



Establishment of the Joint Inspection Unit

This article is part of an ongoing series to commemorate the Joint Inspection Unit's 50th anniversary and highlight the JIU's work and achievements over the last 50 years.

The origins

The idea of a system-wide inspection body dates back to the United Nations financial crisis during the early 1960s. During the United Nations General Assembly session (UNGA) in 1965, the Fifth Committee (focusing on Administrative and Budgetary matters) discussed “the establishment, on an experimental basis, of a small inspection unit consisting of a limited number of specialists highly qualified in financial and administrative matters”. Through Resolution 2049 (XX) in 1965, the UNGA initiated an Ad Hoc Committee of Experts assigned to examine the financial situation of the UN and of the specialized agencies across the system.

At the time, external oversight over financial management in the UN system was less developed than it is today. The Committee of Experts advocated to strengthen external controls and to establish, in agreement with the various organizations of the UN system, a temporary joint inspection unit to conduct on-the-spot inquiries and investigations. This experiment was approved for an initial period of four years. The main characteristics of the JIU as we know it today were already present in this agreement. The Unit was envisioned and designed to be administratively attached to the Secretary-General, as chief administrative officer of the UN and as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (predecessor of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB)). Funding for the operations of the JIU was established in a cost-sharing scheme between the participating organizations.

Following the Committee's report, an external control body was established one year later by the UNGA's

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), Sretin Ilic (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.

21st session under Resolution 2150 (XXI) on 4 November 1966.

The UNGA determined that the JIU should be operational no later than 1st January 1968 on an experimental basis for an initial period of four years. This marks the starting point for the JIU's pioneering role in system-wide oversight function.

“An external control body was established by the UNGA’s 21st session under Resolution 2150 (XXI) on 4 November 1966”

In subsequent years and following its temporary establishment, the UNGA reaffirmed the JIU's mandate as well as extended its existence several times under various resolutions. During this period, the JIU was still operating on a temporary basis and its mandate was subject to reassessment. Resolution 2360 (XXII) of 1967, which was unanimously adopted, strengthened co-ordination procedures and established a more co-operative relationship between the JIU and the Panel of External Auditors to avoid overlap and increase efficiency. The JIU thereby received the authority to review the work of all the organizations in the UN family and the voluntary funds entrusted to them. At the same time, the resolution recognized the independence, responsibilities and functions of the JIU.

In 1970 and 1972, Resolutions 2735 A (XXV) and 2924 (XXVII) respectively reviewed the JIU's mandate and extended its term for an additional period of four years. At the same time and in response to proposals of various members of the UNGA, the Fifth Committee recommended that the operations of the JIU should be improved while bearing in mind its independent status and terms of references. The UNGA also proposed that the JIU should streamline its activities in the interests of greater efficiency and intensify its consultations with other oversight bodies of an investigative and co-ordinating nature to minimize redundancy between the work of the various oversight bodies.

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

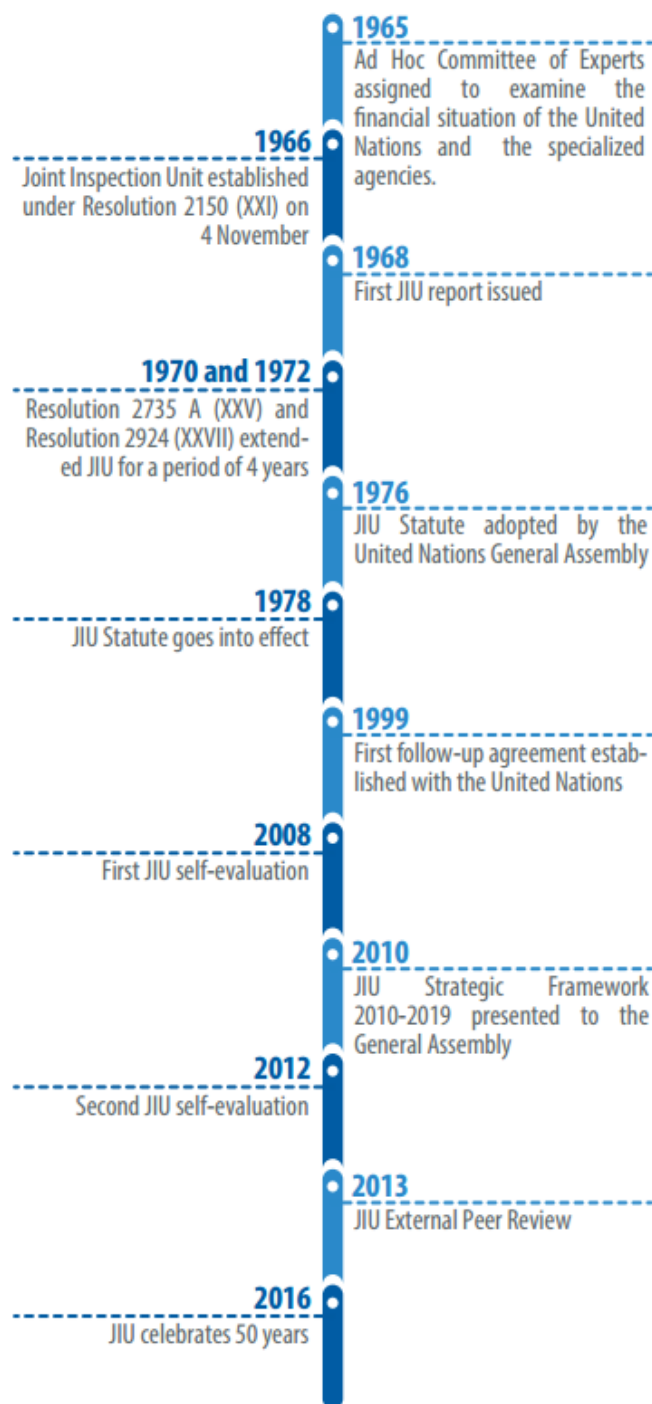
The UNGA adopted the Statute of the JIU in 1976 which was then implemented in 1978. This changed the status from that of a temporary body to a permanent one. The Resolution 31/192 established the JIU as the only independent external oversight body empowered with a system-wide mandate. As such, the Unit 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.

For further details on the evolution, workings and key developments of the JIU, see "Münc, W. (1998). The Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations and Specialized Agencies: The Role and Working Methods of a Comprehensive Oversight Institution in the United Nations System. Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law, 2, 287-306".

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



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