Easier Said than Done: Overcoming Coherence Challenges Within the United Nations System

Center on International Cooperation
New York University

Eugene Chen
Senior Fellow

September 2024

Center on International Cooperation
NYU | ARTS & SCIENCE

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

This paper was funded thanks to the generous support of Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Additional thanks go to Céline Monnier and Sophie Rutenbar for their inputs into this paper. Editorial support was provided by Symphony Chau.

About the Center on International Cooperation (CIC)

The Center on International Cooperation (CIC) is a nonprofit research center housed at New York University. For over two decades, CIC has been a leader in applied policy that links politics, security, justice, development, and humanitarian issues. CIC's mission is to strengthen cooperative approaches among national governments, international organizations, and the wider policy community to prevent crises and advance peace, justice, and inclusion. Learn more at cic.nyu.edu and @nyuCIC.

Introduction

Personnel and budgetary policies and procedures can seem esoteric at best and incidental to the lofty work of the United Nations (UN), even to seasoned UN watchers. These issues, however, are not merely technical matters within the purview of administrative officers or Fifth Committee delegates. The normative and operational functioning of the United Nations is a function of its personnel and budgets, but not only as a matter of adequate resourcing. In fact, the policies and practices of the UN around the management of its personnel and budgets also have an outsized and underappreciated effect, including on whether mandates are implemented in a coherent and effective manner.

1. Efforts to Enhance UN Coherence

Conventionally, the work of the UN system is conceptualized into several thematic pillars, such as peace and security, development, human rights, and humanitarian assistance. Each pillar has its own intergovernmental bodies and processes, as well as its own UN entities[1] and organizations, all of which were built up by member states at different times and under other circumstances to address different requirements in global governance. As these pillars have developed distinct identities and approaches to their work, they have gradually become siloes consisting of what UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan described in 1997 as "a disparate collection of units with little strategic focus."[1] UN staff and member state diplomats working within these thematic siloes tend to broaden the activities of individual UN entities, but do so without considering the implications of their decisions on other pillars. Annan noted that the resulting overlap in activities "compounded the problems created by the fragmentation of existing structures" and "make it difficult for the United Nations to respond to the needs of countries in a consistent, coherent and cost-effective manner.[2] Over the years, there have been several efforts to drive greater unity around purpose and to ensure that the efforts of the pillars are mutually reinforcing. These generally fall into two categories:

- Efforts related to leveraging the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) "nexus."
- Efforts related to fostering "integration" within the UN system.

Humanitarian crises, development concerns, and peace and security challenges often intersect in fragile contexts, and efforts to address one set of considerations can have unintended consequences on another. I**n recognition of these linkages, the nexus approach is an attempt to more effectively and flexibly meet the needs of affected populations through greater coherence, collaboration, and complementarity in the efforts of actors across these three areas**. Although nexus approaches initially focused on coordinating humanitarian and development efforts, there has been growing traction in the past decade, particularly after the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, for the incorporation of a peace dimension in

[1] This policy brief uses the term "entity" to refer to subsidiary bodies of the UN, including its departments, offices, and peace operations. It uses the term "organization" to refer to institutions that are legally separate from the UN, but which cooperate as part of the UN system, such as the specialized agencies.

the nexus. The resulting "triple nexus" approach "seeks to capitalize on the comparative advantages of each pillar—to the extent of their relevance in the specific context—in order to reduce overall vulnerability and the number of unmet needs, strengthen risk management capacities, and address root causes of conflict."[3]

In contexts where the UN has deployed a peace operation,[2] the UN system has adopted a more structural approach to coherence through the concept of "integration" at the UN. Integration is the bringing together of UN entities and organizations across the peace and security, development, and humanitarian pillars to enhance the individual and collective impact of the UN system.[4] In integrated contexts, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSGs) not only serve as heads of peace operations, but also have authority over resident coordinators responsible for coordinating the work of the development organizations in the UN country team and humanitarian coordinators responsible for coordinating the work of the members of the humanitarian country team. Integration is—at least in theory—underpinned by joint structures, joint analysis and planning, and common strategic frameworks.

In practice, however, coherence remains aspirational despite broad agreement with the aims of integration and the triple nexus and despite pressure from donors and intergovernmental bodies. There are many reasons for the divergence between rhetoric and reality, including longstanding rivalries that feed mistrust between pillars, the sprawling nature of the UN system, and dogmatism in the interpretation of the key principles that underpin the activities undertaken across the pillars—particularly in the tensions between impartiality, neutrality, consent, and national ownership.[5]

[2] This policy brief uses the term "mission" to refer to UN field-based presences with political or peace and security responsibilities. It uses the term "peace operations" to refer collectively to all missions, including but not limited to peacekeeping operations and special political missions.

Table 1: Key principles underpinning activities across the pillars

Area of Work	Key Principles
Humanitarian	Humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence.
Development	National ownership.
Peacebuilding	National ownership.
Peacekeeping	Consent, impartiality, non-use of force except in self-defense and defense of the mandate.

The differences in approaches and guiding principles across the entities and organizations of the UN system should be seen as assets rather than liabilities. They can provide greater opportunities for response, as it means that the UN has a broader range of tools, entry points, and relationships that it can leverage when responding to complex crises. This is particularly important given that over half of populations in fragile, conflict-affected, and vulnerable settings now live in politically estranged situations in which traditional approaches and assumptions underpinning international engagement and assistance have been upended.[6] A perennial concern has been that integration, and the nexus is about subordinating the activities or principles of one pillar to another. That is not the purpose of integration or the nexus, though this fear is not entirely unwarranted given that large peace operations have historically dominated the ostensibly integrated contexts in which they have been deployed. That model of monolithic mission, however, is suffering a crisis of confidence, which have prompted calls, including in the secretary-general's *A New Agenda for Peace*, for a new approach to peace operations.[7] **This new approach to peace operations must avoid the pitfalls of current approaches and should embrace the diversity of approaches and principles available across the UN system**.[8]

2. Administrative Obstacles to Coherence

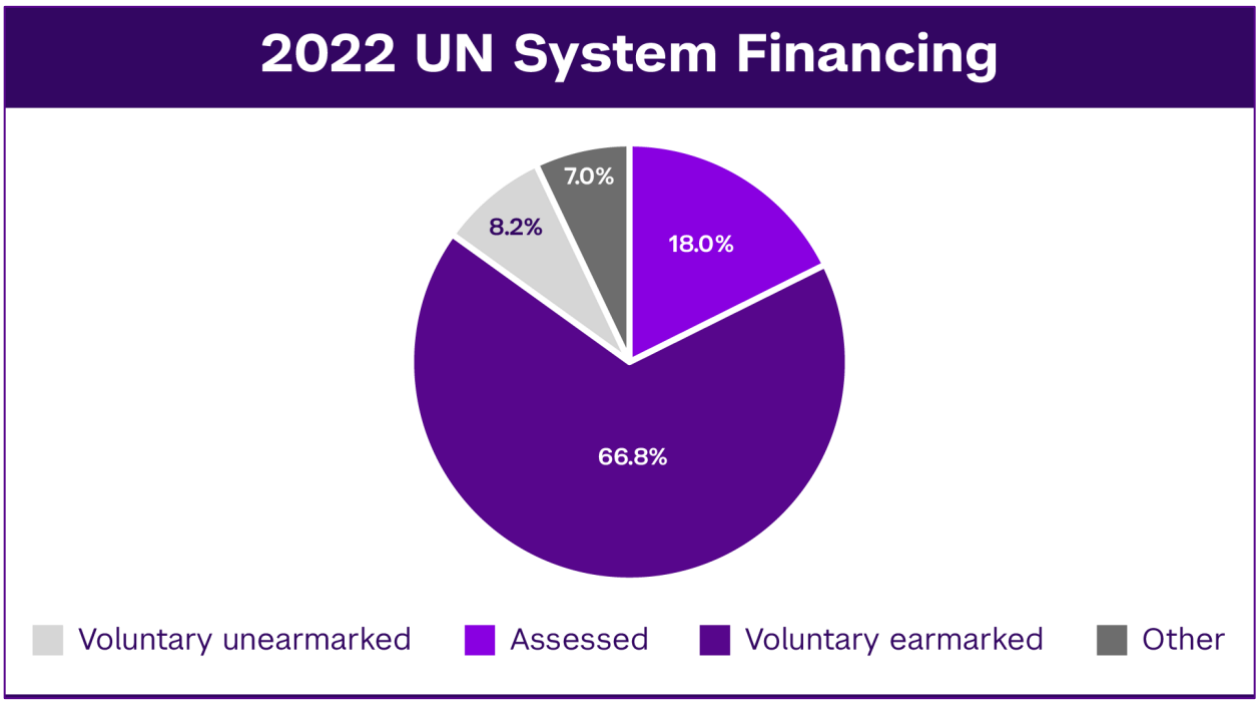
However, this is easier said than done given the longstanding administrative obstacles that disincentivize cooperation across organizational boundaries and pillars of work. These include competition among entities and organizations for resources, restrictions on the use of funds imposed by donors and governing bodies, career disincentives for cooperation at the working level, and contractual arrangements that reinforce hierarchical approaches to country-level engagement and aid delivery.

2.1 Financing through voluntary contributions

The drafters of the UN Charter did not envisage that the UN would have resources beyond those in the program budget approved by the General Assembly,[9] with the associated expenses to be met through assessed contributions. By 1949, the General Assembly realized that the amount included in the program budget and financed through assessed contributions for economic and social development fell far short of demand. This led to the establishment of an Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance for the Economic Development of Less-Developed Countries, which was funded entirely through voluntary contributions.[10] While humanitarian assistance already had a history of financing through voluntary contributions—as in the case of the International Refugee Organization and its predecessor, the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration[11]—this marked the start of voluntarily-financed UN development activities.[12]

Reliance on voluntary contributions has grown over successive decades: in 2022, 75 percent of the total UN system revenue came from voluntary contributions, with only 18 percent coming from assessed contributions. **Voluntary contributions suffer from a lack of predictability and are particularly vulnerable to changes in donor governments and political priorities**. In recent years, the foreign policy of traditional donors has increasingly been driven by a "more openly self-interest-driven narrative," which has affected official development assistance trends.[13]

Table 2: 2022 UN system financing (in US dollars)[14]



Category	Amount	Percentage
Assessed	$13,339,852,705	18.0%
Voluntary non-core (earmarked)	$49,648,083,800	66.8%
Voluntary core (un-earmarked)	$6,099,149,397	8.2%
Revenue from other activities	$5,217,695,967	7.0%
Total	**$74,302,153,809**	

Most voluntary contributions are earmarked by their donors, often for specific countries, thematic areas, or even specific projects. The preference of some of the largest financial contributors to the UN for earmarked voluntary contributions is not simply a matter of parsimony. For example, the amount of voluntary contributions provided by the United States to the UN system in 2022 was 4.8 times the level of its assessed contributions,[15] and reflects a long-standing trend of the United States increasing its voluntary contributions to the UN system even as it seeks to reduce its share of assessed contributions.[16] Instead, the preference for earmarked voluntary contributions is primarily a matter of influence. Voluntary

contributions fall outside the scrutiny of the General Assembly, and earmarked voluntary contributions afford donors the greatest control over how funds are used by ensuring that resources are channeled to the activities that donors value the most.[17] This, however, has a variety of negative consequences. For example, several recent studies have shown that earmarking reduces performance in international organizations.[18] Moreover, **reliance on earmarked contributions undermines the multilateral character of international organizations** by creating a divergence between the work they undertake and the priorities agreed by their governing bodies.[19] This, in turn, perpetuates a "pay-to-play" culture in which large donors have an outsized influence on the operational activities of individual entities, which—over time—can translate into normative effects if they emphasize certain issues or activities at the expense of others. This is a particular concern given the increase in contributions from nontraditional authoritarian donor countries in recent years.

Reliance on earmarked voluntary contributions for so much of the work of the UN system also **creates an underlying tension that drives rivalry and resource competition between parts of the system**, therefore undermining coherence. Voluntarily-funded entities are incentivized to expand their scope of activities to cover the issues and buzzwords at the forefront of intergovernmental discourse in an attempt to attract donor funding, regardless of whether they have the requisite expertise or comparative advantage in those areas. This puts them in conflict with other entities who are also seeking funding from the same donors. A recent UN Office of Internal Oversight Services evaluation noted the "negative impacts of programme and project-based earmarked funding and bilateral relationships between donors and United Nations agencies on integrated policy approaches," which "engendered competition for funding between agencies and meant that agencies, at times, prioritized their own respective projects, programmes, agendas and performance metrics over a collective approach."[20]

Theoretically, stronger reliance on assessed contributions would address many of the shortcomings of earmarked voluntary contributions. This would strengthen multilateralism by aligning activities with mandates and intergovernmental-agreed priorities while providing for adequate and predictable levels of funding. But in practice, the absence of meaningful enforcement mechanisms to ensure payment of contributions, short of suspending the ability to vote in the most egregious of cases, means that activities financed through assessed contributions suffer from persistent liquidity challenges.[21] Greater use of what is officially classified as non-

earmarked voluntary "core" funding to the funds and programs would be an improvement over the current reliance on earmarked funding, but—as such funding is provided directly to individual entities, each of which has specific thematic focus areas—these are, in practice, still softly earmarked.

The ideal solution would be for donors to direct more of their voluntary contributions to inter-agency pooled funds, whether at the global level [such as the Peacebuilding Fund and Joint Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Fund] or at the country level (where many are known as the One UN or SDG funds). Such vehicles provide greater flexibility in allocating funds to where they are needed most by the entity or entities best suited to implement. As such, they can serve as a facilitator of inter-agency cooperation and programmatic coherence. These, however, only make up a tiny fraction—3.2 percent—of total UN system revenue.

2.2 Personnel and staffing

Within individual UN entities, the body of personnel and staffing policy and practice built up over the years also present obstacles to coherence. A recent UN review of integration found that individuals who were most effective in promoting integrated approaches were ones with experience in multiple entities or across different pillars, but "trilingualism" across the humanitarian, development, and peace pillars is rare. This is because, in practice, **career advancement at the UN, particularly in substantive functions, generally requires specialization within a particular job family (a set of related occupations) and within a particular pillar of work**. Staff selection processes are highly personality-driven and in which reputation and perceived loyalty play an outsized role in selection decisions. As a result, there are strong career incentives for staff—whether in the field or at UNHQ—to align with the views and preferred approaches of the leadership within their specific entity or pillar. At the same time, there are few incentives for promoting cross-pillar coherence. To pursue a course of action that benefits the UN as a whole can be seen as prioritizing the interests of another entity or pillar at the expense of one's own, which can have negative consequences for career advancement.

Part of the problem lies in the fact that the authority to select staff members rests with the head of entity and that each entity is responsible for determining the required qualifications and experience for their own vacancies. As a result, these

are often written in such a manner as to ensure that only individuals from within the pillar can be successful. This is despite the fact that senior leaders at the UN are the ones responsible for promoting integration. In fact, the senior managers compact signed by heads of entity and the secretary-general—intended to be an accountability tool for senior leaders—include indicators on integration and the requirements of the integrated assessment and planning policy. In practice, the senior managers compact is, a box checking exercise, and there is little correlation between whether the indicators on integration have been achieved on paper and meaningful implementation in practice.[22] The compacts are not treated seriously by either senior managers, the Management Performance Board that reviews them, or by the secretary-general, as they have no bearing on contract renewal decisions or future appointment, particularly for high-profile positions that have been monopolized by certain member states for extended periods of time.[23]

Challenges also exist between entities and organizations. A 2012 inter-agency agreement on transfer, secondment, and loan exists to facilitate movement of staff across organizations of the common system, but it is seldom used, for various reasons. A UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) study found that inter-agency mobility accounted for only 1.3 percent of moves in 2018 and found that underlying causes included the limited organizational commitment to inter-agency mobility, the "siloed, fragmented and protective, as well as inward and often duplicative, nature of staff selection and assessment in the United Nations system," and the absence of a system culture. Different human resources policies, including whether time in other common system organizations count as time-in-grade for promotion, inconsistency on the recognition of continuing and permanent contracts, and different approaches to the right of return from secondment, create strong disincentives for staff members to pursue such options. In addition, member states also create obstacles for inter-agency mobility, including the failure to finance employment-related liabilities—such as after-service health insurance—in several organizations including the Secretariat. The JIU study found that such liabilities were a preoccupation of many organizations in whether and how to use the inter-agency agreement, and that some organizations find the requirement to assume liabilities of incoming staff to be a major obstacle.[24]

Human resources management reform in the UN system is difficult. **Member states are often more focused on immediate costs rather than on programmatic impact when looking at issues such as mobility, talent management, training and career development, and conditions of service**. Further complicating reform

is the fact that, despite being the chief administrative officer of the organization under the Charter, the secretary-general is unable to present to the General Assembly proposals for human resources management reform without the agreement of staff unions, who generally oppose reforms and other changes to conditions of service. However, difficult is not the same as impossible. In 2023, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on human resources management that approved a new mobility system that had been the subject of long and difficult negotiations between staff and management. The new system is framed around skills development for staff and incentivizing movement between different levels of hardship duty stations.[25] This is not a centralized managed mobility arrangement of the type used in many diplomatic services, but rather a decentralized system in which heads of entity continue to make staff selection decisions. Fostering a UN identity (as opposed to a pillar or entity-specific identity) and enabling coherence are not among the stated objectives of the new mobility system, but if managed correctly, it can potentially foster the "trilingualism" required for programmatic coherence. **Member states should, in their review of the implementation of the system, press the secretary-general to ensure that the talent pools under the new system are designed with cross-pillar mobility in mind** while also incorporating measures to facilitate inter-agency mobility.

2.3 Systemic hierarchy

Beyond the staff selection policies and practices, however, there is a more fundamental aspect of UN personnel policy that creates challenges for achieving programmatic coherence. The 2021 review of UN integration noted that, in several contexts, individuals were able to facilitate integrated approaches by focusing on pragmatic solutions and the practical requirements of local populations as opposed to the differences in the principles underpinning the various pillars of work. However, the nature of the international civil service—and the contractual arrangements in place that underpin it—can make it difficult for staff members to value and heed local perspectives, despite the lip service paid to national and local ownership. Studies on the anthropology of aid have shown how the everyday practices of UN staff drive a preference for generalized thematic knowledge over local expertise,[26] while others note that locally hired staff face constraints on exercising agency,[27] feel undervalued, and perceive a glass ceiling that restricts opportunities for career progression.[28] Despite efforts in recent decades to

introduce measures promoting gender parity and greater flexibility in moving between categories of staff, **the international civil service remains fundamentally an institution rooted in a twentieth-century conception of a diplomatic service**. In fact, the Noblemaire Principle, which specifies that the salaries of international staff in the UN and other organizations of the common system are determined by reference to those applicable in the highest-paid national civil service, was originally established in 1921 by the committee of experts established to examine the organization of the Permanent Secretariat of the League of Nations and the International Labor Office (now ILO). The international civil service continues to be marked by rigid hierarchies between "professional" and "general service" staff and between "international" and locally-recruited "national" staff, with high barriers—both in policy and in organizational culture—for moving between categories despite the existence of formal and informal grade equivalencies.

Table 3: Secretariat staff by category as of 31 December 2022[29]

	Substantive	Administrative and technical
International	*Professional and higher categories* 14,458 (39.3%)	*Field service* 3,016 (8.2%)
National	*National professional* 2,702 (7.3%)	*General service and related* 16,615 (45.2%)

Table 4: Table of formal and informal UN grade equivalencies[30]

	Professional grade	Field service grade	National professional grade[3]	General service grade
More junior		FS-1		GS-1/2
		FS-2		GS-3
		FS-3		GS-4
		FS-4		GS-5/6
		FS-5		GS-7
	P-1		NO-A	
	P-2		NO-B	
	P-3	FS-6	NO-C	
	P-4	FS-7	NO-D	
More senior	P-5		NO-E	

The fundamental logic of the international civil service—an independent institution with international responsibility whose members are barred from seeking or receiving instructions from states or other external authority—reinforces a distinction between the international and the national. The fact that national staff are subordinated to international staff and have limited opportunities to move between categories promotes a hierarchical ordering within the organization that prioritizes the experiences and knowledge of international over the national. This drives a paternalistic mindset to the implementation of mandates, limits the ability of the UN system to draw upon local expertise for solutions, and creates barriers for the meaningful adoption of people-centered approaches that can be a useful

[3] Equivalencies between international professional and national professional are based on common education and requirement for years of professional experience. The NO-E category is rarely used.

starting point for leveraging the triple nexus. Beyond the contractual framework in place at the UN, other decisions by the General Assembly also reinforce this distinction, including the rigidity of staffing tables and the restrictions on movement between general service and professional posts. These are issues member states should take into account in Fifth Committee deliberations on both human resources management and budgetary questions.

2.4 Unintended consequences of reforms

Finally, it should be noted that several management and reform decisions taken by Secretary-General Guterres have had the practical effect of undermining programmatic coherence across the UN system. The first set of decisions relate to the structure of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG).[31] The decision to restrict the function of the deputy secretary-general to sustainable development and the humanitarian-development nexus—as opposed to the triple nexus—has reinforced the siloes among the thematic pillars. Although other senior positions within EOSG are ostensibly responsible for promoting coherence, the extent to which they have promoted integration has been uneven, at best. For example, while the senior advisor on policy is responsible for assisting the secretary-general in maintaining a "holistic overview and strategic oversight of policy matters across all pillars of the work of the United Nations" and leading "horizontal and vertical integration for system-wide coherence on conflict prevention," the functions of the position have primarily been driven not by the formal description of the role but by the interests of the incumbent and his or her personal relationship with the secretary-general. And while a position of assistant secretary-general for strategic coordination exists, that position has been vacant since its last incumbent, Volker Türk, was promoted to Senior Advisor on Policy in 2022.

A signature initiative of the current secretary-general's first term is his reform agenda. However, the establishment of separate tracks for the reform of the development system and for the restructuring of the peace and security architecture without mechanisms in place for coordinating between those tracks meant that decisions in each were taken without reference to their impacts on the other, and efforts were not pursued to use the reforms to enhance coherence between peace operations and UN country teams. Only in November 2023 was a revision to the 2006 note of guidance on integrated missions issued. This document clarifies the roles and responsibilities of SRSGs and the triple-hatted

deputy SRSGs who simultaneously serve as the resident coordinators of UN country teams as well as the humanitarian coordinators. Instead of addressing the structural obstacles to coherence, this revision was largely a light-touch review that focused on updating the document to reflect new structures and concepts put in place since the earlier note was issued.

At the same time, the management reform track, which inter alia established a new system of delegation of authority across the Secretariat, decentralized the management of financial and human resources to entities. Although in theory this has many benefits—including by moving decision-making closer to the point of delivery and enhancing accountability through the alignment of management authority with responsibility for mandate implementation—it also reinforces entity and pillar-level siloes. This is the case particularly in the absence of an organizational culture that prioritizes the interests of the UN and the populations it serves or strong mechanisms within EOSG, the Secretariat, or the UN system that are able to promote or effectively incentivize coherence.

3. Observations and Recommendations

Addressing the problems of coherence, the lack of traction on the triple nexus, and the challenges of moving integration from rhetoric to reality requires efforts from both the UN bureaucracy and UN member states. Within the bureaucracy, transcending siloes to move towards a coherent approach requires **systems thinking** and a **focus on people-centered approaches** and a **move away from templated and top-down approaches**. These must be reinforced through strong leadership and practical guidance for practitioners. Among member states, awareness of the structural drivers of incoherence, including both the administrative obstacles outlined in this paper and a recognition of how the manner in which member states engage in intergovernmental processes creates and exacerbates structural siloes, is a necessary prerequisite for designing effective solutions.[32]

As noted earlier, some initiatives are already in place that have the potential to help improve coherence. Ensuring that they succeed where previous efforts did not require expert and intergovernmental oversight bodies to insert a coherence imperative in mandate implementation and program delivery. Such sustained pressure is required to compensate for the tendency of entities within the UN system to revert to siloed, protective, and inward-looking approaches. This includes the new mobility system in place within the Secretariat mentioned above, but could also include monitoring the implementation of the revised integrated assessment and planning policy. The revised policy established a single common planning framework—the UN sustainable development cooperation framework—for the UN country team and peace operations where previously separate frameworks existed for development and peace and security activities in integrated settings. Beyond encouraging strong cross-pillar cooperation in the cooperation framework and its associated processes, such as the common country analysis and business operations strategy, member states should also support the systematic inclusion of non-mission peace and security UN entities active at the country level, such as the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, into this framework.

Donors should recognize the counterproductive and short-sighted nature of their funding practices. The heavy reliance on earmarked voluntary contributions to finance individual multilateral institutions is not only programmatically inefficient,

but it also undermines multilateralism and drives resource competition and internecine rivalry between the entities and organizations of the UN system. Instead, d**onors should prioritize voluntary contributions to inter-agency pooled funds, either at the global or country levels, which can help maximize the impact of funding while also promoting UN system-wide programmatic coherence**. To support this, the UN can work with donors to address the effective disincentives to the use of pooled funds, including ways to give credit to donors and to provide more transparent reporting on the use of funds.

In recent years, the General Assembly has on several occasions provided funding through assessed contributions to activities or functions previously funded through voluntary contributions. This includes its decision to shift 49 extrabudgetary (voluntary) positions in the UN Office for Counter-Terrorism into regular budget (assessed) posts in the 2023 and 2024 budgets and its decision in General Assembly resolution 78/257 to provide USD 50 million on an annual basis through assessed contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund beginning in 2025. The General Assembly is also currently considering the proposal of the secretary-general to finance a larger share of the resident coordinator system through assessed contributions. Rather than examine the funding modalities of activities in a piecemeal manner, **member states should undertake a serious reflection on whether the logic of relying on voluntary contributions for the programmatic work of the UN are still appropriate today**. This reliance, which was a practical response to postwar economic realities and the requirements for reconstruction, persists today largely due to bureaucratic inertia even though—nearly eight decades after the establishment of the UN—the context in which the multilateral system operates is significantly different. Traditional donors should reconsider their preference for voluntary contributions for programmatic activities and consider measures such as shifting activities to assessed budgets and establishing clear guidelines for the acceptance of voluntary contributions, and under what circumstances. Such measures are necessary to safeguard against the increasing risk that new sources of voluntary financing divert the activities of the UN away from their intergovernmentally-agreed mandates and priorities—and, by extension, the liberal norms that at the heart of the multilateral system.

With regard to the challenges presented by the existing staffing structure of the UN system, there is no obvious alternative to the Noblemaire principle or the logic of the international civil service. **However, the General Assembly could consider steps to reduce some of the structural obstacles to movement between**

international and national categories. These considerations include eliminating the examination requirements for conversion from general service to international professional posts and reconsidering the rigidity of staffing tables within budgets, which prevent entities from engaging qualified national staff of equivalent grade to fill international staff functions, as per Table 4. General Assembly resolution 66/264 already calls the Secretariat to undertake civilian staffing reviews with a view to identifying functions performed by international field service staff that can be performed by national general service staff. A broader approach should provide heads of each entity the opportunity to fill functions with the most qualified staff regardless of category, and to ensure that national staff are considered to be qualified for equivalent international positions in other countries.

The siloed approaches to engaging in complex crises and fragile-, conflict-, and violence-affected contexts that remain prevalent across the UN system are clearly both ineffective and inefficient. However, the longstanding policy and practice of member states and the bureaucracy alike drive such approaches. **Member states can help overcome these barriers by supporting nascent efforts within the UN system to promote coherence and "trilingualism" across the three areas of the triple nexus**. They can also go beyond paying lip service to integrated approaches and the triple nexus by adopting more of a systems thinking approach when looking at UN policy. This includes taking advantage of processes such as the Summit of the Future and the upcoming 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review to look at the areas of intersection, overlap, and tension between and within the humanitarian, development, and peace pillars. It also means being more aware of the substantive impact of decisions on human resources and financial policy in the Fifth Committee as opposed to a fixation on cost-control. Major donors should also reflect on the impact of their financing practices on the character of the UN system, which fosters a pay-to-play mentality that can undermine some of the foundational norms of the multilateral system. Instead of directing most of their financial resources to the UN system through earmarked voluntary contributions, they should seriously consider shifting towards inter-agency pooled funds and assessed contributions—and to ensure that they pay in full and on time. This would not only enhance the effectiveness of the entities and organizations of the UN system in programmatic delivery and coherence but would be a powerful signal of commitment to collective approaches to addressing global challenges.

Endnotes

[1] United Nations, "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform: Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/950)," July 14, 1997, 16, https://undocs.org/en/a/51/950.
[2] Ibid, 50.
[3] OECD, "DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, OECD/LEGAL//5019," 2024, https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD/DAC/INCAF(2023)1/FINAL/en/pdf.
[4] United Nations, "Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning 2023," *Executive Office of the Secretary General, Strategic Planning and Monitoring Unit*, August 2024, https://unsdg.un.org/resources/un-policy-integrated-assessment-and-planning.
[5] Louise Redvers and Ben Parker, "Searching for the Nexus: Give Peace a Chance," *The New Humanitarian* (blog), May 13, 2020, https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/05/13/triple-nexus-peace-development-security-humanitarian-policy.
[6] Sarah Cliffe et al., "Aid Strategies in 'Politically Estranged' Settings," *NYU Center on International Cooperation*, April 3, 2023, https://cic.nyu.edu/resources/aid-strategies-in-politically-estranged-settings.
[7] United Nations, "Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace (A/77/CRP.1/Add.8)," July 3, 2023, https://dppa.un.org/en/a-new-agenda-for-peace.
[8] Eugene Chen, "A new vision for UN peace operations (or how I learned to stop worrying and love Christmas tree mandates)," *NYU Center on International Cooperation*, forthcoming.
[9] Bruno Simma et al., eds., *The Charter of the United Nations: A Commentary*, 3rd ed, Oxford Commentaries on International Law (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2012), 591.
[10] David Owen, "The United Nations Expanded Program of Technical Assistance—A Multilateral Approach," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 323, no. 1 (May 1959): 25–32, https://doi.org/10.1177/000271625932300105.
[11] Theodore A. Sumberg, "The Financial Experience of UNRRA," *American Journal of International Law* 39, no. 4 (October 1945): 698–712, https://doi.org/10.2307/2193410.
[12] Romesh Muttukumaru, "The Funding and Related Practices of the UN Development System," *ECOSOC Dialogue on the Longer-Term Positioning of the UN Development System in the Context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, May 2015, https://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/qcpr/pdf/ie_muttukumaru_paper_funding.pdf.
[13] Pauline Veron and Andrew Sherriff, "International Peacebuilding Financing and Changing Politics in Europe," *NYU Center on International Cooperation*, October 24, 2022, https://cic.nyu.edu/resources/international-peacebuilding-financing-and-changing-politics-in-europe/.
[14] United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, "Financial Statistics Database," n.d., https://unsceb.org/financial-statistics.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Chadwick F. Alger, "The United States in the United Nations," *International Organization* 27, no. 1 (1973): 1–23, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300003167.
[17] Bernhard Reinsberg, "Trust Funds as a Lever of Influence at International Development Organizations," *Global Policy* 8, no. S5 (August 2017): 85–95, https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12464.
[18] Max-Otto Baumann and Sebastian Haug, *Financing the United Nations: Status Quo, Challenges and Reform Options* (Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2024); Mirko Heinzel, Ben Cormier, and Bernhard

Reinsberg, "Earmarked Funding and the Control–Performance Trade-Off in International Development Organizations," *International Organization* 77, no. 2 (2023): 475–95, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818323000085; Bernhard Reinsberg and Christian Siauwijaya, "Does Earmarked Funding Affect the Performance of International Organisations?," *Global Policy* 15, no. 1 (February 2024): 23–39, https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.13270.

[19] Erin R. Graham, *Transforming International Institutions: How Money Quietly Sidelined Multilateralism at the United Nations* (Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 2023), 2, https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11558-023-09509-0.

[20] United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services, "Evaluation of Resident Coordinator System Support to Enabling Coherent United Nations Policy Advice (IED-23-019)," December 20, 2023, https://oios.un.org/file/10139/download?token=DWFOv2sM.

[21] Eugene Chen, "The Liquidity Crisis at the United Nations: How We Got Here and Possible Ways Out," *NYU Center on International Cooperation*, August 19, 2024, https://cic.nyu.edu/resources/the-liquidity-crisis-at-the-united-nations-how-we-got-here-and-possible-ways-out.

[22] United Nations, "Review of UN Integration: Final Report," March 2021.

[23] Jiayi Chai, "Exploring Member State Dominance Over UN Senior Appointments," *NYU Center on International Cooperation* (blog), August 14, 2024, https://cic.nyu.edu/resources/exploring-member-state-dominance-over-un-senior-appointments.

[24] United Nations, "Review of Staff Exchange and Similar Inter-Agency Mobility Measures in United Nations System Organizations: Report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU/REP/2019/8)," December 2019, https://undocs.org/en/jiu/rep/2019/8.

[25] United Nations, "New Approach to Staff Mobility: Building an Agile Organization by Providing Opportunities for on-the-Job Learning and Skills Development: Report of the Secretary-General (A/75/540/Add.1)," November 19, 2020, https://undocs.org/en/a/75/540/add.1.

[26] Séverine Autesserre, *Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2014), https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107280366.

[27] Kseniya Oksamytna and Sarah von Billerbeck, "Race and International Organizations," *International Studies Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (March 14, 2024): https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqae010.

[28] Katharina P. Coleman, "Downsizing in UN Peacekeeping: The Impact on Civilian Peacekeepers and the Missions Employing Them," *International Peacekeeping* 27, no. 5 (October 19, 2020): 703–31, https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2020.1793328.

[29] United Nations, "Composition of the Secretariat: Staff Demographics: Report of the Secretary-General (A/78/569)," November 10, 2023, https://undocs.org/en/a/78/569.

[30] International Civil Service Commission, "Comprehensive Review of the Common System Compensation Package: Overview of Staff Categories in the United Nations Common System: Note by the Secretariat of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC/82/R.4)," January 13, 2016.

[31] António Guterres, "Terms of Reference for the New/Revised EOSG Posts and Units," *United Nations*, January 3, 2017, https://www.un.int/sites/www.un.int/files/Permanent%20Missions/delegate/eosg_terms_of_reference.pdf.

[32] Eugene Chen et al., "Managing Opportunities, Challenges, and Expectations for the New Agenda for Peace," *NYU Center on International Cooperation*, May 17, 2023, https://cic.nyu.edu/resources/managing-opportunities-challenges-and-expectations-for-the-new-agenda-for-peace.