

Twenty-fifth meeting of the Council
Abu Dhabi, 23-24 May 2023

Report of the Director-General Human Resources Management and Trends

I. Background

1. This report provides an update of Human Resources (HR) trends as requested by the Council at its twenty-fourth meeting (C/24/SR/1, paragraph 163) and outlines Human Resource Management issues that are related to the current trends and have the potential to position IRENA as an employer of choice.
2. The document highlights key HR initiatives which the Agency has been pursuing to improve effectiveness and efficiency of HR services going forward. These Human Resources initiatives and activities are further elaborated in the report.

II. Human Resources Initiatives

A. Talent Management

3. The Agency conducted two job classification reviews in 2019 and 2021 undertaken by two different job evaluation experts. Given that the recommendations in both studies largely match for 92% of grade levels, it was determined that the remaining posts, where the experts arrived at divergent results, would benefit from a more rigorous assessment. To this end, the Agency is currently in the process of engaging a consulting firm to evaluate selected posts thus bringing the project to completion. Upon completion of this final step, draft implementation plans will be prepared taking into account budgetary realities.
4. At present, the Agency is in the process of establishing generic rosters by grade for certain job profiles in IRENA Divisions. For roster management to meaningfully support the Agency's talent acquisition strategy, job profiles must be generic across several IRENA Divisions. The Human Resources Office is working with IRENA Divisions to develop such profiles. Once finalised, these profiles will provide a basis for setting talent pipelines to ensure efficient and timely hiring outcomes in key Agency functions. This change is in preparation for increased turnover and recruitment activity described in the next paragraph.
5. Starting in 2024, staff departures due to tenure (9 and 13-year tenure) will start accelerating with 24 departures expected in addition to normal turnover for the period 2024-2026. This will include senior posts with two D-1 Director-level posts in 2024, five P-5 posts in 2025 and three P-5 posts in 2026. Given that there is no guarantee that these 24 staff will complete the full period of tenure, the Agency will contact recruiting Agencies for assistance with the expected increase in turnover.

6. The Agency in its efforts to improve retention is looking to provide cost-efficient and impactful learning programmes to address specific staff development needs. At the moment, the Agency has embarked on a pilot initiative with Coursera.org, an online training platform offering a wide range of cost-effective learning opportunities. The Human Resources Office will provide interested staff with Coursera licences to pursue training courses relevant to their field of work and assess their utility upon completion. This will help better tailor future training programmes to the needs of the Agency. This initiative will complement courses already offered to staff through linkedin.com in areas such as Financial Management, MS Excel and SQL Essential Training, Digital Transformation, Database Programming and Project Management.
7. In tandem with online learning initiatives, the Agency also is planning to organise a training refresher for managers which will focus on leadership, performance management, communication, competency-based interviewing, and related aspects. To this end, qualified trainers will be engaged to deliver onsite management training to relevant staff in Abu Dhabi and Bonn. This will be a logical extension of the training on performance management delivered to Agency's staff during the pre-pandemic period. The purpose of such training programmes is to help relevant staff deepen their managerial and leadership skills which will unleash creative potential and generate cohesion and cross-functional synergies across IRENA Divisions. Several providers have already been contacted to determine their availability with a view to offering courses starting in the fall of 2023.
8. In early 2020, IRENA launched an ERP-based performance appraisal process (e-PAR) across the Agency. This was followed by a practical training programme to all Agency staff which was also repeated in early 2022 given further modifications made to the system. The e-PAR process has now been duly institutionalised and all teams in the three Agency locations (Abu Dhabi, Bonn, and New York) follow its timeline and key milestones.
9. Another major initiative the Agency has embarked on in 2023 is the succession planning given the current tenure policy and related planned staff departures. The succession plan will guide appropriate human resource actions for essential Agency positions in managerial and professional roles. At present, the Agency is in the process of recruiting for three director posts, of which one (Director, IITC) is in the final stage of the selection process and two others are planned to be advertised in May 2023. The succession plan envisages that posts at D1 and P5 levels will be advertised 12 months prior to the departure of their incumbents, whereas posts at P4 and below levels will be advertised 9 months prior to the departure of relevant staff. This approach is intended to ensure smooth transition and continuity in senior and middle management roles going forward.

B. Enabling Work Environment

10. Effective 8 March 2023, the Agency adopted Teleworking and Telecommuting Arrangements for 2023. Teleworking and Telecommuting Arrangements are intended to enable staff to improve work-life balance while ensuring the effective and efficient delivery of IRENA's mandate. The arrangements are applicable to all IRENA staff and other personnel, including Associate Professionals, Service Contractors, Loaned Officers, Interns and Consultants engaged on a monthly basis assigned to any of the IRENA duty stations. Staff may be authorised to telework or telecommute for up to 20 days during 2023 within and outside the duty station, provided that they have access to the necessary ICT equipment, information, materials, and facilities and can be reached without difficulty by telephone and e-mail, including for any conference calls and meetings. In addition to

the authorised Teleworking and Telecommuting days, staff in agreement with their line managers may be allowed to telework on Fridays subject to work priorities and on a rotational basis. These arrangements are not a leave entitlement and unused teleworking and telecommuting days during a calendar year cannot be carried forward to the next calendar year. Teleworking and Telecommuting Arrangements are in line with Agency efforts to create a more supportive and flexible work environment. The Agency will monitor and periodically evaluate the application of such arrangements throughout the year with a view to developing a comprehensive policy on flexible working arrangements that support its mandate and enhance the employee value proposition.

11. The Council, at its twenty-fourth meeting requested the Secretariat to provide further information and analysis on shifting to the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF) and to the Inter-Organization Agreement concerning Transfer, Secondment or Loan of Staff among the Organizations applying the UN Common System of Salaries and Allowances (IOA) initiative to the Council at its twenty-fifth meeting. The Agency engaged an independent expert to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the financial, human resources (HR) and policy implications of joining these initiatives and prepare a technical paper outlining key findings and recommendations in this regard. The technical paper prepared by the independent expert includes, inter alia, the costs and benefits as well as opportunities and risks of joining the UNJSPF and IOA from the point of view of IRENA, as an independent intergovernmental agency. The expert performed the project during the period from 1 March 2023 to 15 April 2023 and produced a detailed report outlining these issues and providing relevant analytics, information, and recommendations for consideration by IRENA and its Membership
12. At the twenty-fourth meeting of the Council, delegations underlined the importance of staff retention and decreasing staff turnover rate, and a number of delegations requested the Secretariat to provide Human Resources trends related to retention, turnover rate, and years of service as standard reporting at the Council meetings. There was also a call for an independent Human Resources audit to review and understand the reasons for the current staff turnover rate.
13. As a follow-up to the call for an independent Human Resources audit to review and understand the reasons for the current staff turnover rate the Agency issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) and conducted a competitive evaluation and selection of the best value proposal in February – March 2023. As a result, the contract was awarded to KPMG who commenced the project in mid-April 2023.

The key objectives of the project are:

- 1) Conduct a comprehensive review of HR data/analytics submitted by the Agency to the Governing Bodies (IRENA Council/Assembly).
- 2) Make an assessment of the current staff turnover rates and staff retention trends in IRENA (with differentiation of its Abu Dhabi and Bonn offices); determine the root causes and ways to address them.
- 3) Prepare a report with recommendations on specific improvements/enhancements in HR reporting and HR policies for consideration by IRENA and its Membership.

The project is planned to take six weeks to complete and a full report by KPMG experts detailing the results of the assessment will be shared with Members at the twenty-sixth meeting of the Council. On the basis of the findings and recommendations of the review,

the Agency will develop an action plan to comprehensively address staff retention challenges and implement improvements in HR reporting to IRENA Governing Bodies going forward.

III. IRENA Human Resources Trends

Summary of HR Trends

14. At present, the HR trends report covers Professional (P) and Above and General Service (GS) staff on fixed-term appointments funded under regular (core) and project (non-core) budget, and includes the following information: current staffing profile (core and non-core posts); evolution of the number of staff positions and organizational annual growth; staff turnover trend, staff vacancy rates history, average length of service of separated and existing staff and projections of Professional and Above positions impacted by the tenure limits. The average vacancy rate (VR) for Professional(P) and Above staff during 2012-2022 was 19% while for GS staff it was 13%. In 2022, the VR peaked at 24% for P staff and 26% for GS staff.

Human Resources Trends Tables I-A through I-D

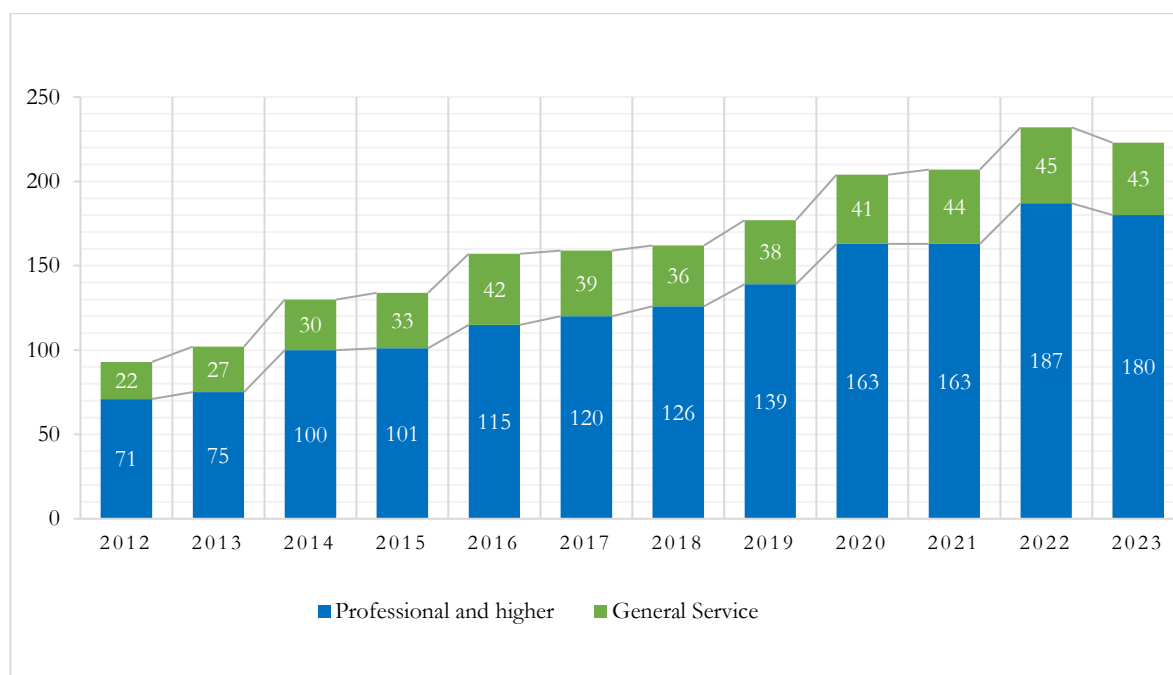
15. As of 31 March 2023 217, out of the 223 core and project staff positions are encumbered or under recruitment (I-A).
 16. Annual Growth Rate (I-A-3):
A steady upward trend has been shown in the number of staff positions since 2012. Compared to 2012, the Agency expanded by 140% with a total number of 223 posts. The Agency has grown at a 9.7% average annual rate during the period 2012-2022.
 17. Staff Turnover Rate (I-B):
The average turnover rate previously reported by the Agency over the past 12 years was approximately 16% annually.
After an increase to 23% in 2016, the overall turnover has decreased to 15%-16% in the subsequent period.
Except for one staff previously at ASG level, all separated staff left the Agency before reaching the maximum tenure period.
As of 31 March 2023, 7 staff members separated from the Agency in the year of 2023.
 18. Staff Vacancy Rate (I-C):
A steady upward trend has been shown in staff position vacancy rates, from 11% in 2019 to 24% 2022. The vacancy rates comprise the nexus of staff turnover and new job vacancies; the ascending trend in vacancy rates begins in 2018 and peaks in 2022 (24%), denoting the challenges in staff retention.
- f) Average Length of Service (I-D)
The average length of service of current (180) staff is 4.4 years. The average length of service of separated (228) staff, however, is 2.7 years.

I-A. Current Staffing

I-A-1. Filled/under recruitment core and project posts by level as of 31 March 2023

Level	Filled or Under Recruitment	Total
ASG	1	1
D-2	1	1
D-1	7	7
P-5	22	23
P-3/4	80	81
P-2/1	67	67
Sub-total Professional and above	178	180
General Services	39	43
Total	217	223

I-A-2. Evolution of the number of staff positions from 2012 to 31 March 2023

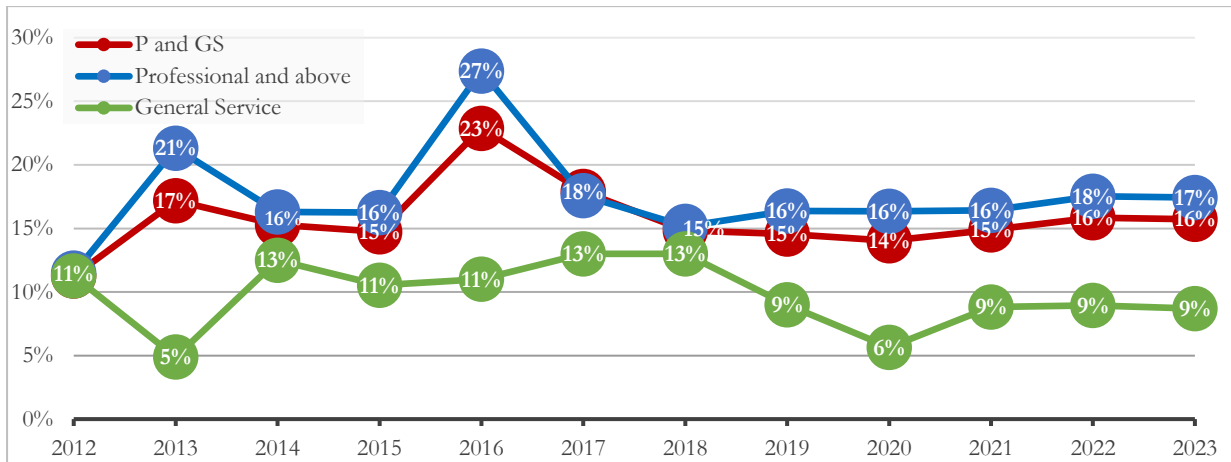


I-A-3. Evolution of the organizational annual growth¹ from 2013 to 31 March 2023

Year	P and GS	Professional and above	General Service
2013	10%	6%	23%
2014	27%	33%	11%
2015	3%	1%	10%
2016	17%	14%	27%
2017	1%	4%	-7%
2018	2%	5%	-8%
2019	9%	10%	6%
2020	15%	17%	8%
2021	1%	0%	7%
2022	12%	15%	2%
2023	-4%	-4%	-4%
Average Growth Rate	10%	11%	9%

I-B. Staff Turnover² from 2012 to 31 March 2023

I-B-1. Evolution of Staff Turnover³ from 2012 to 31 March 2023



¹ Average annual growth rate is calculated for the period 2012-2022. Data for 2023 (-4%) covers only the first quarter of 2023 and therefore is excluded from the calculation of average annual growth rate.

² Turnover rate: the number of staff separations in one year divided by the average number of active staff during the same period, multiplied by 100.

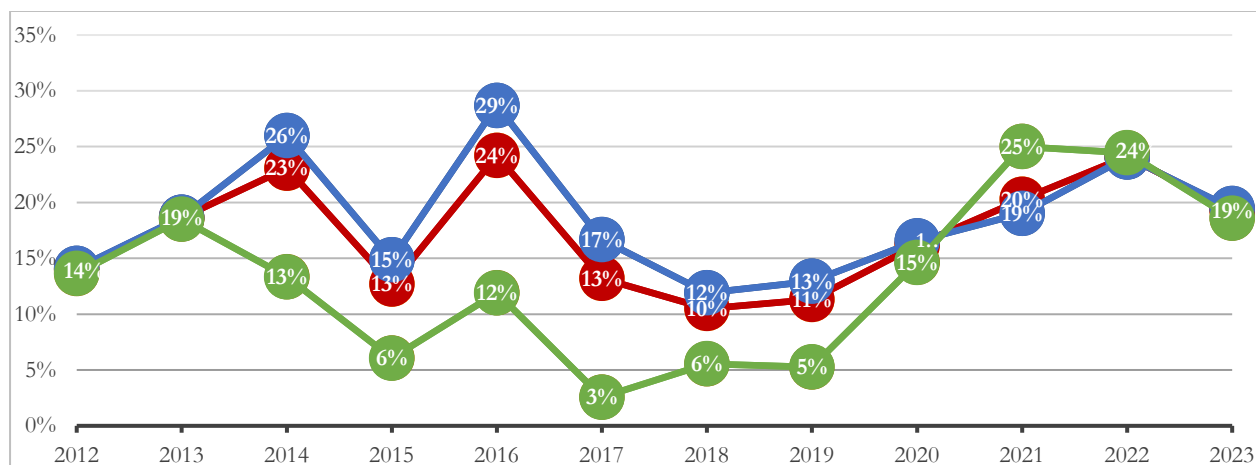
³ The staff turnover rate for 2023 is calculated based on data till 31 Mar 2023 (7 staff have been separated from service from 1 January to 31 March 2023, the first quarter). While the actual number of separated staff (7) is provided in table I-B-2, graph I-B-1 shows as annualized staff turnover (%) rate for 2023 to ensure that the trend line presents a year-to-year comparison. The annualized rate for 2023, therefore, is based on the projection that separated staff throughout 2023 will include: Professional and Above staff – 25 and General Service staff – 3 (i.e., a total of 28 P & GS staff).

I-B-2. Number of Separated Staff from 2012 to 31 March 2023

Year	P and GS	Professional and above	General Service
2012	9	7	2
2013	14	13	1
2014	14	11	3
2015	16	13	3
2016	27	23	4
2017	23	16	7
2018	21	16	5
2019	22	19	3
2020	23	21	2
2021	25	22	3
2022	27	24	3
2023	7	7	0
Total	228	192	36

I-C. Staff Vacancy⁴ from 2012 to 31 March 2023

I-C-1. Evolution of Staff Vacancy from 2012 to 31 March 2023



⁴ Vacancy rate: the number of vacant staff positions divided by the total number of staff positions, multiplied by 100.

I-C-2. Staff Vacancy Rate from 2012 to 31 March 2023

Year	P and GS	Professional and above	General Service
2012	14%	14%	14%
2013	19%	19%	19%
2014	23%	26%	13%
2015	13%	15%	6%
2016	24%	29%	12%
2017	13%	17%	3%
2018	10%	12%	6%
2019	11%	13%	5%
2020	16%	17%	15%
2021	20%	19%	25%
2022	24%	24%	24%
2023	19%	19%	19%
Average Vacancy Rate	17%	19%	13%

I-D. Average Length of Service

I-D-1. Average Length of Service of Separated Staff

Year	Employee Category	Average Length of Service (Years)
2012 - 2023 (as of 31 Mar 2023)	Professional and above (192 out of 228)	2.7
	General Services (36 out of 228)	2.6
	P and GS (total 228)	2.7

I-D-2. Average Length of Service of Existing Staff

Year	Employee Category	Average Length of Service (Years)
2023 (as of 31 Mar 2023)	Professional and above (145 out of 180)	3.8
	General Services (35 out of 180)	6.6
	P and GS (total 180)	4.4

I-D-3. Professional Positions Impacted by Tenure through 2032

	2024		2025		2026		2027		2028		2029		2030		2031		2032		Incumbents Impacted	Total Posts
	13 years	9 years	13 years	9 years	13 years	9 years	13 years	9 years	13 years	9 years	13 years	9 years	13 years	9 years	13 years	9 years	13 years	9 years		
D1	2						1				1		1				1	6	7	
P5			5			3		1		1	1	2		4		4		21	23	
P4			2			2	2	1	1	3	2		1	2		4		21	34	
P3	2				2	4	1	6		1	2	4		6		9		37	47	
P2	1					1		5	1	4	1	9		5		21		53	61	
P1												2			2		1	5	6	
Total	5		7		2	10	4	13	2	9	6	18	1	18		40	8	143	178	

As of 31 March 2023, the Agency has two groups of Professional and above staff with different tenure limits – 27 staff with the 13-year tenure limit who joined before 15 January 2017 and 116 staff with 9-year tenure limit who joined after 15 January 2017. The table (I-D-3) illustrates the number of Professional and Above staff from each group reaching tenure limits in the subsequent years through 2032.