A main characteristic of the JIU is that it is an independent oversight body composed of 11 Inspectors who, according to article 5 of the Unit’s Statute, “shall have the broadest powers of investigation in all matters having a bearing on the efficiency of the services and the proper use of funds.”

Throughout the period in which the JIU was a temporary body, there were eight Inspectors, who were chosen for their special experience in national or international administrative and financial matters and selected from among countries designated by the UN Secretary-General. The duration of each Inspector’s term also changed from four to five years, renewable once. The JIU Statute establishes that Inspectors are not staff members of the United Nations. They serve in their personal capacity and their reports, are drawn up, under their own signature.

The Inspectors are appointed by the United Nations General Assembly in accordance with a selection procedure in which Member States, the General Assembly President, the President of ECOSOC and the Secretary-General in his capacity as Chairman of CEB (formerly the ACC) were to participate. The first composition announced by the Secretary-General in 1968 consisted of: Maurice Bertrand (France), Lucio Garcia del Solar (Argentina), Sreten Illic (Yugoslavia), Robert M. Macy (United States), R. S. Mani (India), Joseph Adolf Sawe (United Republic of Tanzania), Sir Leonard Scopes (United Kingdom) and A. F. Sokirkin (USSR).

The composition of the Unit changed after 1976 and since the current statute was implemented on 1st January 1978, Member States have always ensured that all 11 positions are filled.
The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) noted that the UN system would continue to benefit from the services of the JIU, and encouraged all UN organizations to continue their active participation and co-operation with the Unit. The ECOSOC advocated strongly that “(the) JIU’s recommendations were to be thoroughly implemented by the organizations and followed-up upon by the respective Secretariats in form of systematic reports on the status of implementation”. A statement which can be seen as the initial call for the follow-up system that the Unit put in place over the years.

Throughout the Unit’s temporary period and the years leading up to its formal institutionalization, JIU produced on average 10 to 12 reports per year. The first report was issued in 1968, titled “UN activities in Ghana (JIU/REP/68/1)” by Inspector Robert M. Macy. In substance, these reports focused on system-wide management, addressing policies for coherence and risk-management, as well as performance and reform aspects. Topics covered a range of UN organization activities and focused mostly on operational, coordination and co-operation issues. Two examples of reports conducted by the Unit show how the work of the Unit as well as evaluation techniques were positively appraised during these early years:

In response to the JIU REP/69/2 on the overhead costs of extra-budgetary programmes and the methods of measuring performance and costs (system-wide), prepared by Inspector Maurice Bertrand, the Secretary-General highlighted that the report “has stimulated a great deal of useful discussion within the UN family on the subject of overhead costs of extra-budgetary programmes and on methods of measuring performance and costs of secretariat services utilized in providing assistance to developing countries”(E/4095/Add.1).

Furthermore, the system-wide JIU REP/69/9 on selected ideas for improving field operations, under the supervision of Inspector Robert M. Macy, received special attention by the Secretary-General stating that the JIU’s recommendations are “pertaining to modern management methods” and “reporting and network analysis are most pertinent” (A/6343/Ad Hoc Committee of Experts).
The institutionalization

The UNGA adopted the Statute of the JIU in 1976 which was then implemented in 1978. This changed the status from that of a temporary body to a permanent one. The Resolution 31/192 established the JIU as the only independent external oversight body empowered with a system-wide mandate. As such, the Unit became a standing subsidiary organ of the UNGA and of other legislative bodies of the UN organizations that accepted its Statute.

The Statute defines the mode of operation, conditions of service, and the administrative, budgetary and financial arrangements of the JIU. These functions and powers had already been included in the 1966 report by the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts, which provided the basis for the Statute. The Statute emphasizes the independence of the Inspectors and reaffirms that the JIU was created to assist intergovernmental bodies in management review and reform processes. Besides its system-wide mandate, JIU’s financing model represents another innovative approach. In accordance with article 20 of the Unit’s Statute, the budget is included in the regular budget of the UN and “the expenditures of the Unit shall be shared by the participating organizations as agreed by them”. Accordingly, all organizations participating in the JIU Statute have agreed to finance it on the basis of a cost-sharing agreement.

The JIU has always been committed to self-improvement and evolution. In 2003 it conducted an internal review of its working methods and statute, which it presented to the United Nations General Assembly. In 2008 and 2013 it undertook two self-evaluation exercises and in 2013 it also implemented recommendations resulting from an external peer review. These efforts have allowed the JIU to further improve its methods and practices.


This document was written by former Inspector Wolfgang Münch (1996-2005) and provides valuable insight into the evolution of the JIU.

JIU website: www.unjiu.org. Register here to receive updates about the JIU’s work and activities.