Background

In his December 2017 report, the United Nations Secretary-General set a number of ambitious targets to reform the UN development system.

Of these, the Business Innovations Strategic Results Group (BIG), co-chaired by UNHCR and WFP, has been tasked with delivering on the proposals envisioned to maximize programmatic gains through efficient and high-quality back-office operations.

In July 2018, the BIG established a designated inter-agency Project Team to design and pilot concepts and methodologies to advance the Secretary-General’s targets.

Workstreams resulting from the Secretary-General’s targets

1. Mutual Recognition – Operate with the mutual recognition of entities’ policies and procedures to readily enable inter-agency service provision.
2. Client Satisfaction Principles – Improve the quality of inter-entity services.
3. Costing and Pricing Principles – Bring transparency to the costing and pricing of services provided.
5. Common Back Offices (CBO) – Establish common back offices for all UN country teams by 2022.
6. Global Shared Service Centres (GSSC) – Explore consolidation of location-independent business operations into a network of shared service centres.
7. Common Premises – Increase the proportion of UN common premises to 50 per cent by 2021.

Scope

- Design and pilot concepts to meet the ascribed targets and workstreams, before handover for implementation and global rollout.
- Business Operations of UNSDG entities at all levels, global and local.
- Business operations is understood by the UNSDG to include the following service lines:
  1. Administration (incl. facility services, travel, transport, etc.)
  2. Finance
  3. Human Resources
  4. ICT
  5. Logistics
  6. Procurement

Principles

- Be transformative: Leverage existing technology and enable innovation.
- Location-dependent business processes should, whenever feasible and supported by a business case, be consolidated at the country level.
- Location-independent business processes should be consolidated into a network of Global Shared Service Centres.
- Embrace culture change, such as adopting co-locating on shared premises as the new normal.
- Build on best practices and work that are already ongoing (e.g. HLCM, country-level initiatives, etc.).
- Proposals are offered as opt-in solutions for the UNSDG as a system. For example, to date, 17 heads of entities, including the Secretary-General, have committed their respective entities by signing the Mutual Recognition statement.

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1 Secretary-General’s Report: https://undocs.org/A/72/684
2 BIG: https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/business-operations
3 MR: https://www.unsystem.org/content/mutual-recognition
4 BOS 2.0: https://unsdg.un.org/resources/business-operations-strategy-bos-20-guidance