



# Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services

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Item 7 of the provisional agenda

**Addressing racism and racial discrimination**

## UNOPS: Addressing racism and racial discrimination

### *Summary*

In its decision 2025/12, the Executive Board decided to include an agenda item on addressing racism and racial discrimination, for consideration as a decision, at the first regular session 2026, and requested UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to submit separate reports detailing their actions taken in this regard, to ensure the issue receives sufficient visibility, including on metrics to measure progress. The Executive Board also requested UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to inform the Executive Board of the measures taken to ensure that actions to address racism and racial discrimination are duly considered in their respective approaches when implementing the Joint Inspection Unit recommendations, in particular UNOPS.

In line with this decision, the UNOPS report highlights actions taken to address racism and racial discrimination, including in implementing the respective Joint Inspection Unit recommendations. The report outlines UNOPS organization-wide approach to eliminating racism and racial discrimination and embedding anti-racism across policies, culture and leadership.

### *Elements of a decision*

The Executive Board might wish to:

- (a) take note of the separate reports provided by UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS in accordance with decision 2025/12, detailing the actions taken to address racism and racial discrimination within their respective organizations;
- (b) recall its decision 2024/10 and note the continued efforts of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to implement the entity-specific and system-wide recommendations outlined in the Joint Inspection Unit note JIU/NOTE/2022/1/Rev.1;
- (c) urge UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to continue taking concrete, results-oriented measures to combat racism and racial discrimination throughout their respective organizations, and to foster respectful, inclusive and safe workplace environments for all personnel; and
- (d) request that UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS provide regular updates on their efforts to address racism and racial discrimination.

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## I. Organizational commitment and strategic direction

1. UNOPS remains steadfast in its commitment to eliminating racism and racial discrimination in all forms, in alignment with the principles of the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Collectively, these instruments affirm the obligation of all entities of the United Nations system to uphold equality, dignity and justice for every individual. For UNOPS, this means ensuring that its institutional culture, policies and practices embody fairness, inclusivity and respect for diversity, consistent with Article 101(3) of the United Nations Charter, which underscores the importance of recruiting personnel on as wide a geographical basis as possible.
2. In accordance with Executive Board decision 2025/12 – which requests UNOPS to continue taking “concrete efforts, including at country level” – to address racism and racial discrimination, UNOPS has strengthened its institutional commitment to this agenda, aligning internal reforms with broader United Nations system coherence on anti-racism. Guided by these mandates, UNOPS has positioned anti-racism as a core pillar of its diversity, equity and inclusion strategy, 2022-2025, its anti-racism accountability plan, 2025, and its diversity, equity and inclusion strategy, 2026-2029. Together, these frameworks lay the foundation for an inclusive, equitable and representative workforce, ensuring that anti-racism remains both a stand-alone institutional priority and a cross-cutting driver of organizational excellence.
3. The anti-racism accountability plan translates this commitment into action. It serves as a framework for building an equitable workplace by addressing both individual and systemic forms of racism. It has fostered awareness, promoted the review of internal policies and practices to remove bias, and supported expanded safe, confidential reporting channels to ensure that all personnel feel supported and protected. These efforts have yielded tangible progress. Anti-racism principles continue to be embedded across UNOPS institutional practices, shaping how the organization manages its people, builds capacity, and communicates its values. Awareness campaigns such as the Open Door Dialogues series have deepened collective understanding of identity, race and belonging, while integrating anti-racist values into daily interactions and leadership expectations.
4. Recognizing that sustained progress requires continuous learning and reflection, UNOPS undertook a comprehensive institutional assessment on diversity, equity and inclusion in 2025. The assessment engaged personnel across various levels, operational units and locations (headquarters, regional hubs and country offices), exploring how personnel experience inclusion, respect and equity within the organization – with clear research objectives on race and ethnicity. The findings revealed that UNOPS is broadly regarded as a values-driven and respectful workplace with a strong commitment to fairness and representation. At the same time, the assessment identified areas for improvement, including the need to strengthen equity in leadership representation and to establish more robust structural mechanisms to ensure consistent application of inclusive practices across all contexts.
5. Building on these insights, UNOPS developed a dedicated anti-racism action plan within its new diversity, equity and inclusion strategy, 2026-2029. The action plan outlines clear accountabilities at the global, regional and country levels, support by key performance indicators to measure and track progress. The strategy aims to institutionalize anti-racism as both an organizational value and a behavioural norm – integral to how UNOPS defines leadership, manages talent, and delivers results.
6. Through these combined efforts, UNOPS continues to demonstrate that advancing anti-racism is essential not only to fairness and human dignity but also to organizational effectiveness, trust and legitimacy

## II. Institutional frameworks and policy integration

7. Building on its strategic commitment to an equitable and inclusive workplace, UNOPS has continued to strengthen the institutional frameworks that translate principles into practice. These

efforts are grounded in the recognition that sustainable progress on anti-racism requires clear policies, robust systems and dedicated resourcing that make inclusion measurable and enforceable across all areas of people management.

8. In accordance with Executive Board decision 2025/12, which “calls on UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to ensure the provision of dedicated resources to address racism and racial discrimination” and to “take measures to prevent all forms of racial discrimination in recruitment, retention and leadership development”, UNOPS has embedded discrimination provisions within its regulatory and human resources frameworks. This work aligns with Joint Inspection Unit recommendations 3 and 5 in document JIU/NOTE/2022/1/Rev.1, which emphasize resource adequacy and accountability mechanisms for addressing racism and racial discrimination.

*Embedding anti-racism within people policies and systems*

9. UNOPS is progressively mainstreaming anti-racism into its human resources policies to ensure fairness, transparency and equity at every stage of the personnel lifecycle.

10. The draft talent acquisition policy 2025 marks a major milestone in UNOPS efforts to advance anti-racism, introducing a unified framework for how talent is identified, assessed and selected across all personnel categories. Anchored in the policy’s guiding principles – non-discrimination, diversity, inclusion, transparency, fairness and accountability – UNOPS reaffirms its commitment to evaluating candidates solely on merit and competence, while addressing barriers to equitable participation in recruitment processes and explicitly prohibiting all forms of bias or discrimination.

11. The policy recognizes diversity, including race and ethnicity, as intrinsic to organizational excellence. It underscores that geographical representation is not only a matter of fairness but also a key driver of performance and legitimacy, in alignment with Article 101(3) of the United Nations Charter. Inclusive hiring practices are strengthened through structured recruitment standards – such as standardized vacancy announcements, assessment panels trained in equitable evaluation, and independent compliance reviews – to ensure that decisions are transparent and free from undue influence or bias.

12. The accountability principle clearly articulates the shared responsibility of senior leaders, hiring managers, human resources practitioners and assessment panels in upholding fairness and diversity commitments. Importantly, the policy’s diversity and inclusion principle explicitly commits UNOPS to “fostering a diverse workforce and encouraging candidacies from all backgrounds, genders and nationalities”, while recognizing the intrinsic aspects of individual identity, including race and ethnicity. This institutional articulation establishes a clear normative foundation for anti-racist practice in talent acquisition and serves as a reference point for embedding racial equity across all people processes.

13. In 2025, UNOPS introduced its first people planning and performance philosophy to foster a more intentional and value-driven approach to performance management. The new philosophy is grounded in foundational principles that promote fairness, transparency and equity by ensuring that both *what* is achieved and *how* it is achieved carry equal weight in assessing performance. Its central aspect is the assessment of behaviours through UNOPS integrity and inclusion competency, which explicitly encompasses respect for diversity, equity and inclusion, reinforcing zero tolerance for any form of bias or discrimination.

14. The people, planning and performance philosophy embeds a culture of mutual feedback and accountability, including mandatory 360-degree feedback for eligible leaders and Management Team members. These feedback mechanisms – grounded in UNOPS competencies, culture behaviours and leadership priorities – enable peers and teams to identify and challenge biased or exclusionary practices while recognizing inclusive leadership. By linking inclusion competencies directly to performance evaluation and leadership accountability, the people, planning and performance philosophy helps prevent discriminatory behaviours from going unchecked and ensures that equitable treatment, representation and respect are integral to career development. In doing so, it strengthens leadership responsibility for building diverse talent pipelines and supports fair opportunities for progression and retention across all levels of the organization.

15. In 2024, UNOPS conducted a comprehensive review of its human resources policies and processes, supported by an external expert organization, to assess alignment with the principles of equity and inclusion (including anti-racism). The assessment confirmed that the UNOPS policy framework provides a strong foundation for equitable workforce management, but recommended strengthening accountability mechanisms to better address bias and discrimination, as well as enhancing the integration of inclusive language and safeguards across all policy instruments. These recommendations are currently being integrated into relevant policy updates led by the People and Culture Group.

*Protection, integrity and accountability*

16. To support personnel who raise concerns regarding misconduct, UNOPS applies its whistleblower protection policy and associated procedures in a manner that is attentive to both conscious and unconscious bias. Reports of retaliation connected to allegations of racial or other forms of discrimination are handled with the same seriousness, confidentiality and procedural rigour as all protected activities. Raising concerns or allegations of racism, discrimination or exclusionary behaviour with the Workplace Conduct Team is considered a protected disclosure and is therefore covered under UNOPS anti-retaliation framework.

17. The Workplace Conduct Team reviews such reports to determine whether a referral to the Internal Audit and Investigations Group for formal investigation is warranted, or whether managerial or preventive interventions are more appropriate, in consultation with the reporting individual. Relevant support pathways and information are shared with the personnel member throughout the process. This approach reinforces a safe and accountable reporting environment and advances a culture in which personnel can speak up, speak out and seek support without fear of reprisal.

18. Complementing these protections, the UNOPS code of ethics – *Ethics Starts with Me: A Reference Code* – and the Integrity Portal, both launched in January 2025 in English, French and Spanish, provide a clear framework for ethics, integrity and accountability. The code offers practical guidance on navigating ethical dilemmas and understanding the internal justice system, while the Integrity Portal enables direct reporting of misconduct and signposts available support services. Together, these tools operationalize UNOPS standards and make accountability mechanisms accessible and actionable.

*Targeted investments and temporary measures*

19. Recognizing that racism and racial inequity manifest differently across social and cultural contexts – including in forms linked to ethnicity, caste, descent and national origin – UNOPS has adopted a targeted, context-sensitive approach to promoting equitable access to opportunities. In 2024, the organization piloted “temporary measures” in the Latin America and the Caribbean region to address barriers faced by underrepresented racial and ethnic groups in accessing employment opportunities. The pilot improved outreach and engagement strategies and increased transparency in selection processes.

20. Building on its success, in 2025 UNOPS developed global guidance on temporary measures of this kind, providing a standardized yet flexible framework for context-tailored diversity outreach across regional and country offices. This initiative represents a concrete step toward operationalizing the Executive Board’s call for “partnerships with regional institutions, internship, fellowship and young professionals programmes” (decision 2025/12) as mechanisms to broaden representation and inclusion. Furthermore, in 2024 UNOPS signed a memorandum of understanding with Tsinghua University to provide cost-free internships for young professionals, with initial placements in the UNOPS country office in China and planned expansion across the Asia and the Pacific region. This initiative aims to remove financial barriers, expand regional pathways into UNOPS, and advance racial and geographical inclusion.

*Dedicated resources and structural support*

21. In line with Joint Inspection Unit recommendation 3 and the Executive Board’s request for dedicated investment, UNOPS has institutionalized anti-racism resourcing within its core budget.

The organization ensures a dedicated budget allocation, forming part of the regular corporate allocation under the people and culture portfolio, to ensure sustainability and independence from extrabudgetary contributions. This budget supports training, awareness campaigns, employee resource groups and advisory services related to anti-racism and diversity, equity and inclusion more broadly.

22. To strengthen implementation, UNOPS maintains technical expertise and thematic task forces that ensure coordinated oversight and knowledge sharing across regions. Dedicated personnel with specialized competencies in diversity, equity and inclusion and anti-racism provide technical advice and facilitate cross-regional learning. The reactivation of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisory Panel and establishment of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion–Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Working Group in 2024 have further strengthened strategic coordination, ensuring that anti-racism considerations are embedded in workforce and organizational culture initiatives. The organization also continues to leverage external expertise, including specialized consultants, to enhance learning delivery, policy review and system-wide benchmarking.

*Integrating diversity, equity and inclusion metrics into analytics and reporting*

23. UNOPS is strengthening its people data and analytics to better monitor inclusion and workforce diversity. In line with the United Nations Charter’s emphasis on recruiting on a wide geographical basis, overall results by business units are now trackable, enabling pattern analysis across recruitment, mobility and appointments to leadership roles. In parallel, in 2025 UNOPS introduced voluntary racial and ethnic self-identification in the exit survey, supported by a dedicated dashboard for trend analysis. This enables the organization to identify any disproportionate attrition among identity groups, uncover equity issues that may be driving exits, and inform targeted retention and workplace improvements. Together, these measures support evidence-based decision-making and integrate diversity, equity and inclusion metrics into corporate reporting for transparent measurement, institutional accountability and continuous improvement.

### **III. Organizational culture and accountability for inclusion**

24. UNOPS has maintained a strong institutional commitment to nurturing a workplace culture grounded in fairness, respect and inclusion. The organization views an anti-racist culture not only as a moral imperative but also as a prerequisite for organizational effectiveness, trust and legitimacy. As part of its ongoing culture transformation journey, UNOPS continues to advance tangible measures that reinforce behavioural accountability, strengthen personnel confidence in systems of integrity, and create spaces for dialogue and learning across the organization. These initiatives collectively aim to build a culture where inclusion is a lived experience, where personnel at all levels feel safe, heard and valued, irrespective of race, ethnicity or background.

*Building an inclusive and accountable culture*

25. UNOPS approach to culture transformation is holistic, combining structured learning with participatory engagement to foster inclusion, accountability and psychological safety across the organization.

26. The Ethics Dialogues – developed by the Ethics Office and launched by the Executive Director in January 2025 – have been rolled out across teams, creating safe spaces for personnel to discuss ethical dilemmas and reflect on values in practice. These sessions are cultivating a “speak-with-each-other” culture that encourages openness, shared responsibility and collective learning.

27. Complementing these efforts, the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Unit, in collaboration with the Anti-Racism Employee Resource Group, convened the Open Dialogue sessions across UNOPS regional operational hubs in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean – with further expansion planned for 2026. These dialogues have been instrumental in fostering reflection, dismantling stereotypes, and strengthening shared understanding among personnel. They have enabled personnel to contextualize discussions on racial equity and inclusion within their specific cultural and operational realities, reinforcing a sense of belonging and respect.

28. Building on these dialogues, regional operational hubs translated the corporate anti-racism ambition into contextually tailored engagements that reflect diversity while upholding common organizational standards. In this spirit, the Global Portfolios Office piloted the Racial Equity Learning Challenge, which catalysed reflection and peer exchange, helping teams internalize key concepts, acknowledge lived experiences, and strengthen allyship. Together, these efforts are embedding anti-racism as a shared organizational responsibility and reinforcing a culture of inclusion and accountability at the global, regional and country levels.

29. UNOPS has strengthened its employee resource groups – including the Anti-Racism Employee Resource Group – which provide safe-space networks for peer support, collective advocacy and institutional learning. In 2024, these networks were reinforced by the voluntary participation of UNOPS leadership members as group champions. This ensures that the perspectives and recommendations emerging from these groups are elevated to the Management Team for consideration and follow-up, creating a direct bridge between personnel experiences and organizational decision-making. The result is greater transparency, accountability and responsiveness across all levels of the organization.

*Leadership accountability and cultural indicators*

30. Leadership remains at the centre of culture change. UNOPS continues to strengthen leadership accountability for inclusion through learning, evidence and behavioural indicators. Its culture and engagement survey – previously referred to as pulse survey – is a key instrument for measuring perceptions of fairness, inclusion and trust across the workforce. Since 2023, UNOPS has incorporated voluntary racial and ethnic self-identification into its culture and engagement survey, using the common categories recommended in Joint Inspection Unit report JIU/NOTE/2022/1/Rev.1 to enable consistent analysis of experiences and outcomes across racial and ethnic groups. This disaggregation allows UNOPS to identify patterns, detect disparities and use evidence to guide strategic interventions and policy refinement.

31. The 2024 UNOPS culture and engagement survey reveals significant variation in how inclusion and organizational climate are experienced across racial and ethnic groups. While overall progress is evident, persistent gaps point to ongoing challenges related to psychological safety and trust. UNOPS is leveraging these insights to inform system-level actions and strengthen accountability across the organization.

32. To deepen engagement with survey results, UNOPS introduced the role of culture ambassadors: personnel who work with managers to interpret survey findings, facilitate team discussions, and co-design actions that strengthen inclusive behaviours within teams. This participatory approach has helped transform data into dialogue and accountability, ensuring that inclusion is not abstract but locally owned and action oriented. In 2025, survey findings and dialogues allowed UNOPS to tailor and implement training in different country offices on the prevention and response to racism and racial discrimination.

33. In parallel, anti-racism principles have been integrated into the organization's learning and leadership development framework, including tailored sessions on inclusive leadership, supported by components on identity-based bias and discrimination. In 2025, UNOPS conducted specialized training for personnel involved in investigations and case management, responding to findings of Joint Inspection Unit report JIU/NOTE/2022/1/Rev.1 (paragraph 5.1), which emphasized the critical role of managers and investigators as first points of contact in addressing racism and discrimination. The training equipped investigators, case managers and ethics practitioners with the tools to identify and manage cases involving racial bias, ensuring objectivity, sensitivity and adherence to human rights principles in all inquiries.

*Integrity, safeguarding and people-centred support*

34. Integrity, ethics and accountability remain central to maintaining a culture of trust. UNOPS operates a comprehensive integrity architecture designed to prevent, detect and respond to all forms of misconduct, including racism and racial discrimination. The Integrity Portal is both a central platform for confidential reporting and a hub for information about available support services. The

Ethics Office, the Internal Audit and Investigations Group, and the Workplace Conduct Team work closely together – with reporters’ consent and full respect for confidentiality requirements – to ensure concerns are handled in a timely and consistent manner.

35. UNOPS seeks to apply a people-centred approach to all allegations of misconduct, recognizing the importance of identity-specific engagement and tailored support. The Navigation and Support Team provides confidential guidance to personnel as they navigate reporting options and accompaniment support once a report has been made. At the same time, this team’s mandate includes referral services to tend to every person’s specific needs, regardless of reporting.

36. The investigation process ensures that reported allegations of discrimination or abuse are managed sensitively and expediently. UNOPS also provides confidential, professional well-being support to personnel – drawing on external clinical services, the United Nations system counsellor network, and in-house counselling – to offer psychological assistance across duty stations and uphold duty-of-care commitments. In 2025, UNOPS strengthened its preventive and response mechanisms by joining the United Nations system-wide Clear Check 2.0 database, expanding its coverage beyond protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment to include other serious misconduct, such as racism and racial discrimination. This ensures accountability extends beyond individual offices and reinforces system-wide integrity and due diligence.

#### *Evidence-based culture transformation*

37. The 2025 institutional diversity, equity and inclusion assessment provided a critical evidence base for advancing cultural transformation. The assessment benchmarked UNOPS anti-racism culture against United Nations system standards and international best practices, offering a detailed analysis of strengths and areas for improvement. It found that personnel generally experience UNOPS as a respectful and purpose-driven organization but identified the need for greater dialogue across identity lines and more equitable representation in leadership roles. These findings have informed the design of the anti-racism action plan within the diversity, equity and inclusion strategy, 2026-2029, which includes clear accountability metrics to ensure that racial equity remains a strategic priority embedded in the organization’s culture transformation agenda.

38. By integrating data, dialogue and accountability, UNOPS is ensuring that anti-racism is not an isolated initiative but an enduring feature of its organizational identity. The deliberate connection between cultural insights, integrity mechanisms and leadership accountability demonstrates UNOPS approach to evolving an organizational culture that is both anti-racist and human centred.

## **IV. Workforce diversity, representation and equal Opportunity**

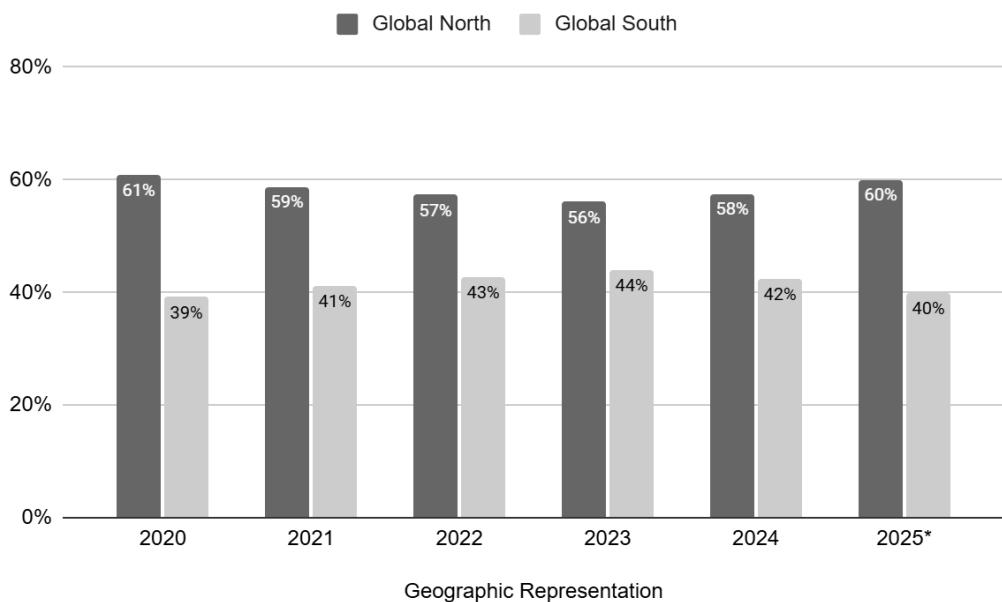
39. UNOPS continues to strengthen systems and policies that advance fair representation, equality of opportunity, and inclusion across all levels of the organization. These priorities are embedded in the new UNOPS organizational strategy, 2026-2029, where geographical diversity has been designated as a core key performance indicator for achieving the organization’s mandate in the next strategy cycle.

#### *Diversity snapshot and disaggregated data*

40. UNOPS regularly reviews and reports on the composition of its workforce, analysing diversity across gender, nationality, region, contract modality and functional level. Current data show steady progress in representation, with personnel drawn from over 175 nationalities across 160 duty stations. Continued attention is being given to senior leadership levels and to the equitable inclusion of personnel from the Global South, particularly in international senior leadership roles.

41. This systematic approach to workforce analytics ensures that diversity trends are visible, measurable and actionable – an important condition for sustaining trust and fairness in employment practices.

### Geographic representation of senior personnel in international positions (2020-2025)



*Note: All figures are reported as of 31 December of each year, except for 2025, where data is reported as of 30 September.*

#### *Inclusive recruitment, mobility and advancement*

42. UNOPS has updated its talent acquisition policy to operationalize anti-racism in recruitment by applying a single, rules-based framework that embeds non-discrimination, diversity and inclusion – including recognition of race and ethnicity – throughout the process. Standard recruitment now includes an independent compliance review, with all processes managed in the new recruitment system, Talent+, launched in November 2025, ensuring consistent treatment and traceability. Data collection, analysis and reporting are leveraged to support accountability for decision-making by all recruitment process stakeholders.

43. Assessment panels are instructed to consider organizational needs, including diversity, equity, inclusion and culture priorities, when making recommendations. Safeguards include reasonable accommodation on request, structured shortlisting rules, conflict-of-interest disclosures, and mandatory candidate checks (including sanctions screening, United Nations Clear Check 2.0, and the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme) with informed consent and confidentiality. Post-selection feedback obligations further strengthen transparency. Collectively, these provisions reduce the risk of bias, reinforce equal treatment, and support fair access and progression over time.

44. The organization's mobility framework (currently under development) aims to ensure equitable access to developmental and rotational opportunities, allowing personnel from different backgrounds to gain experience across duty stations and functions. Together, these recruitment, development and mobility measures create a coherent system for diversifying leadership pathways and promoting fairness throughout the employee lifecycle. The implementation of a revamped job architecture (currently in progress) supports these measures by establishing a transparent, skills-based foundation that organizes related functions into job families and broader job networks, based on shared characteristics such as core functions, required knowledge and transferable skills. This improves consistency, transparency and comparability across roles and career paths, reducing the influence of implicit biases related to race, origin, or background. By anchoring recruitment, career

development and mobility in objective, transferable skills, UNOPS ensures fair and equal access to opportunities, minimizes subjectivity in decision-making, strengthens accountability through data-informed monitoring, and advances the operationalization of anti-racism, equity and inclusion across the full employee life cycle.

*Embedding fairness and accountability in performance management*

45. The people planning and performance philosophy anchors personnel management in fairness and inclusivity, with diversity, equity and inclusion objectives integrated into managerial performance indicators to reinforce accountability for nurturing diverse talent pipelines and equitable development opportunities. Complementing this preventive focus, the UNOPS performance rebuttal mechanism (introduced in 2022) provides a structured avenue for procedural fairness and bias mitigation, including in cases where racial or other identity-based bias may influence assessments. This mechanism enables personnel to challenge performance evaluations through a transparent review process, ensuring that decisions are evidence-based, consistently applied and aligned with UNOPS non-discrimination standards.

46. Building on lessons from rebuttal cases, UNOPS is evolving its approach toward a proactive, anti-discrimination-informed model, whereby the organization initiates early personnel engagement for personnel in emerging under-performance situations. This promotes timely dialogue before issues escalate and enables swift identification and implementation of corrective actions. As a result, the process strengthens trust in people management, reduces overreliance on formal disputes, and reinforces a culture where feedback, accountability and inclusion are mutually reinforcing. In practice, this dual approach – preventive (the philosophy’s emphasis on behaviour and inclusive leadership) and protective (the rebuttal mechanism’s due process safeguards) – helps deter discriminatory practices and supports equitable treatment across teams and duty stations.

*Early career investment and youth voice*

47. UNOPS has further invested in early career diversity through the Junior Talent Programme (launched in 2019), creating entry points for emerging professionals – particularly youth and underrepresented groups – and building national capacity in hardship duty stations. The programme has enabled specific vacancies in locations such as the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea (Conakry), Haiti and Sudan to be filled by former interns with relevant degrees, while outreach partnerships with universities and institutions in historically underrepresented regions supported equitable access to UNOPS employment.

48. The programme remained active until 2023 and included more than 45 participants, with an average age of 29. In 2020, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) recognized the Junior Talent Programme as a United Nations system best practice under the “reflect, realize and respond” category for outstanding outreach and recruitment.<sup>1</sup> In 2021 and 2022, UN-Women again recognized the programme as a great initiative to retain female talent. Complementing these entry pathways, the UNOPS Youth Engagement Platform convenes diverse young leaders as an advisory body to UNOPS leadership, ensuring youth perspectives – across racial and geographical backgrounds – inform inclusive policies and engagement.

*Career development initiatives*

49. In 2025, career development efforts prioritized equitable access to growth opportunities and the reduction of structural barriers that can perpetuate identity-based disparities. Aligned with the “people” goal of its integrated people strategy goal, Build Tomorrow’s Workforce, UNOPS is advancing career awareness and continuous learning as enablers of fair progression. These initiatives aim to further advance the Joint Inspection Unit recommendation 6, underscoring the need to strengthen the equal distribution of opportunities across human resources management.

50. A new e-learning module on the fundamentals of career development was launched to help personnel plan and navigate their professional growth, reinforcing shared accountability among

<sup>1</sup> UN-Women, “Reflect. Realize. Respond. Rising to New Challenges: Accelerating Gender Parity in Times of Crisis and Beyond”, 2020.

individuals, supervisors and the organization. To date, 338 personnel have completed the course. Complementing this, a series of regional webinars – delivered with regional focal points – expanded engagement, contextualized practices to local realities, and promoted peer learning to support consistent, bias-aware approaches across regions. A total of 1,142 personnel participated in these sessions.

51. To reinforce implementation, UNOPS has invested in regional human resources capacity-building, providing training and guidance to strengthen teams' ability to support transparent, merit-based development pathways. The organization is also designing initiatives to build supervisors' capabilities to provide equitable, evidence-based feedback and development support. Mentoring and coaching programmes continue – including targeted engagements for senior-level personnel – to enhance leadership effectiveness and ensure access to inclusive growth opportunities across duty stations and contract types, in line with UNOPS anti-racism and non-discrimination commitments.

#### *Voluntary self-identification and data safeguards*

52. In line with Joint Inspection Unit recommendation 1, UNOPS is strengthening the quality and depth of its demographic data. Guided by the United Nations Secretariat's framework, the organization is exploring, through its new recruitment system, Talent+, the introduction of voluntary self-identification fields for race and ethnicity using categories consistent with Joint Inspection Unit-endorsed standards. In parallel, UNOPS will continue engaging with the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) to align with system-wide frameworks and advance unified self-identification standards across United Nations entities. Together, these steps will lay the groundwork for evidence-based decision-making and a clearer understanding of how different groups experience recruitment, progression and the workplace, enabling more targeted and effective equity interventions.

#### *Equity in organizational transitions and structural processes*

53. A critical milestone in 2025 was the integration of equity considerations into the UNOPS guidelines for strategic workforce planning. The guidance directs business units to weigh inclusion considerations alongside operational and fiscal imperatives when identifying cost-saving measures and workforce configurations. It encourages consultation with the People and Culture Group where specialized equity guidance is required and emphasizes transparent engagement with impacted personnel.

54. Building on this foundation, UNOPS has also integrated diversity, equity and inclusion principles into the draft guidance on restructuring. This effort recognizes that organizational change processes can inadvertently perpetuate or deepen inequalities across identity groups if not guided by equity safeguards. The revised draft guidance therefore incorporates a “need–risk–dignity” lens to assess the potential impact of workforce adjustments on different demographic groups, including those distinguished by gender, nationality, duty station context and other intersecting identities. It also calls for careful consideration of how restructuring may affect the diversity and geographical balance of the workforce across duty stations and roles.

55. By embedding diversity, equity and inclusion analysis in restructuring protocols, UNOPS supports decision-making on workforce realignment, contract transitions and post abolition that is transparent, consistent and attentive to representation and inclusion. This helps to maintain a workforce composition that reflects the international character and values of the organization.

## **V. Learning, knowledge and capacity development**

56. UNOPS views continuous learning as fundamental to advancing its anti-racism and inclusion agenda. Consistent with Joint Inspection Unit recommendation 2 calling for strengthened awareness and capacity development, UNOPS has prioritized learning as a lever for behavioural change, accountability and long-term culture transformation.

*Integrated learning framework and digital learning products*

57. In 2025, UNOPS launched its first diversity, equity and inclusion e-learning course, a landmark achievement that integrates a comprehensive anti-racism learning pathway. The course introduces personnel to foundational concepts of bias, privilege, allyship and systemic discrimination, supported by modules designed to connect learning to day-to-day managerial and operational realities. Since its release, it has become one of the most widely accessed courses on the UNOPS Learning Zone, reflecting strong demand for practical and reflective learning opportunities.

58. To ensure institutional accountability, a global completion dashboard was introduced, enabling real-time monitoring of participation across regions, contract types and functions. Built-in evaluation mechanisms capture user feedback and assess learning outcomes. Building on this success, UNOPS plans to designate the diversity, equity and inclusion e-learning – together with its anti-racism pathway – as mandatory for all personnel beginning in 2026, ensuring global reach and sustained behavioural reinforcement across the workforce.

59. Complementing the e-learning, UNOPS has curated a dedicated anti-racism learning repository within the Learning Zone. This resource library aggregates diverse external and United Nations system materials, expanding access to multiple perspectives on racial equity and inclusion. The repository enables self-paced exploration and fosters cross-context understanding of racism's varied manifestations across regions and identities.

60. UNOPS also sustains year-long “learning bursts” – short thematic engagements offering reflective spaces on emerging racial and identity-based issues. These virtual dialogues and micro-learning modules keep the conversation dynamic throughout the year, translating awareness into consistent behavioural practice and reinforcing the key messages of empathy, allyship and accountability.

*Leadership and applied learning resources*

61. Beyond foundational training, UNOPS has embedded practical inclusion tools into leadership and performance learning – including bias-aware feedback resources and supervisor toolkits – while integrating dedicated diversity, equity and inclusion workshops and mandatory modules across its Aspiring People Leaders and Supervisor Essentials modules. These enhancements equip managers to model equitable feedback, interrupt bias and build inclusive, high-performing teams. These tools reinforce the behavioural expectations articulated in the organization’s people planning and performance philosophy, strengthening accountability for inclusive management across all levels.

*Regional resource labs: decentralizing learning and practice*

62. In 2025, UNOPS established resource labs, regional hubs for organizational learning across five identity themes, including race and ethnicity. These hubs function as innovation spaces that localize learning, capture regional experiences, and foster peer exchange on inclusion practices. The Latin America and Caribbean Resource Lab serves as the organizational hub for anti-racism learning and practice, enabling contextual analysis of racial dynamics and piloting the “measures” highlighted previously in this report.

63. By decentralizing learning, the resource labs leverage regional expertise and lived experience, ensuring that inclusion strategies are informed by local realities rather than imposed centrally. This model offers a cost-effective pathway to scale learning while strengthening regional ownership. Insights from the labs feed directly into global policy reviews and the iterative adaptation of learning content.

64. This decentralized approach is also reflected in the 2025 UNOPS regional learning plans. For example, the Global Portfolio Office has embedded anti-racism through activities such as “Global Portfolio Office Awareness on Anti-Racism” and “Beyond the 21-Day Challenge: Practicing Anti-Racism Every Day,” positioning anti-racism within a broader inclusion framework and demonstrating how regional initiatives inform and reinforce organization-wide learning priorities.

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*Partnerships and inter-agency collaboration*

65. Recognizing that anti-racism and inclusion learning must be coherent across the United Nations system, UNOPS collaborates with the United Nations System Staff College on learning initiatives and participates actively in the United Nations Learning Managers Forum, sharing methodologies and participating in inter-agency communities of practice. These collaborations support harmonization of training standards and enable cross-fertilization of tools and practices.

*Behavioural insights and learning impact*

66. Initial evaluation results from the new UNOPS diversity, equity and inclusion e-learning modules indicate encouraging progress, with completion rates continuing to increase. Participant feedback reflects a strong positive impact on awareness and capability-building, with more than 95 per cent of respondents rating the course “excellent” or “good”, and nearly all indicating they would recommend it to colleagues. Learners highlighted the clarity of the content, the relevance of practical examples, and the direct applicability of the concepts to everyday workplace interactions. UN-Women has also adopted the UNOPS diversity, equity and inclusion e-learning course for internal capacity-building, reflecting its alignment with system-wide priorities and its value as a shared resource for strengthening inclusive organizational culture.

## **VI. System-wide and inter-agency engagement**

67. UNOPS recognizes that the fight against racism and racial discrimination within the United Nations system cannot be achieved in isolation. Consistent with Executive Board decision 2025/12, which calls on UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to “enhance cooperation through formal inter-agency coordination” and to “collaborate with the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB)”, UNOPS continues to play a constructive role in system-wide efforts to advance equality, accountability and cultural transformation. These commitments directly support Joint Inspection Unit recommendation 4, which emphasizes strengthened collaboration and coherence across United Nations entities to address racism and racial discrimination.

*Collaboration within the CEB and HLCM frameworks*

68. UNOPS remains committed to inter-agency collaboration through the CEB and HLCM and its sub-working groups on gender equality and disability inclusion. Drawing on its global workforce model, UNOPS contributes practical, operational insights to ensure that proposed indicators and performance measures reflect the realities of personnel. In parallel, it will continue to support collective efforts to establish harmonized United Nations system data standards and reporting mechanisms for racial and ethnic identities. This engagement underscores UNOPS alignment with the Secretary-General’s call for a One United Nations approach to equality and inclusion, grounded in shared standards, mutual learning and transparent accountability.

*Partnership and informal learning with peer entities*

69. Building on a tradition of close cooperation with its sister organizations, UNOPS maintains ongoing engagement with UNDP, UNFPA and others. Beyond formal coordination, the three organizations have pursued informal peer learning initiatives, such as the Joint Staff Council Learning Series implemented in 2024, which provided personnel from all three entities with shared learning opportunities on equity, inclusion and allyship. These exchanges fostered a common understanding of the systemic barriers faced by diverse groups (including underrepresented racial and ethnic groups) and encouraged collaborative organizational responses, where necessary.

*Contribution to system-wide integrity and accountability*

70. In 2025, UNOPS strengthened its contribution to inter-agency integrity frameworks by joining the United Nations System-Wide Clear Check 2.0 database, an expanded version of the previous inter-agency tool for due diligence and safeguarding. While earlier iterations focused primarily on

protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment, the new platform now encompasses additional forms of serious misconduct, including racism and racial discrimination. UNOPS participation in Clear Check 2.0 reinforces its zero-tolerance stance on racism, enhances accountability across entity boundaries, and supports a unified United Nations approach to preventing re-employment of individuals found responsible for serious violations. This measure complements UNOPS internal integrity systems and signals its continued commitment to the broader United Nations vision of “one standard of ethical conduct, one framework of accountability.” It also reflects the organization’s understanding that eliminating racism requires both prevention and structural safeguards within recruitment and reassignment processes across the system.

## **VII. Future directions and path to transformation**

71. As it concludes this phase of its institutional journey toward eliminating racism and racial discrimination, UNOPS remains committed to building on the progress achieved under the first anti-racism accountability plan and to deepening this work under the new UNOPS diversity, equity and inclusion strategy, 2026-2029. The next strategic cycle represents a critical opportunity to consolidate gains, embed measurable accountability across all levels of the organization, and advance a model of inclusion that is systemic, transparent and sustainable.

72. In accordance with Executive Board decision 2025/12, UNOPS will continue to implement the Joint Inspection Unit recommendations, with a focus on institutionalizing measurable outcomes and harmonized system-wide reporting mechanisms.

### *Advancing system-wide accountability*

73. In light of the United Nations Secretariat framework and with the ambition of adopting measures articulated in Joint Inspection Unit recommendations, UNOPS remains committed to contribute to the finalization of a United Nations system-wide harmonized framework for race and ethnicity data categorization, as well as a system-wide accountability framework on racism and racial discrimination. UNOPS will continue to advocate for indicators that capture both structural and behavioural dimensions of progress, linking organizational culture to workforce outcomes.

### *Integration of anti-racism within the diversity, equity and inclusion strategy, 2026-2029*

74. The UNOPS diversity, equity and inclusion strategy, 2026-2029, embeds anti-racism as a strategic pillar of organizational transformation. A dedicated anti-racism action plan within the strategy articulates objectives, activities and milestones across various domains, including leadership accountability, policy and systems, workforce representation, learning and culture. Each domain is accompanied by key performance indicators to track institutional progress and personnel experiences. The strategy further reinforces accountability through a multi-level results framework, cascading global targets to regional and country offices. This approach will ensure that every office has a measurable role in fostering racial equity and that progress is continuously monitored.

### *Expanding inclusive opportunities and partnerships*

75. Building on the success of the temporary measures pilot in Latin America and the Caribbean, UNOPS will expand these initiatives and fellowship programmes to other regions to address context-specific barriers to representation. The organization will also strengthen partnerships with regional institutions, universities and professional networks, as encouraged by the Executive Board, to create equitable access pathways for racially and ethnically diverse professionals to enter and thrive within the UNOPS workforce. These initiatives will not only diversify talent pipelines but also strengthen regional ownership of inclusion outcomes.

76. To complement recruitment reforms, UNOPS will further enhance its post-recruitment survey to capture disaggregated insights on personnel experiences during onboarding and integration. The expanded survey will include voluntary racial and ethnic self-identification fields, enabling the organization to identify potential barriers early in the employee lifecycle and to refine its induction

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and retention strategies accordingly. This data-driven approach will strengthen accountability for equitable treatment from entry to advancement.

*People planning, performance and development*

77. Following the introduction of the UNOPS first people planning and performance philosophy, the organization is piloting a peer calibration process in selected offices across all regions for the 2025 performance appraisal cycle. This process aims to strengthen fairness, equity and accuracy in performance assessments by promoting alignment and consistency of standards. It helps identify and address potential biases or irregularities in the assessment process, thereby reinforcing accountability for results and fair, inclusive and equitable leadership practices.

*Strengthening learning and behavioural change*

78. The new strategy cycle, 2026-2029, will prioritize the expansion of the learning and knowledge-sharing initiatives introduced in 2025. Planned developments include continued scaling of resource labs as learning incubators for inclusive workplaces, fostering localized experimentation, peer learning and innovation on inclusion themes while informing global policy design. Through these initiatives, UNOPS aims to embed learning as a continuous process – integrating behavioural expectations into performance processes, leadership development and culture-building efforts.

*Embedding transformation and measuring impact*

79. As UNOPS enters this next phase, its focus will remain on institutionalizing accountability and demonstrating tangible outcomes. UNOPS commitment to anti-racism extends beyond compliance; it is a defining element of the organization's credibility, leadership and performance. By embedding racial equity into its strategy, operations and culture, UNOPS seeks to exemplify the United Nations values of fairness, dignity and justice, ensuring that its workforce, partnerships and practices reflect the diversity of the world it serves.

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