

Governing Body

337th Session, Geneva, 24 October–7 November 2019

GB.337/PFA/11

Programme, Financial and Administrative Section
Personnel Segment

PFA

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ELEVENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Composition and structure of the ILO staff: Action plan for improving the diversity of the ILO workforce

Purpose of the document

This document proposes a comprehensive and time-bound action plan for improving gender parity and geographical diversity of the ILO staff, and ensuring the necessary breadth of skills and experience of the ILO staff to deliver effectively on the mandate of the Organization. The action plan is set in the framework of the ILO's Human Resources Strategy 2018–21 endorsed by the Governing Body at its 331st Session (October–November 2017), taking into account the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work and seeking to support the effective discharge of the constitutional mandate of the ILO.

The Governing Body is invited to endorse the action plan (see draft decision in paragraph 29).

Relevant strategic objective: None.

Main relevant outcome/cross-cutting policy driver: Enabling outcome C: Efficient support services and effective use of ILO resources.

Policy implications: None.

Legal implications: Not at this stage. If any measures have legal implications requiring changes to the Staff Regulations, they will be brought to the Governing Body for decision.

Financial implications: None.

Follow-up action required: Implementation of the action plan, taking into account the guidance provided by the Governing Body.

Author unit: Human Resources Development Department (HRD).

Related documents: GB.331/PFA/13, GB.335/PFA/11.

Introduction

1. In line with the Human Resources Strategy 2018–21: Agility, engagement and efficiency,¹ which was endorsed by the Governing Body at its 331st Session (October–November 2017), the Office strives to ensure greater diversity among its staff, with particular emphasis in the short to medium term on gender balance and fair geographical distribution. This document responds to the decision taken by the Governing Body at its 335th Session (March 2019) on accelerating progress towards improving diversity in the ILO’s workforce. In that decision, the Governing Body: (a) requested the Office to present to the Governing Body at its 337th Session (October–November 2019) a comprehensive and time-bound action plan for improving gender and geographical diversity and ensuring that the necessary breadth of skills and experience of ILO staff, which includes experience relevant to the three constituent groups, is taken into account, to effectively deliver on the mandate of the Organization. It should particularly indicate the measures to be taken to ensure representation of the unrepresented and under-represented countries. The subsequent report should also indicate the gender and geographical distribution of regular staff by category and grade to facilitate the evaluation of the established targets of the Human Resources Strategy; and (b) encouraged the Office to widely disseminate job postings to constituents to encourage a wide pool of applicants.²
2. In recent years, progress has been made, in particular with respect to gender parity in the professional category grades P1 to P4. However, further efforts are needed to improve gender balance in senior positions at the P5 level and above and to achieve geographical diversity that better reflects the ILO’s membership across all grades and staff categories.
3. An internal task force was established in 2018 with a mandate to identify barriers to achieving greater geographical diversity and to make proposals to overcome them. The key recommendations covered the following areas: (i) broadening the concept of geographical diversity; (ii) establishing accountability; (iii) reviewing and clarifying job requirements; (iv) adequately supporting decision makers (v) harmonizing approaches across entry points; (vi) updating the Staff Regulations; and (vii) expanding outreach.
4. The action plan presented in this document draws on the task force’s proposals and further internal consultations – including with staff representatives with whom discussions are ongoing – as well as the overall guidance provided by the Governing Body. It is in line with the vision and strategy for enhancing diversity set out in the Human Resources Strategy 2018–21 and in the ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality 2018–21,³ and reflects the principles of the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work.

¹ [GB.331/PFA/13](#).

² [GB.335/PV](#), para. 1043.

³ ILO: *ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality 2018–21*, Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch, Conditions of Work and Equality Department, ILO, Geneva, 2018

5. The action plan covers the period 2019–21 but the intention is that the results should have a long-term and lasting effect. It has been developed taking due account of the nature of the current staffing context and various lines of action with different time frames being pursued simultaneously. Certain actions are relatively straightforward. However, other possible measures will need to be assessed in relation to the provisions of article 4.2(a)(i) of the Staff Regulations which stipulates that “the paramount consideration in the filling of any vacancy shall be the necessity to obtain a staff of the highest standards of competence, efficiency and integrity. Due regard shall be paid to the importance of maintaining a staff selected on a wide geographical basis, recognizing also the need to take into account considerations of gender and age.” Consequently, certain measures, if so desired, may require adjustments to the Staff Regulations and will need to be prepared through appropriate consultative processes and brought to the Governing Body for decision.

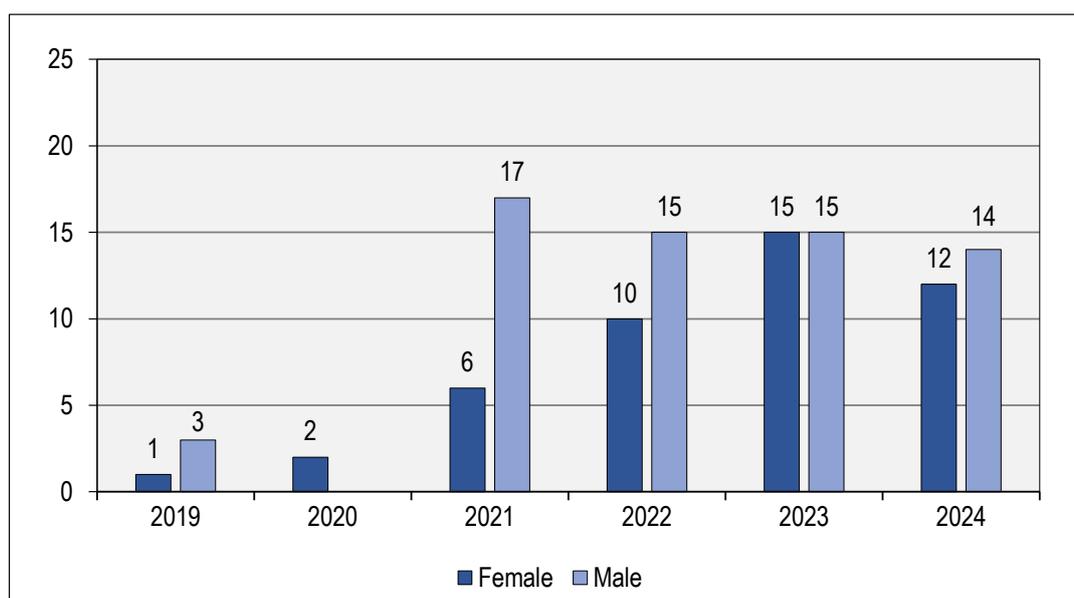
Current staffing context ⁴

6. The following analysis takes into account the impact of known separation due to retirement upon reaching the mandatory age of separation (MAS). Staff turnover due to other reasons cannot be reliably predicted and is therefore not reflected.
7. The increase in the MAS approved by the Governing Body at its 319th Session (October 2013), ⁵ has resulted in significantly fewer retirements in 2018 and 2019 than would otherwise have been the case and it will continue to have a noticeable impact for the next two years. Based on historical data, it is expected that the majority of staff members in the Professional and higher categories will remain in service until the age of 65. In 2018, no staff members in the Professional and higher categories chose to retire before reaching their MAS and only 14 staff members left the Office for reasons other than retirement. This is slightly above the average number of staff who left the Office for reasons other than retirement in the years from 2015 to 2018, which was 10.75. The combination of generally high retention rates and lower than usual numbers of retiring officials will restrict the opportunity in the short-term for the Office to make significant improvements to the diversity of the staff through new recruitment. Enhancing gender parity and geographical diversity and ensuring the necessary breadth of skills and experience of the Office staff will therefore require careful recruitment and succession planning policies and practices.
8. Figure 1 shows the number of male and female staff within the Professional and higher categories who will reach the MAS over the next six years. While a total of only six staff members will reach the MAS during 2019 and 2020 combined, the number will increase to 23 in 2021, the majority being male, and they will reach the MAS towards the end of the year. In total, 25 staff members are due to retire in 2022, 30 in 2023 and 26 in 2024.

⁴ All references to the ILO staff in this document refer to those employed under the regular budget unless specified otherwise.

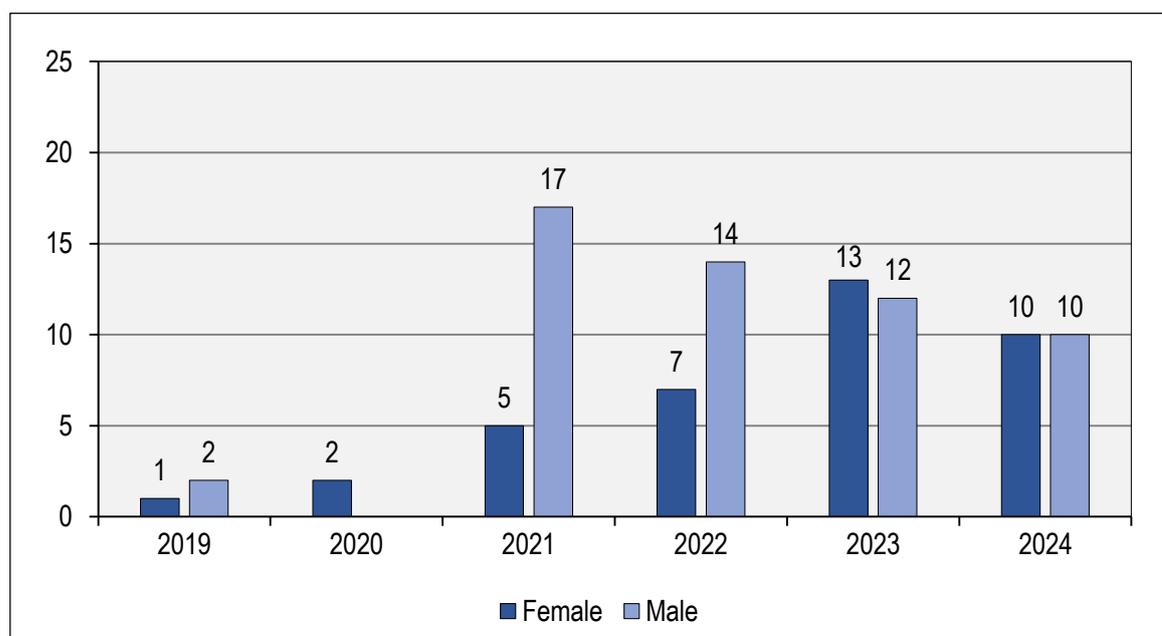
⁵ [GB.319/PFA/11](#).

Figure 1. Staff members reaching the mandatory age of separation over the period 2019–24
(Professional and higher categories, regular staff)



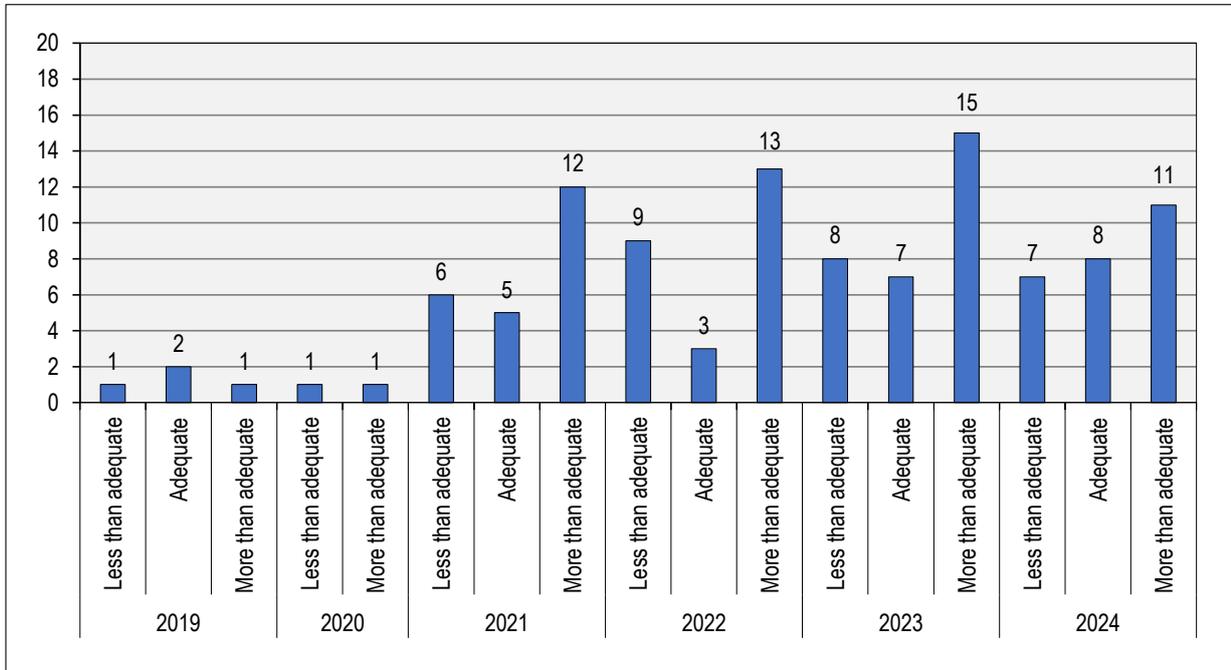
9. Figure 2 shows that the majority of the staff reaching the MAS over the period 2019–24 in the Professional and higher categories are already at the senior level (P5 and above). In 2021 and 2022, the senior staff reaching the MAS are predominantly male, which provides an opportunity for the Office to strengthen its gender balance at this level. This will require both proactive recruitment and selection practices as well as continued efforts to develop the leadership and managerial potential of existing female staff, while reinforcing an inclusive organizational culture through the measures set out in the relevant initiatives below.

Figure 2. Senior staff reaching the mandatory age of separation over the period 2019–24
(regular staff, P5 and above)



10. Figure 3 shows the geographical distribution of existing staff members reaching the MAS over the period 2019–24. Of these, 32 are from member States that are currently identified as being less than adequately represented in the composition of the Office staff, while 78 are from adequately and more than adequately represented member States.

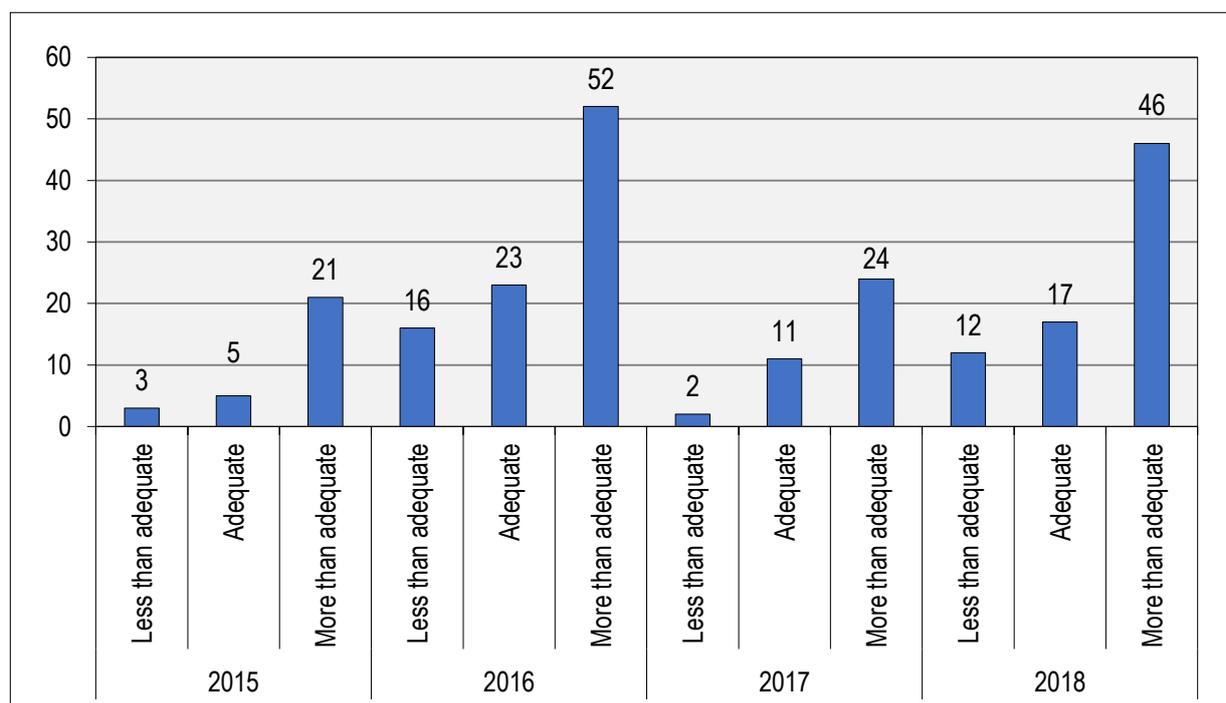
Figure 3. Staff reaching the mandatory age of separation by representation categories for the period 2019–24 (Professional and higher categories, regular staff)



11. In the period 2015–18, the Office recruited 232 new ⁶ Professional and higher category staff members, of whom 33 came from less than adequately represented member States. Based on recruitment data, it is clear that, despite the efforts of the Office to foster a more geographically diverse workforce, successful external candidates for regular budget positions in the Professional and higher categories continue to come predominantly from more than adequately represented member States (see figure 4).

⁶ Persons not previously employed under the ILO regular budget on professional or higher category positions.

Figure 4. Recruitments by representation status for the past five years
(Professional and higher categories, regular staff)



- 12.** In a typical year, approximately 50 per cent of regular budget vacancies for Professional and higher category positions are filled by candidates who already hold a regular budget fixed-term or without-limit-of-time contract. This is a positive consequence of the Office's commitment to offering career path opportunities and mobility to existing staff. Of the remaining 50 per cent of vacancies for Professional and higher category positions, approximately half are filled by candidates who already hold some other form of ILO contract. This recruitment pattern must be considered when developing strategies to improve gender parity and geographical diversity and in determining the measurements and indicators of success.
- 13.** As the analysis shows, taking into account low staff turnover, reduced numbers of retirements and the desirability of career progression for internal staff, the current context significantly limits the scope for the Office to improve gender parity and increase geographical diversity over the next five years, and in fact raises challenges in terms of just maintaining the status quo. Moreover, as noted earlier, it will be necessary to take due account of the relevant provisions of the Staff Regulations should eligibility to compete be restricted, for example. It is recalled, in this connection, that practically identical provisions are to be found in the staff regulations of all United Nations specialized agencies. The Tribunal's case law confirms that considerations such as nationality, gender and age can be considered as determining factors only in recruitment where there are two or more persons of equal competence, efficiency and integrity from whom to make a selection.
- 14.** Thus, proposals to overcome barriers to gender parity or geographical diversity by targeting specific groups of candidates will need to be done in a deliberate and clearly articulated – yet transparent and legally sound – manner. As noted above, such measures are likely to require amendments to the Staff Regulations, which could be presented to the Governing Body at a future session if the Governing Body so instructed and following appropriate internal consultation.

15. Notwithstanding the challenges and constraints outlined above, there are opportunities to be taken in the short and longer-term to improve gender parity and geographical diversity while remaining dedicated to hiring staff of the highest standards of competence, efficiency and integrity.

Action plan

16. The key objective of this action plan is to improve gender parity and geographical diversity within the ILO workforce, while ensuring the necessary breadth of skills and experience to deliver effectively on the mandate of the Organization. It comprises a number of initiatives, each of which addresses certain barriers to diversity. A time frame for the implementation of the initiatives is provided in the appendix. The action plan is designed to support the Office in reaching the targets established in the Human Resources Strategy 2018–21 and the ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality 2018–21 in respect of gender parity and geographical diversity.

Initiative 1. Extending outreach

17. The Office has invested significantly in strengthening its outreach efforts, including with respect to the dissemination of job vacancies. The implementation of a new e-recruitment tool and website, ILO Jobs, in 2018 has already enhanced awareness of ILO employment opportunities and facilitated a wider dissemination of vacancies. More than 91,000 people have created an account on ILO Jobs, and the site has had nearly 1.5 million hits since it went live. ILO Jobs also allows the Office to maintain a database of external candidates for any future targeted outreach campaigns. In addition to the use of ILO Jobs, the Office will continue to advertise through global job portals such as LinkedIn and in relevant journals and newspapers, and to communicate vacancies to Geneva-based missions and workers' and employers' organizations. A number of additional measures will be taken. Based on thorough research into key online job portals and outreach specialists, the Office will select new job portals to advertise and disseminate ILO vacancies. The Office will introduce automatic job alerts for Geneva-based missions and workers' and employers' organizations, to ensure the optimal and timely dissemination of job postings to constituents. Regional offices, decent work teams and country offices and projects will be encouraged to disseminate vacancy announcements and to reinforce outreach to relevant targets at the country level, including constituents and the academic community. In addition, applications from qualified candidates with experience relevant to the three constituent groups (workers, employers and governments) will be encouraged in vacancy announcements.

Initiative 2. Investing in diversity: Creating talent pipelines

18. Using new functionalities in the e-recruitment tool, ILO Jobs, the Office will consider establishing talent pipelines for staff from less than adequately represented member States who are serving on positions which are currently not accounted for in the Office's diversity metrics, namely national professional officers, General Service category staff and all staff serving in development cooperation projects. These talent pipelines would also include young people who are already associated with the ILO as Junior Professional Officers or interns. The new functionalities would include creating email campaigns and job alerts to ensure the visibility of ILO vacancies and the maximum number of applications.

19. In addition, the Office will explore the creation of talent pools of external candidates, who could be contacted for specific vacancies. These pools would contain candidates from less than adequately represented member States who have applied for ILO vacancies and reached an advanced stage in a competition, but were not selected. Furthermore, the Office will welcome interest from member States wishing to support efforts to enhance diversity within the ILO staff through the Junior Professional Officer programme. The Office will also continue to explore means by which young people can be actively engaged to gain experience and place them in a better position when recruitment opportunities arise with this objective in mind. The Office will also review its assessment tools to ensure that they respond appropriately to the need for a diverse workforce and an inclusive organizational culture.

Initiative 3. Review of generic job requirements

20. Vacancies for regular budget professional positions are based on the ILO's generic job descriptions, which were introduced more than 15 years ago. However, the minimum requirements in terms of language, education and experience as defined in the generic job descriptions were identified by the task force as a barrier to diversity. Consequently, the Office proposes to initiate an appropriate consultative process to review the current specification of minimum requirements in the generic job descriptions, in order to better reflect and accommodate the nature of work experience in the modern globalized and networked economy, to recognize the potential value of substantial and relevant work experience, particularly that of tripartite constituents, and to ensure that the minimum requirements in terms of language, education and experience stipulated for each position are realistic and reflect the actual needs.

Initiative 4. Targeted recruitment

21. Given the relatively tight recruitment situation in the coming years, the Office proposes to review forecasted vacancies and organizational needs in order to identify any opportunities to recruit in a targeted manner. This would need to be done taking due account of the fact that any changes to ILO rules, regulations, policies, procedures and guidelines governing recruitment and selection that may result from this review should be introduced in such a way that they do not have a negative impact on the career development and mobility of serving staff. Taking the foregoing into account, encouragement will be given to opening more positions at the professional entry level (P1 and P2) as far as is feasible, with a view to recruiting young external candidates from less than adequately represented member States as one means of improving geographical diversity.

Initiative 5. Reinforce an inclusive organizational culture and practices

22. A more diverse pool of applicants is necessary but not sufficient to meet diversity objectives. The internal task force identified unconscious bias as a potential non-procedural barrier to increasing diversity. It is within the Office's capacity to take steps to address this. The Office will provide staff members involved in recruitment and selection with targeted training so as to reduce the influence of unconscious bias at all stages and in all dimensions of the process. Guidelines will be developed to facilitate sensitivity to diversity in panel, interviews and in panel reports.

23. The Office will reinforce an inclusive organizational culture and drive positive change by mainstreaming diversity and inclusion in relevant existing ILO staff training offerings. This will complement the unconscious bias training targeted at staff involved in recruitment processes and the unconscious bias training targeted at managers (see below).
24. In addition, the Office will implement a range of campaigns to reinforce the importance of diversity and inclusion in day-to-day work by recognizing good practices and promoting and sharing the benefits of diversity. Relevant Office policies and procedures will be assessed, through appropriate internal social dialogue, with a view to identifying any direct or indirect forms of discrimination that create barriers to inclusion and preparing proposals for revision.

Initiative 6. Reinforce accountability and role modelling

25. The Office will institute increased accountability and support role modelling at the managerial level with a view to reinforcing an organizational culture valuing diversity and inclusion. A tool for monitoring gender and geographical diversity will be established for use at the Deputy Director-General and Assistant Director-General levels to track progress in respect of these two aspects of diversity. In the performance appraisal system, the managerial output for staff with supervisory responsibilities will be revised to include diversity as a more explicit component, to ensure that all staff with supervisory responsibilities are aware of, and are measured on, their contribution towards ensuring a diverse and inclusive workplace. Furthermore, managers will be supported in their leadership roles and in discharging their responsibility to serve as role models in developing and reinforcing an organizational culture that values diversity and is committed to inclusion, including through training on unconscious bias.

Initiative 7. Establish an annual ILO gender parity and geographical diversity outlook report

26. The existing format of annual reporting to the Governing Body on the composition and structure of the ILO staff has provided information on the gender and nationality of staff occupying regular budget positions. Diversity has been assessed in relation to gender-parity targets and desirable ranges of national representation, which are determined for regular budget positions at the Professional and higher categories on the basis of each member State's rate of contribution to the regular budget. However, such positions represent around 65 per cent of all positions in the Professional and higher categories, and only 25 per cent of the overall ILO staff. Accordingly, the Office proposes to extend the scope of annual reporting by including data and analytics on the wider population of the ILO staff in order to reflect more accurately the diversity of the ILO staff. The gender parity and geographical diversity outlook report will provide a richer perspective on gender and geographical distribution for the overall ILO staff, and include data from recent years along with projections of the scope for improving gender parity and geographical diversity.

Follow-up

27. Some measures may require changes to the regulatory framework governing recruitment and selection, while others relate to the revision and development of guidelines and practices. The Office will actively engage with the ILO Staff Union, as appropriate, on the design and implementation of the initiatives and actions proposed.

28. The Office will report on progress made against the action plan and the Human Resources Strategy 2018–21 at the 340th Session (October–November 2020) of the Governing Body. In addition, the gender parity and geographical diversity outlook report on the composition and structure of the ILO staff will be submitted to the Governing Body, indicating the gender and geographical distribution of the regular staff by category and grade to facilitate the evaluation of progress against the targets of the Human Resources Strategy 2018–21.

Draft decision

29. *The Governing Body:*

- (a) *endorsed the action plan for improving gender parity and geographical diversity within the ILO workforce as set out in document GB.337/PFA/11, taking into account that certain measures might be subject to processes of internal social dialogue; and*
- (b) *requested the Director-General to take into account the guidance provided by the Governing Body in implementing the action plan and to present an update on the Human Resources Strategy 2018–21 for its review at the 340th Session (October–November 2020) of the Governing Body.*

Appendix

Action plan for improving gender parity and geographical diversity in the ILO workforce: Time frame for initiating actions (by quarter)

In the work leading up to the implementation of this plan, the Office is committed to social dialogue and will engage as appropriate with the ILO Staff Union on the initiatives and actions proposed.

Initiative 1: Extending outreach

- Actions**
- Encourage applicants with experience relevant to the three constituent groups in vacancy announcements Q4 2019.
 - Expand partnership with field offices Q1/2 2020.
 - Set up automatic job alerts Q1 2020.
 - Join new online job portals Q1 2020.

Initiative 2: Investing in diversity: Creating talent pipelines

- Actions**
- Define and create talent pipelines Q4 2019.
 - Define and create talent pools of external candidates Q4 2019.
 - Review assessment tools Q1/2 2020.

Initiative 3: Review of generic job requirements

- Actions**
- Review generic job requirements Q1/3 2019.
 - Engage in internal consultations and social dialogue Q3/4 2019.

Initiative 4: Targeted recruitment

- Actions**
- Review ILO rules, regulations, policies and procedures Q1/3 2019.
 - Engage in internal consultations and social dialogue Q3/4 2019.

Initiative 5: Reinforce an inclusive organizational culture and practices

- Actions**
- Mainstream diversity and inclusion in ILO staff training Q1/2 2019.
 - Guidelines for interview panels and reports developed Q4 2019.
 - Unconscious bias training piloted Q4 2019.
 - Unconscious bias training delivered Q1/4 2020–21.
 - Review modalities for interview panels to ensure they reflect diversity Q1 2020.
 - Diversity and inclusion campaigns Q1/4 2020–21.

Initiative 6: Reinforce accountability and role modelling

- Actions**
- Unconscious bias training for managers piloted Q4 2019.
 - Unconscious bias training for managers delivered Q1/4 2020–21.
 - Monitoring tool defined and prototyped Q4 2019.
 - Managerial output revised for 2020 appraisals Q4 2019.

Initiative 7: Establish an annual ILO gender parity and geographical diversity outlook report

- Actions**
- Scope and content established in Q4 2019.
 - New ILO gender parity and geographical diversity outlook report available to Governing Body members Q1 2020.
-