

Thriving in Uncertainty

Staying grounded, focused and effective in a changing UN System





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Staying grounded, focused and effective in a changing UN System



Today's presenters



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House Keeping Rules

- You are muted by default. The chat function is disabled.
- If you have any questions, please submit them through **Zoom Q&A button**.
- The session will be **recorded**. The recording and presentation will be available on: [Inter-Agency Career Week 2026 webpage](#)





Due to the large number of participants in this session, we might not be able to respond to all of your questions.

Thank you for your understanding.

The next 50 minutes

We will focus on three practical shifts to help you navigate uncertainty more effectively

01

Understand the reality we are operating in

→ Why uncertainty feels difficult and how it impacts performance

02

Learn four simple tools to regain clarity and focus

→ Stockdale Paradox, Window of Tolerance, Circle of Control, Sailing Boat

03

Apply these tools to your own context

→ Guided reflection to identify your next steps

Outcome: Leave with **clear, practical actions you can apply immediately**

A quick poll

How would you describe your current work environment?



Very stable and
predictable



Some changes,
manageable



Constant change,
hard to keep up



Highly uncertain
and overwhelming

The UN reality

The context we are operating in



What this feels like

Common experiences across colleagues

- Competing priorities from multiple stakeholders
- Lack of clarity on what to prioritize
- Frequent changes in direction
- Increased workload and pressure
- Emotional fatigue from constant adaptation

Why this matters

Impact on individuals and teams

- Reduced focus and productivity
- Slower decision-making
- Increased stress and burnout risk
- Teams becoming reactive rather than strategic

This is a **shared reality across the system**



What this session will do

Today is about practical navigation

You will learn to:

- Stay grounded in uncertainty
- Focus your energy where it matters
- Move from reaction → intentional action
- Support yourself and others

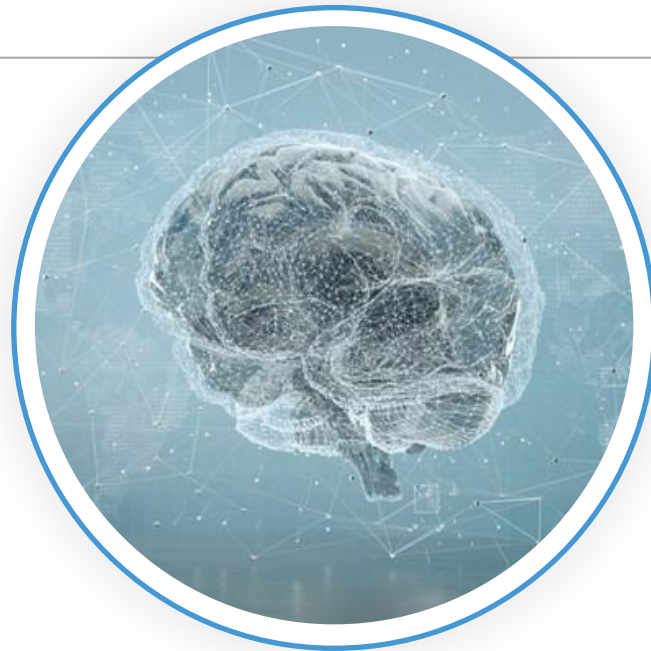


The Human Brain under Uncertainty

Why this feels difficult (and why it's completely normal)

Left:
Your brain expects

- Predictability
- Stability
- Clear direction



Right:
Your reality

- Constant change
- Delayed decisions
- Shifting priorities

Bottom:

The brain interprets this as **threat**

What happens under stress

Typical responses

Typical responses

Fight → frustration, pushing harder

Flight → disengagement

Freeze → overthinking, indecision

In our work this looks like:

- Endless meetings
- Delayed actions
- Feeling stuck

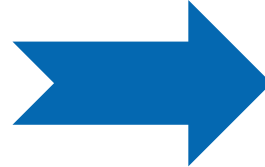
Key shift

From Reaction to Agency

Two modes:

Reactive

- Driven by urgency
- Constantly responding



Agentic

- Focused
- Intentional
- Chooses where to act

Four Practical Tools

We will focus on

01

Stockdale Paradox

→ stabilizes your
mindset

02

Window of Tolerance

→ regulates your
nervous system

03

Circle of Control

→ focuses your
energy

04

Sailing Boat

→ helps you navigate
forward with clarity

Tool 1: Stockdale Paradox

THE STOCKDALE PARADOX

A belief in eventual success, combined with a deep acceptance of the current reality.

Followed by taking action to make things better.



The concept comes from **Admiral James Stockdale**, a U.S. Navy officer who was held as a prisoner of war in Vietnam for over 7 years under extremely harsh conditions.

Stockdale Paradox is about **holding two psychological capacities at the same time**:

1. Radical realism

- Seeing the situation as it truly is
- Not avoiding discomfort, uncertainty, or difficulty
- Naming the “brutal facts”

2. Enduring belief (grounded hope)

- Confidence that you will find a way through
- Not tied to *when* or *how* things improve
- Rooted in internal resilience, not external certainty

The paradox says:

👉 *You need both realism AND belief—at the same time.*

A quick poll

“Which mindset do you tend to lean towards?”

Options:

Overly optimistic
(things will be fine)

Overly pessimistic
(things won't work)

Balanced realism + belief
(Stockdale)

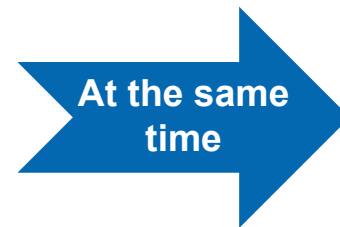


Tool 1 Live Demo

Stockdale's Paradox

Retain Faith:

Believe that you will prevail in the end, regardless of difficulties.

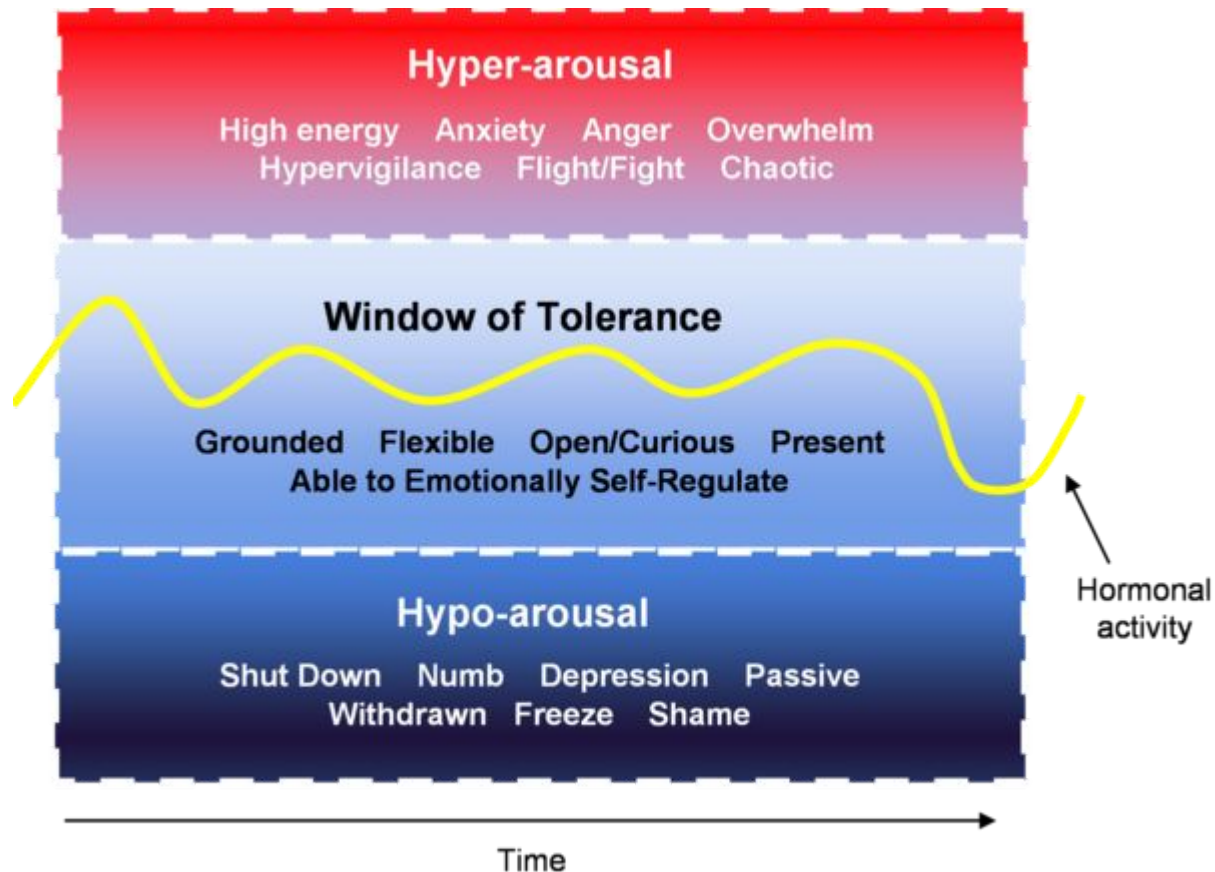


Confront Realities:

Face the most brutal facts of your current realities at the same time.

Tool 2: Window of Tolerance

Is your nervous system helping you or hindering you right now?



- **Hyper-arousal (The Red Zone):** Fight or Flight. Feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or reactive.
- **The Window (The Green Zone):** Optimal Arousal. Feeling grounded, flexible, and able to process information.
- **Hypo-arousal (The Blue Zone):** Freeze. Feeling numb, disconnected, or "checked out."

Tool 2 Live Demo

Window of Tolerance

How to widen your window

Mind

1. Cognitive Reframing
2. Focusing on Agency
3. Self-Compassion

How to widen your window

Body

1. Movement
2. Breathwork
3. Grounding
4. Sensory input
5. Social Connection

Building on the previous tools

How it builds on the previous tools

01

Tool 1: Stockdale Paradox

Stay grounded in reality
while keeping belief

02

Tool 2: Window of Tolerance

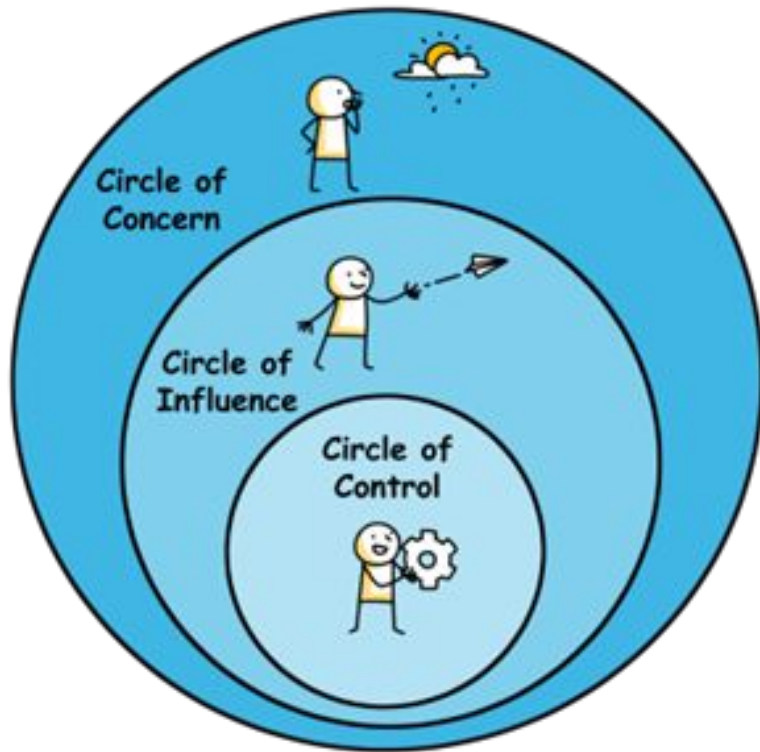
Regulate your body's
response

Now...
what do
you do
next?



Tool 3: Circle of Control

Where is your energy going?



- **Control:** What you *directly* do (your actions, focus, response)
- **Influence:** What you can *shape* (team dynamics, conversations)
- **Concern:** Everything else (politics, restructuring, funding decisions)

A quick poll

Where do you think most of your energy is currently going?

Options:

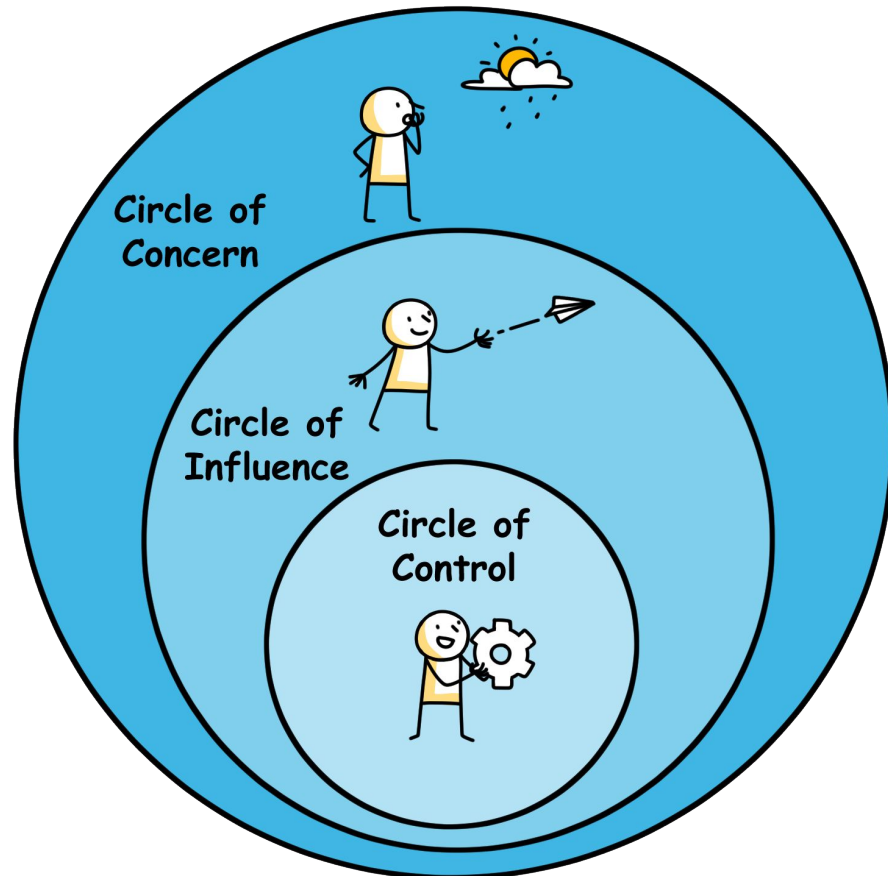
Things I can control

Things I can influence

Things outside my control



Tool 3 Live Demo:







- **Control:** What you *directly do* (your actions, focus, response)
- **Influence:** What you can *shape* (team dynamics, conversations)
- **Concern:** Everything else (politics, restructuring, funding decisions)

Tool 4: Sailing Boat

You may not control the wind or the sea—but you can adjust how you move forward.



Tool 3 helps you move forward

-  **Where are we going? (Destination)**
-  **What is helping us? (Wind)**
-  **What is slowing us down? (Anchors)**
-  **What can't we control? (Sea)**

Tool 4 Live Demo



Key message

Steady your mindset (Tool 1), regulate your response (Tool 2), focus your energy (Tool 3), then adjust your sail and move forward (Tool 4).



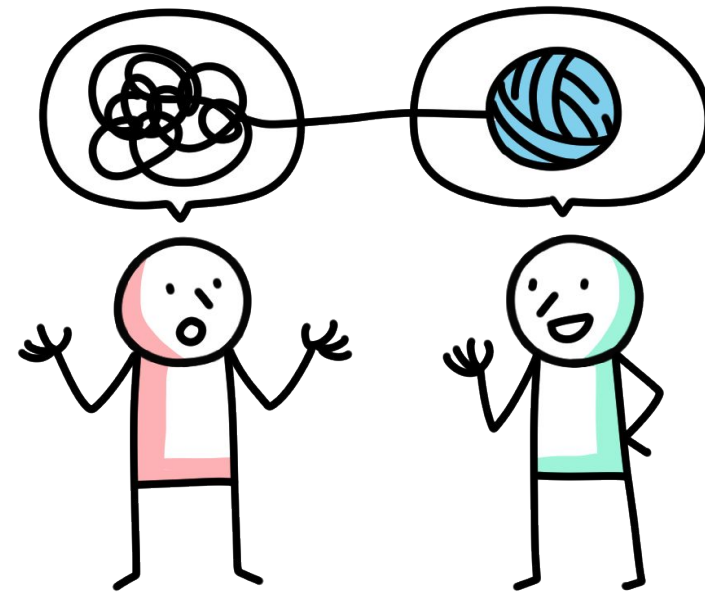
Supporting others

Simple way to help colleagues

Ask:

- What is challenging right now?
- What is within your control?
- What is one next step?

You help them regain clarity



Key Takeaways

- Uncertainty is here to stay
- Your reaction is normal
- You can choose where to focus
- Small actions create momentum



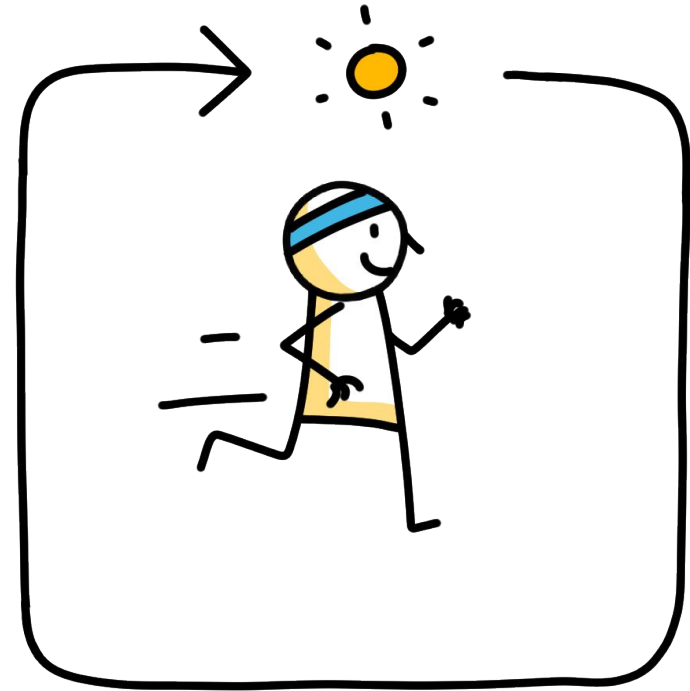
Bringing it all together

Three tools, one approach

- **Stockdale Paradox** → Balance your mindset
- **Window of Tolerance** → Regulate your body
- **Circle of Control** → Focus your energy
- **Sailing Boat** → Navigate forward

Together, they help you:

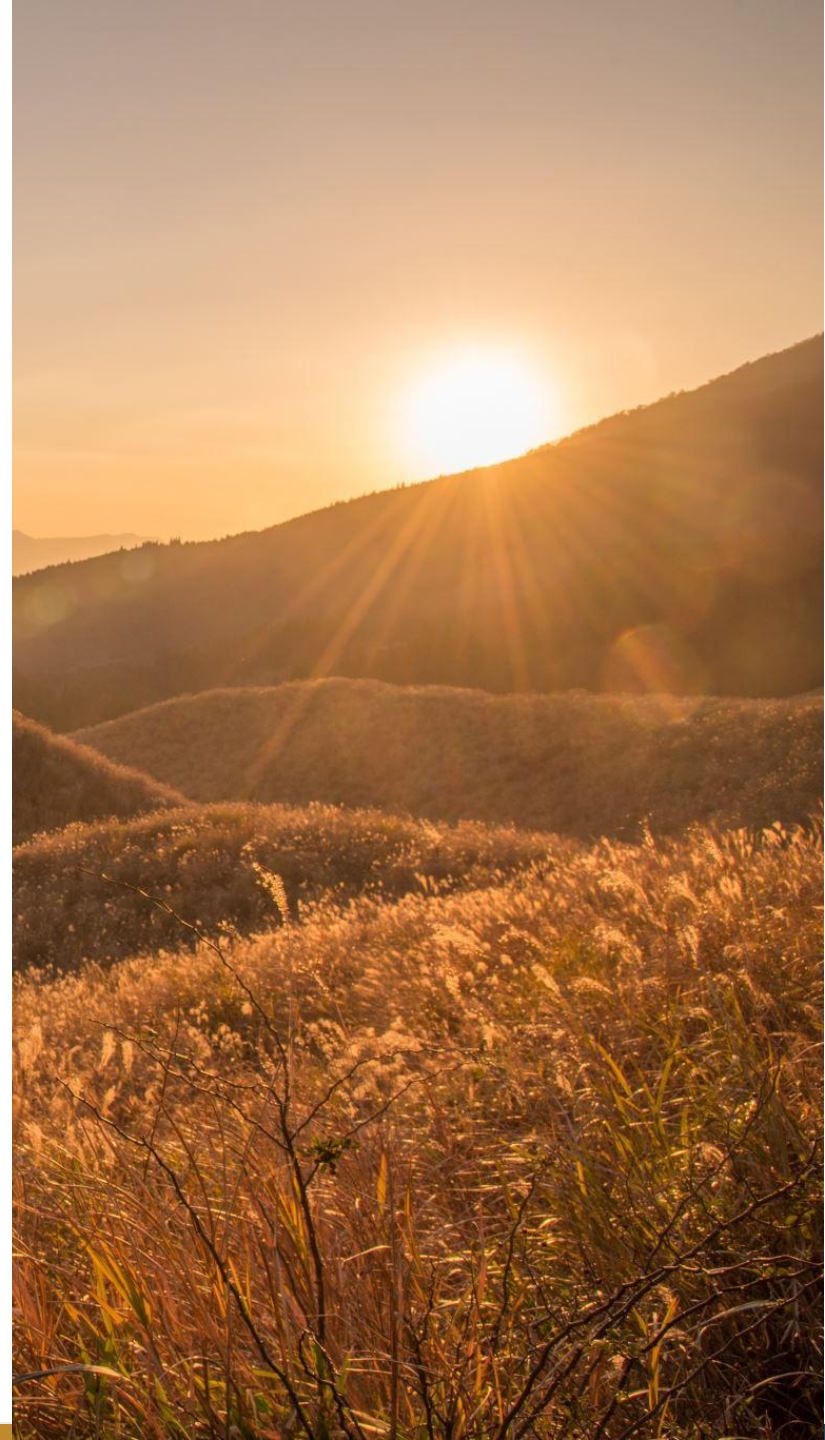
- Stay grounded
- Stay focused
- Keep moving



Final Reflection

One question

- What is one thing you will do differently starting tomorrow?



	Monday, 04 May	Tuesday, 05 May	Wednesday, 06 May	Thursday, 07 May	Friday, 08 May
03:00-04:00 (New York) 09:00-10:00 (Europe) 10:00-11:00 (Nairobi) 14:00-15:00 (Bangkok)	Pres (E) - From the UN to the Private Sector: Skills that enable Career Transition	Pres (E) - Thriving in Uncertainty	Pres (E) - Beyond the algorithm: Preparing your career for Life 3.0	Pres (E) - Habits under Pressure: working more intentionally	Pres (E) Behavioural Science for Career Development: Evidence-Based Steps for Action
04:30-05:30 (New York) 10:30-11:30 (Europe) 11:30-12:30 (Nairobi) 15:30-16:30 (Bangkok)	PD (E) - Inside the Recruiter's Mind: How Hiring Really Works in the UN and Beyond	PD (E) - Private Sector Unlocked: How to Enter, Adapt, and Succeed	Pres (E) - Upskilling for the Future: How to Stay Marketable Inside and Beyond the UN	Pres (E) - Becoming a UN Volunteer; What is in it for you? The Hidden Benefits of Volunteering.	PD (E) - Beyond the UN Blue: Navigating Your Career Transition to Other IGOs
06:00-07:00 (New York) 12:00-13:00 (Europe) 13:00-14:00 (Nairobi) 17:00-18:00 (Bangkok)	PD (E) - Talent on the Move: Growing your career through mobility	Pres (F) - Recherche d'emploi optimisée par l'IA : éthique, sécurisée et tournée vers l'avenir	Clinic (E) - AI for Your Career: Practical Tools and Prompts for Career Management	Pres (E) - Leading from Within: Self-Awareness, Authenticity, and Inner Resilience	Pres (F) - Maîtriser les entretiens d'embauche: Transformer son expérience en levier de réussite
07:30-08:30 (New York) 13:30-14:30 (Europe) 14:30-15:30 (Nairobi) 18:30-19:30 (Bangkok)	Clinic (E) - Mapping Your Motivators for Career Choices	Pres (E) - Mapping Professional Achievements to Job Application and Interview	Pres (E) - Breaking Down Job Descriptions	Pres (E) - What remains when everything changes: Insights from Third Culture and Global Nomad Research	Clinic (E) - The skills shift: What skills-based hiring and AI agents might mean for a UN career
09:00-10:00 (New York) 15:00-16:00 (Europe) 16:00-17:00 (Nairobi) 20:00-21:00 (Bangkok)	Pres (E) - Your Career, Your Conversation	Pres (E) - Strengthening Your Adaptability Muscles - AQ: The Adaptability Quotient	Pres (E) - Managing Your Saboteurs: Removing Barriers to Your Career Growth	Pres (E) - Use Your Strengths to Boost Your Career	Pres (E) - Activating Inner Resources in Uncertain Times
10:30-11:30 (New York) 16:30-17:30 (Europe) 17:30-18:30 (Nairobi) 21:30-22:30 (Bangkok)	Pres (E) - A Mind-Blowing Tour of AI Tools to Accelerate Your Career	Pres (E) - From Sat Nav to Compass: Navigating Your Career in a Changing UN System	Pres (S) - Construye tu Asistente de Carrera con IA	Pres (E) - Building a winning profile from application to interview	Pres (E) - Mentoring 2.0: From Top-Down to All-Around
13:00-14:00 (New York) 19:00-20:00 (Europe) 20:00-21:00 (Nairobi) 00:00-01:00 ¹ (Bangkok)	Pres (F) - Opportunités de carrière aux Nations Unies pour les jeunes professionnels et conseils pour réussir sa candidature	PD (E) - Thriving Globally - The human side of relocation	Pres (E) - Career Development: How you can turn a Psychosocial Hazard into a Thriving Strategy	Pres (E) - Youth Engagement: Put in Practice! (Young Talents in the UN System)	Pres (E) - Working for Justice
14:30-15:30 (New York) 20:30-21:30 (Europe) 21:30-22:30 (Nairobi) 01:30 ¹ -02:30 ¹ (Bangkok)	Pres (E) - Mastering Job Interviews: Turning Your Experience into Impact	Pres (S) - Cómo dominar las entrevistas de trabajo: refleja tu experiencia con impacto	Clinic (S) - Desarrollo de habilidades y redes profesionales a través de la mentoría	Pres (E) - Make career moves with confidence using the 5i Framework	Pres (E) - Own your Future, Make your Role Matter

