UNV and the UN Secretariat sign Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen their collaboration

On Tuesday 11 September, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme and the United Nations Secretariat signed a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at strengthening and deepening their collaboration. The purpose of the agreement is to standardize and simplify the process of deploying UN Volunteers to UN Secretariat departments and offices, as well as provide a solid legal basis for doing so.

Under-Secretary-General for Management Ms Jan Beagle signed the agreement with UNV Executive Coordinator Olivier Adam.

This umbrella agreement facilitates the deployment of UN Volunteers to a variety of UN operations that fall under the auspices of the Secretariat and will help to streamline the deployment of UN Volunteers, both in the field and at headquarters locations, as well as the engagement of UN Online
Volunteers.

This new framework document will govern the long-standing partnership between the UN Secretariat and UNV. It replaces all global agreements which different Secretariat offices have in the past concluded with UNV bilaterally, including the 2003 Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and its 2013 Memorandum of Understanding with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

“I am delighted to sign a new, comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding with UNV. With around 6,500 volunteers deployed in the field, UNV provides vital support to UN Peacekeeping, as well as the Global Goals, human rights and UN field support operations. --Ms Jan Beagle, UN Under-Secretary-General for Management

Every year, between 2,000 and 2,500 highly qualified UN Volunteers serve with different UN Secretariat entities across the three pillars of the UN Charter, most importantly in peacekeeping operations.

However, UN Volunteers are also deployed in special political missions, electoral processes, human rights activities with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), humanitarian operations with the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), peacebuilding initiatives with UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), public information with the UN Department for Public Information and UN Information Centres, and the promotion of economic and social development with the Regional Economic Commissions, amongst others.

UN Volunteers make important contributions to UN action across the pillars of the UN – Agenda 2030, peace and security, and human rights, including humanitarian action – with a particular focus on helping to build South-South capacities and on community engagement.

UN Volunteers have served with the UN Secretariat as Air Operations Assistants, Civil Affairs officers, Civil and Environmental Engineers, Gender Officers, GIS Experts, Human Rights and Protection Officers, Information
Technology Technicians, Programme and Project Officers, Public Information and Communications Officers, Staff Counsellors, amongst many other professions, including in peacekeeping operations and in emergencies.

“I am honored to sign a new UN-UNV Memorandum of Understanding to deliver volunteers solutions across the UN Secretariat for Agenda 2030, thus offering more volunteer opportunities for more people to serve the UN mandate. --Mr Olivier Adam, UNV Executive Coordinator

The new MOU applies to all UN Volunteer modalities – including international, national and youth volunteers – regardless of their funding source (which can range from assessed contributions to extra-budgetary resources) or location (UN Volunteers can now also be deployed in headquarters duty stations).

An important innovation is that UN Online Volunteers, a service UNV has been offering since 2000 and which is now extensively used by the Secretariat, has been streamlined in the MOU alongside the on-site UN Volunteers.

Another highlight of the MOU is that all eligibility restrictions for UN Volunteers to take up a staff appointment have been lifted, which not only opens up longer-term career perspectives for the UN Volunteers, but may also help to diversify the UN’s workforce and improve staff gender ratios.

The new umbrella agreement between the UN Secretariat and UNV offers an opportune moment for UN field operations to discuss opportunities for enhanced collaboration and deploy specialized UN Volunteers, including women and youth – particularly in the context of the ongoing 2019 budget formulation processes. Joint Action Plans will be proposed to different Secretariat departments and offices to ensure effective implementation of the MOU and strengthened partnerships.
Sustainable Development Goal: **SDG 10: Reduced inequalities**