

## **WIPO Coordination Committee**

**Eighty-Third (55<sup>th</sup> Ordinary) Session**  
**Geneva, July 9 to 17, 2024**

### **REPORT**

*adopted by the WIPO Coordination Committee*

1. The WIPO Coordination Committee was concerned with the following items on the Consolidated Agenda (document [A/65/1](#)): 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8(ii), 9, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22.
2. The reports on the said items, with the exception of items 7, 19 and 20 are contained in the General Report (document [A/65/11](#)).
3. The report on items 7, 19 and 20 are contained in the present document.
4. Ms. Vivienne Katjuongua (Namibia), Chair of the WIPO Coordination Committee, presided over the meeting. Mr. Karan Thapar (India) was elected Vice-Chair of the WIPO Coordination Committee.

## ITEM 7 OF THE CONSOLIDATED AGENDA

### DRAFT AGENDAS FOR 2025 ORDINARY SESSIONS

5. Discussions were based on document [A/65/4](#).

6. The WIPO Coordination Committee adopted Annexes I and II; the Paris Union Executive Committee adopted Annex III; the Berne Union Executive Committee adopted Annex IV.

## ITEM 19 OF THE CONSOLIDATED AGENDA

### REPORTS ON STAFF MATTERS

(i) Report on Human Resources

7. Discussions were based on document [WO/CC/83/INF/1 Rev.](#)

8. The Chair introduced Agenda Item 19 and mentioned that there were two sub-items under consideration, which would be addressed separately. The Chair invited the Director of the Human Resources Management Department (HRMD) to introduce the first document under consideration: the Annual Report on Human Resources, document WO/CC/83/INF/1 Rev.

9. The Secretariat stated that it was pleased to present the Annual Report on Human Resources covering the period from January 1 to December 31, 2023. The report comprised Human Resources (HR) matters for which reporting to the WIPO Coordination Committee was required, as well as an overview of HR-related policies, initiatives and activities of interest to Member States. WIPO was currently undergoing a significant transformation to adapt to the constantly changing intellectual property (IP) landscape and to better cater to its Member States and the global community. The Organization's HR Strategy 2022-2026 was central to that effort, with which the Secretariat strived to ensure that the workforce was equipped to serve its stakeholders, driving innovation and supporting business objectives. The midway point in implementing the Medium-Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) and HR Strategy showcased a shift in perspective, acknowledging that people management was a shared responsibility, supported by HRMD, and that the change was pivotal in facilitating WIPO's journey towards its goals. As HR evolved into a more strategic function, it was becoming instrumental in igniting programs and processes to retain talent and support business objectives. Additionally, enhancing the Department's capabilities in areas such as data analytics, strategic workforce planning, and change management were crucial for driving innovation and adapting to organizational change. The Secretariat wished to share the following six critical points in HRMD's journey of transformation: (i) Culture: culture played a pivotal role in WIPO's transformation, acting as the Organization's DNA shaped by leadership, practices, and mindset shifts. A holistic approach to cultural change, including leadership training programs, staff engagement surveys, and a redefined approach to performance management, were gradually shaping the desired cultural shift; (ii) Organizational agility/change in a dynamic environment: agility, driven by horizontal teamwork and adaptable structures, improved performance and boosted employee engagement. The Organization's shift towards a marketplace model that empowered horizontal teams enabling decision-making, communication, and knowledge transfer was crucial for cultural transformation. WIPO was ensuring that the Organization remained fit for purpose, and that meant evolving its processes, strategy and structures. It also required upskilling and reskilling the existing workforce as well as acquiring new talent and capitalizing on technology. Investments in artificial intelligence (AI) and technology projects were modernizing services and processes, streamlining operations, and increasing efficiency. Navigating the dynamic landscape required redefining workforce planning, enhancing diversity, and promoting equal

opportunities for growth. Ensuring that the right skills were available at the right place and the right time was also critical. WIPO's emphasis on mobility, diversity, skill revitalization, and capacity-building underscored its commitment to adaptability and innovation;

(iii) Performance management: at WIPO, performance management was evolving towards a dialogue-driven approach, prioritizing feedback and growth. The new policy, which was expected to evolve further, had not only refocused, but lightened the Organization's approach to performance management;

(iv) Upskilling/reskilling: efforts to reskill and upskill the workforce, alongside initiatives such as the revised and enhanced Gender Equality Policy and the implementation of WIPO's first Disability and Inclusion Strategy, fostered inclusivity and talent retention. WIPO had worked on building the foundation to adopt a more strategic training approach, including learning and development matrices, developed by the WIPO Academy and HRMD, in close collaboration with the business areas. That paved the way for continuous learning and skill development to support both individual growth and WIPO's broader mission;

(v) Diversity: studies showed that diverse and inclusive organizations perform better, were more innovative and dynamic and led to better talent retention. WIPO recognized the significance of diversity and remained firmly committed to enhancing the diversity in its workforce. The unveiling in July 2023 of the Geographical Diversity Action Plan (GDAP) to the WIPO Coordination Committee, highlighted WIPO's commitment to working together with Member States to increase geographical representation in the staff population. However, it should be kept in mind that WIPO was a relatively small Organization and hence the annual rate of change was relatively modest. As of 2026, an increase in retirements could help accelerate this process if Member States worked with the Secretariat to build talent pipelines. In that regard, the Secretariat had initiated a pilot project on Careers in IP with three Member States;

and (vi) Health and well-being: as part of fostering a nurturing employee experience, WIPO was prioritizing talent management alignment, engagement initiatives, and workplace respect. Emphasizing mental health and well-being, the Organization was actively implementing initiatives to ensure a supportive and inclusive environment for all employees. WIPO's participation in the development and implementation of the United Nations (UN) Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy reflected that commitment. The Secretariat stated that, in driving those initiatives forward, HRMD was undergoing its transformation journey, focusing on simplicity, efficiency and user-centric services. By embracing data and technology-driven services, HRMD was simplifying and optimizing policies and procedures to meet evolving needs. In conclusion, the Secretariat indicated that WIPO remained committed to driving organizational growth through a people-centric approach that fostered collaboration, innovation, and excellence. Together, the Organization was shaping a future that embraced agility, diversity, inclusion, and continuous learning.

10. The Delegation of the Republic of Moldova, speaking on behalf of the Group of Central European and Baltic States (CEBS) Group, thanked the Secretariat for preparing and presenting the Annual Report on Human Resources as well as the efforts to achieve gender and geographical diversity, improving WIPO's performance by applying a skilled-based approach and the Organization's work culture. The CEBS Group equally welcomed the practice of holding multilateral meetings for Member States to understand needs and concerns for all parties and hoped that the practice would continue in the future. While the CEBS Group's members continued to face the challenge of under-representation in WIPO's workforce, it saw the need to intensify efforts to address such important issues which could help achieve concrete and tangible progress related to equitable geographical representation. It believed that, while not neglecting a merit-based approach in the recruitment process, geographical diversity in employment was a prerequisite of WIPO's performance, ability to develop well-tailored policies and deliver high quality results to IP stakeholders. In that regard, the CEBS Group declared its commitment to engage in constructive dialogue with other Member States and the Secretariat on how to make the GDAP an effective tool in ensuring geographical diversity in WIPO's recruitment policies. The CEBS Group was also concerned about the low percentage of candidates from its members selected at the final stage of the recruitment process among other geographical regions, and it called on the Secretariat to assist the CEBS Group in analyzing

and identifying the main reasons behind that challenge, and to develop methods to effectively address it in the future. Its members had expressed their interest to work with HRMD to develop region and country specific strategies aimed at increasing the interest in employment at WIPO among experts and specialists as well as to enhance the potential of talent pools in its region. The CEBS Group looked forward to continuing discussions on this matter and awaited further actions that would ensure a positive change on this important topic.

11. The Delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, speaking on behalf of Group B, thanked the Secretariat for preparing the Annual Report on Human Resources. Group B recalled its statement on the report delivered at the 37<sup>th</sup> session of the Program and Budget Committee (PBC) and thanked the Secretariat for the answers provided. Group B stated that it would be monitoring, in particular, WIPO's standing as an accountable employer. Group B noted with concern the continued under-representation of women in positions graded P5 and above as outlined in the WIPO Workforce Brochure and requested to see the trends in gender representation by grade referenced in the text of the Annual Report in the future. Group B also raised its concerns with regards to the high ratios of external hires and temporary staff, both in relation to a lack of institutional knowledge and familiarity with WIPO's highly specialized core mandates, and also in terms of challenges in strengthening the sense of community, shared goals and sense of belonging. Furthermore, according to the Joint Inspection Unit's (JIU) review on the use of non-staff personnel, short-term contracts and job insecurity may have a negative impact on organizational performance. As such, and in accordance with the informal recommendation issued in the review, Group B requested the Secretariat to adopt a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) guide on using contractual modalities. Finally, Group B affirmed that, while it was important for the Organization to ensure broader gender and geographical distribution, it was of the view that merit remained the paramount criterion in transparent hiring practices and appointments processes at WIPO.

12. The Delegation of Iran (Islamic Republic of), speaking on behalf of the Asia and the Pacific Group (APG), expressed its gratitude to the Secretariat for the preparation and presentation of the Annual Report on Human Resources, which included information and progress made towards staffing goals as well as an overview of HR-related policies, initiatives and activities of the Organization. APG attached great importance to equitable geographical distribution, the administration of human resources and WIPO's workforce, as it constituted the backbone of the Organization and related to administrative resilience to confront new developments promptly and adequately. It took note of the positive efforts made by the Director General and HRMD to improve geographical representation. While welcoming and recognizing those efforts to narrow the existing gaps, APG believed that there was a need for further actions to ensure more balanced geographical representation, and suggested mainstreaming geographical representation in all WIPO activities, especially WIPO decision-making bodies and WIPO's workforce. APG considered that one of the main concerns surrounding these Assemblies was the under-representation of its members in different WIPO governing and decision-making bodies, in particular, in the WIPO Coordination Committee. To narrow the existing gaps, APG urged expeditious actions towards ensuring a balanced geographical representation as well as a skill-based representation. Such improved practices and policies in close consultation with Member States would ensure that the decision-making processes and policy developments were inclusive and reflective of the diverse needs and perspectives of the global community. Without ensuring diversity in the workforce, policy development and implementation could result in ineffective solutions that would fail to address the needs of all stakeholders. APG reaffirmed its full support and collaboration to the Secretariat, and stated that it stood ready to contribute positively to reach the final goal of more balanced geographical representation in all the activities carried out at WIPO.

13. The Delegation of Kenya, speaking on behalf of the African Group, thanked the Secretariat for preparing the Annual Report on Human Resources contained in document WO/CC/83/INF/1 Rev. The African Group stated that it had taken careful note of the

contents of the report and appreciated the efforts made by the Secretariat in promoting gender parity within the workforce and it also noted the significant strides made in that regard. In addition, the African Group indicated that the number of women surpassed that of men overall, with women representing 54.8 per cent of the overall workforce and men at 45.2 per cent. While celebrating that progress, the African Group believed that care must be shown to ensure that both genders were equally represented and that the existing gap did not grow any further, resulting in the under-representation of men. That representation varied across categories and grades and it stated that women remain underrepresented in the higher levels, which called for more remedial action. With respect to equitable geographical representation in WIPO's workforce, the African Group reiterated its view that there was scope for intensifying the initiatives being undertaken and exploring different options that would help accelerate progress towards resolving the imbalance that currently existed. While appreciating the range of initiatives that the Secretariat had undertaken to address that matter, including the deployment of the GDAP in 2023, the African Group was aware that the results of those initiatives would only become visible in decades to come. That outcome was not satisfactory, especially given that the Principles of Geographical Distribution that provided guidance for geographical representation in WIPO had been in place since 1975. The redistribution that the African Group had observed in the past five years was only marginal, thus, there was room for achieving better outcomes with additional interventions. The African Group therefore encouraged the Secretariat to continue engaging different regional groups and delegations constructively, with the view to exchange ideas and approaches that would also cater for the near and short term towards a more representative and multicultural workforce at all levels and in all sectors. The African Group echoed its call for representation and opportunities for the career advancement of Africans in WIPO at all levels, including in the Organization's senior positions. It was of concern to the African Group that about 50 per cent of its members had no representative in the workforce. It wished to highlight that that was not as a result of a lack of interest from Africans, since the information presented in the Annual Report showed that Africa had the highest number of applicants by a significant margin. Neither was it out of a lack of qualifications. The African Group was concerned that despite presenting the largest pool of applicants, the number of selected candidates remained lower than other regions. While increased country engagement and improved mechanisms for preparing candidates may help, it felt that there was a lack of clarity on the process for selecting applicants, particularly at the final stage of recruitment, which may necessitate the establishment of an external validation mechanism. In light of that, the African Group invited the Secretariat to comment on the following issues: the imbalance in the number of African candidates that made it to the final selection process *vis-à-vis* the high number of applicants; the possibility of embarking on alternative lines of action, including possible head hunting in unrepresented countries and underrepresented regions to identify a diverse pool of applicants for vacancies; the possibility of including complete guides on employment for applicants that may be in need of that information to facilitate fairness in competing for the corresponding positions; the reason behind the progressive decline in the number of Africans occupying higher positions within the Organization including the inordinate delay in filling the position of Director for the Division for Africa; and the possible role of the Director General in addressing the problem, including the exercise of discretionary powers in HR matters. The African Group emphasized the importance of transparency and objective criteria regarding the career advancement of Africans in the workforce, particularly in senior positions. As a continent where youth constituted over 70 per cent of the population, the African Group wished to underscore the importance of youth engagement and commended WIPO for prioritizing programs such as the Young Experts Program (YEP), Fellows, Junior Professional Officers (JPOs) and Interns. The African Group reiterated that it valued youth empowerment initiatives and looked forward to those initiatives translating into WIPO's vision of a youth empowerment strategy for young innovators and creators around the world. The African Group felt, however, that it was important for WIPO to address the trend that had emerged across all youth programs where the number of women outstripped that of men by a ratio of approximately four to one. The African Group concurred

that there was a need for more targeted outreach at entry levels, targeting men to keep a balanced Organization at all levels. In closing, the African Group reiterated its willingness to continue constructively engaging with the Secretariat and all stakeholders towards achieving a more inclusive workforce.

14. The Delegation of China thanked the Secretariat for the Annual Report on Human Resources, which detailed the HR policies and activities carried out by WIPO. It appreciated the achievements reached in 2023, in terms of HR management and the efforts in increasing geographical representation, including consultations with regional groups. The Group called on WIPO to set tangible, measurable goals, to take into consideration UN standards in terms of geographical representation and take effective measures to improve geographical representation. The Delegation hoped that with the efforts undertaken by the Secretariat, geographical representation could be further improved.

15. The Delegation of Kazakhstan expressed its gratitude for the Annual Report and the information contained therein. In particular, WIPO's Youth Programs, which included participants in the YEP, Fellows, JPOs and Interns, and which continued to expand each year, provided an important source for preparing future staff for the Organization and for work in the field of IP worldwide. The Delegation said that it would reserve judgment for the future, including the YEP, that was aimed at preparing leaders in the field of IP to meet future needs with a focus on strengthening capacity building in its own country. The Delegation was also confident in its ability to contribute to the creation of a diverse and skilled talent pool capable of supporting IP work in any region of the world. In that regard, the Delegation called upon the Secretariat to expand efforts to attract talented specialists from various regions in the future, which would help achieve the goals stated in the report.

16. The Delegation of the Russian Federation thanked the Secretariat for this high-quality report and stated that the overriding factor when selecting candidates should be their competencies whilst also ensuring equitable geographic representation. The Delegation stated that it was important to take into account that Member States had different education systems and that no single education system should be considered the standard to be applied in the Organization. In that context, the Delegation wished to express its gratitude and support for the active position of the Secretariat to achieve equitable geographic representation. The Delegation was of the view that it would be advisable that WIPO, including through its different Sectors, study the labor market of underrepresented regions for the purpose of determining and using the most relevant channels for circulating information on job openings. In addition, it hoped for an open review into the effectiveness of the action plan in future. The Delegation also expressed its appreciation for the briefings on HR-related matters that were regularly held in WIPO and hoped that that practice would be maintained in the future. The Delegation reiterated that it would be advisable to develop an open online portal for Member States with regularly updated HR statistics, which would significantly enhance the degree of transparency and accountability in WIPO. The Delegation called upon the Secretariat to continue its work to improve the performance management system and stated that, in addition to effective incentive measures for staff, there should also be disciplinary measures and not just on paper. Finally, the Delegation requested the Secretariat to strictly comply with decisions and recommendations of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), as approved by the UN General Assembly.

17. The Delegation of Indonesia said that it aligned itself with the statement made by the Delegation of Iran (Islamic Republic of) on behalf of the Asia and Pacific Group and conveyed its appreciation and acknowledgement of the strides made towards improving diversity within WIPO's workforce as reflected in the Annual Report on Human Resources. However, the Delegation believed there was still room for improvement in terms of diversity. Despite the progress made, there remained gaps that needed to be addressed to ensure a workforce that truly reflected the inclusive nature of the Organization. It strongly supported increasing

employee diversity, reflecting a truly global representation that included underrepresented regions such as the Asia and the Pacific, Africa and Latin America. The Delegation urged the Secretariat to implement more robust strategies to attract and retain talent from diverse backgrounds, which would enrich the Organization's perspective and enhance its global outreach. By embracing a workforce that mirrored diversity based on a balanced geographical representation, the Delegation was of the view that WIPO could leverage a broader range of experiences and insights.

18. The Delegation of Saudi Arabia extended its appreciation to the Secretariat for the document prepared under that item and thanked the Organization for receiving the first batch of four JPOs from Saudi Arabia. The Delegation believed that they would gain great experience and skills and would be enabled to understand and shoulder responsibilities and act effectively. The Delegation looked forward to the continued cooperation with the Organization in that respect.

19. The Delegation of Brazil expressed its appreciation for the report prepared by the Secretariat and stated that the WIPO workforce's geographical distribution had never been more evident, and Member States had convened at a time when it was imperative for a more comprehensive, balanced, and equitable geographical distribution. While the Delegation acknowledged the strides made through the GDAP, it was clear that more decisive action was required to address the deep-rooted challenges Member States faced. It firmly believed that a diverse and inclusive workforce was fundamental to the legitimacy and effectiveness of WIPO, and that it was imperative that the Organization reflected the rich diversity of its Member States, ensuring that all regional groups were equitably represented at all levels. Furthermore, it was not only a matter of fairness, but also of enhancing the Organization's capability to address global IP issues with the benefit of varied perspectives. The GDAP represented an effort in the right direction but fell short of a comprehensive overhaul needed. The reliance on outdated references such as the 1975 document WO/CC/IX/2 on geographical distribution highlighted the urgency for updated frameworks that established clear and straightforward targets for geographic distribution, and the absence of such targets undermined collective efforts to foster a truly representative and inclusive institution. In light of that, the Delegation urged the following key actions: (i) Establish clear targets: it was imperative that WIPO set clear, measurable targets for geographic distribution across all levels. Those targets should be ambitious, yet achievable, providing a roadmap for systematic improvement in representation from all regional groups; (ii) Modernize frameworks: the Delegation called for the revision of outdated documents and the development of new policies that reflected the current global landscape. It added that the frameworks guiding diversity efforts should be rooted in contemporary realities and geared towards achieving tangible outcomes; (iii) Enhance accountability: the Delegation requested the implementation of robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms to track progress towards geographic diversity goals, with regular updates and transparent reporting that would ensure accountability and allow for timely adjustments to strategies as needed; (iv) Strengthen capacity building: the Delegation called for investment in capacity building initiatives tailored to underrepresented regions, as in its view, by enhancing the skills and competencies of candidates from those areas, a more level playing field would be created which would ensure that all regions had the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to WIPO's mission; and (v) Foster inclusive recruitment practices: the Delegation suggested that recruitment processes should be reviewed and refined to eliminate biases and barriers that hinder equitable representation, including by leveraging technology and innovative outreach strategies to attract a diverse pool of candidates from all corners of the globe. In conclusion, the Delegation reaffirmed its commitment to advancing the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion within WIPO and stood ready to collaborate with all Member States in that endeavor, recognizing that collective success depended on the ability to harness the full spectrum of global talent. For that reason, the Delegation stated that it would support a continuation of the process to review the policy of geographic distribution in WIPO last reviewed in 2016, as per the WIPO Coordination Committee document WO/CC/73/5 and called for the agreed recommendation issued in

paragraph 18 of the said document to continue consultation meetings on that matter. In that context, the Delegation proposed the following decision paragraph: “The WIPO Coordination Committee is invited to resume consultations with a view of formulating a new policy or establishing a new system of geographic representation to reflect contemporary realities and to establish clear and measurable targets for geographical representation across all levels of the Organization’s personnel and present the report of these consultations on geographical representation to the 84<sup>th</sup> Session of the Coordination Committee.”

20. The Delegation of the Republic of Korea extended its gratitude to the Secretariat for preparing the detailed Annual Report on Human Resources and noted with interest the balance between gender and geographical representation within the WIPO workforce, especially at the senior levels. However, given that one of WIPO's primary and important functions was to facilitate applicants' access to global IP services such as the PCT and Madrid Systems, the Delegation believed that it was essential to allocate and organize the workforce in a manner that promoted and supported that function effectively. Therefore, the Delegation hoped that future reports would take that perspective into account.

21. The Delegation of Germany thanked the Secretariat for preparing and presenting the Annual Report on Human Resources and stated that it fully aligned itself with the statement made by the Delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on behalf of Group B. The Delegation added that it valued the goal to strive towards geographical diversity across WIPO, but to maintain the highest possible level of talent and expertise within WIPO, it was important that the final hiring decision should always be merit-based. WIPO needed to remain an attractive employer, safeguarding technical expertise, whilst attracting qualified talents. In that respect, the Delegation shared the concerns expressed by Group B as regards the high number of external hires and temporary staff. In that context, the Delegation stated that WIPO should aim at concluding permanent contracts to foster institutional knowledge and a strong sense of community and belonging to WIPO.

22. The Delegation of Namibia welcomed the Annual Report on Human Resources, thanked the Secretariat for the preparation of the document and stated that it was pleased to have the Chair presiding over that important session. With the appreciation that people remained the greatest asset for any organization, it was confident in the Chair’s wisdom and leadership to steward that session, even though the Chair had decided to call for an election of a successor. The Delegation congratulated the Chair for keeping up the spirit of Namibia and said that it aligned itself with the statement made by the Delegation of Kenya on behalf of the African Group both in spirit and letter. It had followed the Annual Report on Human Resources over the years and had taken note that, while the calls for fair and equitable geographical representation remained, and despite the Secretariat’s commitment to put mechanisms in place to address the same, the issue of representation or lack thereof remained. In its view, the Secretariat had had sufficient time to assess the effectiveness of those mechanisms and, therefore, called for their reconsideration. The objective was not merely to employ those mechanisms, but to consider the effectiveness of the measures, which could only be assessed by the outcome, namely, fair and equitable geographical representation. The Delegation took note that while WIPO had over 190 Member States, only 122 Member States were represented within the workforce, stating that the issue of representation could be divided in four categories, namely overrepresented, represented, underrepresented and unrepresented. As of December 31, 2022, Namibia remained part of the fourth category of unrepresented countries, joining another 25 African countries that were reported not to have representation in WIPO. Therefore, the Delegation called on the Secretariat to employ targeted mechanisms for each category to ensure representation of all Member States. In its view, this was imperative, for WIPO to give expression to the principles and values of diversity, inclusivity, transparency, geographical representation, and it was in the interest of WIPO to take the form and shape of all Member States.



23. The Delegation of France said that it aligned itself with the statement delivered by the Delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on behalf of Group B and thanked the Secretariat for presenting the Annual Report on Human Resources. The Delegation commended WIPO for the achievements that had been made under the GDAP and expressed its support for the continuation of the partnership policy with Member States to train talent from different areas as well as for deploying activities for targeted capacity building, which had enabled the achievement of better geographic representation. While the Delegation conveyed its support for the efforts to achieve geographic balance with respect for diversity and inclusion, it was of the view that the goal should not be followed to the detriment of competencies and the merit of candidates, which should remain the ultimate criteria for recruitment. The Delegation stated that it must be taken into consideration that WIPO was a small Organization; therefore, it should not be done to the prejudice of people who were already in their current positions.

24. The Delegation of Kyrgyzstan thanked the Secretariat for preparing the Annual Report on Human Resources and stated that it was in favor of balanced representation of regional groups in the Secretariat, including the representatives of those groups that were currently underrepresented in the Secretariat.

25. The Delegation of Chile, speaking on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC), thanked the Secretariat for the excellent and detailed report and welcomed the move by the Organization to improve geographical representation. It acknowledged the improvements made and achievements reached. While the Group was assured of the willingness of the Organization to move in the right direction, it was of the view that there was still a great deal to be done. The representation of the region needed to be improved, not only in terms of the number of members of staff, but also in terms of the seniority of the staff. GRULAC conveyed its support to the statement and proposal made by the Delegation of Brazil.

26. The Delegation of the United States of America thanked the Secretariat for presenting the Annual Report on Human Resources and said that it aligned itself with the statement delivered by the Delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on behalf of Group B. The Delegation greatly appreciated HRMD's integrated view of human resources management, including the GDAP as well as the consultative meeting held earlier that month during which HRMD contextualized the steady, but incremental changes in WIPO's workforce. It wished to reiterate the emphasis on and the importance of merit-based, transparent recruitment and selection processes, benchmarked with UN system practices. The Delegation cautioned against any decisions that would undermine the selection of the most competitive candidates to carry out WIPO's important mandate. Likewise, it encouraged the Secretariat to explicitly integrate activities to attract women, particularly women who were more senior in their careers, as well as persons with disabilities, during regional or country office consultations.

27. The Delegation of Peru expressed its support to the statement delivered by the Delegation of Chile on behalf of GRULAC and stressed the request for discussions with a view to updating the Principles on Geographical Distribution which dated back 50 years. Efforts needed to be doubled and discussions that were suspended in 2016 resumed, to ensure that those principles represented current realities. The Delegation also wished to express its support to the various delegations who had underscored the need to continue efforts to ensure that there were more women in the most senior posts in the Organization as there was still clearly a gap.

28. The Delegation of Botswana said that it aligned itself with the statement delivered by the Delegation of Kenya on behalf of the African Group and thanked the Secretariat for the detailed Annual Report on Human Resources, as contained in document WO/CC/83/INF/1 Rev. The Delegation attached great importance to having a balanced geographical representation within the workforce of an organization such as WIPO to ensure that diverse perspectives and unique experiences from different regions were included to enrich dialogue and the decision-making

process. That would also foster a sense of ownership and commitment to the shared goals of promoting and protecting IP rights globally. Botswana was not currently represented within the organizational structure of WIPO and while that was a matter of concern, it was important to highlight and commend WIPO for its recent initiative in hiring one of its nationals in the YEP. In its view, this step marked a significant milestone in bridging the gap and enhancing the country's engagement with WIPO. The Delegation was optimistic that WIPO would continue the path to ensure geographical balance and soon employ a qualified Botswanan, thus further contributing to the Organization's mission and equal representation.

29. As there were no further requests for the floor, the Chair gave the floor to the Secretariat to respond to the statements made by the delegations.

30. The Secretariat began by thanking the delegations for the positive comments about the efforts that were being made to transform human resources in the Organization and its efforts to broaden diversity in representation. The Secretariat recognized that the results of those efforts would not be immediately visible, because of the size of the Organization. It added that, by 2038, the Organization would have 285 posts subject to geographical distribution that would be open for recruitment, in other words, approximately 40 per cent of the current positions in the professional and higher categories that were subject to geographical distribution. Member States should bear that in mind as that constituted a window of opportunity and one of the primary reasons why the GDAP was introduced. With respect to the comments relating to the GDAP, the Secretariat stated that there was the risk of dwelling too much on numbers and not moving to more concrete action. It believed that time should be spent designing new actions and then measuring the outcomes of those actions, rather than on an overall measurement, as the end game was much more important than just the formula. The Secretariat also informed the WIPO Coordination Committee that the ICSC would be discussing its recent report entitled "Diversity: monitoring of geographical diversity in the United Nations common system" at its ongoing summer session, in which WIPO was doing relatively well compared to other UN agencies. While that did not mean that there was no effort needed, in that context it was relevant to recognize that the issue was not solely specific to WIPO but was a broader issue in the UN system. With regard to comments from various delegations on the use of tailored approaches and the country-specific labor markets, the Secretariat highlighted that that was very much the approach of the GDAP, which required engaged partnership with Member States, and which constituted another element that needed to be looked into and measured. Based on the statements made by the delegations at that session as well as at the PBC session in June, the Secretariat was committed to focus on actions that targeted unrepresented Member States. With respect to the use of specific measures such as executive search firms, the Secretariat mentioned that that option had been used, but only in a limited number of cases, due to cost. It recalled that the third pillar of the GDAP revolved around the capacity building element and that it was a very significant part of the Secretariat's efforts and consequent close collaboration with the WIPO Academy. With respect to comments on the Youth initiatives, the Secretariat thanked the delegations for having taken note of the increased efforts in that regard and mentioned that there were over 100 Fellows in addition to YEPs, Interns and JPOs. Those programs were indeed focused on attracting and developing young talents and recruiting from unrepresented countries or underrepresented regions. The Secretariat thanked the delegations for the comments on progress made on gender and stated that some of the success related to the growth of internal female candidates and how they had been prepared for more senior roles within the Organization. It would continue to increase its efforts in that regard but would also focus on the external pool of female candidates for higher-level positions. The Secretariat acknowledged the imbalance of men at entry level positions and took the opportunity to highlight that the YEP was gender-balanced due to recruitment by cohort. The Secretariat expressed its appreciation to the Delegation of the United States of America regarding its continuing efforts on persons with disabilities and stated that it was a matter that was being followed closely in the context of the Disability Inclusion Strategy. It added that the Secretariat was now moving into implementing more concrete measures and that it hoped to provide an

update on some new developments next year. With respect to recruitment, the Secretariat reiterated that it consisted of a merit-based process and that there seemed to be no disagreement from delegations that such a process was very critical for WIPO. That was an additional reason for the Secretariat's focus on building strong funnels of talented candidates that could fill roles in the Organization. It took note on the need to maintain institutional knowledge in the context of the number of retirements in the future and mentioned that that would be monitored through more active workforce and succession planning exercises. Finally, with respect to WIPO's engagement with the UN community and in complying with the UN General Assembly decisions, the Secretariat recalled the implementation by the Organization of the recent changes on post adjustment and parental leave. It added that, beyond implementing the UN General Assembly decisions, the Secretariat was an integral part of bodies that drove common themes and proposals in the UN system, such as the implementation group on the Mental Health and Well-being Strategy, the Working Group on the compensation review and the Disability Inclusion Taskforce, as well as the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) and HR Network. With respect to the Chief Executives Board (CEB) Task Force on addressing sexual harassment, the Secretariat indicated that Mr. Staines, Assistant Director General, Administration, Finance and Management Sector, was part of the executive group in his capacity as Vice-Chair.

31. The Chair thanked the Secretariat for its responses referred to the proposal made by the Delegation of Brazil for specific language to be adopted insofar as it related to the 1975 Principles on Geographical Distribution. As the proposal had been circulated to the delegations for consideration, the Chair suggested giving them an opportunity to review the proposal and revert at the end of the discussion of that agenda item.

32. The Delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, speaking on behalf of Group B, thanked the Delegation of Brazil for the proposal and requested a written version. Group B also mentioned to the Chair that it would need some time to coordinate with its members on the proposal.

33. The Chair thanked Group B and stated that the sub-item would be kept open and would be taken up at the end of the session. As there were no further requests for the floor, the Chair then proposed to the Secretariat to proceed to the next sub-item.

34. Reopening Agenda Item 19(i), the Chair recalled that discussions on this item had been suspended to hold consultations with various Groups and delegations. The Chair was pleased to announce that, following those consultations with respect to the proposal made by the Delegation of Brazil to the language of the decision for Agenda Item 19(i), agreement had been reached on a consensus decision paragraph. The Chair read the proposed decision paragraph and gave delegations a few moments to review the paragraph. The Chair noted that there were no delegations requesting the floor with respect to the revised proposed decision paragraph shown on the screen and concluded that there was no objection to the proposed decision paragraph. She then thanked the delegations for their statements and stated that all the statements would be duly reflected in the report. The Chair proposed to proceed with the adoption of the decision.

35. The WIPO Coordination Committee invited the Secretariat to:

- (i) hold consultations with regional groups with the aim of promoting geographical diversity, taking into account the need to reflect contemporary realities and to ensure a merit-based approach; and
- (ii) present a report of these consultations to the 84<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee.

(ii) Report by the Ethics Office

36. Discussions were based on document [WO/CC/83/INF/2 Rev.](#)

37. The Chief Ethics Officer *ad interim* introduced document WO/CC/83/INF/2 Rev. entitled “Annual Report by the Ethics Office” covering the period January 1 to December 31, 2023. The Chief Ethics Officer *ad interim* recalled that the former Chief Ethics Officer had left WIPO for a post in another UN organization in October 2023, and that he had been tasked to fulfil the role pending the recruitment of the new Chief Ethics Officer. The Chief Ethics Officer *ad interim* further explained that, given the temporary nature of his assignment, he had refrained from making policy changes unless these were necessitated by urgency, and he had accordingly made only a few policy decisions. The Chief Ethics Officer *ad interim* also highlighted that, during his term, the number of cases handled by the Ethics Office had continued to rise but not as dramatically as the previous year (168 in 2023, as compared to 155 in 2022, which was a rise of around 9 per cent). Most cases involved issues around conflicts of interest, and requests for authorization of outside activities represented the largest type of case (in 2023, this corresponded to 40 per cent). Some of those cases came from individual members of personnel and some were referred to the Ethics Office by HRMD. The Ethics Office had launched last year a new financial disclosure and declarations of interest program, in compliance with the Financial Disclosure and Declaration of Interests (FDDI) Policy, using internally developed software. In 2023, this new software was used with excellent results and considerable cost saving to WIPO. The FDDI and the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) were completed in 2023 with 100 per cent compliance. In terms of numbers, 111 staff were listed for FDDI in 2023 and a random 10 per cent of those filers were required to produce documentation to verify their disclosure. The Ethics Office received in 2023 four requests for protection against retaliation and, in one of those cases, found a partial *prima facie* case of retaliation and referred the case to the Internal Oversight Division (IOD) for investigation. In relation to the Policy against Retaliation, the Ethics Office was assisted by suggestions by the Independent Advisory Oversight Committee (IAOC). The Committee recommended some amendments of a procedural nature, mainly on timing, and those amendments were duly incorporated into a revision at the end of 2023. The WIPO Academy continued to manage the online ethics training in 2023, with 95 per cent compliance. The Chief Ethics Officer *ad interim* stated that, like the previous year, the Ethics Office would be providing delegates and staff with an illustrated summary of its work in 2023. The Chief Ethics Officer *ad interim* indicated that his term would soon come to an end and invited the Director General to introduce the incoming Chief Ethics Officer.

38. The Director General thanked Mr. David Mitchels, Chief Ethics Officer *ad interim* and expressed his appreciation for his work in the WIPO Ethics Office, whilst the recruitment process for the incoming Chief Ethics Officer was ongoing. The Director General presented the incoming Chief Ethics Officer, Ms. Fanny Martin, to the WIPO Coordination Committee, noting that she had worked at WIPO for over 12 years in various capacities in the Office of the Legal Counsel and HRMD. He further highlighted that the incoming Chief Ethics Officer would bring with her familiarity with administrative law, mediation, as well as a strong skill set in terms of the required knowledge of the relevant rules and regulations. The Director General, with the permission of the Chair, then passed the floor to the incoming Chief Ethics Officer.

39. The incoming Chief Ethics Officer stated that she was honored and humbled to address the WIPO Coordination Committee. She noted that the Chief Ethics Officer *ad interim's* tenure during the transitional period had been instrumental in maintaining the ethical standards of the Organization, and she thanked him for his willingness to share insights and ensure a smooth transition. By way of introduction, the incoming Chief Ethics Officer stated that she had spent a significant portion of her career navigating the realms of litigation, including two roles in international administrative tribunals and, subsequently, in advisory and policy functions within the Secretariat. This professional experience had shaped her understanding of ethics. The

incoming Chief Ethics Officer further stated that, while professional ethics may too often be seen as setting boundaries and imposing constraints, she was of the view that it was the bedrock of protection and development, noting that when individuals could intimately relate to, and connect with, organizational values, then there was harmony, safety, and a sense of common purpose. The incoming Chief Ethics Officer further stated that it was this understanding of ethics – focused on values rather than just rules – that she would bring to this Office. The incoming Chief Ethics Officer went on to state her vision for the Ethics Office, which was centered on three main priorities. Firstly, improving soft law and guidance, particularly concerning situations of conflict of interest. While WIPO benefitted from a robust, legal and ethical framework, there was a need for practical and accessible guidance to help personnel navigate those complex situations with greater confidence and clarity, and to ensure that potential conflicts were identified and managed proactively, safeguarding the integrity of WIPO. Secondly, streamlining processes, notably those related to outside activities. The incoming Chief Ethics Officer expressed the view that the engagement of WIPO personnel with external entities could be a tremendous asset, fostering collaboration and innovation. However, it was crucial that an efficient process be in place to review and authorize those activities, ensuring they also align with WIPO's ethical standards. Thirdly, further improving the accessibility of the Ethics Office. The incoming Chief Ethics Officer insisted that it was essential that all members feel fully confident and comfortable to turn to the Ethics Office whenever they had doubts or concerns. By fostering an open and supportive environment, ethics would be seen not only as a compliance requirement but as a fundamental aspect of the organizational culture that the Secretariat wants to build. Regular training would further cultivate an atmosphere where ethical considerations would continue to be at the forefront of minds, guiding towards excellence. The incoming Chief Ethics Officer explained that because the mandate of the Ethics Office was at the crossroads of values, rules, compliance and pedagogy, she intended to maintain and enhance exchanges with key stakeholders, including the IAOC, IOD, the External Auditor, the Office of the Controller, the Office of the Legal Counsel, HRMD, the Office of the Ombudsperson, the WIPO Academy and the Staff Council. Collaboration with those entities was crucial to fostering a holistic and organization-wide approach to ethics. In closing, the incoming Chief Ethics Officer stated that she was confident that conditions could be enhanced for ethics not to be perceived as a burden, but a beacon, illuminating paths towards a more just, accountable, and impactful Organization. She expressed confidence that this noble mission would be achieved with the collaboration of Member States, oversight bodies, and WIPO's dedicated personnel.

40. The Chair thanked both the Director General and the incoming Chief Ethics Officer.

41. The Delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, speaking on behalf of Group B, thanked the Secretariat for the preparation of document WO/CC/83/INF/2 Rev., and the Chief Ethics Officer *ad interim* for his presentation. Group B stated that the Ethics Office was an indispensable part of the governance structure of WIPO, helping to ensure a working environment characterized by professional ethics. It noted that providing confidential advice and guidance to all WIPO personnel was a critical component of the mandate of the Ethics Office. Group B also took note of the noticeable increase in requests for confidential advice and guidance since 2021 and encouraged the Ethics Office to continue to carefully monitor that trend. In that regard, Group B expressed its support for the efforts of the Ethics Office to keep all stakeholders better informed about its strategy and to report more efficiently and consistently on the ethical maturity within WIPO. Group B thanked the Ethics Office for its valuable work and stated that it looked forward to the continued key and active role that it played within WIPO and wished the incoming Chief Ethics Officer all success in her new role.

## ITEM 20 OF THE CONSOLIDATED AGENDA

### AMENDMENTS TO STAFF REGULATIONS AND RULES

42. Discussions were based on document [WO/CC/83/1](#).

43. The Secretariat introduced document WO/CC/83/1 entitled “Amendments to Staff Regulations and Rules” and stated that, whilst the amendments to the Staff Regulations were presented to the WIPO Coordination Committee for its prior approval, the amendments to the Staff Rules were approved by the Director General and were being presented to the WIPO Coordination Committee only for information. The Secretariat mentioned that amendments to five Staff Regulations were being submitted to the WIPO Coordination Committee for its approval. One of the most substantive amendments proposed concerned fixed-term appointments of limited duration (Staff Regulation 4.17(d)). The Secretariat recalled that the provision on fixed-term appointments with an overall term of limited duration was introduced in October 2021. It provided that such limited duration appointments could not be renewed beyond their overall term and could not be converted into a continuing appointment. Based on review and experience from the implementation, it had been noted that for specific roles, there may be a need to extend a limited duration fixed-term appointment beyond its overall term to support the achievement and completion of results. The Secretariat added that such an extension would only be possible once, to avoid significant business disruption and would be subject to the Director General’s approval. With respect to the Staff Rules, the Secretariat stated that amendments to four Staff Rules, all concerning parental leave, were being reported to the WIPO Coordination Committee for information. In addition, three of the four Rules were replaced with a single Rule on “Parental Leave” to implement the decision of the ICSC: “to replace the current maternity, paternity and adoption leave provisions with a parental leave provision of 16 weeks for all parents” and “to provide an additional period of 10 weeks to birth mothers to meet their specific pre- and post-natal needs.” That was not a change for staff members on fixed-term and continuing appointments who became parents without giving birth, as they already benefitted from 16 weeks of parental leave since June 2021. For those who gave birth, that amendment resulted in a two-week increase of the parental leave entitlement (from 24 to 26 weeks). The Secretariat stated that those two additional weeks had been granted with retroactive effect to staff members who gave birth on or after August 1, 2023.

44. The Delegation of the Republic of Moldova, speaking on behalf of the CEBS Group, thanked the Secretariat for presenting the proposals for the Amendments of the Staff Regulations and Rules as contained in document WO/CC/83/1. The CEBS Group conveyed its agreement with the purpose of the regular review of Staff Regulations and Rules that would allow WIPO to maintain a sound regulatory framework that adapted swiftly to, and supported the changing needs and priorities of, the Organization, while ensuring alignment with best practices in the UN Common System. The Delegation stated that while the CEBS Group was ready to support the proposed changes, it expressed its view with regard to the amendment in Article 4.17(d), which sought greater flexibility by allowing the Director General to take a decision on a one-time extension of a limited duration fixed-term appointment beyond its overall term. It emphasized the necessity for such flexibility to be applied in single, exceptional situations only, justified by reasons, to ensure the effective operations of the Organization. In that context, the CEBS Group kindly requested the Secretariat to monitor the application of that modification and reflect such extensions in the future reports on human resources.

45. The Delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, speaking on behalf of Group B, thanked the Director General for preparing document WO/CC/83/1 and took note of the proposed amendments. Group B believed that those amendments were generally in line with sound and modern employment practices, and it appreciated, in particular, the update to Regulation 9.7 being benchmarked with the UN system practices at the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Furthermore, Group B took note that timely

dismissal for misconduct was key to demonstrating the value WIPO placed on the integrity of its personnel. Regarding the proposed amendments to Regulation 4.17, it understood that some specific tasks may only warrant temporary assignments, thus enabling the Secretariat to apply flexible workforce planning to take account of changing needs. From this perspective, it welcomed the proposed one-time extension of fixed-term appointments for an overall term of limited duration. At the same time, Group B believed that WIPO needed to remain an attractive employer, retaining technical expertise, attracting qualified talents, therefore, in principle, permanent contracts should be concluded. It added that this aim should not be undermined by short-term appointments being prolonged into long-term appointments, and thus, the maximum extension period should be regulated, for example, through an extension by the maximum time for which the original contract was designed. Group B also suggested to carry out an evaluation of how often and for what reasons such an extension had been granted by the Director General as an exception. It would continue to follow with great interest how HRMD implemented an appropriate balance between flexible workforce planning, retention and attraction of expertise. Group B reiterated its thanks to the Director General for having given the opportunity to review the document and approve the amendments to Staff Regulations contained therein.

46. The Delegation of China thanked the Director General for the proposed amendments and took note of the proposed amendment on limited duration fixed-term appointments in the Staff Regulations, in order to avoid significant business disruption, for a one-time extension subject to the Director General's approval. The Delegation requested the Secretariat to provide an overview of the limited duration fixed-term positions, including the numbers, sector and grade of those positions. Furthermore, it wished to be informed whether the Secretariat had assessed the overall situation of that provision since it came into force in 2021, in particular regarding the potential significant business disruption referred to in the proposed amendment. The Delegation requested the Secretariat to share more details about the considerations behind that proposed amendment.

47. The Delegation of the Russian Federation thanked the Secretariat for presenting the Amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules and stated that it shared the Secretariat's desire to implement the recommendations and decisions of the ICSC that were approved by the UN General Assembly. However, regarding the amendments to the Staff Rules on parental leave, the Delegation expressed its regret that, in seeking a path to implement the relevant decision of the ICSC, the Secretariat had turned to gender neutral terminology which flew in the face of common sense. The Delegation stated that a parent who gave birth was called "a mother" in all languages of the world, at least hitherto in science, and anthropology, genetics, anatomy, and linguistics had not proven otherwise. Similar discussions had been held in March 2024 at the Fifth Committee of the UN General Assembly, when Member States took a decision by consensus to delete from the Staff Regulations and Rules of the UN Secretariat the provisional gender-neutral amendment as regards the parent who gave birth. Member States at the WHO also did the same that year. There was no reference to the term "parent who gives birth" in the relevant decision of the ICSC. On the contrary, the 2022 report of the ICSC, paragraph 92, which contained the decision on introducing single parental leave, used the expression "birth mother". In that regard, the Delegation called on the WIPO Secretariat to review its decision and not use the wording "parent who gives birth," especially as deleting that term and replacing it with "birth mother" kept the meaning behind the proposed amendments. The text in English would read as follows: "An additional period of 10 weeks of prenatal and postnatal leave with full pay for the birth mother bringing the total duration of their parental leave to 26 weeks." The Delegation understood the specific nature of the Staff Rules, and that they were not approved by Member States, but the matter raised had a direct impact on the entire Organization and went beyond the issue of staff management. For that reason, the Delegation proposed for consideration by the WIPO Coordination Committee the following amendment to the draft decision: "The WIPO Coordination Committee invites the Director General to review the rules governing parental leave to ensure full compliance with the relevant decisions of the International Civil Service Commission."



48. The Delegation of Algeria, speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, thanked the Director General for document WO/CC/83/1, which contained the Amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules, and the Secretariat for all of its efforts to constantly revise the Regulations and Rules so as to enable the Organization to have a regulatory framework that corresponded to the needs and priorities of the Organization, whilst respecting the best practices that were implemented by the ICSC. The Delegation approved the proposed amendments to the Staff Regulations and took note of the amendments to the Staff Rules that were being submitted to Member States for notification and that entered into force as of May 2024. It commented on Annex 2, paragraph 14, with respect to staff members that had given birth, which did not represent a change, because those staff members had already benefitted from 16 weeks of parental leave since June 2021. In that regard, the Delegation sought clarification from the Secretariat particularly for the term “parents who had not given birth”.

49. The Delegation of Germany thanked the Director General for preparing the document on Amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules and the Secretariat for its presentation. It appreciated that the Staff Regulations and Rules were updated regularly. The Delegation reiterated that, in principle, WIPO should aim at concluding permanent contracts, whilst acknowledging the need to conclude fixed-term contracts of limited duration insofar as it was necessary to fill posts for temporary projects. It welcomed the change in the Staff Regulations that allowed for a one-time extension of a fixed-term contract of limited duration if it was needed to complete the corresponding project. As that change entailed a new practice within WIPO, the Delegation stated that it would welcome an evaluation to be carried out on how often and for what reasons such an extension had been granted as an exception by the Director General.

50. The Delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, speaking on behalf of Group B, stated that it was not in a position to support the amendment to the Staff Rules that had just been proposed by the Delegation of the Russian Federation. The revisions to Staff Rules were not presented to the WIPO Coordination Committee for approval or adoption, but to take note of those changes to the Rules. Group B also mentioned that those amendments to the Staff Rules were consistent with UN practice and had already been implemented, and thus Member States were not in a position to negotiate or revise the Staff Rules.

51. The Delegation of France said that it aligned itself with the statement made by the Delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on behalf of Group B and called upon the Member States, who requested the replacement of the term “parents giving birth” by “birth mother”, to focus more attentively on the status and staff regulations of the UN, in particular paragraphs 1 and 8. The issue resulted from the modification of the parental leave entitlement following resolution 77/256 of the UN General Assembly, which was designed to replace the provisions pertaining to maternity and paternity leave and adoptions already in force and that those amendments took place in 2023. WIPO being a UN organization, the Delegation found it normal that WIPO aligned its Regulations and Rules with those of the UN. Therefore, the Delegation commended the Secretariat for the amendments that had been introduced and stated that it was pleased with them. It believed that that language was already agreed upon and should not be further debated, because it opposed the freedom of choice therefore, the Delegation was in favor of the term “parents who give birth”. It concluded by stating that individuals could be parents in different ways, in particular through adoption.

52. The Delegation of the United States of America said that it aligned itself with the statements delivered by the Delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on behalf of Group B and thanked the Secretariat for those amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules. The Delegation expressed its appreciation to WIPO for its continued efforts to align with the UN system's best practices, including those that related to the Organization's most prized resource, its personnel. In particular, it viewed WIPO's alignment with the ICSC decision on parental leave as another important step in affirming the ICSC's authority and responsibility. The



Delegation noted the Secretariat's timely action in response to the statement made by the WIPO Staff Council at the July 2023 WIPO Coordination Committee session which called for this update. The Delegation further noted that the information provided in document WO/CC/83/1 regarding updates to WIPO's Staff Rules was for notification only, adding that it was well within the Secretariat's mandate and had indeed already been implemented, reflecting WIPO's commitment to adhering to the UN common system benchmarks set by the ICSC. The Delegation recalled that WIPO's history of updating its parental leave policies had been uncontroversial while concurrently being characterized by movement in the direction of equity and standardization. Indeed, the last updates to WIPO's parental leave policies in 2021, increased paternity leave and extended that entitlement to fellows. The Delegation expressed its strong support to the Secretariat's efforts to ensure that its parental leave policy covered all parental leave; maternity, paternity, adoption, surrogacy, enabling WIPO to remain an attractive and competitive employer in the UN system.

53. The Delegation of the Russian Federation wished to provide some clarification to its proposal stating that the proposed modification to the decision on the amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules did not presume a reference to the Director General or to the Secretariat to replace the language in the actual Staff Rules. It added that it was fully aware of the situation and for that reason it considered that its language was quite flexible, but nevertheless it was quite important because it allowed Member States to reflect on the main disagreement of the approach of the Secretariat when it came to implementing the decision of the ICSC. With respect to the statement made by the Delegation of France on the UN General Assembly resolutions 78/200 and 78/275. Paragraph 4 of that latter resolution provided a reference to the UN Secretariat to remove the provisional staff rule that had been used in the UN as well as paragraph 6.3, which talked about "parents who gave birth." That paragraph had been removed by consensus since April 2024 based on a decision of the UN General Assembly, and a similar process took place at the WHO at the beginning of that year. The Delegation did not really understand what best practices within the UN system Member States were referring to on parental leave and, in particular, in gender neutral terms, which did not benefit from consensus within organizations, and thus, could not be considered best practice.

54. The Delegation of Canada expressed its support to the statement made by the Delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on behalf of Group B, as well as the statements of the Delegations of France and the United States of America. The Delegation welcomed the Secretariat's efforts to align its parental leave entitlements with UN common system practices. It also expressed its appreciation to the Secretariat for the clarifications received on the steps it had taken to ensure that the conditions and procedures that govern parental leave were inclusive and reflective of best practices.

55. As there were no other delegations requesting the floor, the Chair then proposed to the Secretariat to respond to the points raised by the delegations.

56. With respect to fixed-term limited-term appointments, the Secretariat recalled that this modality was introduced in November 2021 to increase its ability to source and hire talent with the most up-to-date and relevant skills while managing career expectations of newcomers and facilitating internal mobility. To date, 60 staff members held fixed-term limited-term appointments and the use of those fixed-term appointments with an overall term limit was closely monitored to assess the benefits for the Organization. So far, business teams had used this contractual modality in a balanced manner, combining it with fixed-term and temporary appointments or other contracts, ensuring a mix of longer-term institutional knowledge and business acumen as well as the latest relevant skills based on evolving business needs. It had taken note of the numerous requests for it to closely monitor and report on the use of that exception for a one-time extension and sought to clarify that the earliest possibility of that occurring would not be until two years' time when the first fixed-term limited-term contracts would expire. It was a proactive and a preventive type of approach in managing the workforce

and ensuring business continuity. With respect to comments on the importance of the stability of contracts, the Secretariat reassured Member States that WIPO, contrary to several UN agencies, continued to grant continuing contracts, adding that the Director General had recently validated quite a large number. The Secretariat reiterated that its approach was a cautious balance of evaluating where the core workforce was required and ensuring that it was stabilized, but at the same time using a flexible approach where needed to address specific needs or specific skills needs that were of a limited duration or quickly evolving in the current environment. The Secretariat also confirmed that it would continue to learn from the experience through consultations with the sectors and adjust as needed. On parental leave, the Secretariat noted that there was no disagreement by Member States on the implementation of that new additional entitlement, but on the use of the term “parent who gave birth”. It clarified that the term had been used because it was less stigmatizing for women who could not bear a child, and because the term “birth mother” usually had a different meaning than the term used in the ICSC report. The Secretariat added that it normally referred to a woman who gave birth but relinquished the child for adoption, which was not the case in that context of parental leave. At that stage, the Organization was aligned with the wording used by the ILO, the UN and the UN funds and programs in their respective staff regulations and rules. Moreover, based on recent consultations, the Secretariat was given to understand that the term “parent who gives birth” would not be changed to “birth mother” in the UN Staff Regulations and Rules since the UN General Assembly’s decision contained in resolution 78/275 applied to the amendments aimed at introducing gender inclusive language and not to the staff rule on parental leave.

57. The Chair thanked the Secretariat for its clarifications on the points raised by delegations on the amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules and opened the floor to delegations for any additional comments.

58. The Delegation of the Russian Federation stated that, in its opinion, it was not the role of the Secretariat to interpret the decisions of the ICSC or the resolutions of the UN General Assembly, which in the Delegation’s view were very clear and easy to understand. It noted that the only organization that had used this particular term of “parent who gives birth” was the ILO, and one organization using this term did not constitute a best practice in the UN system. Regarding the issue of interpretation, the language in the ICSC report was also very clear and easy to understand, and while taking into account the concerns raised, it understood the concerns of the Secretariat and other organizations, which could find some kind of path to approve the amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules by consensus. The Delegation insisted on its proposed draft decision being considered by the WIPO Coordination Committee.

59. The Delegation of China expressed its appreciation to the Secretariat for the clarifications provided and wished to make a couple of points. With respect to fixed-term limited-term appointments, the Delegation stated that there seemed to be a discrepancy between the Secretariat’s explanation according to which that modality had been introduced to increase mobility internally, and the proposed amendment to grant a one-time exceptional extension, which was to avoid significant business disruption. Referring to the Secretariat’s statement that it would closely monitor and report on the use of that exception for a one-time extension, the Delegation requested clarification on whether the Secretariat had undertaken an overview of the situation, how the amendment would be applied and the format of the evaluation. It added that such an important amendment to the Staff Regulations and Rules had a bearing on the welfare of the staff and contemplated whether its implementation should be carried out after the evaluation so that the various parties could be assured that the goals would be handled in a balanced manner. In other words, the Delegation believed that the proposed amendment should be introduced once the evaluation had been carried out.

60. As there were no further requests for the floor, the Chair requested the Secretariat to respond to the points raised by the delegations.

61. In response to the comment on the potential discrepancy between the two goals of a fixed-term limited duration appointment and internal mobility, the Secretariat clarified that it was using those openings as a way for mobility, as fixed-term limited-term positions were open to internal staff members, and if they already held, for example, a continuing contract, the limited-term would not apply to them. Therefore, that modality actually created opportunities. At the same time, some of those fixed-term limited-term roles were filled by external candidates, and it was the reason behind the proposed amendment, which focused on potential business continuity issues. With respect to the point on evaluation, the Secretariat stressed its importance, and as mentioned by some delegations, it stated that it was more in terms of when it would exercise that exception, the reasons behind such a use and if there are any specific underlying patterns. That evaluation could only happen when that exception would start to be used, which would not be in the immediate future. One of the reasons the Secretariat introduced the fixed-term limited-term positions, contrary to other organizations, was that WIPO had a limited number of project posts, as those posts were determined by the funding approved in the context of the Capital Master Plan (CMP). Hence, the duration of a project post, which was normally for five years, was very much determined by the funding, but were occasionally extended beyond the five years for business continuity reasons. The Secretariat applied similar reasoning for the fixed-term limited-term positions funded by the regular budget, thus giving itself the opportunity to have that comparable flexibility in the way it was being used for project posts currently. With regards to the interpretation of the ICSC and the UN General Assembly decisions, the Secretariat stated that it was its duty to look at those decisions and consider them within its existing legal framework. Furthermore, with respect to the specific point about the changes and the use of specific terms, the Secretariat noted that that there had been no change in the wording of the Staff Regulations and Rules of the UN and UN funds and programs at that stage. The use of the term was aligned with the wording used by the ILO, and the Secretariat tends to turn to the ILO as a reference for those matters because it was closely related to the ILO's mandate on labor practices.

62. The Delegation of Egypt said that it aligned itself with the statement delivered by the Delegation of Algeria on behalf of the Group of Arab States and thanked the Secretariat for having presented document WO/CC/83/1. It expressed its appreciation for the Secretariat's efforts in reviewing the Staff Regulations and Rules enabling it to maintain a sound organizational framework that could adapt to the needs and the priorities of the Organization while ensuring consistency with best practices in the UN system. The Delegation took note of the amendments to the Staff Rules presented for information and commended the Secretariat for replacing maternity, paternity and adoption leave by a single Rule on parental leave. However, the Delegation also wished to outline that the use of the term "parents giving birth" was vague and not commonly agreed upon within the UN system and was not consistent with the ICSC decision. Due to that vagueness, the Arabic version of the document under discussion had used the term "staff who become mothers and fathers without giving birth" adding that it went against gender and biological principles. The Delegation understood that those amendments to the Staff Rules were for information, but it believed that the issue of parental leave could be crafted in a better way to reflect consistency with language used in the UN system.

63. The Chair thanked the delegations, and as there were no further requests for the floor, the Chair stated that the sub-item be kept open to give delegations time to consider the proposal of the Delegation of the Russian Federation, which would be taken up at the end of the session.

64. Reverting to Agenda Item 20, the Chair recalled that discussions on this item had been suspended for informal consultations between delegations. The Chair was pleased to announce that, following those consultations with respect to the proposal language made by the Delegation of the Russian Federation, the WIPO Coordination Committee had reached

consensus. The Chair noted that there were no objections from delegations with respect to the revised proposed decision paragraph shown on the screen, she proceeded with the adoption of the decision.

65. The WIPO Coordination Committee:

(i) approved the amendments to the Staff Regulations as provided in Annex I, document WO/CC/83/1; and

(ii) requested the Secretariat to prepare a report on the implementation of Staff Regulation 4.17(d) for consideration by the Coordination Committee at its 2028 ordinary session.

66. The Secretariat wished to provide some clarifications to Member States in light of the earlier discussions during the session, and, in particular, upon careful review of all the interventions made by the WIPO Coordination Committee members, including the observations of the Delegation of the Russian Federation regarding the amendments to the Staff Rules, as provided in document WO/CC/83/1, Annex II. The Secretariat reiterated that, as noted explicitly in the document, the amendments to the Staff Rules had been implemented as part of the ongoing review of the Staff Regulations and Rules, which allowed WIPO to maintain a sound regulatory framework that adapted swiftly to, and supported, the changing needs and priorities of the Organization, while – importantly – “ensuring alignment with best practices in the UN common system”. With respect to the rules governing parental leave, the Secretariat assured delegations that the Director General, in the exercise of his functions and authority under the WIPO Convention as Chief Executive of the Organization, would ensure that such rules remained at all times in compliance with that goal. To that end, the Secretariat would continue the above-mentioned ongoing review process so that the rules were not only consistent with developments in that regard across the UN system, as recommended by the ICSC, but also served their ultimate objective, which was, indeed, for “those staff members who became parents,” with or without giving birth, to receive the parental leave entitlement necessary to care for their family and meet their specific needs.

67. The Chair thanked the Secretariat for its remarks and conveyed her appreciation to the delegations for their active engagement and consensus with respect to the important items discussed by the WIPO Coordination Committee.

[Annex<sup>1</sup> follows]

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<sup>1</sup> It is customary practice that the Chair invites a representative of the WIPO Staff Council to address members of the WIPO Coordination Committee after the conclusion of its agenda to provide the perspectives of staff. The Chair informed that she would follow the established precedent with the agreement of the Member States, on the basis of which she proceeded. The statement of the representative of the Staff Council is annexed to this report.

**Statement by the WIPO Staff Council to the Coordination Committee of Member States of the World Intellectual Property Organization**  
**July 16, 2024, Geneva**

Excellencies,  
Madame Chair,  
Director General,  
Delegates and  
Dear WIPO Colleagues,

It is a great honor to be offered the floor today on behalf of the esteemed WIPO staff.

First of all, the WIPO Staff Council would like to express its sincere appreciation for the fruitful collaboration and active engagement with the WIPO Administration.

The new team of WIPO Staff Council was elected in May 2024 and will be here to serve WIPO staff's interests for the coming three years, prioritizing employee well-being and career aspirations. The WIPO Staff Council, as the representative body of the workforce, plays a vital role in facilitating dialogue, gathering feedback, and ensuring that the concerns and ideas of colleagues are voiced and addressed.

The welfare of WIPO's committed employees remains a top priority, as it forms the bedrock of our operational effectiveness and the organization's overall achievement.

We intend to continue working closely with the Administration to identify and implement measures that address the specific challenges and concerns of all WIPO staff. This partnership can help ensure that the needs, rights, and interests of employees are respected, represented and addressed in decision-making processes. By implementing this strategy, we strive to create a supportive and positive work environment that fosters staff well-being and contributes to the overall success of our organization.

The WIPO Staff Council acknowledges the complexities of the current global landscape, including the growing uncertainties surrounding digitalization, automation, workforce diversity, and inclusion. We recognize that these issues are interconnected and require thoughtful consideration and strategic planning. In the context of digitalization and automation, we understand that these trends are reshaping the nature of work and the skills required for the future: we are ready to further support this transformative change, as long as the staff wellbeing is not affected and remains a priority.

The results of the 2024 employee engagement survey highlighted the challenges faced by WIPO staff and the need to work on the following themes: the Speak up Culture, the Sense of Belonging and Staff Wellbeing.

We note with concern that the need to achieve more with fewer resources is leading to increased workloads and prolonged working hours in a demanding and unpredictable setting. WIPO staff are exerting their utmost efforts to support WIPO Administration and the member states amidst a growing workload, and this commitment comes at the price: the staff wellbeing and mental health.

We appreciate WIPO's Administration commitment to addressing the critical areas highlighted in the survey and their dedication to improving staff well-being. It is crucial to create an environment where employees feel valued, supported, and recognized, as this can lead to increased job satisfaction, productivity, and overall happiness.

To foster such an environment, it is important to ensure the following key elements:

1. Open communication: The WIPO Staff Council supports an open and honest communication between the Administration and WIPO staff. This can be achieved through regular meetings, town halls, or an open-door policy. This will allow employees to voice their concerns and suggestions, making them feel heard and valued.
2. Staff Career aspirations, promotions, and professional development: WIPO Staff Council values the importance of promoting diversity and gender equity. Equally, the Staff Council firmly believes that staff expectations and aspirations for growth and advancement in their career, including promotions, are legitimately high. We want to strongly emphasize that advocating for geographical and gender diversity should never come at the expense of fair internal promotions. In fact, these two aspects can coexist harmoniously, as promoting internal candidates to other positions will impact the geographical and gender diversity among senior positions and will vacate other positions, therefore ensuring a continuous cycle of diverse recruitment. When employees feel valued and see a clear path for advancement, they are more likely to be committed to their work and to the Organization. This can lead to increased productivity, improved engagement, and a more skilled workforce. Recognizing and rewarding excellent work and increased responsibilities is a key part of this process. The WIPO Staff Council believes that there should be an open and honest communication about career development opportunities and expectations. All staff should have access to learning and growth prospects through training opportunities and development program.
3. Sustainable contractual Status for staff: The WIPO Staff Council would like to extend its great appreciation to the Administration for the recent decision to convert a large number of fixed term appointments to continuing ones following structural reviews. The previous WIPO Staff Council has been regularly following up with HR stressing the importance of implementing a clear and consistent framework for this process and ensuring that the conversions are carried out in a fair and transparent manner. This decision will undoubtedly contribute to building trust, reducing anxiety and stress, and maintaining a positive work environment for all staff. The WIPO Staff Council is also closely monitoring the use of Fixed Term Limited Term Contracts which carry a maximum duration of 5 years. It is very important to ensure that the unique value of WIPO staff and their institutional knowledge, is not compromised. Greater transparency about which posts are subject to FTLT contracts can alleviate concerns and ensure that the use of these contracts is in line with the Organization's goals and values. This could involve clear communications about reasons for using FTLT contracts and regular review of their use to ensure they are being applied appropriately. In conclusion, while FTLT contracts can be a useful tool in limited circumstances, it is important to ensure they are used judiciously and with transparency, to preserve the institutional knowledge in a specialized UN Agency.

The WIPO Staff Council is dedicated to continuing its efforts for the benefit of all staff members, devoting our time and energy to addressing staff concerns with the utmost respect for the immense responsibility bestowed upon us. We will remain committed in our pursuit of advocating for staff career aspirations and professional growth. We will consistently request the standardization of contract modalities with a unified approach and clear criteria. We will tirelessly endeavor to ensure that a fair and equitable working environment and the well-being of staff remain the foremost priority for all stakeholders. Our commitment extends to preserving WIPO's standing as the "preferred" Organization for attracting and recruiting top talent, while simultaneously promoting and supporting the career development of our dedicated and qualified staff.

We thank for your attention and count on your continued support to always keep the staff at the forefront of your consideration. Our staff members are the most valuable asset of this Organization, and their well-being and professional growth are paramount to our collective success.

[End of Annex and of document]