-sharing activities and triangular technical cooperation call for unified policies and entitlements among all the agencies. If this task could be accomplished the Fellowships Officers would reconfirm once again what has already been acknowledged by the Joint Inspection Unit, that fellowships in the United Nations System is one of the the best coordinated activity.

24. The representative of Van Breda and Co. International would also take the floor on the second day which would be an opportunity for agencies to revisit the many issues which were raised in the last meeting concerning the premiums, the contractual arrangements, the participating groups and the conclusion of individual contracts by each agency with Van Breda.

25. In conclusion, Mr. De Tomassi thanked all the representatives for their participation in the meeting and for the time and effort they spent in preparing and submitting their papers. It was his firm belief that the meeting would be characterized by a policy-focused discussion, accompanied by practical and mutually agreeable solutions, which would further strengthen the inter-agency coordination on training and fellowships.
4. Operational Issues

A. Quality of Fellowships Programmes

Peer Review/Study on the Quality of Fellowships Programmes of the UN System

26. Dr. Jibek Karagulova, Fellowships Medical Officer, WHO/EURO, presented the summary of the findings of the Peer Review/Study on the Quality of the fellowships programmes (QFP) of the UN System agencies. She informed her colleagues that the essential aims of the Review/Study were to analyze possible sources of related information, to collect data, to develop an evidence base within the area of training programmes and to identify the factors which contributed to the quality of training programmes. Another aim was to lay out recommendations to improve the quality of training and to discuss them with the Meeting participants. The overall results would be forwarded to the training institutions involved in the Review. In this context, the work of the Peer Review Group concentrated on the analysis of some publications in order to use them as guidelines during the data review process. Furthermore, it requested the UN agencies’ contribution through the submission of Termination of Studies Reports (ToSRs of WHO-635) as well as the Utilization of Fellows’ Services (WHO-55) of some of the ex-WHO fellows. Finally a questionnaire was designed and distributed among all the agencies and the results of the completed questionnaires were analyzed.

27. To prepare the study, Dr. Karagulova made special reference to the publication “Evaluating Training Programmes: The Four Levels” written by Donald L. Kirkpatrick in July 1998. He proposes four levels to evaluate programmes. Each of these levels has an impact on the others. They are:

Level I → Reaction: As a measure of customer satisfaction

Level II → Learning: In order to evaluate learning, the specific objectives must be determined

Level III → Behaviour: Change in behaviour has occurred because the fellow attended the training programme. It may or may not depend on the quality of training programme

Level IV → Results: The most important and perhaps the most difficult of all – to identify what final results occurred because of participation in a training programme.

28. For change to occur, level III requires four conditions: a) the individual ought to have a desire to change; b) the individual must know what and how to do it; c) the individual must work in the right climate; and d) the individual must be rewarded for change either intrinsically or extrinsically. It is important to evaluate both reaction and learning in case no change in behaviour occurs. Reasons for no sign of change could be either due to ineffective training programmes or as a result of a wrong job climate and lack of rewards.

29. When planning a programme, the trainers should consider the desired results by placing emphasis on the need to determine what knowledge, skills and attitudes would produce the desired behaviour. The final challenge is to present the training programme in a way that enables the participants not only to learn what they need to know, but also to react favourably to the programme.
30. Dr. Karagulova then presented the Trilogy of WFME Documents. The central part of the WFME strategy is to give priority to specification of international standards and guidelines for medical education, comprising both institutions and their educational programmes. The Trilogy consists of three documents: a) Basic Medical Education; b) Postgraduate Medical Education; c) Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of Medical Doctors. WFME recommends the following set of global standards in Postgraduate Medical Education, structured according to the following 9 areas: 1) Mission and Outcomes; 2) Training Process; 3) Assessment of Trainees; 4) Trainees; 5) Staffing; 6) Training Settings & Educational Resources; 7) Evaluation of Training Process; 8) Governance & Administration; and 9) Continuous Renewal.

31. Turning to the brief analysis of the contribution of the UN agencies, Dr. Karagulova underlined that the Peer Review Group received examples of best practices or key factors contributing to the fellowships programme from ITTO, WB, WHO/WPRO and WHO/EURO. The following stakeholders had taken part in the e-mail discussion: WB, WHO/EMRO, WHO/PAHO, WHO/SEARO, WHO/WPRO, WHO/EURO. The aim was to support Member States in developing their nationals by providing countries with fellowships related to their priorities and to increase the number of trained people within the region or country to lead in their professional area. The modalities of training are specially tailored individual training, fixed courses, distance learning, specially arranged courses on specific subjects and study tours for individuals or small groups.

32. Dr. Karagulova noted that one of the inspiring examples for best practices within UN agencies was the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO). ITTO pays considerable attention to the selection of the right fellows as it is one of the main contributing success factors to the programme. Nine members of the ITTO Fellowships Selection Panel (chairperson, representatives of three producer and three consumer countries, secretariat) meet twice a year to review the selection criteria, priority areas and budget guidelines for the fellowships programme. One of the latest meetings of the Panel was devoted to the revision and improvement of the selection criteria.

33. Another good example was the World Bank which follows the guidelines of the global fellowships programme and aims at increasing the number of trained people within the region or country to lead in their professional area. The impact of the World Bank Project is the preparation of highly trained professionals who formulate and implement policies. More than 30 percent of its alumni have been posted in high-level policy making jobs upon their return from the programme. Another 30 percent of alumni returned to positions in academia where they influence public policies in their countries. Another objective is to maintain intellectual and/or operational ties between the alumni and the World Bank. Alumni stay in touch with one another as well as with the World Bank. Several alumni are responsible for their country’s operational programmes with the World Bank. What was striking about the graduates who were interviewed by the evaluation team is their dedication to work for the development of their countries. Evidence of this dedication is also seen in the high rate of graduates (75 percent) who return home after completing their studies abroad.

34. WHO/WPRO evaluated the programmes thoroughly, involving all the key stakeholders: WHO, sending and receiving countries, host institutions, fellows and other partners. The means of programme evaluation included: the analysis of routine reports (Termination of Studies Reports and Utilization of Fellow Services Reports), the rapid follow-up studies of fellowships and study tours done periodically since 1991 and programme evaluation.
through questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions. Dr. Karagulova focused on the evaluation of the impact of the two training courses on OR/RH organized by WHO/EURO RH & fellowships programmes in cooperation with WHO/HQ & Population Council/Frontiers. The aim was to evaluate the impact of OR/RH workshops organized in 2001 and 2003. The key actions were to design and distribute the Questionnaires to the stakeholders, then to collect the feedback and analyze the data. Finally, a report was prepared with recommendations on the improvement of OR/RH workshops.

35. After a thorough analysis of Termination of Studies Reports (ToSR) (WHO-635) and Utilization of Fellow Services Reports (UoFSR) (WHO/55) of the former WHO fellows, Dr. Karagulova found out that none of the reports had a negative reaction but also stated that sometimes reports could not be fully open or objective. However, Termination of Studies Reports remained one of the main tools for the evaluation of the fellowships training programmes.

36. Dr. Karagulova gave a brief overview of the findings based on study Questionnaires. The overall objectives were to collect data and develop an evidence base within the area of training programmes. The Peer Review Group sought to identify key problems that training institutions were faced with and to explore how best to support them in strengthening the training process as well as to improve the quality of fellowships components, including training of the UN Fellowships awardees. The respondents were the respective officials of the training institutions who supervised the fellows of various UN agencies.

37. Out of thirteen UN agencies, six (or 46.2%) participated in the review. Furthermore, The Peer Review Group requested eight UN agencies to distribute the questionnaires among their training institutions but only six (or 75%) responded. Dr. Karagulova then gave an overview of the main questions of the Questionnaire for the Training Institutions/Providers and showed the responses to each question.

38. Before getting to the conclusion of the analysis of these findings Dr. Karagulova quoted the aphorism of the month: “Achieving change is about more than ticking boxes” (Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health, Jan-2004). She reminded her colleagues that now it was their responsibility to follow their inputs and come up with every possible recommendation on strengthening the quality of fellowships components, including training process.

39. According to the Peer Review/Study, Fellowships Officers should bear in mind the following conclusions:

a) Evaluation is an essential element of any managerial process, including Management & Administration of fellowships programmes.

b) Effectiveness of fellowships is fundamentally linked to Evaluation. Evaluation bases on generally accepted standards (criteria, indicators) is an important incentive for high quality. All components of the fellowships process should be evaluated without exception.

c) Kirkpatrick’s book on Evaluation of Training Programmes as well as the WFME three booklets provide us with the organized knowledge, concepts, theory, principles and techniques.

d) Information received from our main partners-Training Institutions is a prerequisite for the actions. Now the Agencies should go thoroughly through the relevant questionnaires completed by their Institutions and look at the problems/proposals from the Regional perspectives.
40. In conclusion, Dr. Karagulova came up with the following recommendations:

- The main principles of the Kirkpatrick, WFME strategies and NZ Self-Evaluation Guide & Workbook should be taken into consideration by the stakeholders of different areas of training. Their books should be recommended as a background instrument for the review of training programmes.
- UN System Fellowships Officers should be actively involved in the selection of fellows, in the assessment of training programmes as well as in the evaluation of the contribution of fellowships to countries’ human resources development.
- Some of the UN Agencies did not request reports from the fellows after termination of studies. The introduction of the Termination of Studies Reports (ToSR) (possibly Utilization of Fellow Services Reports (UoFSR) as well) would be highly recommended to all UN Fellowships programmes.
- It is desirable that each training institution establishes a mechanism for evaluating their training programmes which would monitor the programme, the progress of the fellow and would ensure that concerns be identified and addressed.
- Training Programmes should correspond to the interests of fellows, to the needs of member states as well as to programme objectives of the UN Agencies.
- UN Fellowships Officers should receive preliminary programmes from the training Institution before the commencement of training.
- Each training programme should be assessed by the appropriate Technical Officer and Fellowships Officer of the Agency before the training starts.
- Training programmes should be submitted to the fellow for his/her consideration, comments, proposals, amendments, approval before the programme’s commences.
- Progress reports from fellows and Confidential Reports from the host institutions should be submitted to the respective Fellowships Officer of the given agency.
- Training programmes should be subjected to a process of continuous monitoring, evaluation and, when needed, to relevant modifications.
- In order to ensure that fellowships contribute to the effectiveness of the UN Agencies programmes and national capacity building, a system for continuous monitoring of the Quality of fellowships programmes should be developed.
- UN Agencies should be more cooperative with training institutions in terms of the quality of training programmes.
- Training institutions issues addressed to the UN Agencies should be considered seriously in terms of support that could be provided.
- UN agencies should explore the possibility of issuing a global Newsletter of the UN Fellowships programmes where all stakeholders involved, including fellows, could submit their ideas (good practices, problems, accomplishments and activities of the UN Fellows).
Quality in IAEA/TC Fellowships Programme

41. Mr. Gerard Bischoff, Head, Experts and Training Section A, Division for Africa, East Africa and the Pacific, Department of Technical Co-operation, International Atomic Energy Agency, opened his presentation with some data on the number of IAEA fellows and participants in scientific visits. In the last ten years the number of fellows increased by 30% and the number of participating countries increased by 25%. Also the number of nominating countries rose by 20% while the disbursement remained almost constant. Mr. Bischoff pointed out that there was an increase by more than 30% in the South-South cooperation, while the number of fellows and scientific visits did not change in the North-South cooperation.

42. Mr. Bischoff then explained that an IAEA Technical Cooperation Fellowship consisted of three components: the project, the person and the process. On each of the three components quality could be improved. He emphasized, that the fellowships programme was mainly a project. There is no Fellowship if there is no project in a country. IAEA has set up Country Programme Frameworks with the Member States to accommodate the needs of a member state. These frameworks define the goals to be achieved. An overall goal could be to decrease the adult mortality in a specific country. Mr. Bischoff then mentioned that IAEA had a Project Appraisal Process so that a particular Member State could submit a request for assistance. This process would take two to three months. The agency has already started what they called the National Participation Cost under the new cycle 2005-2006. Member states are required to pay 2.5% of the overall costs of the new project. This percentage has to be paid beforehand if they want the project to start. Finally, the budget as well as each project should be evaluated and should get approved by the board. Mr. Bischoff explained that the aim was to develop a valuable partnership between IAEA and the Member States. While IAEA can offer the programmes, resources and expertise as well as project management and evaluation, the member states have needs, the will and commitment, and they can monitor the project and outcomes.

43. Mr. Bischoff evaluated the main criteria for the second component: the person. First of all, the selection of the candidate is essential for the quality of the fellowships programme. A technical evaluation of the candidate by IAEA Technical Cooperation is important to check the quality of the candidate selected. To guarantee the quality of the training, it is essential for the Technical Officer to approve the training programme of the host institution. A follow-up and a final report should follow each training and an evaluation by the Technical Officer should be made. Local partners and follow-ups on site as well as final reports would ensure the quality of logistics.

44. The third component – the process - is the most complex part. IAEA is trying to build a partnership with Member States to get a better project and to develop a partnership with host institutions in order to obtain a training programme of higher quality. To sum up, quality control is done at every step of the process to make sure that the nomination forms, the “longevity” certificate and the medical clearance are received and reviewed. Quality control is also done during the evaluation of the background of the fellow, the project and the host institution. During the training, the agency follows up on the monthly reports which fellows had to submit. At the end of the training, IAEA uses the final report to do the last quality control on the training programme. Quality control at the end of training allows the agency to evaluate what has been achieved in the country, to measure the knowledge acquired by the trainee through training and the potential for the trainee to apply this new knowledge upon his return at home.
UNU Fellowships Programmes – Quality Assurance Measures

45. In her presentation, Ms. Birgit Poniatowski, Academic Programme Officer, Office of the Rector, United Nations University (UNU) pointed out that, in addition to research, policy studies, and the dissemination of information pertaining to pressing global issues, Capacity Development was one of the main areas of activity of the UNU.

46. The capacity development activities of the United Nations University are conducted in two forms:

   a) The first form is project-based capacity development, whereby the UNU aims at upgrading the skills and knowledge of individuals, groups or institutions through their involvement in UNU project work. This form includes the manifold topical training seminars and workshops that are conducted in direct connection with ongoing research and policy study projects for UN or national/local government officials and civil society actors by all parts of the UNU system as well as community-based, multi-stakeholder participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of UNU projects. Usually, UNU shoulders the cost of organizing such project-based capacity development activities jointly with project partners. While travel and subsistence expenses for meeting participants might be covered, these are not considered UNU Fellowships.

   b) The second form is specialized advanced training programmes for postgraduate scholars and young professionals, particularly from developing countries. These include short- and long-duration training programmes as well as degree-oriented education programmes covering a wide variety of subject areas, all within the priority programme areas of the University (peace; governance; environment; development; science, technology and society). Some of these programmes are being organized at the UNU, while many are implemented in collaboration with academic partner institutions world-wide.

47. In most cases, UNU awards fellowships to some or all programme participants. The vast majority of these fellowships are limited to post-graduate academics and professionals from developing countries, with particular emphasis on persons who pursue their careers in developing countries. Many programmes are open to individual applications, while for some programmes, candidates are identified through site-visits by programme staff. Government nomination is rarely used to identify candidates. In 2003, the UNU awarded 467 fellowships, 434 of those went to recipients from developing countries. Half of the fellows (232) were women.

48. Ms. Poniatowski underlined that the “Capacity Development in the UNU System – Principles and Guidelines” had been developed to guide the design, implementation and evaluation of UNU Fellowships programmes with a view to providing high-quality training opportunities to fellowships recipients, and to ensure that the training opportunity offered to an individual stood a reasonable chance to bear greater fruit at the institutional level.

49. She summarized that UNU aimed at controlling the quality of its fellowships programmes at various stages of the programme cycle. For example, during the programme development, a careful selection of implementing institutions (if the programme is not organized at the UNU) with regard to their expertise in the particular subject area, their experience in training, including training of multicultural groups, and their capacity to deliver a quality programme with regard to the availability of human and financial resources is essential to developing a high-quality training programme.
50. According to her, it is equally important to clearly define the aims of a training programme and its target group jointly with the implementing institution, and to explicitly communicate these aims to the trainers, teachers, supervisors and potential programme participants. The aim of UNU is to structure each programme in a way to ensure that participants can make full use of the knowledge and skills gained during the training after their return to their home countries. Each programme plans (or, for existing programmes which UNU planned to support with fellowships, selected) with due consideration to the specific conditions regarding institutional structures, access to information and the physical infrastructure in the target countries of the training programme.

51. Talking about the selection process of the fellowships recipients, she noted the relevance of the academic and professional background as well as the motivation of the fellows. These are established in a thorough selection process. Of equal importance for sustained training outcomes is the institutional background of a fellow, who should ideally be a mid-career professional, who is in a position to share the knowledge, skills and contacts gained during the training with her or his colleagues.

52. Criteria for the selection of participants are spelled out for each individual programme. For programmes implemented in collaboration with external partners, the criteria have been developed jointly by the person(s) responsible for the programme at UNU and the external partner organization(s). For programmes implemented externally, fellowships recipients are selected jointly by the UNU and the partner institution to ensure that both sides place equal emphasis on the selection criteria.

53. During a training programme, ongoing supervision and tutoring of programme participants is essential for regular feedback on their performance. For programmes organized at UNU, if external trainers or lecturers are involved in course delivery, they receive a comprehensive briefing on the prior development of the course and the specific expectations for their contributions to ensure coherence of the programme.

54. Each programme participant is required to submit a final paper or a report on the knowledge and skills gained during the training programme. For programmes of more than one year duration, interim reports are required at regular intervals to be defined in line with the structure of each individual programme. To identify specific components or features of a training programme that need adjustments, evaluations of structure, contents and organization of the programme are being sought from programme participants each time a programme is given. These are taken into account in review meetings held regularly by programme coordinators and thus feed back into the design of the following programme session.

55. Ms. Poniatowski informed the participants that UNU planned to undertake general reviews of the need for and structure of every programme at regular intervals. For new programmes, such a review should take place once the programme has been offered three times; the intervals might be extended to five programme cycles thereafter. The general review is conducted under the auspices of the responsible UNU entity and should take the form of a self-assessment followed by a peer review. Reports of general reviews of training programmes are submitted to the governing body of the UNU entity (Advisory Committee or Board or UNU Council) for review.

56. In addition to these reviews on the level of individual programmes, an external review of the overall structure of UNU capacity development activities was undertaken in 2001. This evaluation has particularly pointed out a need to more clearly define the specific niche of UNU
capacity development activities and their distinguishing features. This has, in the meantime, been accomplished with aforementioned “Capacity Development in the UNU System – Principles and Guidelines”.

57. To close her presentation, Ms. Poniatowski emphasized two open issues. This first was the monitoring of programme implementation at partner universities. Personnel shortages and cost considerations limit the frequency of attendance of UNU staff at programmes implemented at partner institutions. Thus, the quality of the training, the level of consideration for individual training needs of fellows and their home institutions, or the frequency of participant supervision etc. are difficult to assess other than through participants’ evaluation forms. Therefore, regular external evaluations are of critical importance. The second issue was the comparative and longitudinal analysis. A lack of human resources limits the use of evaluations of individual programme sessions for comparative and longitudinal analysis. External evaluations also rarely capture the development of a programme over time, but rather focus on its status at the time of review. Therefore, the United Nations University is exploring ways to make better use of evaluation data to enhance the overall quality of its fellowships programmes in the future.

58. The above presentations were followed by lively discussions on several issues of common concern. Undoubtedly, the idea of the Peer Review Group to see the possibility of establishing an Inter-Agency Newsletter on fellowships drew a lot of attention. The Chairman, Mr. Al-Mashat, pointed out, that the establishment of a Global Newsletter would mark the first inter-agency organ where Fellowships Officers would be able to exchange their ideas and practices. The idea of the Newsletter is timely. Some indicated that several agencies already had their own newsletters and could contribute with their own experiences. For example, ITTO has its own newsletter where, among other articles, the best fellowships report is selected from all the final reports, and published in full. Finally, all agencies were in agreement to set up a Global Newsletter. They entrusted UN/DESA with this task and offered their full support to issue it as soon as possible.

59. Another issue raised initially by Dr. Hassanabadi, Technical Officer, Human Resources Development and Fellowships, East Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO), related to the modalities of the selection process in UNU and IAEA. On the selection process, Ms. Poniatowski explained that UNU had two approaches: a) individual applications where a programme was already defined; and b) open applications by individuals who considered themselves suitable for the programme and the programme suitable to their needs. These applications were reviewed by the programme partners at the University of Gent. They developed a shortlist, which was then reviewed by a committee established within the UNU, the Training Implementation Committee, for final selection of the fellows. For each of the programmes, they had developed a list of selection criteria jointly with the implementing partners. They have other programmes that employ site visits to identify institutions and individuals to work with in their training programmes.

60. As UNU targeted mid-career professionals, either academics or people working in other areas with their programmes, they needed to have the proper support of their home institutions to participate in the programme. So, UNU had to endorse each fellowships application, otherwise they could not accept them. The UNU specific need in capacity development is the academic nature of the programmes offered. All of their programmes are designed to enhance capacities of postgraduate professionals and their home institutions which limit the target group. Probably it was the fact that UNU was not employing government
nomination procedures that defined parts of the UNU specific needs. This could be considered another one of the specific characteristics of the UNU capacity development programme.

61. As far as the selection process in IAEA was concerned, Mr. Bischoff underlined that the first selection was about the project and what they wanted to achieve in the country. Fellows are selected by their own countries. After that a Technical Officer does a technical evaluation by taking into account the background of the fellow as well as the project. The Technical Officers talk to the host institution to get a better fit with the training programme of the fellows in order to achieve the targets of the project. He singled out the fact that IAEA had many projects related to health. In this framework Mr. Bischoff expressed his willingness to develop good communication and collaborate with WHO. Most of IAEA Technical Officers are medical doctors. If the interaction between IAEA and WHO in the field of training can be enhanced, more projects can be accomplished jointly.

62. The third major issue raised in the presentations was the external evaluation of fellowships. Mr. Bischoff suggested trying to build external-internal evaluations, so that an external evaluation was done by another agency, which had the expertise and the know-how and could help the other agency to do its internal evaluation. He emphasized that his suggestion about peer-reviewers would be a lot cheaper as there would be no fees to be paid. Mr. Zaid, Chief, Fellowships Section, UNESCO, welcomed the idea of getting another sister agency to conduct the external evaluation but it would be too costly for UNESCO. For this reason UNESCO was limited to self-evaluation. Mr. Saho suggested having the evaluation made at country level. He believed that it was important to follow up this matter on a country level to see what benefits the training was providing to the country.

63. Ms. Poniatowski also responded to the concern raised with regard to the cost of external evaluations. Although external evaluation cost a lot of money, she made it clear that external evaluations were extremely helpful in making sure that all the criteria for quality that had been established and worked out over the years were actually implemented on the ground for those programmes where nobody could be on site all the time. UNU came up with a format for external evaluation that kept the costs to a bare minimum. UNU external evaluations are based on an extensive self-study undertaken by implementing institutions. It was noted that most of the UNU trainings and fellowships programmes were specifically designed programmes with the UNU. Usually the programme is developed jointly with the implementing institutions, so there is an incentive to put time and effort into the evaluation process. This might be a policy in the direction of regular external evaluations. UNU also tries to keep costs down by having the external reviewers meet only once at the training venue while a training programme is in progress so that they can talk to the officials, teachers, fellows during this one visit. Every other exchange is done electronically.

64. Talking on the same subject of evaluation, Mr. Bruce P. Browne, Academic Registrar, World Maritime University focussed on the responsibilities of the training institutes themselves. The World Maritime University is in the unique position to offer postgraduate degrees at the Master’s and PhD level. Of all the WMU Fellowships, 10% are funded by the institution itself, 65% are external and 25% pay their own fees. It is very important for the donor to insist that the training institute has a very transparent quality assurance programme. One of the 14 points mentioned in the WHO report emphasized that they should absolutely insist that there be a robust evaluation system by the participants undertaking that programme. Another issue related to this is the need for training institutes to have some form of external examiner system where they invite outside experts to look at programmes to make sure that they are at a
comparable level with programmes of other institutes. Mr. Browne went even further by suggesting that the training institutes should provide an outer ring of quality assurance protection, i.e. some type of regional educational organization should endorse the training programme that a particular institute was offering. This information should be totally transparent and available to the donor who offers the fellowships so that they could have this information to make decisions as to whether they wish to continue the training programmes of the institutes.

65. Mr. Ali Zaid, agreed that the function of the agencies was to ensure that fellows started, continued and finished their studies. Results could be achieved, evaluated and reported to Member States. What is more complex is measuring the impact on Human Resources Development. Unfortunately, evaluating this impact is beyond the field of expertise of fellowships services and programmes. However, a concerted effort should be made by the agencies as well as their national counterparts to know the impact for these trained people. Elaborating on this issue, Dr. Khalilullah, Regional Fellowships Officer, WHO, Regional Office for South-East Asia, suggested combining the assessment review made by the Fellowships Officers with feedback from host institutions and former fellows. He also suggested looking for any alumni association which could offer valuable guidelines for improving the training course.

66. Ms. Isabel Hubert, Senior programme Coordinator, Training Programme in Multilateral Diplomacy and International Affairs Management, UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) commented on the experience of UNITAR to enhance the impact on Human Resource Development and National Capacity Building. UNITAR asks prospective fellows for a motivation letter where they indicate to what extent the programme would contribute to their national capacity building. In addition to this, UNITAR conducts written and oral evaluations. Each fellow is required to make a short presentation again on the plausible impact the acquired knowledge through the fellowships would make upon his/her return to the workplace. About one year later, UNITAR gets back to the fellows to see if they managed to move. Ideally (but due to shortness of staff not often) the agency would prefer to be in touch with Ministries to find out if fellows were really posted where the needs of the country were greatest.

67. Dr. M. Khalilullah raised the issue of the selection of training institutions. In his opinion, a set of criteria should be developed to identify a training institution of high quality, as this would be a guarantee for a good training programme. WHO has already designated its own training centres after a thorough technical review of their resources and training capacities. In addition, WHO is making use of the National Centres of Excellence which were designated by the respective governments in certain countries. While developing criteria WHO felt that these training institutions should have firstly the capacity of training their own nationals; secondly, a considerable number of professionals trained in a course of five years; thirdly, the number of external fellows trained in that particular country. Fourthly, it was important to see the assessment review made by Fellowships Officers on the impact of the training.

68. Mr. Momadou M. Saho, Chief, Fellowships Division, Education and Training Department, World Meteorological Organization (WMO) drew attention on recommendations concerning final reports. He mentioned that the feedback they got in the final reports of the fellows did not indicate a very positive trend. He thought that this was a matter of concern and he confirmed that efforts in the WMO with the final reports of the fellows, did not yield very much. They seemed to all have a standard kind of approach without giving more information. What needs to be looked into is how valuable information can be gathered from the fellows. Ms. Aoki of ITTO supported the importance of final reports. However, while ITTO fellows did submit
final reports, she said that it was imperative to standardize the report format in order to direct the fellows to those issues, which were important to the evaluation of the fellowships programme. Mr. Bischoff informed the participants that IAEA already had a format for fellowships final reports, although not perfect, and could make it available to other agencies.

69. Turning to the training institutions, Mr. Saho noted the paramount role of such institutions. They develop the programme and monitor the progress of fellows. What should the agencies expect from these institutions? He thought that beside the request to monitor the programme and the progress of the fellows, it was essential that the institution got back to the sponsoring agency and provided some regular reporting as to whether the fellow should be maintained or not. Furthermore, agencies received annual progress reports from the host institutions. Some programmes required that fellows write a monthly progress report. Here again the agencies should be more consistent and decide whether they should request monthly or annual reports. Talking of the training institutions and how to document them in the database of the agencies, Dr. Khalilullah reminded the delegates that WHO was developing a website for training institutions. If other organizations had such web pages with a directory of training institutions, they could make them available to one another. In his opinion, this would be conducive to a qualitative training programme.

70. As Mr. Saho did not participate in the 14th Meeting of SFOs in Vienna in 2002, he wanted to know the definition of a Fellowship in the United Nations system and whether a–less-than-one-month duration and partial funding would still constitute a Fellowship. Mr. De Tomassi pointed out that the definition of a Fellowship was an agreement, which was reached after lengthy discussions during the last Meeting. It was a negotiated solution, which intended to fix an amount of time in order to start calling it a Fellowship. But there was a particular need especially in WHO to cluster shorter trainings under the fellowships programme as they had a lot of very short training sessions for nurses in the field. Administratively, they were called fellowships because otherwise there would be no way to finance this training. As to partial funding, Mr. De Tomassi said that the ticketing alone did not fall under the Training. The definition stipulated that a monetary grant provided to qualified individuals for the purpose of fulfilling special learning objectives could be paid under the fellowships programme. If it was very clear that the ticket which the agency paid was to allow the person to attend a training activity, then it could be considered as a part of the cost of the Fellowship. Talking about the duration of UNU Fellowships, Ms. Poniatowski pointed out that they had very few programmes under one week duration. Most of them last between three weeks and two months.

71. In regards to UNU funding, Ms. Poniatowski explained that UNU did have its own funds for fellowships activities. In most cases, UNU run joint programmes with partner institutions. Therefore, those institutions do not only provide the training but also partial funding. For some programmes, the UNU contribution might be the cost of the ticket only while the national agency in the host country or the implementing agency would provide a stipend. There were various arrangements, but UNU did have core funds set aside for fellowships activities. The project-based capacity development activities that UNU offered are intrinsically linked to its research projects. If the training programme is successful it can be developed into an ongoing regular programme. However, that is not necessarily always the case and it is not a prerequisite to organize the first initial training programme.
72. Mr. Al-Mashat presented the outcome of the Tracer Study which was done at the World Bank. The study was in print and would be sent to the participants at a later date. Mr. Al-Mashat explained that the programme which was financed by the Government of Japan entered its 19th selection cycle. They had 3,265 scholarships covering almost all the developing countries. He mentioned that the Tracer Study was conducted every two years, but the Study which was coming out in the coming weeks should have been finished in 2002. Unfortunately, the questionnaires had been sent out just before September 11, 2001. So, they got almost no return for the first couple of months. About six months ago, they had received 35% of the questionnaires back which was sufficient to carry out the survey. Mr. Al-Mashat regarded the low rate of responses as a major issue. Although they had regional coordinators, they were not really active. So, they were thinking of giving intellectual incentives to the alumni and holding regional conferences where alumni could present policy papers. The priority would be given to the ones who responded to the questionnaires. He believed that with the e-mail system they would also get a higher response rate.

73. Normally the Tracer Study was done in house, but this time a consultant was hired. The study covers the period 1997-1998. As part of methodology, the study used five types of indicators to measure the benefits and costs associated with the programme in relation to the JJ/WBGSP mission. Input indicators measured the means by which the programme was implemented. Output or process indicators measured the extent to which the programme was delivering its output, impact or outcome indicators measured the effect of the programme in contributing to overall socio-economic development of the scholars’ countries, beneficiary graduates’ perception and assessment indicators used self-assessment by graduates to measure the perception of benefits and usefulness of the programme and institutional indicators measured the organizations’ performance.

74. Mr. Al-Mashat then turned to the profile of the Scholars. Female scholars have historically been outnumbered by their male counterparts, but the gap has narrowed over the years to about 65% of male and 35% of female scholars. Most graduates come from Africa, followed closely by East Asia and the Pacific region. The programme’s policy has changed from a PhD to a Masters degree. The scholars predominantly select development studies and economics as their chosen fields but the range of fields is opening up. From the mid 1990’s, environment, public health, childcare, gender studies, and information systems have become popular among scholars as the chosen field of studies. Most alumni are in the 30-34-age range.

75. The Impact on the Capacity Enhancement was considered in its multiple dimensions. 97% of the analyzed scholars attained their degrees. The impact on development environment, as measured by return rates to their countries of origin or other developing countries, showed that 83% of respondents did return home or to other developing countries. The results were less encouraging in terms of career progression, promotion and higher income. Since most scholars returned to the public sector after their studies, they were subject to public sector rules and regulations for promotion and salary increase in their countries. However, the Study also noted a tendency to move to the private sector or NGO’s. The impact on Institutional Capacity Enhancement has been varying. For the majority, the presence of scholars enriched the interdisciplinary and multi-cultural character of institutions. The twinning partners developed, experimented and added economic policy and management specialities and disciplines that seemed to be highly beneficial to other candidates as well as the institutions. The Impact on
socio-economic development showed that the majority of respondents were working in positions that could influence the policy and developmental programmes of their countries as intended by the objectives of the JJ/WBGSP. Moreover, the respondent scholars found their newly acquired skills highly relevant to their countries’ needs. The total cost of the programme has varied over the years. They receive about USD 14 million by the Japanese Government per year. There are 3,265 graduates in total, and there are at the moment 600 active scholars at the average expense of USD 30,000. The total costs of the programme depend on the university selected and whether it is privately-run or public.

76. Mr. Al-Mashat concluded by saying that a major issue for all of them was the rate of the questionnaire return. He saw this as a problem and was hoping that next time the return would rise to 50%. Another issue he mentioned was the need for comparing the job which the scholars had before and after their degree. He believed that this comparison would give them a clear view on the impact of the training. What they were planning to do was to have a book of high achievements to give as a gift to their sponsors.

77. The presentation was warmly welcomed by the representatives of the agencies. The Tracer was innovative and a model to follow. Therefore, it provoked a lot of questions and discussions. The major issue was the low return rate of the survey. Mr. Al-Mashat said that this time it was an extraordinary situation due to the incident of 9/11. The original idea was to finish the survey in 2002. He admitted that they would probably get a higher response rate if they did the survey faster, but he also believed that the impact of the programme could not be measured soon after their return because the scholars needed at least one year to adjust and get established in their countries again. Therefore, he thought that four years after the end of the programme were appropriate for the Tracer Study. Ms. Jeanette Funke, Head of Section, Asian-Pacific and Worldwide Programme, Carl Duisberg Gesellschaft, was very interested in the evaluations and especially in the validity of the questionnaire. She was not sure if the evaluation of the impact of the programme could be done by questioning fellows.

78. Mr. Ezekiel Nukuro, Regional Advisor, Human Resources Development, WHO Western Pacific Regional Office, referred to a similar exercise called “VIPRO” and noted that they had also experienced a low return rate. WHO decided to give a financial incentive within the Western Pacific region for the ‘termination of studies report’. The termination package is held off deliberately until the fellows have handed in the ‘termination of studies report’. The result was a 97% return rate. The problem though is that they need two independent reports, one from the fellow and one from the supervisors or institutions. Mr. Nukuro had also experienced a very poor return with the ‘utilization of services report’ which was done by WHO on long term assignments after 12, 24 and 36 months. Determining the impact of the programme is difficult and needs time. So, what they established is a certain process to measure what the contribution and the outcome is. Before fellows are awarded long term fellowships they have to agree to a work plan to make sure that they return to their countries and that WHO does not lose them. In addition, WHO is also doing a rapid follow-up after 2 or 3 years.

79. Ms. Maliina Abelsen, Associate Expert – Fellowships Coordinator, Indigenous and Minority Team, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) explained that they only had five fellows a year since 1997 and that they invited all of them to come back and make an evaluation. More than 80% could come. As OHCHR had a limited number of fellowships, Ms. Abelsen did not find it difficult to keep in touch with them. In regard to the impact of the programme, the fact that the fellows took part in the workgroup for the draft Declaration for Indigenous People which takes place once a year was in itself proof enough. She
understood that fellows could be attracted by the Western world and she believed that they could also contribute to e.g. OHCHR and she regarded them as a resource for future work. Part of OHCHR fellowships programme is to make an individual work plan on what training they are going to do and how they are going to use it. OHCHR then asks them to get back to OHCHR within a couple of months and they all do.

80. In connection with the concerns as to how to find more ways of getting in touch with former alumni, the representative of WHO/PAHO believed that building a strong alumni network, using the service recruiters and the service fundraisers could really strengthen a fellowships programme. The representative of UNESCO suggested looking at the possibility of mobilizing also the national commissions in every country in order to facilitate contacts with alumni. His organization, however, was too busy with the administration of fellowships and could not absorb a new mechanism.

81. In view of the positive response to the Tracer, Mr. Al-Mashat promised to send it to all agencies as soon as the World Bank would get the full study but no later than December 2004. Mr. Bischoff suggested posting the questionnaire on the UN/DESA website.

B. IAEA/TC: New Web-based Fellowships Management System

82. Ms. Nathalie Colinet, Standardization and Data Management Officer, Department of Technical Co-operation, International Atomic Energy Agency, gave an introduction on the new web-based fellowships management system TC PRIME. She pointed out that this system was only for use within the agency. IAEA has about 1500 fellows and scientific visitors a year which is a big number of fellowships to deal with. Therefore, IAEA has a Project Officer, a Technical Officer and an Implementation Staff. Ms. Colinet mentioned that before the system was implemented, the fellowships placement was based on paper flow and files did get lost sometimes. Now the online system is accessible to all stakeholders in the agency. The nomination form exists as a PDF file. The data quality has improved considerably. Data validity can be checked. There is a host institution search online and a history report on host institutions can be retrieved. The online database also improved the timeliness of the fellowships implementation within IAEA by means of a rapid electronic routing and review.

83. Ms. Colinet stated that several steps would be taken in the future in order to make the system accessible to the nominating authority from outside the agency, as well. Difficulties could rise with language and medical certificates as well as proving a signature for an application. For future use, it would be valuable to keep fellowships reports in a database and have them available on the system. Another improvement of the system would be to follow-up its impact on the home countries more efficiently. E-Questionnaires could be sent (two years) after the fellowships to find out if the fellow was working in the institution, in the same field or in a better position. IAEA would also like to promote the Centres of Excellence for training activities to enhance the TCDC concept as well. At the moment IAEA started with a pilot project in Asia. They already have a database but they asked the National Liaison Officer to enter their institution and capacity data so that a database could be created, listing the training fields and capacities of each Centre. On top of this, TC PRIDE could be a tool for nominating countries as well as home countries to get detailed information on the fellowships status.
84. The discussions that ensued threw more light on the technical and administrative modalities of the new system. The new web-based fellowships management system was called “dot.net” (.net). It has the same idea as Share point but it does not really replace the database. All that could be seen on the WebPages was put into the database. There was no double entry. This project, which IAEA is implementing, is considered as pioneer work in the field of fellowships. The World Bank also has launched online applications and the results are relatively promising. At the same time the World Bank requests candidates to submit a hard copy of the application, as well, in order to match the authenticity of the documents.

85. In regard of certain administrative issues such as accountability and follow-up questionnaires, it appeared that the system designers had taken accountability into consideration but not yet the issue of questionnaires. Ms. Colinet explained that the evaluation went from the Project Officer to the Technical Liaison Officer who stood between the Technical Cooperation Department and the Technical Officer. It then comes back to the Project Officer so that he can approve the financial issues. So, there are no signatures but each department has to keep a print paper of the evaluation, which passes for proof of accountability. As to the questionnaires, she admitted that she had not thought about the contact information as yet. A possibility is to contact the institutes where the fellows are working and find out from them. Ms. Hubert shared the experience of her agency. UNITAR has established an alumni network, so the fellows are in contact with one another as well as with the agency. They inform the agency if there is a change of contact information.

86. Another issue brought up for discussion was the criteria which IAEA uses to give access to the database. Since 1958, IAEA has over 6000 institutions in the database and it is considering giving access to the nominating institutions. It would be a welcome development if IAEA would provide access to UN agencies, as well. Ms. Colinet did not anticipate any objection to giving access to other organizations but she saw a technical problem at the moment as they would have to construct an external web base.

C. Report on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the 14th Meeting of Senior Fellowships Officers and on the Work of the Fellowships Focal Point for Inter-Agency Coordination

87. Mr. Tom Rudi, Fellowships Officer, Personnel Service, Technical Cooperation and Management Services, UN/DESA, presented the report as Focal Point for interagency fellowships coordination. At the outset, he referred to the importance which the Committee for Programme and Coordination attached to cooperation and coordination between the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations and other agencies, programmes, funds and Secretariat structures, in particular, Regional Commissions in its report (A/59/16, p.36) on Programme 7 - Economic and Social Affairs - for the proposed biennial plan 2006-2007. Against this background, he noted that the report of the inter-agency focal point on fellowships coordination should be seen as a yardstick that measures the extent to which directives for the enhancement of inter-agency fellowships coordination are translated into reality by the UN agencies. The report outlines the activities of the Fellowships Focal Point over the past two years and the implementation of the recommendations of the last meeting, which gives new dimensions to the inter-agency fellowships coordination. This coordination is no longer restricted
to UN agencies alone, but is expanded to Regional Commissions. The agenda had also changed from simply treating fellowships issues to considering study tours and group training as well.

88. Mr. Rudi gave an overview of the Implementation of the Recommendations of the 14th Senior Fellowships Officers Meeting. He noted with satisfaction that after 28 years the definition of a fellowship has been implemented successfully. UN/DESA was requested by certain offices in the UN Secretariat as well as regional Commissions to provide the definition of a Fellowship in the United Nations. The existence of such an established definition is instrumental for them to determine how to pursue their own training programmes.

89. The second recommendation to provide specific information to Governments on the fellowships selection criteria request agencies to enhance, whenever necessary, modalities and means to disseminate information about procedures, eligibility criteria and selection procedures in as many languages as possible in order to enable Governments to propose the most qualified candidates. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs has provided government entities, project authorities in the field as well as project managers in the substantive Offices with such information, as required. In addition, UN/DESA has directed them to the fellowships website which contains information on fellowships procedures and eligibility in the six languages of the United Nations.

90. The third recommendation is for the Fellowships Officers to be aware of the gender status and encourage the selection of women candidates. This is also a policy issue. Therefore, in selecting the candidates, Fellowships Officers have to act in compliance with each organization’s policies on gender. UN/DESA, for its part, has included gender as one of the criteria in fellowships selection. In the past two years, UN/DESA has awarded more fellowships to women than men. Gender balance is not applied for the sake of reaching a target at any cost. On the contrary, UN/DESA looks first at the academic merit, professional aptitude, leadership potential, long-term commitment to the field of study as well as the linguistic proficiency before determining the nomination. Clearly, between two equally qualified candidates, a female candidate would receive the priority.

91. Lack of transparency in fellowships selection affects, in one way or another, the work of the fellowships services and programmes. This is especially the case when it comes to the identification and pre-selection of candidates, which is the task of national agencies, project authorities and other field offices. The fourth recommendation of the last meeting to inform the officials who were involved in the pre-selection of candidates of the selection criteria is pertinent. Organizations should consider this recommendation as an on-going process.

92. Talking about the fifth recommendation to ensure more equitable distribution of fellowships awards, Mr. Rudi said that the recommendation was taken seriously by UN/DESA as well as the other agencies. UN/DESA, for its part, strictly applied it over the past two years. No former fellow was awarded a second Fellowship. Candidates who were recommended for a second study tour award within one year were declined. UN/DESA has also tried to enforce the recommendation not to grant to an individual a second group training within a six-month period. This proved to be more difficult in certain countries, given the shortage of highly qualified and specialized experts in particular fields. Frequently, the same individuals were called upon by the organizers to participate in workshops and seminars.

93. The 14th meeting laid out as the sixth recommendation that the main topic on the agenda of the 15th meeting would be the quality of fellowships programmes. This topic would be prepared by the Peer Review Group, with Dr. Karagulova, WHO/EURO, acting as coordinator.
Mr. Rudi complimented the Group on an excellent job in collecting and analyzing the best existing practices that ensure the quality of fellowships programmes in various agencies.

94. The seventh recommendation was to *enrich the fellowships website* by providing to the Fellowships Focal Point in UN/DESA additional information materials, particularly official public reports related to various fellowships issues as well as links to UN agency websites. Mr. Rudi was pleased to inform the Fellowships Officers that UN/DESA had posted on its website the Van Breda Brochure and the Van Breda FAQs which were indispensable for the fellows and other trainees. Furthermore, three links were added to the website: the Joint Japan/World Bank Graduate Scholarship Programme, the International Tropical Timber Organization fellowships programme and the fellowships website of WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia. This process is open and UN/DESA expects more organizations to link in the future.

95. During the last meeting the representative of the Joint Inspection Unit suggested and the Meeting recommended providing the information in the website in as many official languages as possible in the framework of multilingualism. While acknowledging at the meeting that this issue involved the time of five translators as well as financial costs, UN/DESA remained seized of this issue from the very beginning. Mr. Rudi stated that UN/DESA had conducted a series of meetings with the Chief of the Documents Control Section, UN Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. Both parties came to an agreement to translate the policies and procedures governing the fellowships, study tours and group training in French, Spanish, Chinese, Russian and Arabic. Thanks to the diligent work of the translators, the document is finally available on line in all six UN languages. Furthermore, the Van Breda brochure and FAQs are posted in three languages: English, French and Spanish. Fellowships nomination forms were already available in three languages.

96. The eighth recommendation of the last meeting was for UN/DESA to *organize the 15th meeting of Senior Fellowships Officers (SFO)* in 2004. As UN/DESA reported in Vienna in 2002, to convene the meetings of SFO, there was no longer a formal requirement to await an endorsement or approval by another body. In October 2001, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) decided, as part of the reform of its working methods, that coordination should be pursued through more informal and flexible mechanisms with an increased reliance on ad hoc, time-bound and result-oriented mechanisms. Furthermore, in 1983 the meeting of SFO recommended that meetings may be convened at the initiative of the focal coordinating point after consultations with the organizations of the UN system.

97. As early as January 2004, UN/DESA sent a letter to the Director of the Department for Health, WHO Headquarters in Geneva, to explore the possibility of hosting the meeting. The Director accepted the offer generously and designated Dr. Alexandre Goubarev to liaison with UN/DESA. From that time on, UN/DESA worked in close collaboration with WHO to prepare the meeting. Invitations were extended to all the UN agencies, funds, programmes, and Secretariat structures, which dealt with training and fellowships. As is customary, some leading National Placement and Supervising Agencies (NPSA) were also invited. In line with the suggestions of the last meeting, UN/DESA sent invitations to some new national agencies such as: the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) and the Tunisian Agency for Technical Cooperation. Attempts were also made to invite China and India through their respective Permanent Missions to the United Nations. Several other Heads of Fellowship Services of UN agencies and NPSAs expressed an interest in this meeting but were unable to attend due to budget constraints, restructuring of Service or conflicting schedules.
98. The 14th Meeting recommended to all agencies to apply the standard fellowships procedures as harmonized at the meeting. This recommendation constituted the main thrust of UN/DESA’s coordination activities. In June 2003, UN/DESA had a meeting in New York with the representative of the WHO regional office for South East Asia. During that meeting, they discussed the IAPSO requirements for the reporting format as well as the evaluation criteria and methodologies applicable to fellowships programmes. UN/DESA provided advice to WMO, ITU, INTRACEN, and certain UN Departments on stipends. Furthermore, the Focal Point conducted online discussions with IAEA on how to involve national execution in the implementation of some of their fellowships programmes. The Economic Commission for Africa had contacted UN/DESA to seek advice on UN Fellowships policies and procedures, following a General Assembly decision for ECA to set up a new fellowships programme for young African professionals.

99. UN/DESA had discussions with ITU on quite another topic - the new visa requirements for the fellows who would go to study in the United States of America. Since 9/11 the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service had put in place a system, called S.E.V.I.S. (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System), which requests all organizations to apply on line to have authority to issue a new immigration form, DS 2019, (which replaced the old form IAP-66). With this form, prospective fellows, who undertake training in the USA, can go to the US Embassies or Consulates in their home countries and apply for J-1 visa. Organizations are required to pay a one-time visa fee (US$799) and furnish to the US authorities the required documentation before they are granted authority to issue the above-mentioned immigration form. UN/DESA is in the process of finalising the application on behalf of the UN Secretariat and expects to be granted that authority soon. UNOPS already has that authority for its fellows.

100. Upon their request, UN/DESA has also coordinated with other offices such as: the Overseas Offices Section, UN/OHRM, UNDP Vietnam, the UNFPA Audit Section as well as UNEP Office in Japan on various issues concerning fellowships policies and entitlements.

101. UN/DESA has been concerned about the need to follow the same procedures on study tour and group training as other agencies, programmes and offices away from the UN Headquarters. A year ago, UN/DESA contacted ESCAP, INTRACEN, ECA and UNOV to enquire about their practices. UN/DESA adjusted temporarily its policies on some entitlements for study tour and group training participants, pending a full review of these categories by this meeting under agenda items: Study Tours and Group Training: Allowances and Entitlements.

102. Mr. Rudi then continued with the 10th recommendation on the medical insurance contracts for trainees. At the 14th meeting of the SFO in Vienna in November 2002 UN/DESA was requested to contact UNDP/IAPSO, as the initial negotiator, an inquire about the terms and conditions of the contract signed by them with Van Breda in 1982, especially the appropriateness of including the service contract holders and National Professional Project Personnel (NPPP) in the fellowships insurance, and report to the agencies in due course. Upon return to New York, the Focal Point contacted IAPSO which administered these contracts until 1998 as well as the UNDP Headquarters to which this activity was transferred. No explanation was obtained on the appropriateness of including service contract holders and other groups in the fellowships category. However, after extensive negotiations with the UNDP, the UN Medical Service and Van Breda, the latter agreed on the following:
(a) There is no longer a need for an “umbrella contract” to be signed by the UNDP. It appears that almost all the agencies have separate insurance contracts for their fellows with Van Breda. For organizations which have no contracts for fellows (e.g. UNOG, CTBTO), Van Breda intends to issue new contracts.

(b) Van Breda has also established contracts with some of these and other organizations (e.g. UNDP, UNOPS) for the insurance of non-fellows (NPPPs and Service Contract Holders).

(c) In the past, the insurers always pooled the results of both groups described above (fellows and non-fellows) in the determination of the premiums for the subsequent years. As a consequence, in the light of this philosophy, the premiums for 2003 were fixed, resulting in a 40% increase for all participants, but fixed for a three year period, from 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2005.

103. Taking into consideration the concerns of the agencies, Mr. Rudi informed that as from January 2003 the insurers would no longer look at the global pooled results from the groups of fellows and non-fellows. On the contrary, they would make the following differentiations:

- The premiums for the group of fellows are determined based on the pooled experience for fellows of the above-mentioned organizations. Each of the above organizations is notified separately of the renewal conditions, but the same premium adjustment will apply to all of them.

- As from 1 January 2003, premiums and claims for the group of fellows are pooled and tracked separately. In other words, their results are no longer pooled with those of groups of non-fellows. This separate tracking started on 1 January 2003, but since the premiums have been fixed for 3 years, the first premium adjustment will only be made starting on 1 January 2006, based on the results of the group of fellows alone.

- The premiums for the NPPPs and Service Contract Holders of the UNDP and OPS is determined based on the experience of those particular groups. The contract that Van Breda proposed to the UNDP in 2003 was for non-fellows (Service Contract Holders). As from 1 January 2003, this contract had its own evolution.

104. As regards the UN fellows, the UN Medical Insurance Section signs the contract with Van Breda. The contract is being reviewed by the UN Office of Legal Affairs (OCA) and is expected to be signed soon. This will also clear the way for some other agencies like INTRACEN to do the same, given their need for clarification on the medical coverage resulting from AIDS or acts of terrorism.

105. Mr. Rudi then turned to other tasks performed by the fellowships coordinator. He recalled that the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA) was the Rapporteur of the 14th Meeting. Therefore, it was incumbent upon UN/DESA to prepare the Report. This involved considerable time and work. With the praiseworthy cooperation of the Fellowships Officers, the report was finalized and sent to print. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs absorbed the costs.

106. Mr. Rudi mentioned that UN/DESA continued to prepare the fellowships stipend rates monthly both in US dollars and local currencies and posted them on its fellowships website. Most of the existing fellowships stipend rates date back to 1989 and can not respond to the new economic realities. Fellows are facing financial difficulties, which prevents them from focusing on the educational and training programmes. Even though UN/DESA requests ad hoc reviews of stipends on a case-by-case basis (i.e. China, India, Kenya, Senegal, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia
and Montenegro, Argentina, Bolivia, Eritrea and Morocco) and addresses the emergencies, the Focal Point feels the need to undertake a global review of the fellowships stipend rates.

107. To this effect, UN/DESA brought this issue to the UN Conditions of Service Section as well as to the UNDP Headquarters. A meeting was organized by UN/DESA with the UNDP and the UN Conditions of Service Section. The meeting decided on the following:

- The UNDP undertakes a global survey of the cost of living of all the countries of the world. The survey is conducted for in-campus and off-campus fellows in order to establish two stipend rates: one for fellows living in a university campus, one for fellows who are not attached to universities but live in rented apartments or similar accommodation.

- The UNDP country offices sends the duly completed questionnaires directly to the UN Conditions of Service Section. The latter collects the data, computes them and informs UN/DESA of the newly approved rates.

- UN/DESA, in turn, updates the existing rates based on the new bands and threshold, posts them on the fellowships website and informs the agencies accordingly.

108. The Security Clearance for Fellows was the last topic of Mr. Rudi’s report. He reminded the participants that the United Nations was obligated to assist fellows, who were included in the Field Security Handbook. Paragraph 12 (d) stated: “For the purposes of security arrangements, most of the provisions of this Handbook are intended to apply to United Nations fellows, either non-resident fellows studying in the country, or nationals who are on leave from the country of study”.

109. Early this year, the UN put in place the Security Management System for planning and managing security issues called Basic Security in the Field. It describes the five security phases: precautionary, restricted movement, relocation, emergency operations and evacuation. It also provides advice on the actions to be taken by the traveller: (a) prior to departure for the host country/duty station; (b) upon arrival there; and (c) what to do for each security phase. This system is online as well as on CDs. It enables staff members to take this course online. Upon successful completion of the course, the computer generates a certificate as proof of having taken the course. UN Staff member cannot travel without such a certificate. UN/DESA felt that this course was indispensable for the UN fellows, as well. Effective January 2005, UN/DESA requests its fellows to complete the course before authorizing their travel. The Focal Point was of the opinion that agencies should make this course mandatory for all the fellows. The Secretary-General had pointed out: “Staff Security is not a luxury. It is not an option. It is a necessity and an essential part of the cost of doing business” (Basic Security in the Field).

110. By way of conclusion, Mr. Rudi emphasized that the implementation of the recommendations of the 14th Meeting of Senior Fellowships Officers marked another milestone in the road to complete fellowships coordination in the UN system. Inter-agency fellowships services had never been so coordinated. The credit goes to each and every one of the Fellowships Officers who acted with a strong sense of responsibility and displayed commendable initiative to make training and fellowships a shining example of inter-agency coordination and harmonization.

111. Representatives of the agencies commended UN/DESA for its accomplishments as Focal Point over the past two years. The report marked a milestone in inter-agency fellowships coordination. Never before had UN/DESA put in place such a strong inter-agency coordination mechanism on fellowships as now.
112. One of the issues that dominated the discussions was the proposal of UN/DESA to make it mandatory for fellows to undertake the Field Security training as designed by UNSECOORD. The representative of the UNDP confirmed that in a recent meeting UNDP sensitised UNSECOORD that, besides English, the Training was needed in other languages. UNSECOORD would therefore translate the Training CD into all the official UN languages. UNSECOORD will also update the training to respond to security awareness in HQ Stations. From the discussions, it turned out that some agencies such as IAEA, IMO and WHO had already started applying it online for all travellers. UN/DESA will introduce it in January 2005. IAEA has gone even further by having had the introduction translated into Russian, Arabic and Spanish. However, other agencies like INTRACEN and UNITAR were not certain whether Field Security could be applied for non-field placements. Nor were they sure whether this could be mandatory for fellows alone or for everybody who travelled. Some WHO regional offices had experienced some difficulties in getting all the fellows to undertake the Field Security training. They called for more evaluation of this requirement before coming up with a recommendation to make this training mandatory.

113. Ms. Patricia Slessor, TC Human Resources & Fellowships Unit, International Maritime Organization (IMO) confirmed that the course was compulsory for everybody representing IMO abroad. Although being based in London, she had done the course herself because of the high security risk that was in that city. She has just recently sent 11 fellows to Trinidad and they had all done the course before having been sent abroad. There were about 60 to 80 countries where a phase was declared. Most of the South-South Cooperation is probably affected by the security phase. All in all, it is necessary to inform the participants early that they are going on a study tour. This allows the participant enough time to go through the three-hour test.

114. The representative of WHO/EURO linked the issue of security with accommodation. The UN policy is for all fellows to make their own accommodation arrangements, unless they search assistance from their respective fellowships programmes. However, they tend to chose very cheap accommodation in less safe areas. This could cause security problems. In this context Ms. Slessor suggested to look at the possibility of changing the policy and having the fellowships programmes arrange their accommodation. UN/DESA clarified that the global review of stipend rates would foresee two stipend rates: on campus and off campus. This enables the fellows to select the accommodation of their choice in a more secure environment. However, it will be the responsibility of the Security Coordinators in the field to suggest to fellows the most appropriate accommodation and the best options.

115. Even though there were some uncertainties and some practical difficulties with some agencies, it was agreed in principle to apply Field Security training to all trainees (fellows and study tour participants) who would be requested to travel to countries in phase 1 and above.

116. As regarded the fellowships websites, delegates welcomed the initiative of some agencies, such as the World Bank, ITTO and WHO/SEARO, to link their websites to that of UN/DESA. They expressed their willingness to do the same upon return to their duty stations in order to make their fellowships programmes known to larger audiences.
D. UNDP CO Management of Fellows on behalf of Other UN Agencies

117. Ms. Henrietta de Beer, Human Resources Specialist, Compensation & Rewards, Office of Human Resources, UNDP, started with an introduction of Atlas. She mentioned that in January 2004 UNDP implemented the first phase of an ERP (ERP) with the introduction of improved business processes using People Soft. The new business module, named Atlas, introduces procedures that provide powerful functionality for effectively initiating and tracking business processes from beginning to end, for goods or services, while at the same time, facilitating effective planning and management against available budgets. In addition, the module provides a mechanism for authorizing other offices to procure or pay on one’s behalf without the need for inter-office vouchers (IOVs), without undertaking any risks of having incorrect or insufficient budgetary accounts being charged, while always ensuring that the transaction is approved by the appropriate budget owner department.

118. In this context, she underlined the general concepts related to the management of fellows in Atlas:

- a) In Atlas all payees are considered as a “vendor” in the system. A payment cannot be made until a payee is properly set up as a vendor. To set up fellows as vendors in Atlas, UNDP requires the following primary information: Name of the fellow, address and telephone number, description of location, bank details (i.e. bank name; branch; bank ID qualifier; bank swift ID, account type, bank account number).

- b) With the introduction of Atlas, UNDP shares the same financial system with UNFPA, UNIFEM, UNOPS, UNV and UNCDF. This combined group is known as the Atlas Agencies, all other agencies are referred to as Non-Atlas Agencies. Under the new arrangements, UNDP requires Non-Atlas Agencies to provide an advance before services can be rendered to such agencies. There are two types of advances: Global and Local. Global advances for services worldwide, similar to the Old Operating Fund, are recorded under Fund 12000, called “Agency Services-Global”. These funds are received and recorded at HQ. Country Offices do not record any income to the fund.

- c) The majority of agencies that have fellowships programmes are Non-Atlas Agencies. These agencies request payments to fellows using the New Service Request Form. In the event that the required format is not used, a UNDP Country Office is not in a position to process the payment unless the request includes the data elements indicated in the form.

119. Ms. De Beer pointed out that during the course of 2003/2004 UNDP had signed new corporate-wide Memoranda of Understanding on cost recovery with all Agencies that frequently used UNDP services. It is the goal of UNDP to eventually sign a Memoranda of Understanding with all Agencies. The principles for cost recovery laid out in such Memoranda have not changed. However, the introduction of Atlas has, in particular, facilitated the reporting back to UN Agencies. The Cost Recovery Charges in Atlas are settled through the Service Clearing Account. Through Atlas UNDP is able to present UN Agencies with a consolidated report, specifying the services rendered across UNDP Country Offices for a specific period. The level of detail in the invoices is maintained and, due to the integrated system, there is consistency across the different UNDP Offices.

120. With the new system in place, UNDP is in a position to conduct a process analysis of all the services included in the Universal Price List (UPL). Based on this process analysis, UNDP revises and updates the service prices and communicates them to Agencies in accordance
with the signed Memoranda of Understanding. The price for non-standardized services continues to be negotiated on an ad-hoc basis with each concerned UNDP Country Office. For any questions concerning UNDP cost recovery, please contact Patrick.tiefenbacher@undp.org.

121. Discussions under this item focused on the actual problems with which the fellowships services and programmes were faced. One of the problems raised by the representative of WHO/EMRO was the difficulties the fellows were encountering to open bank accounts in Europe. According to the European banking system, fellows cannot open accounts unless they stay in the country for more than 3 months. Traveller checks which could be an alternative are sometimes not accepted. Therefore, fellows are in need of a considerable cash advance prior to departure. He suggested that UNDP provided some practical solution on how fellows could receive stipends without having a bank account number in the country.

122. Another issue was the coordination between UNDP and other agencies. In UNESCO, for example, they automate the process of sending the money. But if a fellow is already in the field, it takes at least 3 weeks in order for the payment to be effective. UNDP would have the authorization to pay. Still the linkage of UNDP and the other agencies needs to be performed more effectively. UNESCO got a lot of complaints that the money was not paid on time. The World Bank was also using S... A... P (SAP). As the money takes 3 to 4 weeks to be delivered they pay some money in advance which is then deducted again, once the money arrives. This is done on a very individual basis and, admittedly, can be rather risky. Mr. Al-Mashat thought that there were many different issues related to the payment. The British Council has made special arrangements with Thomas Cook. The agency pays Thomas Cook and avoids in this way giving the whole amount in the beginning of the fellowships.

123. WHO/PAHO Fellowships had found another solution. They have started a pilot programme with the Bank of America to give the students a Smart Card. It is not a bank account where they can do a lot of transactions but it is more like a savings deposit. Students can withdraw cash and use the debit card. For the moment it only works in the United States, but the idea is to use it in other countries, as well.

E. WHO’s Health Leadership Service (HLS)

124. Mr. Daniel Shaw, Technical Officer, Leadership Management and Fellowships (LMF), Human Resources for Health (HRH), Evidence and Information for Policy (EIP) underlined at the outset that administratively the HLS was part of the Leadership Management and Fellowships Unit. This programme is rather new and the aim is to train young professionals under supervision to international leaders for global efforts against poverty, inequities, disease and epidemics. There is also a need to strengthen the country capacity in public health skills with specific focus on health leadership and Mr. Shaw explained that WHO offered unique environment with access to national and international health leaders. He then gave an overview of the detailed objectives of the HLS which were a) strengthening dynamic, ethics-driven leadership and management within WHO and other institutions; b) strengthening WHO work at country level especially in areas of surveillance and response, major communicable disease threats, health systems, child and maternal health and environmental health; c) fostering networks of health leaders who share a common technical language and ethical orientation; d) fostering a high Team Spirit among the HLS Officers and alumni.
125. The Programme Elements consist of two intensive years of formal training and competency based, supervised work, carefully screened work placements and supervisors (selection criteria) and strong mentoring and alumni system. 80% of the assignments are at country level, 20% in Regional Offices (WHO HQ only exceptionally).

126. To meet the selection criteria for the HLS Officers applicants have to be professionals with an advanced degree in a public health related field. They need to have 2-3 years of public health relevant work experience (preferably developing country), be under the age of 38, and have an excellent knowledge of English, while fluency in at least one other UN language is an advantage. The cohort should consist of at least 50% women and at least 80% from developing countries. There is a wide call for applications for HLS Officers for P2 positions (homogenous selection procedure). The screening and selection process is transparent and is done in multiple stages. Firstly, there is an initial electronic and preliminary screening of applications. The Panel includes HQ and regional representatives. But the final decision is taken by the Director-General.

127. Mr. Shaw explained that the training was very well structured. After a 360 degree appraisal and a competency assessment, the officers go through a 4 weeks introduction at the HQ. For the following 11 months they are assigned to supervised position in a country or regional office. Thereafter, two weeks of booster follow at the HQ before going back to the supervised assignment at WHO or another agency. The training ends at the HQ with a debriefing and a conference.

128. The learning activities consist in conducting/participating substantially in field investigation, developing and presenting realistic staffing plans and budget, making presentations to various groups including peers and lay groups, completing a paper analyzing one national health issue from a global perspective, participating in Annual Scientific Meetings, writing as first author a scientific manuscript for submission to a peer-reviewed journal, writing a programme plan for a health programme or intervention that included measurable goals, and preparing and conducting a health needs assessment related to work assignment. The in-service skills which are assessed for the Officers are related to WHO’s vision, strategic thinking, communication, information management, project management and general public health skills.

129. As of October 2004, WHO received more than 2600 applications. The preliminary screening has already been completed. The selection of sites and supervisors is being finalised and the introduction course only needs some finishing touches. The newsletter has been launched. The programme will start in February 2005. The whole concept is not really new. It has been running for six to seven years.

130. Mr. Shaw ended his presentation with the long-term vision of the HLS mentioning that they wanted to evaluate and expand the HLS and also get a linkage with other training initiatives. And finally there should be integration into a comprehensive strategy “WHO as training/learning organization”.

131. The representatives of the agencies found this HLS quite unique. This prompted them to seek more information from the interlocutor. Of primary concern was the benefit of this programme to the member countries. Mr. Shaw underlined that the aim was to provide the countries with Health Leaders who were well qualified, trained, and capable and who possessed technical and leadership skills. The training is paid in full by WHO. The Officers can deliver immediately in priority areas and understand international and global health issues as well as
have an extensive network and bring country perspective to WHO. They are expected to return to their home countries and assume leadership positions in the field of Health.

132. The Chairman commended WHO for this very interesting initiative. He and some other agencies raised the issue of the selection criteria for 8 positions among a total of 2600 applications and whether regional diversity was a criteria. Mr. Shaw replied that it was actually surprising that out of all the applicants about 50% did not fulfil the basic requirements. They tried to look at the relevance of their work and to spot leadership potential, which was quite challenging. Besides the electronic format online, HLS does not have a specific format to measure leadership qualities. There is a function, though, to apply screening questions which people have to answer before they can submit their CVs. To his knowledge, Governments have no role in the selection process. As regards the geographical distribution, Mr. Shaw admitted that they did have a strict goal of aiming at 80% from developing countries with a balance between the regions, although this was not a formal goal.

133. Another concern for the delegates was the risk of brain-drain which might result from this programme. WHO/PAHO, for example, had a lot of fellows with a J-Visa, so they were required to go back to their home country for a period of two years. If they did not and applied for a waiver, then WHO/PAHO would ask them their money back, as they did not fulfil the agreement they had signed at the beginning of the assignment. Mr. Shaw replied that they did a follow up on them and tried to be actively in contact with the participants after their graduation. He explained that there was a lot of discussion about how to make people commit to where WHO/PAHO ideally wanted them to be, but it was restricting and limiting. The most WHO/PAHO can do is to recruit people who have the mindset to commit to country level work. The whole length of the programme does also concentrate on country level work. WHO does not make any commitment to fellows. The contracts are strictly for two years, non-renewable. If they want to apply to the organization they have to go through the same procedures as everyone else.

134. Mr. Al-Mashat shared the similar problems which he had at the World Bank. To avoid the above mentioned problem, WB posts in the Letter of Award on their website a condition that the students are not eligible for 3 years to work at the WB, IMF Headquarters and regional offices. They arrange with IMF and the regional offices that they will not employ their students. The students have to sign a paper regarding this agreement.

135. Ms. Poniatowski commented on the issue of brain drain and how to enforce commitment to return to the country level. In their application UNU asks the applicants to sign a commitment to go back to their countries. Many of them do go back, as they are recruited at mid-career. If they did not go back, Ms. Poniatowski believed that UNU could not do much. She also thought that the fellowships programme could not solve this problem entirely as long as the conditions in developing countries at the country level were not as attractive as elsewhere. She believed that they had to live with the inability to reach their goals a 100%.

136. Ms. Annie Tanmizi, Chief, Human Resources Services Section, UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) asked if the HLS was announced anywhere else than on the WHO website and if ECA would be able to get a link somewhere, as most of the African constituents came to the ECA website. She was also interested if WHO was looking for a host and whether they would consider putting a fellow in an organization like ECA which had a health centre but very limited funding possibilities. Mr. Shaw replied that they had their website linked quite well and that they were very visible on a global WHO perspective. They also advertise in journals (Guardian, Weekly, Jeune Afrique) and they use various mail distribution lists which focus
especially on developing countries. Regional offices help as well to distribute the advertisements and they do a mass mailing of posters and calls for applications to developing countries institutions and libraries. For the moment they are hosted at WHO country sites. He thought that it would be a good idea to look at the possibility of posting them elsewhere, outside WHO, in the future.

F. Global Review of the Fellowships Stipend Rates

137. Ms. Lulu Del Rosario, Conditions of Service Section, Office of Human Resources Management, made a presentation on the global review of the fellowships stipend rates. First of all, she gave some general information on the history of fellowships stipend rates. Prior to 1988, data was obtained on cost of living by UNDP (for developing countries) and TARFO/DTCD/UN Geneva and New York (for USA, Canada, New Zealand and Japan). The cost of living data was forwarded to the UN (the then Common System and Specialist Services/OHRM) for review and analysis and the establishment of appropriate stipend rates.

138. In March 1988 the fellowships stipend rates were linked to a percentage of the daily subsistence allowance on the basis of a series of 5 per cent bands. The stipend rates were automatically updated on a regular basis when the local currency amount of the DSA rates was adjusted. In September 1994 the UN requested to test, inter alia, in connection with the global review by UNDP of adequacy of stipend rates, the 2.5 per cent bands linking stipend rates to DSA. In 1996/1997 TFS/DDSMS indicated that the 2.5 per cent bands seemed to work in New Zealand, Australia and Japan but not in the United States and Canada, especially in large cities. The UNDP had a positive reaction to the 2.5 per cent bands and viewed it as a more realistic and practical option.

139. The global review of stipend rates held in 1994 experienced a very low response from the field offices. Therefore, a three-year periodic review of adequacy of stipend rates was not adhered to. In view of the above, most of the stipend rates established during the 1989 global review remained unchanged and the rates were no longer representative of the living costs currently incurred by fellows and scholars. There were also more frequent requests for establishment of ad hoc stipend rates. Ms. Del Rosario questioned, if the recommended 2.5 per cent bands had officially been approved by the High Level Committee for Management or not.

140. She then presented some recommendations and actions in order to address the identified problems. First of all, a better coordination and communication among agencies and offices responsible for the conduct of the review of adequacy of stipend rates is necessary whether it is a global or a three-year periodic review. The importance of the review of stipend rates should be emphasized to field offices as there are fellows who are in difficult financial situations. Another recommendation Ms. Del Rosario made was to request the High Level Committee for Management to officially approve the 2.5 per cent bands.

141. A global review of stipend rates is underway through the collaboration of the UN Conditions of Service Section, OHRM, fellowships programme of UN/DESA and the United Nations Development Programme. 142. In this regard, Ms. Del Rosario gave an overview of the 2004 global review of stipend rates which was launched on August 19, 2004. Communications, together with questionnaires on room and meal costs were e-mailed to UNDP offices in the field on 23 August 2004. As of October 7, 2004, at total of thirty UNDP country offices responded.
Another follow-up communication was sent out to the field offices to emphasize the importance of the survey and to explain that the questionnaires had to be filled up by them even if there were no fellows in their countries. The information on room and meal costs could be collected by them in close consultation with educational and training institutions, pensions, apartments, houses, dormitories.

143. The review of stipend rates had become a burning issue for some agencies and regional offices of WHO. Discussions revealed two major issues. The first was the adequacy of stipend rates. The representative of WMO acknowledged that most of the training institutions would regard the UNDP stipend rates as too high and they recommended to WMO a package which ended up to be far lower than the UNDP stipend rate. Institutions insist to keep this rate in order to maintain harmony and uniformity among the fellows regardless who they are sponsored by. The representatives of WHO regional offices shared the same concern. They did not feel comfortable before governments, institutions or fellows when the rates were too high or too low. Even using ad-hoc stipend rates is not a solution because all the countries to which they send the fellows will end up having ad hoc rates. They expressed the hope that the UNDP country offices would make it a priority to conduct accurate surveys and establish stipend rates that would reflect the actual cost of living in those countries.

144. The second issue was the adequacy of the DSA rates. The representative of WHO/SEARO was of the opinion that the DSA rates were not correctly calculated. He based this idea on the fact that WHO conducted a survey in Thailand and India and found wide variations within each country. In order to address the adequacy of stipend rates he suggested adjusting the DSA rates for each country.

145. The representative of OHRM noted that DSA rates were established by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) which conducted its own review. ICSC bases its decisions on the information provided by the field offices. For the proper review of stipend rates it is necessary to make the field offices aware of the importance of providing UNDP with the relevant information and make sure that they submit the questionnaires accordingly. The UNDP representative showed her commitment to improve the response to the global survey of stipends. She will send out a strong letter to UNDP Resident Coordinators on the urgency of submitting the questionnaires by a certain deadline. Furthermore, she intended to collaborate with the regional bureaus at UNDP HQs to get the response on time.

146. The Fellowships Officer of UN/DESA, who prepared the stipend rates monthly, pointed out that United Nations stipend rates were maximum rates. As such, the United Nations reserves the right to apply lower rates when the conditions so warrant. In any case, fellowships Services and Programmes should consult with host institutions or UN agencies in the field before requesting to establish ad-hoc rates. The Secretary of the Meeting felt the need to emphasize that all payments, salaries, post adjustments, DSA and stipends had to be harmonized among all the agencies. The authority to decide on those issues was shared by ICSC and OHRM Conditions of Service Section. It is very difficult to have several organizations deciding on the stipends.

G. Evaluation of the WHO Fellowships Programme

147. Mr. Michael Schroll, Office of Internal Oversight Services (IOS), briefed the representatives of the agencies on the Evaluation Process which was in progress at WHO. He
stated that the Evaluation was part of WHO’s Evaluation Framework and constituted an organization-wide, thematic evaluation. The term fellowships programme is used as a description of the implementation process and to sum up the total of fellowships. The purpose of that evaluation was to systematically assess the contribution of the fellowships programme towards developing sustainable national capacities in the area of health and human resources. It was necessary to know how the fellows contributed to WHO objectives and mandates. The evaluation was expected to provide insight into the effectiveness and outcome of the fellowships programme. It was also expected to provide lessons learned and recommendations that could be used for decision-making on future policies and strategies. The fellowships evaluation had a formative character, basing considerations for the future on an examination of past performance, current and emerging trends.

148. Mr. Schroll then explained the set-up of the evaluation. The evaluation team which consisted of three members (two external members and one internal IOS Evaluation Officer) had the following main functions: review the Terms of Reference, establish the evaluation work plan, develop a toolkit, desk review, fieldwork, analysis and draft reports. The Review Panel consisted of two external and one internal member, as well. The Chair was one external evaluation expert. The main functions were to review the Terms of Reference, to do the evaluation work plan and to draft and write the final report. The main tasks of the IOS was to develop the Terms of Reference, be in overall control of the evaluation process, give assistance in gathering relevant information, technical and managerial backstopping, secretarial support, and reporting to governing bodies. The fellowships units at the Regional Offices had as main functions the Review of the Terms of Reference, provide information, facilitate and support visits of evaluation team at regional and country level.

149. The timeframe of the process was 14 months – October 2003 (establishing ToR) to January 2005 (report to Executive Board). Mr. Schroll pointed out that the evaluation team had worked for about 300 working days. Fieldwork included visits to all six Regional Offices (RO) and eight Country Offices (CO). The visits were usually carried out by two members of the evaluation team; 4-5 days at each RO and 3-4 days at each CO.

150. Mr. Schroll then turned to the Methodology which was applied. He mentioned that they had done quantitative as well as qualitative analysis. A toolkit had been developed to provide guidance for interviews, meetings and discussions with major stakeholders. The available quantitative monitoring and reporting data was compiled, structured and analyzed. Then a desk review of available documentation was made and in-depth discussions took place with the fellowships units, the senior management and other staff at all ROs. Beside the narrative interviews and focus group discussions with a total of 92 former fellows in eight visited countries, semi-structured interviews were conducted with WHO Representatives, CO staff, national health administrations, host and receiving institutions and other fellowships providers. The questionnaire survey was to poll the WHO Representatives on their views of the fellowships programme. The analysis did not rank the offices according to performance. The differences between the offices were used to illustrate strengths and weaknesses.

151. Delegates of the WHO regional offices expressed their satisfaction with the WHO fellowships evaluation process, as they were actively involved by providing feedback on the validity and reliability of the survey. They thought that if there were any matters of concerns, they would have to look at them before the final report would come out in 2005. They expected from this study to give them some direction in terms of policies and strategies related to the programme.
152. The representatives of other agencies were also impressed by the methodology that WHO was using. They saw new elements in the WHO Fellowships evaluation which they thought could possibly be applied by their own agencies, too. Ms. Jennifer Humphries, Senior Director, Membership and Educational Programs, Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), asked whether the toolkit and the questionnaire were available on the website for the agencies to utilize. Mr. Schroll replied that they would be in the annex of the report and could also be forwarded to UN/DESA for distribution at a later date.

153. It was understandable that the composition of the evaluation team, especially the external members, was a concern to everybody. At the World Maritime University, for example, they had external examiners who were connected to the University as it was easier for them to make evaluations. Lately WMU had changed its approach and had chosen people who were completely out of University as they were bringing in a totally different perspective. Mr. Schroll noted that WHO regional offices were consulted on the composition of the team. These offices were requested to recommend non-staff individuals who were experienced and quite knowledgeable about the fellowships. WHO did not want totally external people, though. They also could not pay fees to consultants, so one member was seconded by the Australian Government and the other member was a retired WHO staff. Both had the WHO experience, the knowledge of a country which hosted many fellows and the evaluation expertise. The review panel members were not paid any fees except the cost of travel.

154. In response to questions from the World Bank and UNITAR on the length of the process and the size of the sample, Mr. Schroll replied that in a way the process was long due to the fact that they wanted to go to all regions. On top of it, for an evaluation to be utilized, a solid database analysis was required before and after the survey. As to the size of the sample, he said that there was a total of 4000 fellows a year.

155. Ms. Chisato Aoki, ITTO Fellowships Programme, International Tropical Timber Organization asked whether WHO was using any kind of qualitative and quantitative analysis to measure the future impact of the fellowships programme. Mr. Schroll admitted that this was one of the most difficult issues as it could take 2-4 years to visibly see any kind of outcome. The question then remained how one could attribute the outcome to the investment in that person. The approach they used was qualitative interviews. Mr. Schroll did not believe that one could get a quantitative answer to the issues of attribution and causality. Besides, he noticed that people who were involved in the process started reflecting on improvements and solutions to different situations already during the survey and did not wait until the results were out.

H. The Training Activities of UNITAR

156. At the request of the Chairman, Ms. Isabel Hubert, Senior Programme Coordinator, Training Programme in Multilateral Diplomacy and International Affairs Management, UNITAR, gave a briefing on the mandate and the training activities of her agency. UNITAR is entirely self-funded and depends on voluntary contributions. Although the name says so, the Institute does no longer do research. Its activities concentrate mainly on training. The Institute consists of 50 staff with 6000 trainees in 150 training events per year. The main activities are in economic and social development, environmental law, debt and financial management, peace, security and diplomacy (peace making and preventive diplomacy). They provide regular and distance learning courses. Often they act as a training arm for other agencies and especially the
Secretariat. For diplomacy training they offer: a) free training for the diplomatic community at Headquarters; b) tailor-made training courses for member states, Governments and NGO’s; and c) fellowships (6 weeks training on International Law in The Hague; 1 month training in partnership building and human security in Geneva; 7 months course for French speaking countries with 4 months training on public administration and international relations in the UN system and 3 months training in the form of an internship).

157. UNITAR has not offered yet management skills training, but they intend to do so. To announce the programmes, they disseminate the information through the missions, UN agencies, internet etc. Sometimes, they receive an uneven number of applications from certain countries.

158. When selecting the fellows, a list of criteria is used by the selection committee, the donors, partners and UNITAR. They try to achieve a fair geographical and gender distribution. UNITAR concentrate on its targeted clientele - the diplomatic community, but they are also training UN staff, when space is available.

5. Administrative Issues Re-visited

A. Study Tour Policies and Procedures Revisited (Interpretation and Harmonization)

159. Mr. Tom Rudi presented the existing Study Tour Policies and Procedures. He invited the participants to revisit these procedures in order to streamline and harmonize them across the board. Talking about the new trends in development cooperation, he mentioned that training of nationals from developing countries through study tours had come to dominate the activities of a number of training and fellowships services in the United Nations system. Study tours have increased over the past few years, in part due to budget constraints for longer trainings, in part due to the pressing needs of the recipient countries to send their nationals abroad for exchange of experience in certain fields. A number of these agencies have already accumulated a lot of experience in study tour administration and management. Due attention is given to adapting existing policies, rules and procedures to the changing needs and priorities in the context of delegation of authority to field offices in the framework of decentralization. While study tours pose fewer problems than fellowships in terms of inter-agency coordination, still there are a few aspects that need to be addressed in order to reach a common position.

160. Although there is a general study tour policy in the UN system, there is not a common definition of the study tour acceptable to all the United Nations System Fellowships Services. Mr. Rudi suggested that this discrepancy should be reconciled in order to ensure a better application of entitlements. UN/DESA defines study tours as “a pre-arranged series of visits to carefully selected sites and institutions in one or more carefully selected countries for a maximum study of two months”. The chief purpose of the study tour is to benefit technical cooperation projects directly by providing senior professional personnel of the country in which the project is located with an opportunity to undertake short observation visits abroad. Basically, study tours are designed to provide participants the means of observing developments, gathering information, comparing policies and methodologies and exchanging experiences with other senior professionals in the host countries visited. A common definition of the study tour along these lines would be a breakthrough in the meeting deliberations.
161. Mr. Rudi then turned to the issue of the duration of study tours. Study tours are training awards for periods normally not exceeding 30 days and are arranged either by the fellowships services, or by the UNDP field offices, or through National Placement and Supervising Agencies. Under various circumstances, a study tour might last longer but no more than two months. UN/DESA study tours rarely exceeds four weeks. Occasionally, Training and Fellowships, UN/DESA, receives requests from Substantive Offices for study tour participants to visit up to five countries. While such requests have been strongly rejected, it has not been easy to scale them back to the threshold of three. Mr. Rudi suggested that a clear rule on the number of countries would be desirable, for that matter.

162. IAEA and WHO felt that the duration of up to two months was far too long and too expensive. IAEA would limit the DSA payment to two weeks. WHO usually did not have study tours longer than two weeks. UN/DESA replied that the maximum of two months was to accommodate participants who went on a study tour to several countries for a period of more than one month. Mr. De Tomassi suggested changing the definition on the duration of study tours and proposed to say that normally a study tour would last less than one month and in exceptional cases two months. IAEA and WHO did not feel comfortable. They asked for a maximum of two and four weeks respectively. WHO also noted that they agreed on a maximum of two countries per study tour and that the group was limited to four people, including the interpreter, due to administrative, organizational and logistical reasons. Mr. De Tomassi suggested that they would change the definition to: “the study tour is for a short duration (normally 2 weeks however never exceeding more than 2 months)”. After some serious discussion, it was agreed to include in the definition of a study tour a maximum duration of two months in order to allow other agencies more flexibility.

163. As regards the mode of travel, WHO acknowledged that often senior professionals were flying business class. UNESCO never gave business class to fellows unless it was within the guidelines and the allocated budget. UN/DESA noted that only cabinet ministers and above could be provided with business class travel on an exceptional basis.

164. Traditionally, study tour participants are entitled to a daily subsistence allowance from the arrival day to the last day of the official programme, plus one additional day of DSA in lieu of terminal expenses (subsistence expenses while en route, airport taxes, transport to and from the airport). If the study tour includes more than one country, per diem in lieu of terminal expenses are that of the last country. When both board and lodging are provided for participants, the daily subsistence allowance is reduced to 20%, except for the additional day, which is paid in full.

165. Mr. Rudi pointed out that the issue of “terminal expenses vs. one day in lieu of terminal expenses” needed to be discussed. On the subject of terminal expenses for study tour participants, past meetings of the Senior Fellowships Officers had recommended that a uniformed rule be applied and those organizations not paying such terminal expenses should reconsider their policy. Though a majority of the organizations pays terminal expenses for study tour participants, practices continue to vary. Proceeding from this, UN/DESA proposed to review this matter again. Until 2003 UN/DESA used to pay the participants one additional day of DSA in lieu of terminal expenses. While UN/DESA initiated consultations with ESCAP, INTRACEN, ECA and UNOV on this issue, the application of one additional day of DSA was suspended temporarily and replaced with terminal expenses. UN/DESA stood ready to unify this practice with that of the other agencies which paid terminal expenses. Before reaching a common stand, some questions need to be answered: How do the agencies pay these expenses, upon completion
of Travel Expense Claims (F-10 claims) or together with DSA prior to departure? Certain agencies do not request participants to submit travel expense claims. Some do. Furthermore, are terminal expenses paid for each country in the study programme or do they consist of a one-time fixed amount of $120?

166. Ms. Tineke J. Volker, Fellowships and APO Programme Officer Food and Agricultural Organization FAO commented that FAO tried to do the travel authorization as late as possible, when they were pretty sure about the itinerary. This saves them a lot of staff time. They pay the full DSA and the terminal expenses upfront. IAEA explained that they too preferred to do a one time payment in advance and that they gave the instructions to UNDP to buy tickets at least 4 weeks ahead so that the flights were cheaper and the participants could get their visa on time. The UNDP representative supported FAO and IAEA to pay 100% of the DSA instead of making two payments. UNESCO, on the other hand, pays 80% upfront and 20% after termination of the study tour. UN/DESA noted that they could not know beforehand if the study tour was going to be completed and therefore it was better to pay only 80% upfront and the rest upon return. UN/DESA explained that it was certainly administratively easier to pay 100% but they had to be accountable for what they were doing.

167. The latest report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled Harmonization of the Conditions of Travel throughout the United Nations System (JIU/REP/2004) underlined elements of travel where disparities still existed among the organizations of the common system. One of these elements was the class of air travel. Mr. Rudi emphasized that although the above report did not touch upon the travel of trainees, it raised an issue which was pertinent to the agenda of the Meeting – the need for harmonization of the class of travel for trainees among the agencies of the UN system as well. While the rule of thumb is that trainees should be provided with international travel by the most direct and economical route, yet a number of UN System Fellowships Services make exceptions to the established practice by authorizing business class air travel for study tour participants. This issue has become a rather complex one because of the increasing tendency to include high level government officials in study tours. Often times, there is considerable political pressure to provide them with more comfortable travel.

168. UNDP country offices often recommended that very high government officials be permitted to travel on business class in line with protocol. Such officials are deemed to be entitled to the same standards of accommodation as are applied to staff members, i.e. the class immediately below the first class for travel of more than nine hours and economy for flights of less than nine hours. In the report of the Meeting of the Senior Fellowships Officers in 1987, it was agreed that, in exceptional situations, the fellowships services could provide more comfortable travel arrangements for very high-level officials participating in study tours. The question arised: Who could be considered high level officials?

169. Some agencies do not use technical cooperation training funds for the travel of high-level government officials. This might give them more leeway to authorize business travel. UN/DESA’s study tours, on the contrary, are all linked to technical cooperation projects. For this reason, all study tour activities are recorded under a specific budget line which is reserved for this purpose.

170. Mr. Rudi summed up that overall there was no consensus to authorize, as a matter of policy, economy class regardless of the duration of flight. This situation reflects, perhaps, the variation that exist in the UN system on the standards of accommodation. According to the Joint Inspection Unit Report JIU/REP/2004 on the system-wide standards of accommodation, WIPO
granted business class regardless of the duration of the flight, ILO after 5 hours; WHO lowered the threshold for business class from 9 to 6 hours; ICAO seven hours; UNESCO eight hours; ITU increased from five to nine; IAEA seven hours; UNIDO, UNOF and UN apply the nine hour threshold. This appears to be the practice among some agencies for the travel of study tour participants, too.

171. Mr. Rudi then turned to the issue of travel allowances. The JIU noted in its latest report on fellowships that one agency applied a lump-sum grant in lieu of payments for certain travel allowances of study tour participants. This approach might lead to excessive travel estimates. In addition, it can hardly claim to be a transparent and accountable solution. Another issue is the nature of the travel allowances. Does this lumps-sum grant include airport taxes, visa fees and a minor terminal expense of $9 when airport pickup is included in the programme? UN/DESA’s policy is not to give cash to study tour participants to purchase tickets. Participants are provided with tickets either through the UNDP country offices or through AMEX at UN Headquarters.

172. Mr. Rudi recalled that the rationale behind the decision of the predecessors which was to give to study tour participants one additional day of DSA in lieu of terminal expenses was taken to enable the participants to pay airport taxes, visa fees and other minor expenses related to travel. Nowadays, the reality has changed. Participants are required to defray in certain countries up to $100 as airport taxes or visa fees. Clearly, they cannot afford it. Nor can the UN absorb such expenses on their behalf without an established policy. Even if the former practice of one additional day of DSA would be retained, it would still not be adequate to cover travel expenses alone, especially in countries with a DSA rate $100 or less. Hence, the need to tackle and harmonize these issues.

173. IAEA asked if they had to pay visa fees for all the participants. UN/DESA replied that visa fees used to be covered by the additional DSA in lieu of terminal expenses. With the recent increase in visa fees up to $100 in some countries, agencies should come up with a recommendation to reimburse the trainees. FAO thought it should be at the discretion of each agency.

174. With respect to airport taxes, WHO suggested that they should also be reimbursable.

175. WHO raised the issue of excess baggage. They have a lot of trainees who have excess baggage. WHO seems to be the only agency with this issue. To other agencies this is not a problem.

176. UN/DESA drew the attention to the fact that the terminal allowance of USD 30 was reduced to USD 9 when a pick-up was available. FAO and WHO appealed to make this process as easy as possible. Finally, it was recommended not to provide any allowance when an airport pick-up was available.

B. Group Training Policies and Procedures Revisited (Interpretation and Harmonization)

177. Mr. Rudi then continued with the next presentation on Group Training Policies and Procedures. He pointed out that the term group training carried a somewhat more flexible connotation and application than the term study tour. At the planning stage of a technical
cooperation project of UN/DESA, the Government, the UNDP Resident Representative or the Chief Technical Advisor of a project determines that some group training within the country or abroad in the form of workshops, seminars, symposia, regional or global forums will be necessary. The selected form of training as described in the narrative of the Project Document and the estimated cost is provided for in the budget under specific budget lines. UN/DESA uses a separate budget line (33) for group training.

178. Turning to the issue of a common definition, Mr. Rudi cited the UN/DESA definition of Group Training as a starting point for discussion: “Group Training is a generic term covering flexible arrangements made to meet the requirements of two or more nationals working in a project whereby they (a) receive practical training within the country designed to upgrade the skills; or (b) attend specially designed, practical training courses, seminars, symposia, workshops or technical meetings outside the country in which the project is located”.

179. As can be seen from the definition, unlike study tours, group training takes place both inside the country and abroad. When such training is organized in the country it is called “in-country training”, or “in-service training”. When such training is conducted abroad, it could be in the form of tailor-made courses at specialized institutions, or it could be attendance at workshops, seminars, etc. Clearly, in-country training involve a large participation from various regions of the country, whereas group training abroad has a more limited number of trainees.

180. Talking about the participants in advisory meetings, Mr. Rudi invited the agencies to provide their feedback on how they handled this activity from the financial and administrative points of view. Until 2003, UN/DESA included in the category of Group Training the participants in advisory meetings, as well, because they were planned in the project document under the training line. In fact, participants in advisory meetings and in ad hoc expert groups were “experts on mission”. The costs incurred for the services of participants in advisory meetings had to be charged exclusively to funds specifically authorized for these purposes. Such costs were always coded under the appropriate object of expenditure for participants in advisory meetings. Last year Training and Fellowships had several discussions with its Project Finance to take this category out of the training lines and agreed to treat participants in Advisory Meetings in compliance with ST/AI/296 dated 19 November 1982. It turned out from the discussions that other agencies did not handle this category. However, they referred to ST/AI/296 if need would be.

181. The Mode of Travel for Group Training participants was an issue which has become a rather complex one for UN/DESA. Due to the changing nature of technical cooperation activities, there is a growing trend to invite very high-level government officials to attend workshops, seminars, symposia, international conferences and global forums. Theoretically, they should be treated in line with the policies on group training. Practically, it is difficult to authorize travel on economy class for a Minister, Speaker of Parliament or Presidential Advisor. Another issue related to this is the accommodation of these high-level officials. For security reasons, they cannot be accommodated at any hotel. UN/DESA was faced with such situations and was forced to request, on an exceptional basis, approval of ad-hoc DSA from the Conditions of Service Section, UN/OHRM, for certain hotels in a particular country.

182. Ever since the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the UNDP signed the Compact three years ago, Workshops, Seminars, Conferences and Summits, such as World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, the Conference on E-Government in Palermo and the 5th Global
Forum in Mexico City, just to mention a few, were becoming a dominant factor in the training activities of UN/DESA, both in terms of the number, which sometimes exceeded one hundred, and the level of participants. UN/DESA training and fellowships is faced with situations where the administrative procedures does not warrant any distinction among the participants in a conference. Yet, the presence in a single conference of more than twenty ministers from various developing countries under the administrative umbrella of “group training” is a reality, which needs to be addressed in order to allow for adequate treatment in line with their functions and protocol. A few cases might be considered as exceptions. But when the participation of so many high-ranking officials is a common phenomenon, undoubtedly more creative and innovative approaches need to be found.

183. Training budget lines allow for equal treatment of all participants vis-à-vis the entitlements. However, there is often considerable political pressure to provide certain meeting participants with more comfortable travel. As in the case of study tours, UNDP country offices has often recommended that very high government officials be permitted to travel on business class in line with protocol. Such officials are believed to be entitled to the same standards of accommodation as is applied to participants in advisory meetings (or staff members), i.e. the class immediately below the first class for travel of more than nine hours and economy for flights of less than nine hours.

184. In absence of clear-cut guidelines for high-ranking officials, UN/DESA has been forced in a few cases to apply the Administrative Instructions on Participants in Advisory Meetings in order to accommodate the travel of very high-ranking officials. Again, this might not be pertinent to some agencies, which do not use technical cooperation fellowships funds for the travel of high-level government officials. But, to UN/DESA, which has applied the staff rules to tackle such cases on an exceptional basis or to any agency, which has resolved this matter by offering the participants lump sum grants in lieu of payments for travel and other allowances, a more coordinated, transparent and accountable approach would be a welcome development. Delegates were invited to discuss and make recommendations on this issue. UN/DESA considered it as a cross-cutting element that required clear policy and management.

185. Mr. Rudi further discussed the Travel and DSA for In-Country Training participants. If the participants are required by the United Nations to travel beyond commuting distance from their usual place of residence, such travel can be borne by the United Nations. DSA is also applicable for each day of the activity. With respect to the travel of the participants within commuting distance from their usual place of residence, the practice is to provide them with twenty percent of DSA as pocket allowance, which, among other things, covers the cost of local transportation. Participants in an advisory meeting, who reside at the place of the meeting, receive a daily subsistence allowance at one fifth of the usual rate for each full day of attendance to cover their incidental expenses. ESCAP, ECA, INTRACEN and UNOV do pay this entitlement to meeting participants within commuting distance. ESCAP sometimes provides lunches in lieu of 20% of DSA. Some agencies might not pay it at all. Therefore, a review by the delegates is called for in order to establish whether the entitlement 20% of DSA is necessary.

186. WHO/EMRO expressed reservations to pay 20% of DSA to participants from the same country where the Group Training took place. They did not think that it was justified. UN/DESA though noted that if the participants came from another city they also had to get accommodation and pay for their meals. Dr. Hassanabadi explained that the stipend rate could exceed 10 times the salary of a person working in a developing country. Therefore, he appealed to make a difference between national and foreign participant. For instance, in Iran a foreign
person has to stay in a hotel at USD 50 for security reasons while an Iranian can stay in a hotel for USD 10. If the Iranian was getting the full DSA he would gain in one month so much money that this would create a problem in the Government working environment. For this reason, WHO/EMRO pays the full DSA to foreigners, 50% to nationals and 10-20% to residents of the same location. IAEA gives the full DSA to participants who live more than 50 km away from the venue. To those within that radius they pay only USD 10.

187. In order to reach a compromise, Dr. Nukuro suggested that the definition of the DSA as well as the pocket allowance could be changed into the wording ‘a maximum of…’ Mr. De Tomassi thanked him for the proposal which could meet the different points of view.

188. Mr. Rudi emphasized that the issue of Medical Clearance was as essential as the mode of travel. Since participants who travel at UN expense are covered medically by the United Nations, participants are asked to submit certificates of good health and fit to travel to the venue of the meeting. Again, participants in advisory meetings are treated as per ST/Al/296 of 5 July 1995 which stated: “27. In issuing invitations to participants in advisory meetings, the United Nations assumes that the individual concerned is in good health and has no illness or disability that might prevent the individual concerned from travelling to or participating in the meeting as required by the Organization. It is the responsibility of the participant in an advisory meeting to inform the United Nations of any such health impediment prior to accepting the invitation.”

189. The request for the confirmation of fitness is for the protection of the Organization as well as in the interest of the individual. Over the years, there were people who could not be cleared for certain elevations or climates. A person might have a heart condition that could be aggravated by air travel or there could be a prior impediment that might complicate the Organization's liability. UN/DESA applies the medical clearance policy across the board, no matter the duration of the training or the level of participants. In every financial authorization that UN/DESA issues on behalf of group-training participants, it is requested that “Participants should be medically cleared prior to issuance of tickets”. This medical clearance is either submitted to Fellowships Office or is presented to the UNDP country office. Two years ago, for objective reasons, UN/DESA decided to amend the wording for this category of training to show some measure of flexibility. Now it reads: “Travel at UN expense is subject to certification of medical fitness”. The position of J.Van Breda & Co. International, as stated in its Group, Life, Disability and Medical Insurance Policy, was that “For durations up to one month, a statement of good health, attested to by a duly-qualified physician, will be sufficient”.

190. Mr. Rudi expressed his belief that, drawing on the best experience of the agencies and on the expertise of the Van Breda representative, the Meeting would be in a position to adopt a common policy on the procedures and entitlements of participants in Group Training.

C. IAPSO Annual Report on Training and Fellowships

191. Mr. Niels Ramm, Procurement, Advisory and Development Officer, Inter-Agency Procurement Services Office explained that IAPSO had two mandates. The first mandate included the procurement of equipment (goods), training, consultancy and electronic purchasing as well as systems contracting. The second part of the mandate was the Secretariat – Inter-Agency Procurement Working Group and the Business information services.
192. Over the years, IAPSO had several mandates: In 1979 it was decided in the GA Res.32/197 that IAPSO should promote inter-agency cooperation, coordination and harmonization, by conducting research and development and procurement related matters for the UN system. They should also continue to provide a full range of such procurement services to the organizations of the UN system and to partners in development. In 1987, the EB 87/19 requested to compile statistical information on procurement. In 1998, IAPSO was asked to also provide additional data on other components such as experts, consultants, national experts, fellowships and volunteers (EB 89/29).

193. Mr. Ramm mentioned that the Annual Statistical Report (ASR) was made on procurement of Goods and Services by the UN system of organizations under both UNDP funding and all sources of funding. There were also reports on the Procurement from Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries as well as statistical data on International Project Personnel, National Project Personnel, UN Volunteers and fellowships. Mr. Ramm pointed out that the annual statistical report compiled procurement and personnel data of 40 UN Agencies and 143 UNDP Country Offices. It was used by the Governments, Donors, Business Community and UN Agencies.

194. The ASR data collection started in mid-January 2004, when an e-mail was sent to the Heads of the Section of submitting Agencies, containing information on requirement, deadlines and link to website for downloadable compilation tables. By the End of March the data was submitted via e-mail to IAPSO by means of attached MS Excel tables. Usually the majority of data was submitted after the deadlines, in some cases by 2-3 months late, despite repeated reminders. The data compilation should be completed by June. The compilation process consists of registering submission, verifying completeness and format, up-loading of tables into master compilation tables and ensuring the accuracy of calculation. Finally the ASR Report was published as a downloadable PDF file from the IAPSO website in June and was submitted to the UNDP Executive Council Meeting.

195. Mr. Ramm also reacted to some previous notes of criticism. According to him, the report lacked sometimes comparability and reliability because the organizations did not always provide the input. This made yearly comparisons inaccurate. Another issue was that data submission was not always provided by a fellowships unit which resulted in differing data, depending on the source. Problem areas during the data collection phase were: a) Identifying and keeping track of responsible units or individuals to address request to; b) Lack of response despite multiple reminders; c) Difficulty to comply with data format; and d) Timing conflicts in reporting year. During the data compilation phase problems like incomplete data, e.g. missing cost or person month, lacking gender distribution could arise. IAPSO generally did not provide an analysis of the given data, other than check format and completeness.

196. To close his presentation, Mr. Ramm referred to the question whether IAPSO would be the right entity to collect and compile data and if the current data met the Fellowships Officers requirements. He was confident that IAPSO was the right entity to collect and compile the data and he also suggested the following points to move forward: 1) Establish contact roster of fellowships units responsible for reporting; 2) Include annual reports as a mandatory work task of agencies fellowships units; 3) Develop data collection format that meet agencies requirement and for which agencies could provide data; and 4) Enhance the fellowships data in the ASR, e.g. provide agency country of assignment and country study tables (similar to procurement by agency tables).
197. Agencies were very pleased with the presence of the representative of IAPSO at the meeting. It was an opportunity for all to discuss the pending issues and seek ways of facilitating and improving their mutual cooperation in data submission and report preparation. The fact that the data was not reported for the year 2000 was a ‘wake-up’ call for closer collaboration.

198. Content-wise, some representatives from WHO wanted to know the purpose of the report and whether the data presented in it had any influence on decisions or policy-making. Mr. Ramm believed that the report was needed to obtain an overview of the costs and the amount which was spent on the activities throughout the UN system. He pointed out that donors tended to use the data to calculate return rates. Governments use the data to see how much is procured in their particular countries. Ms. de Beer added that UNDP found the data useful for insurance purposes and noted that the UNDP Executive Board often asked for that data. Dr. Nukuro thought it was obvious that the UN would like to know how much they spent on the Fellows. He was wondering if all the UN agencies gathered that information.

199. Format-wise, some agencies such as IAEA, INTRACEN and WHO/SEARO came up with some suggestions. For example, the report would not be complete if it was restricted to fellowships and study tours. Dr. Khalilullah suggested to include the group training (seminars, workshops, meetings, conferences, symposia) participants, as well. After some discussion it was agreed that there were too many trainings and that it was also necessary to first clarify if there was a real need for all that information. Furthermore, the table which is provided to input data manually is not very user friendly and the format of the duration (decimal) is not ideal. Mr. Ramm promised to look into these issues. However, according to him, it was difficult to find a format which collected all the data required and fitted the different agency systems.

200. Delegates also asked to improve the communication between IAPSO and their agencies. Ms. Browning thought that an e-mail was probably not the correct method to contact people on these important issues as it was too informal and easily deleted. She also worried that they did probably not reach the people who were really concerned about the statistics. Instead of contacting the head of personnel or procurement she suggested to contact the head of administration. Mr. Ramm responded that they used to send letters, but since they have switched to e-mail the response rate had increased. They had experienced that it was more efficient to address the chief of the procurement section, but he admitted that it was very difficult to find the right person to contact. Ms. Slessor had experienced a similar situation for data collection and she explained that they had set up a link to their website so that the data could be entered by different people. They actually received more accurate data.

201. Mr. Ramm summed up that IAPSO would include the duration period in the tables. They would contact the agencies by e-mail and send a hardcopy. He also suggested sending e-mails to each Fellowships Officer to find out who the right persons were to contact for this report.

D. Insurance Policy: Van Breda

202. Mr. Alain Van Noten, Account Manager, International Benefits Group Plan, Van Breda and Co. International, began his presentation with a historical overview of the evolution of the “Fellowships Insurance”. He pointed out that the “Fellowships insurance” was made up of Group Life, Disability and Medical Insurance for which a policy had been negotiated by
IAPSO/UNDP in 1982. The categories which fall under the “Fellowships Insurance” are: Fellows, Trainees, Study Tour Participants, NPPPs, Experts/Consultants under National Execution and Service Contract Holders. Until December 31, 2002 a pooled claims experience for all categories was made. The premiums from 1994 – 2002 stayed unchanged and the fellows’ subsidy went towards “non-fellows”. As of January 1, 2003, there was an increase of premium rates by 40% and a reintroduction of 10 USD-deductible for fellows and non-fellows.

203. Regarding the Medical Insurance, Mr. Van Noten confirmed that no premium adjustment would take place until December 31, 2005. He stated that they experienced a differentiation of claims between the four groups: a) Fellows; b) Service Contract Holders/NPPPs of UNOPS; c) Service Contract Holders/NPPPs of UNDP; and d) Service Contract Holders/NPPPs of WFP. Mr. Van Noten stated that no more subsidies would go from fellows towards non-fellows. This means that the next premium revision (January 1, 2006) will be differentiated for each group based on their respective claims experience. In the meantime, WFP has made a new arrangement outside of IAPSO framework.

204. Overall medical insurance premiums for fellows went up 24.7% in the last two years which was a result of more people being insured. The reimbursement increased by 51.6%.

205. As far as the Life and Disability Insurance is concerned, there was a change of insurers on March 1, 2003. The reasons to change to “Les Assurance Générales de France Vie” are the following: It applies the same premiums as in 2002, excluded terrorism and demonstrates a positive impact on claims handling. The premiums did not change on January 1, 2004 and will not change on January 1, 2005. The policy is under review every year. The premiums for Life and Disability Insurance increased in the last two years by 22%.

206. Mr. Van Noten reminded the participants of the FAQ flyer which Van Breda issued to inform the fellows about the duration of coverage, benefits and exclusions, direct billing, claims procedure and contact data. The flyer appears in English, French and Spanish. He concluded that no premium adjustment would be made on January 1, 2005 and that on the occasion of the next premium revision in 2006, Van Breda would take into account the differentiated claims experience for the group of fellows alone.

207. UN/DESA mentioned that there was a general concern about the condition on authorizing the travel for fellows and if it was a requirement by the insurance to have a medical certificate before travelling. Mr. Van Noten specified that a medical check was necessary to join the insurance and that a medical certificate was sufficient and compulsory when a person was going to travel. A signed letter on which the travelling person states his/her good health can be an alternative and a practicable solution if time is short. Van Breda will base the insurance on the list which is sent to them by the agencies.

208. Ms. Hubert wondered if it was feasible to give the fellows some vouchers when they needed to go to the doctor, as the pre-financing could be very difficult for the fellows. Mr. Van Noten was aware of the issue but did not see an easy solution to it. For the doctors it is too much administration and they are not willing to take vouchers. They have about 8000 hospitals with which they have agreements. Mr. Van Noten suggested that they reported case by case if any problems occurred.

209. Mr. Bischoff mentioned that in Switzerland the coverage was up to USD 50,000 and that this amount was not covered by Van Breda. As Switzerland was the only country where the
coverage was at USD 50,000, Mr. Van Noten suggested that two lists should be made, one for the regular premium and one with a slightly higher premium which covers up to USD 50,000.

E. Exploration of Possibilities to Establish Stronger Mechanisms for Fellowships Networking among Agencies

210. Ms. Gloria Wightman, Manager of Training and TOKTEN Cluster, UNOPS, was not able to participate in the meeting. However, she sent in her PowerPoint Discussion Paper on Strengthening Networking among the UN Fellowships Officers. In her absence, her Paper was presented by Dr. Goubarev and Ms. Gladbach. Talking about networking as a tool of communication, it was noted that networking was “the act or process of informally sharing information or support, especially among members of a professional group.” Simply stated, networks were people talking to each other, sharing ideas, information and resources. Unfortunately, networking is often misunderstood, misused and therefore underused. Reciprocity is the cornerstone of networking. Networking is an attitude, an approach to work and the way in which you relate to people and the resources around you. There is a spirit of sharing that transcended the information shared.

211. In terms of the benefits of networking, it is underscored that when used wisely, appropriately and professionally, networking is a powerful tool. Within professional groups, networking is an easy, fast and cost effective way to get and give information. It promotes brainstorming to solve problems. As each person in a network makes contributions, everyone takes in new information that is synthesised and results in new ideas. Networks are structured to transmit information in a way that is quicker, more high-tech, more energy efficient than any other process. Networks foster the exchange of information to improve productivity and work life as well as to share resources. Technology advances have given us electronic means which facilitated networking around the globe.

212. The UN Senior Fellowships Officers meeting is a unique forum that promotes harmonization, encourages discussion of issues of mutual interest and enhances the sharing of information and the exchange of ideas.

213. Networking is already a critical part of our interactions and work. There already exist other fora and virtual networks in the UN community that facilitate the information sharing on best practices in the human resources management, training and procurement areas.

214. In this regard, “some food for thought” was offered to the SFOs. It was suggested to look at the possibility of setting up an Internet-based networking system which would facilitate continuous dialogue and information-sharing among Fellowships Officers. To accomplish this, the following three points were underlined: a) Establish a LISTSERV or email group for the Senior Fellowships Officers, other members of the UN community and National Placement and Supervising Agencies involved in fellowships programmes; b) Nominate an agency (such as UN/DESA) to play a leading role and serve as focal point to establish, maintain and promote the use of the network to build relations, advance harmonization efforts and share best practices and information; and c) The Focal Point would also be responsible for enrolling new membership. Effective and committed networking would put the Senior Fellowships Officers way ahead of the ball game and would enrich their professional and personal lives.
6. Discussion of the Draft Conclusions and Recommendations

215. The discussion and adoption of the conclusions and recommendations of the Meeting dominated the deliberations on day three. The Working Papers and other documents prepared by the delegates under various agenda items contained many thought-provoking ideas and proposals. In addition to on-going issues such as Transparency in the Fellowship Selection Process and Gender Balance, participants elaborated extensively on the need for continuous monitoring and evaluation of fellowship programmes by UN agencies and host institutions alike; security of fellows in the field; the publishing of an on-line inter-agency Newsletter; the proper implementation of the fellowship policies and procedures by field offices; the enrichment of the Fellowship Website, etc. The whole set of Conclusions and Recommendations is reproduced in Annex VI.

7. Closing Statements

216. Dr. Goubarev made a closing statement on behalf of the host agency, the World Health Organization. He expressed his deep appreciation for the dedication and hard work of the delegates. WHO was proud to host the 15th Meeting and to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Meeting of Senior Fellowships Officers. He extended his gratitude to all the agencies and emphasized that the Fellowships Programme was very important to all the countries. He was confident that the recommendations would further facilitate the work of the Fellowships Services and Programmes and thanked UN/DESA for its valuable contribution.

217. The Secretary, Mr. De Tomassi, joined Dr. Goubarev in thanking the participants for their very constructive input. He extended his appreciation to WHO for being host to the Meeting. He also commended Mr. Al-Mashat for his punctual and efficient chairmanship. He also thanked the support staff for their services as well as the Sound Coordinator for assisting all along the meeting and taping the whole discussion. He reminded the participants that the preparation of the next meeting would start in about one year, so if they had any suggestions, they should send them to UN/DESA.

218. The Chairman, Mr. Al-Mashat, thanked everyone for their contributions and underlined that the success of the meeting was done by all of the participants. He was touched and honoured to be the Chairman and hoped to have fulfilled the expectations. He was happy to announce that the meeting had come to an end and, at the same time, the recommendations were ready. He felt that UNESCO, where the next meeting would be held, was the right place to discuss the topic such as ‘South-South Cooperation’ which was suggested by the colleagues. He, once again, congratulated everyone for the success of the meeting and hoped to see them all again in Paris in two years.
8. Annexes

Annex I: Conclusions and Recommendations of the 15th Meeting

1) The 15th Meeting of SFOs agreed on the following definition of Study Tours:
   “A study tour in the United Nations system is an award for a development cooperation activity
given to an individual or group of individuals to visit pre-arranged sites and institutions in one or
more selected countries for a short duration (normally no more than two weeks and even in
exceptional cases never exceeding two months) to observe developments, gather information and
exchange experience with host counterparts in fields pertaining to specific country agreements or
project documents.”

1a) The Meeting also endorsed the set of standardized entitlements and procedures for Study
   Tours participants as amended during the discussions (see attachment) and requested UN/DESA
to submit them to the High Level Committee on Management (HLCM) for its approval.

2) The Meeting also agreed on the following definition of Group Training:
   “A Group Training in the United Nations system is a flexible arrangement made to meet the
requirements of two or more nationals working in a project or programme whereby they (a)
receive practical training within the country designed to upgrade the skills, or (b) attend specially
designed, practical training courses, seminars, symposia, workshops or technical meetings
outside the country.”

2a) The Meeting also endorsed the set of standardized entitlements and procedures for Group
   Training Participants, as amended during the discussions (see attachment) and requested
UN/DESA to submit them to HLCM for its approval.

3) UN system Fellowships Officers should be actively involved in the fellows’ selection
   process.

4) In order to ensure that fellowships contribute effectively to the national capacity
   enhancement, a quality assurance system for continuous monitoring of fellowships programmes
should be developed by the UN agencies.

5) It is desirable that the UN agencies encourage and support training institutions to establish
   mechanisms for evaluation of their training programmes that monitor the programme and
fellows’ progress, and ensure that concerns are identified, addressed and reported to the
aforementioned agencies.

6) With regard to the evaluation of fellowships programmes, it was noted that a cost effective
   practice could be to utilize other agencies representatives as external evaluators.

7) Following the proposal of UN/DESA, the agencies welcomed the idea to make the “Basic
   Security in the Field” training mandatory for all trainees as a needed security measure. The
meeting requested UN/DESA to contact UNSECOORD and seek the possibility of customising it
for trainees. The request to translate the security training in other UN languages has already been
discussed with UNSECOORD.
8) In order to harmonize issues concerning administration of trainees in the field and to ensure proper implementation at country level, the Meeting suggested that UN/DESA transmit to the UNDP country offices the harmonized policies, procedures and allowances on:
   a) Fellowships
   b) Study Tours
   c) Group Training

9) The participants acknowledged with satisfaction the commendable work of UN/DESA both in adding agency links to the website and applying multilingualism. It was suggested that the enhancement of the website should continue with the addition of new links and new documents of common use, in particular questionnaires on Tracer surveys and evaluations, as well as events of interest to fellowships programmes.

10) The Meeting suggested that UN/DESA explore the possibility for: a) publishing an online Global Newsletter and b) creating a shared interagency workspace (such as on the web site GC21.de) as a means to further develop the coordination mechanisms and exchange of experiences on fellowships.

11) The Meeting, noting with satisfaction that in the last two years there has been an improvement concerning gender balance, in line with the recommendations made during the 14th meeting, recommended that further efforts be deployed to promote gender balance.

12) The Meeting requested UN/DESA to clarify with the appropriate high level coordination body the purpose of the annual report on training prepared by IAPSO in order to identify the specific data variables to be collected and published.

13) The Meeting participants took note of the confirmation by Van Breda representative that every trainee should submit a certificate of good health in order to be enrolled in the medical coverage.

14) Participants expressed their deep appreciation to UN/DESA for the excellent inter agency fellowships coordination over the past two years and for the quality of the documents submitted to the 15th SFO-Meeting. They also paid tribute to the host agency, WHO, for the warm hospitality and the excellent facilities and working condition which they generously offered to the participants. On the basis of the concrete and very constructive results obtained during the deliberations, the participants consider the meeting a full success. In light of the above, they request UN/DESA to start, in due time, the organization of the 16th SFO-Meeting to be held in 2006. The representative of UNESCO will explore the possibility for his agency to host the next meeting in Paris and will inform UN/DESA accordingly.
Annex II: Programme of Work

Wednesday, 13 October 2004:

09:00    Registration
09:30    Welcoming Address by Dr. Tim Evans, ADG and Representative of the World Health Organization
09:45    Organizational Session:
          Election of Officers
          Adoption of Agenda
10:00    General Introduction by Mr. Furio De Tomassi, Chief of Personnel
          Service, UN/DESA, and Secretary for Inter-Agency Fellowships
          Coordination
10:15    Coffee Break

I. Operational and Substantive Issues

10:30    A. Quality of fellowships programmes: Presentations by Dr. J. Karagulova,
          (WHO/EURO) as Coordinator of the Peer Review Group, Mr. G.
          Bischoff (IAEA), Dr. B. Poniatowski (UNU). National Placement and
          Supervising Agencies are expected to present their views.
          Presentation by Ms. N. Colinet (IAEA).
13:00    Lunch
14:00    C. Report by Mr. Tom Rudi, (UN/DESA), on the Implementation of the
          Recommendations of the 14th Meeting of Senior Fellowships Officers as
          well as on the Work of the Focal Point.
14:30    D. Presentation by Ms. H. De Beer (UNDP) on the New Policies of the
          UNDP and Their Impact on the Implementation of Fellowships
          Programmes of the UN Agencies.
15:15    Coffee Break
15:30    E. The Health Leadership Service (Information by WHO/HQ)
16:00    F. Global Review of the Fellowships Stipend Rates – Policy and
          Methodology. Presentation by Ms. L. Del Rosario, Conditions of Service
          Section, UN Secretariat, followed by discussions.
17:30    Tracer Study – Presentation by Mr. A.-M. Al-Mashat (World Bank)
18:00    Reception given by WHO in honour of the delegations.
Thursday, 14 October 2004:

09:00  G. Evaluation of the fellowships programme (Information by Mr. M. Schroll, Education Officer, WHO/HQ)

II. Administrative Issues Re-visited.

09:30  Presentation by Mr. T. Rudi, (UN/DESA), followed by round-table discussion on:

10:00  A. Study Tours: Allowances and Entitlements
10:30  Coffee break
10:45  B. Workshops, Seminars, Conferences, Symposia: Allowances and Entitlements.
12:45  Lunch
14:00  C. IAPSO Annual Report on Training and Fellowships -Presentation by Mr. N. Ramm (IAPSO), followed by discussions.
15:15  Coffee break
15:30  D. Insurance Policy. (Presentation by Mr. A. Van Noten (Van Breda), followed by discussions).

Friday, 15 October 2004

09:00  E. Exploration of possibilities to establish stronger mechanisms for Fellowships networking among agencies (informal consideration based on a Paper circulated by Ms. G. Wightman (OPS)
09:20  F. Presentation of UNITAR by Ms. I. Hubert
09:40  G. Preliminary Discussion on the New Recommendations of the Meeting.
10:30  Coffee Break
10:45  Presentation of the Draft Recommendations
11:30  Adoption of the Recommendations.
12:00  Wrap-up and Closing Statements.
12:30  Departure.
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### Annex IV: Harmonized Policies and Procedures: Study Tours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>1. DEFINITION</strong></th>
<th>A study tour in the United Nations system is an award for a development cooperation activity given to an individual or group of individuals to visit pre-arranged sites and institutions in one or more selected countries for a short duration (normally no more than two weeks and even in exceptional cases never exceeding two months) to observe developments, gather information and exchange experience with host counterparts in fields pertaining to specific country agreements or project documents.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **2. DSA** | All study tour participants receive DSA:  
  a) Full DSA from the arrival day to the last day of the programme.  
  b) 20% of DSA when board and lodging are provided.  
  c) 70% of DSA when board is provided.  
  d) 50% of DSA when lodging |
| **3. MODE OF TRAVEL** | 1. Normally, the mode of travel should always be economy class, regardless of the length of the trip.  
  2. For the level of Cabinet Ministers and above, exceptions for business class may be considered and submitted for clearance to the Administration of the relevant fellowships service, if the length of travel exceeds the threshold of the UN Secretariat which is nine hours, or the standard limit of the agency. |
| **4. INTERNAL TRAVEL** | Study Tour Participants are entitled to internal travel in the host country(ies) if such travel is part of the programme. If internal travel is by air, it should be included in the original ticket. If travel is by train or by car, they should be reimbursed on submission of travel claims and proof of ticket purchase. |
| **5. TRAINING CHARGES** | UN agencies pay training charges to host institutions as required, upon receipt of invoices. |
| **6. INTERPRETATION CHARGES** | Such charges are exception rather than common practice. When the training programmes so warrant, interpretation charges may be paid to the host institutions upon receipt of invoices. |
| **7. MEDICAL INSURANCE** | All study tour participants are medically insured by the relevant agency. Each participant should submit a certificate of good health to the relevant fellowships service prior to travel. In exceptional cases, it may be submitted to the UNDP CO with a copy to the Fellowships. In a cost-sharing arrangement, the certificate of good health is still required if the UN agency is to ensure the participant medically. |
| 8. TERMINAL EXPENSES | Terminal expenses should replace one additional day of DSA in lieu of terminal expenses. Terminal expenses should be paid for every country in the programme, if there are no airport pick. If the UNDP CO confirms that itinerary includes an overnight stay in a third country due to connection flights, terminal expenses for that particular country should be paid prior to departure. If the stopover was not anticipated, terminal expenses should be reimbursed upon receipt of Travel Expense Claims and other supporting evidence from the participants. In a cost-sharing arrangement, terminal expenses are borne by the agency that provides the travel. |
| 9. MINOR TERMINAL EXPENSES | When a UN or Government vehicle is made available for the trip from the airport to the hotel, the amount to be reimbursed to a staff member is nine dollars (ST/IC/2001/43). This is not applicable to study tour participants. |
| 10. TRAVEL TIME PAYMENT | There are no provisions for travel time payment. DSA is applicable from the arrival day to the last day of the study tour. If the participants arrive earlier or depart later due to non-availability of flights, DSA is paid for those days. |
| 11. OFFICIAL COMMENCEMENT OF TRAVEL | Official travel starts at the closest international airport in the home country. If participants need to travel by train or by air to go to the closest international airport for departure, such travel should be included in the overall budget of the study tour. |
| 12. DSA ADVANCE | The amount of DSA advance to study tour participants is at the discretion of each agency. |
| 13. EXCESS BAGAGE ALLOWANCE | Study tour participants are not entitled to excess baggage allowance. |
| 14. VISA FEES | Visa fees have jumped to $100 or more in some countries. It is recommended that the UN Agencies and Programmes reimburse such fees based on submission of Travel Expense Claims (F-10) and other supporting evidence by the participants. |
| 15. AIRPORT TAXES | In some countries airport taxes have reached $100. It is recommended that the UN agencies and Programmes reimburse such fees to the study tour participants based on submission of a Travel Expense Claim (F-10) and other supporting evidence. |
| 16. FINAL REPORTS | Each study tour participant should submit a final report of 2-6 pages at the end of training. When applicable, payment of balance 20% of DSA should be linked to the submission of the final report. |
| 17. WAIVER OF UN RESPONSIBILITY | The United Nations assumes no liability for damage to persons or property caused by a study tour participant. |
Annex V: Harmonized Policies and Procedures: Group Training

| **1. DEFINITION** | Group Training in the United Nations system is a flexible arrangements made to meet the requirements of two or more nationals working in a project or programme whereby they (a) receive practical training within the country designed to upgrade the skills, or (b) attend specially designed, practical training courses, seminars, symposia, workshops or technical meetings outside the country. |
| **2. DSA** | (a) Abroad: Each participant is entitled to DSA from the arrival day to the last day of the training event. If accommodation is provided, they receive 50% of DSA. If meals are provided, they receive 70% of DSA. If both accommodation and meals are provided, they receive 20% of DSA as pocket allowance.  
(b) In-country: Participants coming from various regions of the country may receive up to a maximum of full DSA if no meals and accommodation are provided free. If one or two meals are provided through other arrangements, the DSA is reduced by 10% for each meal (meals make up 30% of DSA). |
<p>| <strong>3. MEDICAL INSURANCE</strong> | All group training participants who travel abroad are insured medically by the relevant agency. Each participant should submit a certificate of good health to the relevant fellowships programme/service prior to travel. In exceptional cases, it may be submitted to the UNDP CO and copied to the Fellowships. In a cost-sharing arrangement, the certificate of good health is still required if the UN agency is to ensure the participant medically. Payment of medical expenses will be the responsibility of the participant. |
| <strong>4. MODE OF TRAVEL</strong> | The current policy is to provide each participant with the most direct and economical air ticket. For the level of Cabinet Ministers and above, exceptions for business class may be considered and submitted for clearance to the proper administration of the relevant training and fellowships service if the length of travel exceeds the threshold of the United Nations Secretariat, which is 9 hours, or the standard limit of the relevant Organization. |
| <strong>5. MINOR TRAVEL ALLOWANCE</strong> | When a UN or Government vehicle is made available for the trip from the airport to the hotel, the amount to be reimbursed to a staff member is $9 (ST/IC/2001/43). This is not applicable to group training participants. |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>6. TERMINAL EXPENSES</th>
<th>Terminal expenses must replace one additional day of DSA in lieu of terminal expenses. In the UN this will correspond to $160 for New York and $120 elsewhere in the world. Terminal expenses should be paid for each country in the training programme, if no airport pick-ups are pre-arranged by the host institutions. If the UNDP CO confirms that itinerary includes an overnight stay in a third country due to connection flights, terminal expenses for that particular country should be paid prior to departure. If the stopover was not anticipated, terminal expenses should be reimbursed upon receipt of Travel Expense Claims and other supporting evidence from the participants. In a cost-sharing arrangement, terminal expenses are borne by the agency that provides the travel.</th>
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<tr>
<td>7. TRAVEL TIME PAYMENT</td>
<td>There are no provisions for travel time payment. DSA is applicable from the arrival day to the last day of the training. If the participants arrive earlier or depart later due to non-availability of flights, DSA is paid for those days.</td>
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<td>8. BUDGET LINE</td>
<td>Group Training has a separate budget line in the project document or country agreement.</td>
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<td>9. REGISTRATION FEES</td>
<td>Registration fees are paid to institutions, as required, upon receipt of invoices</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. DSA ADVANCE</td>
<td>DSA advance to group training participants is at the discretion of each agency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. VISA FEES</td>
<td>Visa fees are charged to group training participants. It is recommended that if the waiving of such fees is not included in Host Country Agreements, the UN agencies and Programmes cover them based on submission by participants of Travel Expense Claims (F-10) and other supporting evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. AIRPORT TAXES</td>
<td>Airport taxes in some countries have reached $100. It is recommended that such taxes be borne by the United Nations agencies. Airport taxes should be reimbursed based on submission of Travel Expense Claims (F-10) and other supporting evidence by participants.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. POCKET ALLOWANCE</td>
<td>Agencies may pay up to a maximum of 20% of DSA as pocket allowance to participants residing in the city where the training activity takes place.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. DEFINITION: LOCAL TRANSPORT vs. INTERNAL TRAVEL</td>
<td>Local transportation should be distinguished from internal travel. Local transportation is within commuting distance from the place of residence. Internal travel is beyond commuting distance from the place of residence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. IN-COUNTRY TRAINING</td>
<td>In-country (in-service) training is also group training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. WAIVER OF UN RESPONSIBILITY</td>
<td>United Nations assumes no liability for damage to persons or property caused by a group training participant.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>