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| **Council Working Group on  Financial and Human Resources**  **Tenth meeting – Geneva, 18 September 2019** |  |
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**Contribution by the Secretariat**

Practices of United Nations and UN specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations fellowship policies

Attached is the report on “Practices of United Nations and UN specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations fellowship policies”.

**Background**

Fellowships are administered on the basis of various resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly or of the policy-making bodies of the specialized agencies of the United Nations. In 1974, the Meeting of Senior Fellowships Officers (SFO) of the United Nations system was created to help streamline policies and procedure on fellowship administration. It has grown over the years to become the unique inter-agency Forum on fellowships. Its mandate is to serve as the main framework for inter-agency coordination on system-wide issues relating to the management of fellowships.

The Meeting of Senior Fellowships Officers, held every two years, was formalized in 1976 as a coordination machinery on fellowships following recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of the United Nations system. Since then, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA) and its predecessors have served regularly as Secretary and Focal Point for inter-agency fellowship coordination.

Major accomplishments coming out from these meetings include the harmonization of fellowship policies, procedures and entitlements, including a common definition of fellowships – all of which are compiled in the Handbook for Senior Fellowships Officers of the United Nations system organizations, which use it widely and appreciate it as a reference tool.

1. **Definition**

The [14th Meeting of Senior Fellowships Officers](https://www.un.org/development/desa/fellowship/wp-content/uploads/sites/57/report_sfo_2002.pdf), which took place in 2002, reached a consensus on the definition of a fellowship by the UN system agencies. “A Fellowship in the United Nations System is a specially tailored or selected training activity that provides a monetary grant to a qualified individual for the purpose of fulfilling special learning objectives; such training, which may be of at least 30 days duration (except in the case of WHO and some other agencies) and may take place in an appropriate training institution, usually abroad, should be in response to nationally approved human resources policies and plans, and should aim at impact and relevance for all stakeholders involved.”

The United Nations considers fellowships as a core component of the organization’s technical cooperation programme that are intended to respond to the needs of Member States for enhanced national skills development and training.

1. **Objective and purpose**

The main objective of fellowships is to enable beneficiaries to derive from the event or activity they attend the knowledge which will enable them to participate more actively in the economic and social development of their countries.

The purpose of fellowships is to:

* Promote strategic human resource development to help countries reach national economic and social development objectives.
* Assist Member States address acute shortages in advanced professional skills.
* Build national capacity for development in areas that are of a high priority to Member States.
* Enhance national training opportunities.

1. **Eligibility**

Fellowships are awarded to candidates nominated by their respective governments.

They are intended for Member States, particularly developing countries.

Depending on the nature of the activity and/or its objective(s), priority may be given to least developed countries and/or other developing countries such as small island developing States, countries with economies in transition or a region or a segment of a population.

1. **Funding**

The contributors to the budget of fellowships are Member States, foundations, institutions and private donors. Fellowships are also granted through co-sponsorship arrangements.

1. **Programme of fellowships**

The programmes of fellowships are established in accordance with the respective mandates of the specialized agencies, current global priorities and/or country needs.

1. **Criteria of selection**

The first selection is made by the Government designating the candidate(s) in accordance with the requirements described in the programme.

Once the candidature is submitted through the official channel to the relevant agency, the following criteria which are known in advance by the candidates can be applied:

* academic merit;
* professional aptitude;
* leadership potential;
* long-term commitment to the field of study;
* national development;
* linguistic proficiency;
* gender;
* geographic distribution.

1. **Rules governing the administration of fellowships**

**7.1 The main entitlements are as follows**:

* round-trip international air travel, via the most direct and economical route;
* daily subsistence allowance at the established United Nations rate;
* tuition or training charges;
* **medical benefits.**

**7.2 Obligations of fellows:**

* to undertake the study programme in accordance with the instructions issued by the relevant agency;
* to devote full time to the programme;
* to conduct themselves at all times in a manner compatible with their responsibility as holders of a United Nations award;
* to refrain from engaging in political, commercial and any other activities incompatible with the study programme during the period of award.

1. **Inter-agency fellowship coordination**

As mentioned earlier, the Meeting of Senior Fellowships Officers serves as a framework not only to tackle problems of common concern, but also to share the best practices among the [participating agencies](https://www.un.org/development/desa/fellowship/participating-agencies/). These agencies have expressed a genuine willingness to share their experiences and practices, and have to this end created a “Unite Connections platform” web page.

The ITU seat at these meetings remained vacant for a few years because of restructuring. In 2020, ITU will attend the SFO Meeting and will share its experience on the implementation of the recommendations of the 22nd SFO Meeting, held in Vienna, Austria, from 23 to 25 October 2018 regarding:

* Fellowships for women as a pool of talent to reach gender equality;
* Aligning the fellowship programmes with the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Development Agenda, among others.

ITU will also contribute to the key agenda item on “Transparency and accountability of fellowship programmes”.