

The Joint Inspection Unit and its Participating Organizations

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 Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) operates in respect to the legislative organs and the secretariats of those specialized agencies and other international organizations, within the United Nations system, that have accepted its Statute. These entities are often referred to as the JIU Participating Organizations (POs). JIU has a total of 28 POs as of 2016 that play a crucial role in how the JIU functions. POs support the JIU both financially with regards to a cost-sharing arrangement and practically in that POs contribute to the oversight work of the JIU in a cooperative partnership.

The JIU had already been operating on an experimental basis for ten years when its Statute was approved by the General Assembly with resolution 31/192 (1976). The relations between the JIU and these entities were outlined in Article 1 of the Statute. At the time of the JIU's institutionalization 12 entities, mostly UN funds and programmes, adhered to the Statute, becoming the first POs. Over the next 40 years, the number of organizations supporting the work of the JIU would gradually increase to 28, creating a broad oversight universe that enables the JIU to perform its mandate on a truly system-wide level.

The participation of the Participating Organizations in the Unit's oversight activity

The mission of the JIU is to help its POs increase their efficiency and effectiveness in achieving their respective mandates and to facilitate their legislative bodies' ability to meet governance responsibilities. In addition to this primary responsibility, the broad scope of the JIU's oversight powers allows the Unit to promote information-sharing throughout the whole United Nations system and greater coordination between the organizations on a system-wide basis.

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In order to fulfil this unique mandate, the JIU works in close collaboration with all its POs and seeks to incorporate their input and encourage the participation of its stakeholders at several stages of the evaluation process.

Every year, each PO has the opportunity to express its priorities by proposing and rating the relevance of topics envisaged for future reviews to be included in the JIU Programme of Work. Once the topics have been selected, outreach continues in the phase of project planning. Sharing draft Terms of Reference with the POs ensures common understanding of the scope, the intended impact, and the methodology of the project. In the next stages of the evaluation, data collection, the positive working relationship are maintained between the JIU and the POs (e.g. facilitating the completion of questionnaires and surveys, arranging face-to-face interviews and regular interactions with Inspectors and their project teams). In the analysis and reporting phase, the JIU prepares a draft report that is submitted to the POs for comments. The JIU considers and incorporates the comments where appropriate and may request clarifications, making clear that all inputs from POs are taken into due consideration.

The Joint Inspection Unit's Participating Organizations

1976



1977



1978



1981



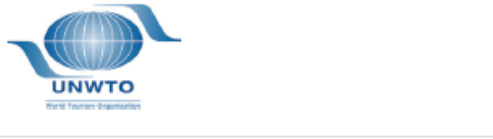
1983



1986



2003



2012



Focal points: much more than contact persons

The continuous exchange of information described above relies on the effective work of the focal point, a person working in each PO to facilitate the cooperation between the organization and the JIU. The profile and level of the focal point may vary based on the structure of the PO and the arrangement between the JIU and each respective PO. Focal points are often members either of the management, oversight or the external relations offices of their respective organization. However their role and responsibilities with respect to the JIU remain consistent across the range of POs.

Focal points provide support at various stages of the evaluation process, from preparation to follow-up:

- Facilitate data collection and contribute to planning on-site missions by helping to identify relevant internal stakeholders.
- Collect and transmit comments on draft reports.
- Take steps to ensure due consideration of reports by the executive heads and governing bodies of their institution.
- Gather relevant information on the acceptance, implementation and impact of recommendations and share it with the JIU for follow-up.

Given the critical importance of focal points in ensuring effective interaction with the POs, the JIU established periodic meetings as an additional channel to facilitate communication. The first focal points meeting was convened in Geneva in 2010, in response to a recommendation from the United Nations General Assembly to “further strengthening of the interaction between the Unit and focal points identified by the participating organizations” (RES/65/270). The meetings are held biennially, providing an opportunity for focal points to gather with the Inspectors and the staff of the JIU secretariat, as well with their counterparts in other POs, to discuss and enhance working practices. The fourth Focal Point Meeting took place in Geneva in September 2016 and once again provided an opportunity for the JIU to strengthen its relationships with the United Nations system and included a panel discussion on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Unit.

((Enhancing efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and transparency across the United Nations system))