



Inter gNodeB Handover

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Feature Summary and Revision History

Summary Data

Table 1: Summary Data

Applicable Product(s) or Functional Area	SMF
Applicable Platform(s)	SMI
Feature Default Setting	Not Applicable
Related Changes in this Release	Not Applicable
Related Documentation	Not Applicable

Revision History

Revision History

Revision Details	Release
First introduced.	Pre-2020.02.0

Feature Description

The SMF supports the Xn-based and N2-based handover procedures to hand over a UE from a source NG-RAN node to a target NG-RAN node using the Xn or N2 reference points. Initiation of this procedure can be due to new radio conditions, load balancing or due to a specific service.

The SMF releases the QoS flows that failed to set up on the target NG-RAN during Xn and N2 handovers on the respective interfaces N4 (UPF) and N1 (UE). The SMF sends appropriate notification to N7 (PCF) based on the triggers if armed. The SMF also sends the usage report to N40 (CHF) for the released QoS flows.

How it Works

Call Flows

The following sections explain the execution of Xn-based and N2-based handover procedures.

Xn-based Inter NG-RAN Handover

This section provides details regarding the Xn-based inter NG-RAN handover without UPF reallocation.

The handover preparation and the execution stages are implemented as specified in 3GPP TS 38.300. When performing the handover in a shared network, the source NG-RAN determines a PLMN to be used in the target network as specified in 3GPP TS 23.501. If the serving PLMN changes during the Xn handover, the source NG-RAN node indicates the selected PLMN ID to the target NG-RAN node.

If the AMF generates the N2 downlink signalling and receives a rejection to an N2 interface procedure due to the ongoing Xn handover procedure, the AMF reattempts the same N2 interface procedure either when the handover is complete or the handover is deemed to have failed. The failure is known by expiry of the timer guarding the N2 interface procedure.

Upon reception of an SMF-initiated N1 and/or N2 request(s) with an indication that the request has been temporarily rejected due to the ongoing Xn handover procedure, the SMF starts a locally configured guard timer. The SMF holds signalling messages targeted towards the AMF during the handover preparation phase unless it detects that the handover is completed or the handover has failed or cancelled. The SMF reattempts, up to a pre-configured number of times, when either it detects that the handover is completed or has failed using message reception or at expiry of the guard timer.

The Xn-based inter NG-RAN handover is used to hand over a UE from a source NG-RAN to target NG-RAN using Xn when the AMF is unchanged and the SMF decides to keep the existing UPF.

The following figure depicts the call flow of the Xn-based inter NG-RAN handover without the UPF reallocation.

Figure 1: Xn-based Inter NG-RAN Handover without UPF Reallocation

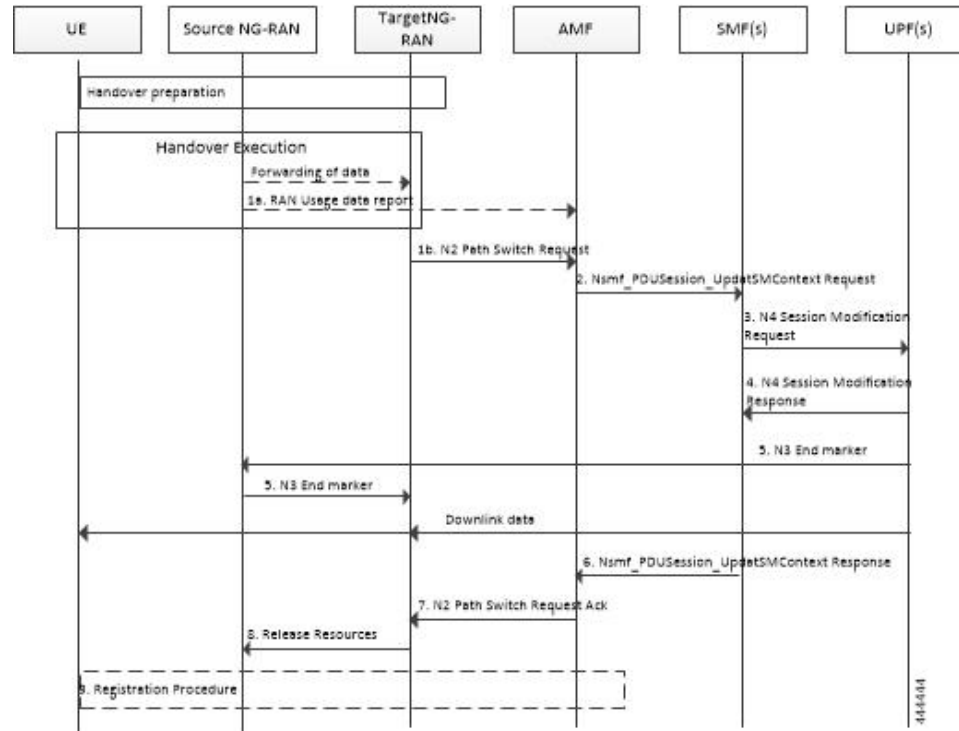


Table 2: Xn-based Inter NG-RAN Handover Call Flow Description (Without UPF Reallocation)

Step	Description
1a	<p>During the handover execution, the source NG-RAN node provides RAN usage data Report to the AMF. The source NG-RAN node provides this report only when the target NG-RAN has confirmed handover over Xn interface.</p> <p>This report includes N2 SM Information (Secondary RAT usage data), Handover Flag, and Source to Target transparent container. The Handover Flag indicates that the report needs to be buffered by the SMF.</p>
1b	<p>The target NG-RAN sends an N2 Path Switch Request message to the AMF to inform that the UE has moved to a new target cell. The NG-RAN provides a List Of PDU Sessions To Be Switched. The N2 SM Information includes the AN Tunnel Info for each PDU Session to be switched.</p>
2	<p>The AMF sends N2 SM information by invoking the Nsmf_PDUSession_UpdateSMContext request service operation for each PDU session in the lists of PDU Sessions received in the N2 Path Switch Request.</p>
3	<p>The SMF sends an N4 Session Modification Request message to the UPF. The SMF may notify the UPF that originated the Data Notification to discard downlink data for the PDU Sessions and/or to not provide further Data Notification messages.</p>
4	<p>The UPF returns an N4 Session Modification Response message to the SMF after the requested PDU sessions are switched.</p>

Step	Description
5	The UPF sends one or more "end marker" packets for each N3 tunnel on the old path immediately after switching the path. The UPF starts sending downlink packets to the target NG-RAN.
6	The SMF sends an Nsmf_PDUSession_UpdateSMContext response (CN Tunnel Info) to the AMF for PDU sessions which have been switched successfully. Important Step 6 can occur any time after the receipt of N4 Session Modification Response at the SMF.
7	Once the Nsmf_PDUSession_UpdateSMContext response is received from all the SMFs, the AMF aggregates the received CN Tunnel Info and sends this aggregated information as a part of N2 SM Information along with the Failed PDU Sessions in N2 Path Switch Request Ack to the target NG-RAN. If none of the requested PDU sessions have been switched successfully, the AMF sends an N2 Path Switch Request Failure message to the target NG-RAN.
8	The target NG-RAN confirms success of the handover by sending Release Resources message to the source NG-RAN.
9	The UE initiates Mobility Registration Update procedure if one of the triggers of registration procedure applies.

The following figure shows the detailed call flow of the Xn handover without UPF reallocation.

Figure 2: Xn Handover Without UPF Relocation Call Flow

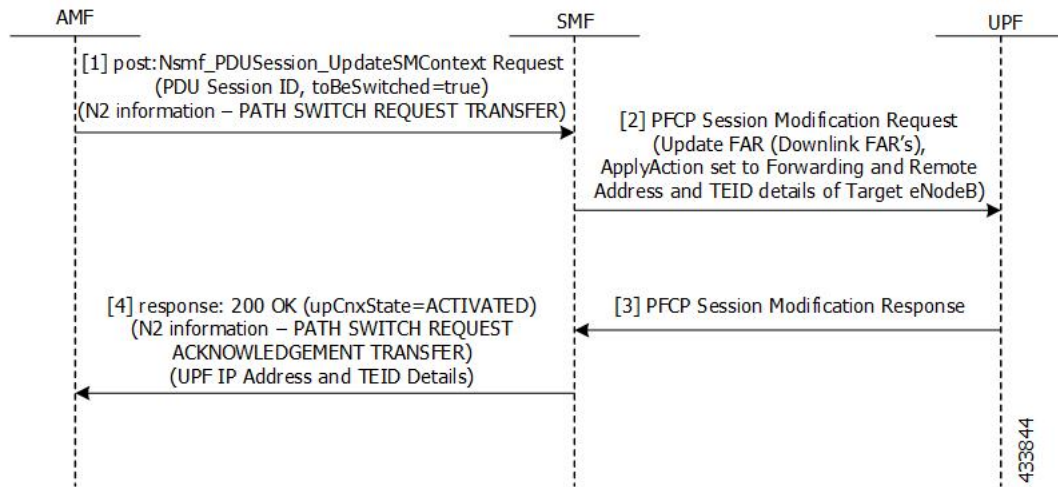


Table 3: Detailed Call Flow Description for the Xn Handover Without UPF Relocation

Step	Description
1	<p>The NF Service Consumer (AMF) requests the SMF to switch the user plane connection of the PDU session. The AMF sends a POST request with the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The toBeSwitched indication. • N2 SM information received from the 5G-AN (PDU session path switch request transfer IE), including the new transport layer address and tunnel endpoint of the downlink termination point for the user data for this PDU session. • User location and user location timestamp. • Other information, if necessary.
2	<p>The SMF switches the N3 tunnel of the PDU session after receiving the request. The SMF initiates PFCP session modification procedure toward the UPF with downlink FAR updated with the following option:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forwarding Action is enabled with the remote node “forwarding parameters” details, such as the IP address and GTP-U F-TEID.
3	<p>The SMF marks the PDU handover as successful after receiving the successful response from the UPF node.</p>
4	<p>The SMF initiates the 200 OK response. This response includes the N2 SM information, which has the transport layer address and tunnel endpoint of the uplink termination point for the user plane data for this PDU session, that is UPF's GTP-U F-TEID for the uplink traffic.</p>

N2-based Inter NG-RAN Handover

The source NG-RAN decides to initiate an N2-based handover (HO) to the target NG-RAN. Initiation of this procedure could be due to any of the following reasons:

- New radio conditions
- Load balancing
- If there is no Xn connectivity to the target NG-RAN
- An error indication from the target NG-RAN after an unsuccessful Xn-based handover (that is, no IP connectivity between Target RAN (T-RAN) and Source UPF (S-UPF))
- Based on dynamic information learnt by the Source RAN (S-RAN)

The source NG-RAN determines the availability of a direct forwarding path and indicates the same to the SMFs. If the IP connectivity is available between the source and target NG-RAN and security association is in place between them, a direct forwarding path is available. If a direct forwarding path is not available, use the indirect forwarding. The SMFs use the indication from the source NG-RAN to choose the data forwarding path.

When performing the handover in a shared network, the source NG-RAN determines a PLMN for use in the target network as specified by 3GPP TS 23.501. The source NG-RAN indicates the selected PLMN ID to the AMF as part of the Tracking Area sent in the HO Required message.

If the AMF generates the N2 downlink signalling and receives a rejection to a N2 interface procedure due to the ongoing N2 handover, the AMF reattempts the same N2 interface procedure either when the handover is complete or the handover is deemed to have failed. If the Inter NG-RAN node handover changes the serving AMF, the source AMF terminates any other ongoing N2 interface procedures except the handover procedure.

If the AMF is still the serving AMF, the AMF pauses non-handover related N2 interface procedures and resumes them after the N2 handover is complete.

If the AMF detects that it needs to be changed, the AMF rejects any SMF-initiated N2 request and includes an indication that the request has been temporarily rejected due to the ongoing N2 handover procedure.

The following figure depicts the call flow for the preparation phase of the N2-based inter NG-RAN handover procedure.

Figure 3: Inter NG-RAN Node N2-based Handover - Preparation Phase

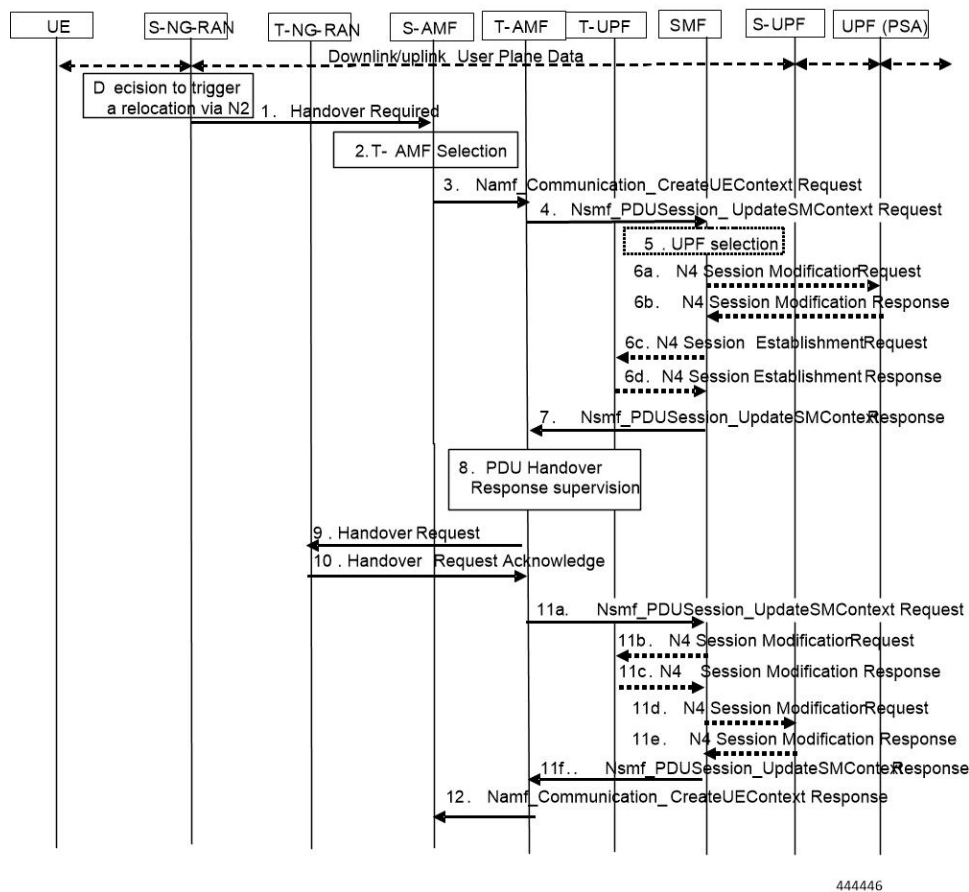


Table 4: Inter NG-RAN Node N2-based Handover Call Flow Description - Preparation Phase

Step	Description
1	<p>The Source NG-RAN (S-RAN) sends the Handover Required message to the Source AMF (S-AMF). This message includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target ID • Source to Target transparent container • SM N2 info list • PDU Session IDs • Intra system handover indication <p>The Source to Target transparent container includes NG-RAN information for use in Target RAN (T-RAN), and is transparent to 5GC. It also contains the corresponding User Plane Security Enforcement information, QoS flows/DRBs information subject to data forwarding.</p> <p>If direct data forwarding is available, the SM N2 info includes Direct Forwarding Path Availability.</p> <p>Direct Forwarding Path Availability indicates whether direct forwarding is available from the S-RAN to the T-RAN. This indication from S-RAN is based on the presence of IP connectivity and security association between the S-RAN and the T-RAN.</p>
2	<p>When the S-AMF cannot serve the UE anymore, the S-AMF selects the T-AMF as described in clause 6.3.5 on "AMF Selection Function" in TS 23.501.</p>

Step	Description
3	<p>The S-AMF initiates Handover resource allocation procedure by invoking the Namf_Communication_CreateUEContext service operation towards the T-AMF.</p> <p>The Namf_Communication_CreateUEContext Request includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N2 Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target ID • Source to Target transparent container • SM N2 information list • PDU Session IDs • UE context information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUPI • Service area restriction • Allowed NSSAI for each Access Type if available • Tracing Requirements • The list of PDU Session IDs along with the corresponding SMF information and the corresponding S-NSSAI(s), PCF ID(s), and DNN <p>When the S-AMF can still serve the UE, this step and step 12 are not needed.</p>
4	<p>For each PDU session indicated by S-RAN, the AMF invokes the Nsmf_PDUSession_UpdateSMContext Request to the associated SMF. However, if the S-NSSAI associated with PDU session is not available in the T-AMF, the T-AMF does not invoke Nsmf_PDUSession_UpdateSMContext for this PDU session.</p> <p>If the T-AMF detects that the UE moves into a restricted area based on Service area restrictions, the T-AMF notifies that the UE is only reachable for regulatory prioritized services to each NF consumer which has subscribed for UE reachability event.</p>
5	<p>Based on the Target ID, the SMF checks the acceptance of N2 handover for the indicated PDU session. The SMF also checks the UPF Selection Criteria. If the UE has moved out of the service area of the UPF connecting to NG-RAN, the SMF selects a new intermediate UPF.</p>
6a	<p>If the SMF selects a new UPF to act as intermediate UPF for the PDU session, and the different CN Tunnel Info need to be used, the SMF sends N4 Session Modification Request message to UPF (PDU Session Anchor (PSA)). If the SMF allocates the CN Tunnel Info, it provides the CN Tunnel Info on N9, and the UPF (PSA) associates CN Tunnel Info with UL Packet detection rules.</p>

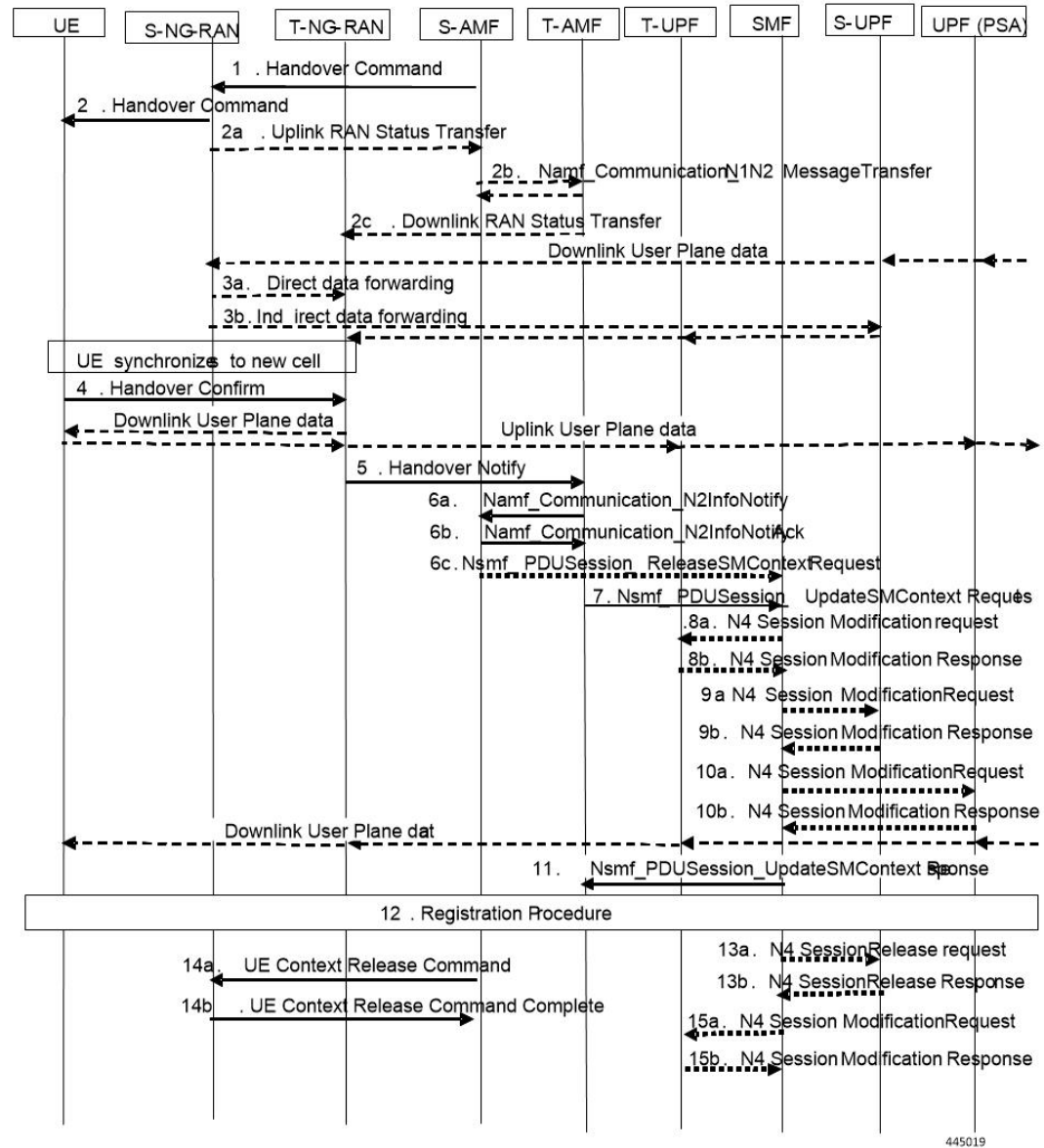
Step	Description
6b	The UPF (PSA) sends an N4 Session Establishment Response message to the SMF. If the UPF (PSA) allocates CN Tunnel Info (on N9) of UPF (PSA), it provides CN Tunnel Info (on N9) to the SMF. The UPF (PSA) associates the CN Tunnel Info (on N9) with UL Packet detection rules provided by the SMF.
6c	If the SMF selects a new intermediate UPF (T-UPF) and if the T-UPF allocates the CN Tunnel Info, the SMF sends an N4 Session Establishment Request message to the T-UPF. This request enables the Packet detection, enforcement, and reporting rules to be installed on the T-UPF. The T-UPF receives the CN Tunnel Info (on N9) of UPF (PSA) for this PDU session, which is used to set up N9 tunnel.
6d	The T-UPF sends an N4 Session Establishment Response message to the SMF with DL CN Tunnel Info and UL CN Tunnel Info (that is, N3 tunnel info). The SMF starts a timer to release the resource of S-UPF, which is to be used in step 13a of the Execution Phase.
7	<p>If N2 handover for the PDU session is accepted, the SMF includes the N2 SM Information in the Nsmf_PDUSession_UpdateSMContext response. The N2 SM Information contains the N3 UP address and the UL CN Tunnel ID of the UPF and the QoS parameters indicating that the N2 SM Information is for the Target NG-RAN.</p> <p>If the N2 SM information received at step 4 does not include the Direct Forwarding Path Availability and the SMF knows that there is no indirect data forwarding connectivity between source and target, the N2 SM Information includes a Data forwarding not possible indication.</p> <p>If the N2 handover for the PDU session is not accepted as described in step 5, the SMF does not include the N2 SM Information to avoid establishment of radio resources at the target NG-RAN. The SMF provides a reason for non-acceptance. If the SMF receives notification from T-AMF that UE is only reachable for regulatory prioritized service, the SMF deactivates the PDU session.</p>
8	The AMF supervises the Nsmf_PDUSession_UpdateSMContext Response messages from the involved SMFs. At the expiry of maximum wait time or when all Nsmf_PDUSession_UpdateSMContext Response messages are received, the AMF continues with the N2 Handover procedure (Handover Request message in step 9).
9	<p>If the subscription information includes Tracing Requirements, the target AMF provides the target RAN with Tracing Requirements in the Handover Request.</p> <p>The Handover request includes Source to Target transparent container, N2 MM Information, N2 SM Information list, and Tracing Requirements.</p> <p>The T-AMF determines T-RAN based on Target ID. T-AMF allocates a 5G-GUTI valid for the UE in the AMF and target TAI.</p> <p>N2 MM Information includes, for example, security information and Mobility Restriction List if available in the T-AMF. N2 SM Information list includes N2 SM Information for the T-RAN in the Nsmf_PDUSession_UpdateSMContext Response messages received within allowed max delay supervised by the T-AMF in step 8.</p>

Step	Description
10	The T-RAN sends Handover Request Acknowledge to the T-AMF. The Acknowledge message includes Target to Source transparent container, List of PDU Sessions to Hand-over with N2 SM information, List of PDU Sessions that failed to be established with the failure cause given in the N2 SM information element.
11a	<p>The AMF sends Nsmf_PDUSession_UpdateSMContext Request (PDU Session ID, N2 SM response) to the SMF.</p> <p>For each N2 SM response received from the T-RAN, the AMF sends the N2 SM response to the SMF indicated by the respective PDU Session ID.</p> <p>If no new T-UPF is selected, the SMF stores the N3 tunnel info of T-RAN from the N2 SM response if N2 handover is accepted by T-RAN.</p> <p>The SMF/UPF allocates the N3 UP address and Tunnel IDs for indirect data forwarding corresponding to the data forwarding tunnel endpoints established by T-RAN.</p> <p>If a PDU session is indicated as a rejected PDU session by the Target NG-RAN, the SMF triggers the release of this PDU session. In all other cases of PDU Session rejection, the SMF decides whether to release the PDU session or to deactivate the UP connection of this PDU session.</p> <p>If some of the QoS Flows of a PDU Session are not accepted by the Target NG-RAN, the SMF initiates the PDU Session Modification procedure to remove the non-accepted QoS Flows from the PDU Session(s) after the handover is completed.</p>
11b	The SMF sends N4 Session Modification Request to the T-UPF. This request includes T-RAN SM N3 forwarding Information list, and indication to allocate DL forwarding tunnel(s) for indirect forwarding.
11c	The T-UPF allocates Tunnel Info and returns an N4 Session Modification Response message to the SMF. The T-UPF SM N3 forwarding info list includes T-UPF N3 address, T-UPF N3 Tunnel identifiers for forwarding data.
11d	The SMF sends N4 Session Modification Request to the S-UPF. This request includes T-RAN SM N3 forwarding Information list or T-UPF SM N3 forwarding Information list, and an indication to allocate DL forwarding tunnel(s) for indirect forwarding.
11e	<p>The S-UPF allocates Tunnel Info and returns an N4 Session establishment Response message to the SMF.</p> <p>The S-UPF SM N3 forwarding Information list includes S-UPF N3 address and S-UPF N3 Tunnel identifiers for DL data forwarding.</p>
11f	The SMF sends an Nsmf_PDUSession_UpdateSMContext Response message per PDU session to the T-AMF.

Step	Description
12	The AMF supervises the Nsmf_PDUSession_UpdateSMContext Response message from the involved SMFs. At the expiry of maximum wait time or when all Nsmf_PDUSession_UpdateSMContext Response messages are received, the T-AMF sends the Namf_Communication_CreateUEContext Response to the S-AMF.

The following figure depicts the call flow for the execution phase of the N2-based inter NG-RAN handover procedure.

Figure 4: Inter NG-RAN Node N2-based Handover - Execution Phase



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Table 5: Inter NG-RAN Node N2-based Handover Call Flow Description - Execution Phase

Step	Description
1	<p>The Source AMF (S-AMF) sends the Handover Command to the Source NG-RAN (S-RAN).</p> <p>The Handover Command includes Target to Source transparent container, List Of PDU Sessions to be handed-over with N2 SM information containing information received from T-RAN during the handover preparation phase, and List Of PDU Sessions failed to be set up.</p> <p>The SM forwarding info list includes T-RAN SM N3 forwarding info list for direct forwarding or S-UPF SM N3 forwarding info list for indirect data forwarding.</p> <p>The S-RAN uses the PDU Sessions failed to be setup list and the indicated reason for failure to decide whether to proceed with the N2 handover procedure.</p>
2	<p>The S-RAN sends Handover Command (UE container) to the UE.</p> <p>The UE container is a UE part of the Target to Source transparent container which is sent transparently from T-RAN via AMF to S-RAN and is provided to the UE by the S-RAN.</p>
2a - 2c	<p>The S-RAN sends the Uplink RAN Status Transfer message to the S-AMF. The S-RAN refrains from sending this message if none of the radio bearers of the UE are treated with Packet Data Convergence Protocol (PDCP) status preservation.</p>
3	<p>The T-RAN sends the uplink packets to the T-UPF and UPF (PSA). The UPF (PSA) sends the downlink packets to the S-RAN via S-UPF.</p> <p>The S-RAN forwards the downlink data towards the T-RAN for QoS flows or Data Radio Bearers (DRBs) subject to data forwarding. The data forwarding path is either direct (step 3a) or indirect forwarding (step 3b).</p>
4	<p>After the UE has successfully synchronized to the target cell, it sends a Handover Confirm message to the T-RAN.</p>
5	<p>The T-RAN sends Handover Notify message to the T-AMF. This message is sent to indicate that the handover is successful.</p>
6a.	<p>The T-AMF notifies to the S-AMF about the N2 handover notify received from the T-RAN by invoking the Namf_Communication_N2InfoNotify.</p> <p>The S-AMF uses a timer to supervise the release of resources in S-RAN.</p>
6b	<p>The S-AMF acknowledges by sending the Namf_Communication_N2InfoNotify ACK to the T-AMF.</p>
6c	<p>The S-AMF sends Nsmf_PDUSession_ReleaseSMContext Request to the SMF. This request includes SUPI, PDU Session ID, and N2 SM Information (Secondary RAT Usage Data).</p> <p>If the PDU Session(s) is not accepted by the T-AMF, the S-AMF triggers PDU Session Release procedure after the reception of N2 Handover Notify.</p>

Step	Description
7	<p>The T-AMF sends Nsmf_PDUSession_UpdateSMContext Request to the SMF. This request includes Handover Complete indication for PDU Session ID, UE presence in LADN service area, and N2 SM Information (Secondary RAT usage data).</p> <p>The T-AMF sends Handover Complete indication per each PDU Session to the corresponding SMF to indicate the success of the N2 handover.</p>
8a	If a new T-UPF is inserted or an existing intermediate S-UPF is reallocated, the SMF sends N4 Session Modification Request indicating DL AN Tunnel Info of T-RAN to the T-UPF.
8b	The T-UPF acknowledges by sending N4 Session Modification Response message to the SMF.
9a	If the UPF is not reallocated, the SMF sends N4 Session Modification Request indicating DL AN Tunnel Info of T-RAN to the S-UPF.
9b	The S-UPF acknowledges by sending N4 Session Modification Response message to SMF.
10a	<p>For non-roaming or local breakout roaming scenario, the SMF sends N4 Session Modification Request message to PDU Session Anchor UPF, UPF (PSA). If a new T-UPF is inserted or an existing intermediate S-UPF is reallocated, the SMF provides N3 AN Tunnel Info of T-RAN or the DL CN Tunnel Info of T-UPF.</p> <p>If the T-UPF is not inserted or an existing intermediate S-UPF is not reallocated, skip the step 10a and step 10b.</p>
10b	<p>The UPF (PSA) sends N4 Session Modification Response message to the SMF.</p> <p>When there are multiple UPFs (PSA), perform step 10a and step 10b for each UPF (PSA).</p>
11	The SMF sends Nsmf_PDUSession_UpdateSMContext Response (PDU Session ID) to the T-AMF. The SMF confirms reception of Handover Complete.
12	The UE initiates Mobility Registration Update procedure as defined in 3GPP TS 23.502.
13a	If there is a source intermediate UPF, the SMF initiates resource release by sending an N4 Session Release Request (Release Cause) to the source UPF. This message is also used to release the indirect data forwarding resource in the S-UPF.
13b	<p>The S-UPF acknowledges with an N4 Session Release Response message to confirm the release of resources.</p> <p>In case of indirect data forwarding, the resource of indirect data forwarding is also released.</p>
14a	After the expiry of timer (defined in step 6a), the AMF sends UE Context Release Command.

Step	Description
14b	The source NG-RAN releases its resources related to the UE and responds with a UE Context Release Complete () message.
15a	If indirect forwarding applies and the UPF is reallocated, after the timer of indirect data forwarding expires, the SMF sends N4 Session Modification Request to the T-UPF. Then, the T-UPF releases the indirect data forwarding resources.
15b	The T-UPF acknowledges with an N4 Session Modification Response message to confirm the release of indirect data forwarding resources.

Limitations

The Xn-based handover with UPF reallocation is currently not supported.

OAM Support

This section describes the operations, administration, and maintenance information for this feature.

Statistics Support

The "smf_ran_failed_flows" metric is added to identify the number of QoS flows released by RAN as part of various call flow procedures including the Xn and N2 handover procedures.

The SMF uses the "xn_handover" label to account for Xn handovers. Similarly for the N2 handovers, the SMF uses the "n2_handover" label.