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Report of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2020 and programme of work for 2021

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Report of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2020 and programme of work for 2021



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Note

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

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Abbreviations

CEB	United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICSC	International Civil Service Commission
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMO	International Maritime Organization
ITC	International Trade Centre
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNU	United Nations University
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization
UPU	Universal Postal Union
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

Message by the Chair

In accordance with article 10, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations system, I have the honour to present the annual report of the Unit. The report contains an account of the Unit's activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2020 and an outline of its programme of work for 2021.

As the only independent and external oversight body mandated to apply a system-wide perspective, the Joint Inspection Unit's work over the years has brought a unique perspective on a variety of topics that responded to the needs of organizations and legislative bodies, and also supported the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, while maintaining the Unit's long-standing commitment to strengthening transparency and accountability, identifying good practices and learning across the United Nations system.

Owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) global pandemic, our working methods were disrupted, and some planned activities, such as on-site interviews, observation and inspection missions, had to be curtailed or cancelled. Notwithstanding this, the Unit did well to adjust its work to meet the challenges and constraints, and to ensure delivery of its programme of work. The full effect of the changes, however, must still be assessed in terms of its impact on the scope and objectives of the reviews. In 2020, the Unit issued eight reports and will carry over four reviews, which are in progress and will be completed in 2021.

Looking ahead to 2021, the programme of work includes five system-wide and two single organization reviews.

In 2019, the Unit undertook a process to develop a new strategic framework for the period from 2020 to 2029. The process included stakeholder consultations with key partners and focal points, as well as a substantive analysis and lessons learned from the results of the previous framework, which covered the period from 2010 to 2019. During the introduction of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2019 and programme of work for 2020 and subsequent informal consultations, the Unit briefed the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session on its activities as well as the strategic framework.¹ The Assembly did not take a decision in this regard. The Unit would therefore welcome the Assembly revisiting the strategic framework of the Joint Inspection Unit during its consideration of the present report.

The Joint Inspection Unit bid farewell to three inspectors at the end of 2020, (Aicha Afifi, Jeremiah Kramer and Petru Dumitriu) and welcomed three others at the start of 2021 (Jesus Miranda Hita, Victor Moraru and Tesfa Seyoum).

Finally, while inspectors are responsible for the reports that are published under their names, the inspectors do not work alone. We greatly appreciate the dedication, support and contributions of the Unit's secretariat staff, who adjusted to new working methods and schedules imposed by the pandemic. The Unit's focal points in each of its participating organizations also deserve special recognition for their continued support in 2020. As Chair of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2021, I look forward to working with inspectors and secretariat staff to deliver the programme of work for this year.

(Signed) Jorge Flores Callejas

Chair

Geneva, 19 January 2021

¹ The strategic framework of the Joint Inspection Unit for the period 2020–2029 and medium-term plan for 2020–2024 (A/74/34, annex I).

Chapter I

Overview of activities in 2020

1. Beginning in mid-March 2020, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) global pandemic disrupted typical work routines and necessitated virtual working conditions for the Unit and for participating organizations. The work of the Unit shifted dramatically by late March to adjust to a primarily virtual working environment.
2. While new methods were adopted to complete the reviews that were carried over, the Unit largely remained on schedule with processes that were within its purview, but experienced delays in the final stages due to requests from participating organizations for more time to provide inputs and for the draft report reviews. The timelines for editing and finalization of reports were also consequently extended and led to delays in the finalization and publication of the reports.
3. In 2020, the Joint Inspection Unit worked on 13 reviews, which included seven reviews that were carried over from previous years and completed in 2020. The reports completed in 2020 are the following: management and administration in the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; the state of the investigation function: progress made in the United Nations system organizations in strengthening the investigation function; multilingualism in the United Nations system; policies, programmes and platforms to support learning in the United Nations system; United Nations common premises: current practices and future requirements; enterprise risk management: approaches and uses in the United Nations system organizations; blockchain applications in the United Nations system: towards a state of readiness; and the review of mainstreaming environmental sustainability across organizations of the United Nations system.
4. The Unit suspended the management and administration review of UN-Habitat at the request of the Executive Director of the organization, and will resume its work on the project in 2021. The management and administration review of the WMO will be completed in the first quarter of 2021. Other reviews that have been carried forward and are currently in progress are on timely and relevant topics, including system-wide reviews on cybersecurity; support for landlocked developing countries; and the current state of the ethics function.
5. The status of implementation of the workplan for 2020 is included in annex I to the present report, and the summaries of the completed reports are presented in section B of this chapter.
6. The outputs of the Joint Inspection Unit continue to draw attention in the United Nations and beyond, as evidenced by various stakeholders' interest in the work of the Unit and the invitations received to participate in conferences and workshops on a vast range of topics associated with the Unit's work, in particular its engagements with organizations on topics such as staff mobility, change management, knowledge management, results-based management, the investigations function and enterprise risk management. In addition, the Unit participated in the consideration of its reports by the General Assembly as well as by the legislative bodies of WHO and UNESCO. Other engagements with legislative bodies and/or committees of ILO and UNHCR were postponed or cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A. Interaction with legislative, oversight and coordinating bodies

7. The two tripartite meetings of the United Nations Board of Auditors, the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Joint Inspection Unit were held in May and December respectively, to provide more opportunity for sharing workplans in a

strategic and coordinated manner. In the meeting held in May, the three entities shared their progress with their 2020 workplans and the implications of COVID-19, and in the meeting held in December, the emphasis was on draft programmes of work and areas of focus for 2021. The entities also discussed the challenges they encountered and their experiences in 2020 and acknowledged the continued collaboration and interaction among the members of the three entities at the working level during the year.

8. Following each entity's presentation of its programme of work, the meeting agenda focused on the opportunities to strengthen collaboration in 2021 in areas of common interest. The following areas were identified by the members of the three entities: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; United Nations reform and the resident coordinator system; and assessments of how various entities responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. A key aspect for all three entities was avoiding duplication and maximizing synergy in the conduct of oversight work, with due consideration granted to the distinct and separate mandates of each of the three oversight entities. Accordingly, the Unit reconsidered and/or deferred related topics in the finalization of its programme of work for 2021.

9. All three entities agreed to hold biannual meetings in the future, to enhance synergies and avoid duplication and overlap in their work. Meetings in 2021 will be timed to best align with the steps in the development of the members' programmes of work for the forthcoming year.

10. The Joint Inspection Unit interacts regularly with the secretariat of CEB, which continues to be a valuable partner in facilitating the timely processing of the Unit's system-wide reports and consolidation of comments from participating organizations. CEB also provides relevant United Nations system data for the Unit's reviews. The Unit appreciates the efforts of the CEB secretariat and the support it provides.

11. The effectiveness and impact of the work of the Unit hinges on the consideration of its reports and actions taken on the recommendations made, which the General Assembly has recognized as a shared responsibility of the Unit, secretariats of the organizations and the Member States.² In line with article 11 of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, a key stage leading to decision-making after a report is completed is the submission of the comments on it made by organizations to the competent legislative bodies. For system-wide reviews, joint comments are coordinated through the mechanisms of CEB and presented to the Assembly in the form of a note by the Secretary-General.

12. Drawing on the General Assembly's encouragement that the Joint Inspection Unit and other United Nations oversight bodies share and learn from each other's best practices,³ the Unit envisages responding to the comments of CEB or individual organizations when it considers this necessary to facilitate informed decision-making.

B. Reports issued in 2020

13. In 2020, the Unit produced seven system-wide reports and one single organization report. For each completed report, the respective inspectors have provided a summary of the salient aspects of their reports, as presented below.

² Resolution [73/287](#), paragraph 4.

³ Resolution [72/269](#), paragraph 12.

Summaries of key findings and recommendations of reports in 2020

Review of the state of the investigation function: progress made in the United Nations system organizations in strengthening the investigation function (JIU/REP/2020/1)

14. The objectives of the review of the investigation function were to assess the adequacy of organizational, structural and operational arrangements for the investigation function; identify gaps and challenges; and identify good practices and lessons learned across the United Nations system. The review served as a follow-up to two previous reports of the Unit (JIU/REP/2000/9 and JIU/REP/2011/7). The inspector made 10 formal recommendations to ensure, among others, greater independence of the function, an end to the fragmentation of responsibilities for investigations, enhancement of the coherence of the policy framework and the establishment of formal procedures for investigations of allegations against executive heads. Nine recommendations are addressed to the legislative bodies, and one to the executive heads of participating organizations. These are complemented by 27 informal recommendations.

15. The review found that the situation has improved considerably over the past two decades regarding the establishment and professionalization of the investigation function. Notwithstanding the progress made, the report identified a number of shortcomings and weaknesses, in particular the persisting fragmentation of the responsibility for investigations and related activities, the level of independence of the investigation function and its organizational set-up. The independence of the function is a prerequisite for the effective delivery of the investigation mandate and for the unbiased, objective and effective discharge of investigation responsibilities.

16. In an evolving environment, the function is faced with new demands and challenges. Confronted with a significant increase in the number of complaints and investigation caseloads, in most organizations, capacity and resources have not kept pace with the rising demand, thus posing an ongoing challenge to managing the investigation portfolio. Investigating complaints of sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse require a special skill set and competence on the part of investigators and a requisite investigation capacity. Growing investigation-related information demands by Member States, donors and other stakeholders have led to the need to develop appropriate communication strategies and tools. In many organizations, there are still no satisfactory processes in place for the investigation of allegations against executive heads. Finally, there is room for further improvements in the area of inter-agency cooperation, for instance in developing a common investigation terminology and case categorization.

17. The Unit will present the report to the General Assembly at the second resumed part of its seventy-fifth session.

Policies and platforms in support of learning: towards more coherence, coordination and convergence (JIU/REP/2020/2)

18. As the main asset of the United Nations system is its staff, learning is an indispensable tool in enhancing quality and efficiency for achieving organizational goals. Through learning, staff can develop new knowledge and skills, acquire new competencies and improve attitudes. Learning is not optional: it is an essential condition for the organizations and their staff to adapt in a highly competitive environment. The United Nations organizations cannot escape the transition to the future of work, which requires agility on the part of organizations and continuous learning for individuals. Learning is a transformative force that can break down silos, stimulate inter-agency cooperation, create synergies and increase efficiency.

19. The review finds that while there is general agreement on the principle that learning is strategic, the principle is not always put in practice. Short-term solutions are developed at the expense of holistic talent management systems. Creating a new culture of learning and developing a comprehensive perspective on inter-agency cooperation is necessary. The use of opportunities offered by new technologies remains random and inconsistent, although e-learning can be construed as a step towards agile organizations. Bearing in mind that learning is a shared responsibility, there is a need for more engagement and commitment by the staff themselves, rather than expecting initiatives to originate with organizations and managers only.

20. To address these issues, the report makes nine recommendations aimed at improving the use of key performance indicators and associated targets for the efficiency of learning programmes, the integration of the evaluations findings on learning in decision-making, the systematic use and curating of the external learning platforms, the recognition of learning credentials acquired across the United Nations system, the use of open learning resources and the integration of staff learning plans into staff performance assessments.

21. Other recommendations are based on three main vectors that could drive the United Nations system towards more coherence, coordination and convergence: policy-related (the development of a strategic common organizational framework); institutional (the upgrading and consolidation of the role of the United Nations system staff college); and operational (a coordinated, more systematic and pragmatic use of e-learning platforms).

22. The report will be presented to the General Assembly at the first resumed part of its seventy-fifth session.

United Nations common premises: current practices and future prospects (JIU/REP/2020/3)

23. The review of United Nations common premises found that despite more than 30 years of mandates, progress on common premises has been limited; data provided to the Unit indicates that 18 per cent of premises are common. Nearly two thirds of premises are at the subnational level, of which the vast majority are single-entity premises. An important lacuna is the lack of data on which to base concrete forecasts or on which to carry out planning and priority setting.

24. The repositioning of the United Nation development system has brought about major changes to the pursuit of common premises. These included widening participation beyond UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP, establishing a target of reaching 50 per cent of common premises by 2021, and a new emphasis on subnational locations. The review finds that while it has positive attributes, the target also presents important limitations. The review considers that the objectives of common premises are not sufficiently clear. Expectations of financial savings have become blurred. It is also necessary to clarify how benefits such as a reduced environmental footprint, public image and programmatic collaboration should affect decision-making.

25. A long-standing barrier is that financing for common premises has never been addressed satisfactorily. Efforts to gain access to private investment, such as public-private partnership schemes, have not offered cost-effective solutions. Furthermore, the discussion of common premises has focused on the country level, thereby overlooking the significant regional presences that have developed. Leadership and inter-agency mechanisms for common premises are weak. The United Nations Sustainable Development Group should make changes that strengthen planning and analysis of common premises opportunities at the global level and provide more proactive central support to United Nations country teams through specific project-roles that the Development Coordination Office is best equipped to discharge.

26. The review also concludes that consideration of common premises on a case-by-case basis is not likely to resolve the main inefficiencies in how the United Nations system acquires and manages premises in the field. There is no coherent, global approach to planning, acquiring and managing these facilities. Rather than a piecemeal, location or organization-specific approach, a global view of the United Nations system property portfolio should be considered.

27. The report will be presented to the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session.

Review of management and administration in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (JIU/REP/2020/4)

28. The objective of the review of management and administration in ECLAC was to provide an independent assessment of the regulatory frameworks and related practices concerning the management and administration of ECLAC, highlighting areas of concern and those in need of improvement and the challenges faced, with a view to enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of ECLAC. As part of the review, a management letter was prepared and submitted to the Secretariat at the end of 2019. It presented some of the preliminary findings of the review for informed decision-making in a timely manner. The review served as a follow-up to a previous note of the Unit (JIU/NOTE/2013/2) and contained four formal recommendations addressed to the Executive Secretary of ECLAC.

29. The review found that ECLAC continues to be responsive to regional needs, providing valuable support and services to countries in Latin America and the Caribbean region in key areas such as the implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda or the efforts to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. ECLAC focuses on integration and regional cooperation as the foundation for successfully implementing the 2030 Agenda.

30. The inspectors described and welcomed the launch by ECLAC in 2018 of its Caribbean First strategy. However, they concluded that the long-awaited strategy should translate into specific results, which should be monitored and reported regularly to the Commission. The review also found that ECLAC has been affected by the liquidity crisis and by the reform efforts within the Secretariat, which has affected its financial structure, and that considerable effort was expended by ECLAC management in monitoring and reallocating resources. ECLAC, as other departments of the Secretariat, will be forced to divert its focus from delivering its programme of work to managing the financial crisis, adjusting plans and priorities based on cash flows.

31. The findings of the review confirmed once more the importance of the pertinent role of the regional commissions as the outposts of the United Nations stationed in five regions of the world. However, they require more visibility and support from Member States.

32. The Unit will present the report to the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its sixty-first session, to be held in 2021.

Enterprise risk management: approaches and uses in United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2020/5)

33. Enterprise risk management has its roots in the private sector and has value in all sectors, including United Nations system entities. United Nations system organizations are exposed to a myriad of risks while delivering on their mandates, from fraud and corruption, reputational risks and cybercrime, to risks of a political nature and natural and human-made disasters. In its resolution 61/245, the General Assembly endorsed the adoption of enterprise risk management in the United Nations system to enhance governance and oversight.

34. Enterprise risk management is an organization-wide process of structured, integrated and systematic identification, analysis, evaluation, treatment and monitoring of risks towards the achievement of organizational objectives. It is fundamentally about managing uncertainty and can address both threats and opportunities.

35. The main objective of the review is to inform legislative/governing bodies and the executive heads of United Nation system organizations about the progress made since the previous review (JIU/REP/2010/4) and the status of implementation, utilization and integration of enterprise risk management practices across all 28 participating organizations, as well as to identify good practices and lessons learned to guide ongoing and future initiatives.

36. The review proposes 10 updated benchmarks and assesses the progress of enterprise risk management implementation against them. It makes four formal recommendations and 21 informal recommendations aimed at enhancing effective and integrated enterprise risk management with a view to more proactive and better-informed decision-making and good governance.

37. The Unit will present the report to the General Assembly in 2021.

Multilingualism in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2020/6)

38. The main objective of the review on multilingualism is to inform legislative and governing bodies and the executive heads of United Nation system organizations about the progress made in multilingualism since the previous review (JIU/REP/2011/4) with respect to the implementation of previous recommendations of the Unit. The review examined strategies, policies, practices and mechanisms in place; incentives for staff to promote and enhance multilingualism; and opportunities to improve the use of external resources, partnerships and language technologies.

39. Multilingualism is both an asset and a shared commitment for all organizations in the United Nations system. Multilingualism is critical to the governance of the organizations in the United Nations system, but also to reaching out to its mandate beneficiaries, the peoples of its Member States. The review makes seven formal recommendations and six informal recommendations for further improvement of the status of multilingualism in the United Nations system organizations and across the system.

40. The most salient finding of the review is that, almost 10 years after the relevant 2011 recommendation, most participating organizations do not yet have a strategic framework in place that would regulate and provide guidance on the overall equitable use of languages and the implementation of multilingualism in their respective organizations. Furthermore, the review reconfirmed the absence of a coherent approach to multilingualism in the United Nations system, starting with the lack of a common definition for the terms “official language” and “working language” and ending with the lack of a system-wide approach to the issue.

41. With only one decade remaining to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, it is important that the United Nations system organizations communicate in the languages of the peoples on the ground, including local languages, so that no one is left behind. The staff members of the system should be linguistically competent and master more than one of the official and working languages of their respective organization so that they reflect the universal character of the Charter of the United Nations.

42. The Unit will present the report to the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session.

Blockchain applications in the United Nations system: towards a state of readiness (JIU/REP/2020/7)

43. Blockchain is among the technologies whose fusion and interaction across physical, digital and biological systems define the profile of the fourth industrial revolution. Although the technology is still young, weighing the trade-offs and determining regulatory action and operational frameworks should be a subject for multi-stakeholder dialogues, including in the United Nations system. The 2030 Agenda and the strategic calls for innovation that have followed it prompted some organizations to take the lead and pilot blockchain applications, mostly for operational activities.

44. The review found that ongoing blockchain applications are still at an experimental stage in the United Nations system. Current practices do not yet constitute a critical mass to allow definitive conclusions on the usability and relevance of blockchain, but promising applications are emerging. Some assumptions with respect to its benefits are not yet confirmed, while others require further testing. There is an increasing interest in this technology, but also awareness of specific risks involved.

45. Most participating organizations agree that policies and standards are necessary in order to reduce legal uncertainty and encourage innovation. Building in-house expertise is advisable and realistic. The creative use of blockchain open sources is feasible. By virtue of its network vocation, blockchain carries unprecedented opportunities for inter-agency collaboration and collective engagement in support of the Sustainable Development Goals, but gives rise to a need for cultural change and a new vision of the responsibility and roles of various organizations.

46. The report contains eight formal and nine informal recommendations, aimed at enhancing preparedness for a more rigorous exploration of blockchain's potential in the future. Some recommendations refer to action to be taken at the level of individual organizations, in relation to the integration of blockchain applications into overall innovation strategies, risk management measures and use of open source platforms. Others focus on enhancing coherence and coordination at the system-wide level, including by knowledge-sharing, capacity-building, and adoption of an inter-agency governance framework. Finally, the report proposes a comprehensive decision-making matrix for blockchain as practical guidance for the determination of future business cases.

The review of mainstreaming environmental sustainability across organizations of the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2020/8)

47. The Unit reviewed mainstreaming environmental sustainability across organizations of the United Nations system following a proposal from the United Nations Secretariat. Using the framework provided by the Strategy for Sustainability Management in the United Nations System, 2020–2030, endorsed by CEB in May 2019, it identified good practices to mainstream environmental sustainability and makes 10 actionable formal recommendations, one addressed to the legislative organs and governing bodies and nine to the executive heads. In addition, 53 informal recommendations outline suggestions for effecting further improvements.

48. The review found that legislative mandates for addressing environmental sustainability were missing in many entities, although some aspects were being addressed indirectly as part of the implementation of policies and procedures relating to different management areas. It analysed the mechanisms for governance, accountability and coordination for promoting environmental sustainability at the system-wide level and at the organizational level and sought to identify the main challenges, obstacles and

impediments in the way of mainstreaming environmental sustainability. The review examined 10 specific internal management functional areas in detail.

49. To address the principal challenges identified, the review outlines measures that include: developing a dedicated policy and related standard operating procedures for mainstreaming environmental sustainability; incorporating environmental sustainability considerations in specific internal management functional areas such as procurement action, human resources and learning, facilities and infrastructure, travel, events and conferences, information and communications technology, finance and budget, public information and communication, and partnerships; establishing focal points within entities as necessary; improving consideration of environmental sustainability-related costs; improving inter- and intra-agency coordination mechanisms to share good practices; ensuring staff training on environmental sustainability-related matters; incorporating environmental sustainability-related questions into staff surveys; improving data collection; ensuring regular reporting on environmental sustainability to the legislative organs and governing bodies; and persuading oversight bodies to focus on monitoring and evaluating environmental sustainability in the internal management areas of entities.

C. Investigations

50. The Joint Inspection Unit focuses on alleged violations of regulations and rules and other established procedures by executive heads, heads of internal oversight bodies, officials of the organizations other than staff members and, on an exceptional basis, staff of organizations that do not have an in-house investigation capacity. In the course of 2020, the Unit received no complaints.

D. Acceptance and implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit

Web-based tracking system

51. The web-based tracking system is a core application for the Unit, and for participating organizations, as an online tool to monitor and update the status of recommendations and for reporting and carrying out a statistical analysis of the acceptance and implementation of recommendations. This is important, as it enhances understanding of the value and effect of the work of the Unit.

52. The Office of Information and Communications Technology has provided the hosting and maintenance services for the web-based tracking system since 2018. The system has been operational throughout 2020 and no major disruptions in its operation were experienced. The Unit continues to work with the Secretariat to address enhancements and services.

53. Owing to the combination of a lack of additional specific funding and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which diverted staff resources and rearranged the Unit's work priorities, the planned development of new functionalities was not carried out in 2020. The following new features will be programmed when the required resources become available: open access to the statistics, reporting capabilities and graphics provided by the web-based tracking system; and enhancements to facilitate easier access to the web-based tracking system by Member States (avoiding the need to manage a user/password combination).

Number of recommendations

54. The table below indicates the average number of recommendations by report, note and management letter, which stood at 7.5 in 2020.

Number of Joint Inspection Unit reports, notes and management letters and recommendations, 2014–2020

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total 2014–2020
Reports, notes and management letters								
System-wide and several organizations	7	5	11	9	6	7	7	52
Single organization	3	6	25	2	1	3	1	41
Total, reports, notes and management letters	10	11	36	11	7	10	8	95
Recommendations								
System-wide and several organizations	61	33	74	56	49	44	56	373
Single organization	16	16	26	20	3	14	4	99
Total, recommendations	77	49	100	76	52	58	60	472
Average number of recommendations by output	7.7	4.5	2.8	6.9	7.4	5.8	7.5	5.0

Source: Web-based tracking system, January 2021.

Acceptance and implementation rates of system-wide and single organization recommendations

55. The average rate of acceptance of recommendations made between 2012 and 2019 was 80 per cent for single organization reports and notes, and 68 per cent for system-wide reports (see figure below).⁴ During the same period, the implementation rate of recommendations that had been accepted in system-wide reports and notes was 79 per cent, and slightly higher for single organization reports and notes (81 per cent).

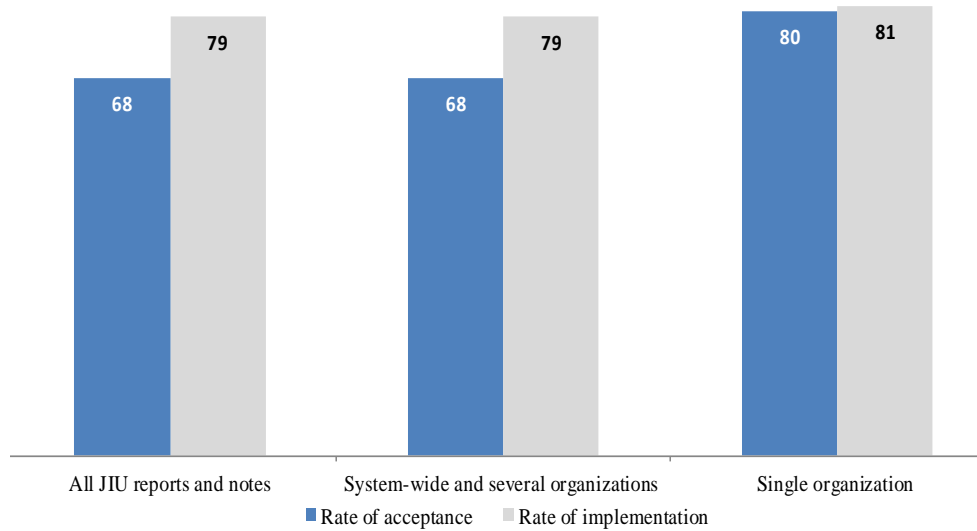
56. The Unit commends the organizations for the action taken to implement its recommendations (see annex II, showing the aggregated acceptance and implementation rates by participating organizations from 2012 to 2019).

57. The Unit has found that recommendations addressing the enhancement of system-wide coherence have the lowest rates of acceptance and implementation. It appears that organizations generally find it difficult to act on such recommendations that require cross-agency work. The Unit will continue to work with the CEB and participating organizations on the measures to address the implementation of recommendations relating to enhancing system-wide coherence.

⁴ As of January 2021, no input for 2019 had been provided by ILO, ITC, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UN-Habitat and UNODC. In 2020, a significant number of participating organizations decided to postpone their governing bodies' meetings owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. This may explain the lower rate of inputs by some organizations in 2020.

Figure
Average rate of acceptance of the Joint Inspection Unit recommendations and rate of implementation of accepted recommendations (2012–2019)

(Percentage)



Source: Web-based tracking system, January 2021.

Chapter II

Outlook for 2021

58. With restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic expected to continue in 2021, the Joint Inspection Unit will adapt its approach to the programme of work delivery as needed. In doing so, the Unit will maintain its focus on improving organizational effectiveness by enhancing transparency, accountability and system-wide coordination, learning from good practices and improving efficiency so that organizations may make the best use of available resources, as stipulated in article 5 of the statute of the Unit. This focus is even more pressing considering the continuing pandemic and its impact on budgets, planning, staffing and reform efforts in United Nations system organizations. The Unit will continue to respond to the demands for independent external oversight and ensure that the programme of work is delivered in a timely manner and remains of high quality.

59. The programme of work of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2021 comprises five system-wide projects and two management and administration reviews of single organizations. The Unit will revisit the programme of work in the middle of the year with regard to the reviews, which typically require in-person meetings and site visits, as those are essential for the gathering of data. The Unit will assess the viability of undertaking the reviews if travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic are still in place.

60. Pending a decision by or guidance from the General Assembly on the strategic framework of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2020–2029 (A/74/34, annex I), the Unit will proceed with its implementation. This will include holding targeted forums to discuss the products of the Unit and engaging with participating organizations on the strategic goals and approaches outlined in the framework. **To facilitate its work, the Unit would welcome the consideration of its strategic framework by the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session.**

61. Many of the outreach activities planned for 2020, in particular with the executive heads of participating organizations, were curtailed or cancelled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Joint Inspection Unit looks forward to resuming its outreach to stakeholders in 2021 to further refine and streamline its processes and deepen the impact of its products. The activities will include an increased engagement with the leadership of organizations to familiarize them with the strategic framework and exchange information on emerging challenges and the contribution that independent external oversight can make. The Unit will also schedule its biennial meeting with organizational focal points in 2021 in a format that will encourage broad and interactive participation and is likely to be online.

Chapter III

Programme of work for 2021

62. In preparing its programme of work, the Joint Inspection Unit considered proposals for reviews submitted by its participating organizations as well as oversight and coordination bodies of the United Nations system and the inspectors themselves. The final programme of work adopted by the Unit at its session in January 2021 includes five system-wide projects and two management and administration reviews (see annex V).

63. The workplan of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2021 comprises seven new projects, which are summarized below, as well as the projects carried over from 2020.

Summaries of projects in the programme of work for 2021

Review of management and administration in the United Nations Human Settlements Programme

64. The review of management and administration in UN-Habitat was included in the programme of work of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2020. However, in response to a request from the Executive Director of UN-Habitat to postpone the review, owing to several concurrent internal activities and restructuring, the review was suspended in May 2020 and will now resume in 2021.

65. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, the precursor to UN-Habitat, was established in 1977. The Programme, based in Nairobi, operates in more than 90 countries, maintains four regional offices and runs activities in the range of \$225 million annually. One of the key functions of UN-Habitat is its role within the United Nations system as a focal point on sustainable urbanization and human settlements, including in the implementation, follow-up to and review of the New Urban Agenda, as well as in supporting the urban dimension of the 2030 Agenda, in collaboration with other United Nations entities.

66. UN-Habitat has been facing important challenges. In endorsing the New Urban Agenda, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, held in Quito in October 2016, the General Assembly initiated a series of reviews aimed at enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and oversight of UN-Habitat. A high-level independent panel established by the Secretary-General found that UN-Habitat had limitations in terms of accountability, transparency and efficiency, that its resources had been inadequate, insecure and unpredictable and that it had strayed too far from its normative mandate.

67. UN-Habitat has subsequently undertaken a series of major internal and external reforms of its governance, financing, organizational structure, management and work culture. Against that backdrop, the Joint Inspection Unit will undertake its first management and administration review of UN-Habitat. The review will examine organizational arrangements within the Programme to support transparency, accountability, efficiency, effectiveness and trust, which the Executive Director stated was the purpose of ongoing changes.

Review of policies, measures, mechanisms and practices to prevent and address racism and racial discrimination in the United Nations system

68. The Charter of the United Nations stipulates that one of the purposes of the United Nations is to achieve international cooperation in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion (Art. 1, para. 3). The Organization has conducted

extensive work at the national level to promote human rights and combat racism and racial discrimination. Senior United Nations officials have emphasized that the Organization must lead by example and have an honest assessment of how it upholds the Charter within the institution. This first step is important for enhancing trust in and the credibility and integrity of the United Nations system and its leadership role as a true partner in achieving internationally agreed goals and implementing multilateral conventions.

69. The Secretary-General has clarified that the fight against systemic and institutional racism and racial discrimination in the United Nations must go beyond the two existing instruments designed to ensure geographical representation and inclusivity. Various efforts were initiated in United Nations system organizations in 2020, including self-reflection, assessment and training for the development or refinement of initiatives to address racism and racial discrimination. The review of policies, measures, mechanisms and practices to prevent and address racism and racial discrimination in the United Nations system will respond to the request by a significant number of those organizations that the Unit exercise its system-wide mandate to enhance the development of a common understanding, system-wide position and benchmarking framework that would enhance inter-agency operations across the system.

70. The review will examine prevention, accountability and administrative measures to address racism and racial discrimination in the United Nations system. It will describe the status quo and variations across organizations and assess the appropriateness, adequacy and integrity of policies and organizational, structural and systemic measures. It will also identify capacities, challenges, constraints and success factors.

Review of business continuity policies and practices in United Nations system organizations

71. Business continuity refers to a framework on which an organization builds its resilience and facilitates the continuation of its operations in the event of a disruption to its business activities. To minimize the impact of major disruptions, business continuity plans outline how operations can continue at headquarters and centres away from headquarters, including country offices.

72. The review of business continuity policies and practices in United Nations system organizations will be a follow-up to the review conducted by the Joint Inspection Unit in 2011 (JIU/REP/2011/6). In the previous review, the Unit found that only a handful of organizations had implemented business continuity in a comprehensive way and had approved policies and plans in place. That review contained nine recommendations aimed at improving the low level of implementation and establishment of business continuity policies and practices across the United Nations system.

73. The review will provide an updated assessment of business continuity policies and practices across the United Nations system, including how policies are implemented and updated and the staff functions that support business continuity planning within the various business models, as well as good practices and lessons learned from recent disruptive events. The review will be aimed at assisting United Nations system organizations and contain an analysis and lessons learned on how prepared, resilient, able and aligned organizations may deliver on their mandate when threats and crises disrupt operations. It will look at how participating organizations have implemented, updated and refined their business continuity policies and practices against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and other recent disruptive events.

Review of the management of implementing partners in organizations of the United Nations system

74. The Joint Inspection Unit will undertake a review and update of its previous review of the management of implementing partners of 2013 (JIU/REP/2013/4) and assess the major developments and changes in practices that have occurred with regard to engaging and dealing with implementing partners, including how the changing landscape has had an impact on various aspects of the relationships, whether in respect of the funds and programmes, specialized agencies and Secretariat structures or of normative, developmental, peacekeeping and humanitarian entities. An in-depth assessment will be undertaken of the status of acceptance and implementation by the United Nations entities of the recommendations made in 2013, including an analysis of the actions taken and responses furnished by the organizations and an analysis of the evidence provided.

75. The Joint Inspection Unit will consult closely with its participating organizations to assess the difficulties, obstacles and impediments encountered in accepting and implementing any of the recommendations of the previous review and provide its own assessment of the challenges and constraints that have hindered the full implementation by the United Nations entities of those recommendations and how they can be best addressed and ameliorated. The review will take appropriate account of the impact of COVID-19 as it relates directly to the engagement and management of implementing partners. It will also draw upon reviews of related topics undertaken by the Unit during the intervening years, as appropriate.

76. The review will explore ways of strengthening inter-agency cooperation and coordination in the management of implementing partners. As in 2013, the proposed review will focus on the adequacy of, and compliance with, the accountability, internal control and risk management frameworks of the organizations in engaging and managing implementing partners, their capacity to monitor and evaluate programme delivery by the implementing partners and the audit and other oversight arrangements in place related to implementing partners.

Review of the internal pre-tribunal stage appeal mechanisms available to staff members in the United Nations system organizations

77. Internal (non-judicial) appeal mechanisms that precede the tribunal stage have not been the focus of a comparative, system-wide examination to date. Justice-related reviews carried out by such bodies as the Redesign Panel on the United Nations system of the administration of justice, the Internal Justice Council or the Joint Inspection Unit have tended to focus mostly on the system of internal justice as a whole. Against this background, the Unit has decided to include in its programme of work for 2021 a review of the internal pre-tribunal stage appeal mechanisms available to staff members in the United Nations system organizations to assess whether the existing internal appeal mechanisms provide adequate recourse, due process safeguards and confidence as regards their fairness, integrity, transparency, impartiality and credibility.

78. As reaffirmed by the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal, “the right to an internal appeal is a safeguard which international civil servants enjoy in addition to their right of appeal to a judiciary authority”.⁵ The Tribunal also stated that “the existence of an internal appeal procedure allows the organization, if need be, to remedy an omission or rectify an error and, if necessary,

⁵ See judgment 4313 of the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal, adopted at its 130th session, in 2020, citing established jurisprudence.

to alter its position before a final decision is taken”.⁶ Against this background, the existence of effective and adequate internal recourse mechanisms is vital for both the organizations and the staff members concerned.

79. In its review, the Unit will undertake a comparative analysis of existing pre-tribunal stage appeal mechanisms available to staff members to challenge administrative decisions and will identify possible gaps in areas where staff members lack recourse on matters affecting them. The findings and recommendations of the review will be geared towards the improvement of recourse options available to staff in the United Nations system organizations, thereby contributing to safeguarding employee rights, reducing related inequalities and institutional risks and furthering justice-related improvement efforts overall. Furthermore, they may provide the basis for longer-term reform efforts that could significantly improve the credibility and effectiveness of internal justice mechanisms for the benefit of staff across the United Nations system.

Review of management and administration in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

80. Founded in 1945 as a specialized agency of the United Nations, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is dedicated to lead international efforts to defeat hunger. Its goal is to achieve food security for all. Following a change in leadership in 2019, a new strategic vision and direction have been established for building a more dynamic FAO. The secretariat has also undergone a major restructuring and changes to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and cross-sectoral collaboration with a strengthened risk management approach.

81. The review of management and administration in FAO is part of the series of such reviews of participating organizations carried out periodically by the Joint Inspection Unit. The main objective of the review is to provide an independent assessment of the implementation of the reforms in the management and administration of FAO. Its focus will be on the status of the reforms, especially the structural reforms of the secretariat and the adequacy of current arrangements for risk and change management and financial and human resources management, as well as the governance, oversight and accountability mechanisms and their alignment with the ongoing reforms and restructuring of FAO.

82. In its first review of the management and administration in FAO ([JIU/REP/2002/8](#)), in 2002, the Joint Inspection Unit made a total of 13 recommendations, 3 of which were addressed to the FAO Council and 10 to the executive management. The status of their implementation will be taken into consideration if still relevant and applicable.

Review of accountability frameworks in the United Nations system organizations

83. The review of accountability frameworks in the United Nations system organizations is a follow-up to that conducted by the Joint Inspection Unit in 2011 ([JIU/REP/2011/5](#)). Since the previous review, there have been several significant developments relating to accountability in the United Nations system organizations, namely, the implementation of internal control frameworks, the adoption and implementation of the three lines of defence model and an increased implementation of enterprise risk management. Several organizations have implemented management reforms that have restructured their management, expanded delegated authority to lower levels and shifted internal controls accordingly, and implemented management attestation for the implementation and operation of the system of internal controls.

⁶ Ibid.

The United Nations Secretariat has moved to an annual budget cycle, and new budget preparation and reporting to legislative bodies have been introduced. A consolidated programme planning and budgeting document, focused on results and performance, is a key element in an accountability system.

84. The main objective of the review will be to assess the progress made by the United Nations system organizations in strengthening accountability frameworks in line with the recommendations made in 2011 and to update the benchmarks, where necessary, taking into consideration developments in accountability systems in the past 10 years. The scope of the review will be limited to the accountability frameworks as developed by the organizations themselves.

85. Furthermore, the Joint Inspection Unit will maximize the United Nations system-wide scope of the review to help its participating organizations to identify gaps in their respective accountability frameworks and relevant risks, as well as any good practices that could be shared. Decisions, principles and actions adopted by United Nations system organizations as members of CEB will be included in the scope to determine to what extent the organizations meet the agreed commitments.

Annex I

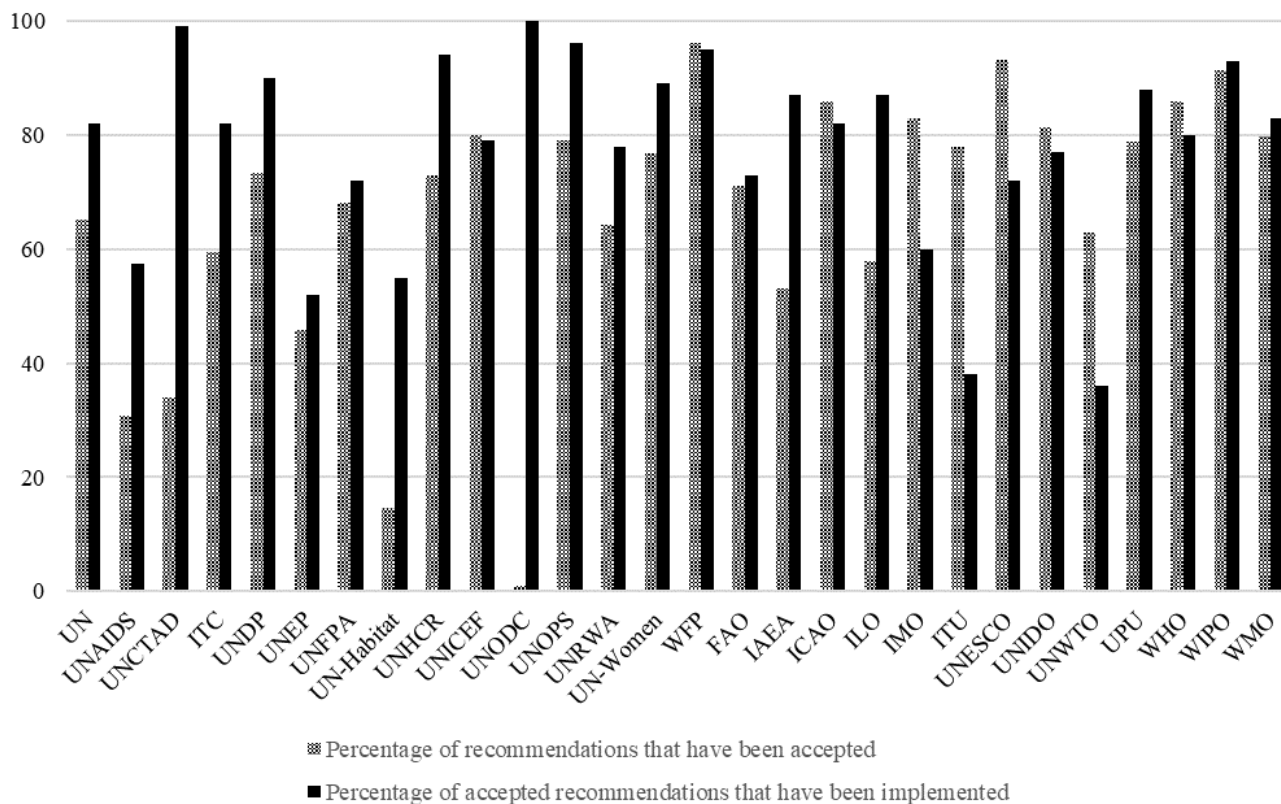
Status of implementation of the workplan for 2020 as at 31 December 2020

<i>Project title</i>	<i>Symbol/completion date</i>
Review of the state of the investigation function: progress made in the United Nations system organizations in strengthening the investigation function	JIU/REP/2020/1
Policies and platforms in support of learning: towards more coherence, coordination and convergence	JIU/REP/2020/2
United Nations common premises: current practices and future prospects	JIU/REP/2020/3
Review of management and administration in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	JIU/REP/2020/4
Enterprise risk management: approaches and uses in United Nations system organizations	JIU/REP/2020/5
Multilingualism in the United Nations system	JIU/REP/2020/6
Blockchain applications in the United Nations system: towards a state of readiness	JIU/REP/2020/7
Review of mainstreaming environmental sustainability across organizations of the United Nations system	JIU/REP/2020/8
Review of management and administration in the World Meteorological Organization	To be completed in 2021
Cybersecurity in the United Nations system organizations: a review of policies and practices	To be completed in 2021
Comprehensive review of United Nations system support for the landlocked developing countries	To be completed in 2021
Current state of the ethics function in the United Nations system	To be completed in 2021

Annex II

Status of acceptance of Joint Inspection Unit recommendations and implementation of accepted recommendations by participating organizations, 2012–2019

(Percentage)



Annex III

List of contributing organizations and their percentage share in the costs of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2020

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
FAO	3.7
IAEA	1.6
ICAO	0.6
ILO	1.8
IMO	0.2
ITU	0.5
UNAIDS	0.5
UNDP	13.3
UNESCO	1.8
UNFPA	2.5
UNHCR	10.6
UNICEF	15.4
UNIDO	0.7
United Nations	15.7
UNOPS	2.2
UNRWA	3.6
UN-Women	0.9
UNWTO	0.1
UPU	0.2
WFP	15.8
WHO	7.0
WIPO	1.0
WMO	0.3

Source: CEB.

Note: The United Nations entry includes the United Nations Secretariat, UNITAR, UNU, ITC, ICSC, the International Court of Justice and the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund. It excludes tribunals, special political missions and peacekeeping operations.

Annex IV

Composition of the Joint Inspection Unit

1. The composition of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2020 was as follows (each inspector's term of office expires on 31 December of the year indicated in parentheses):

Gopinathan Achamkulangare (India) (2022)
Aicha Afifi (Morocco) (2020)
Jean Wesley Cazeau (Haiti) (2022)
Eileen A. Cronin (United States of America) (2021)
Petru Dumitriu (Romania) (2020)
Jorge T. Flores Callejas (Honduras) (2021)
Keiko Kamioka (Japan) (2024)
Jeremiah Kramer (Canada) (2020)
Nikolay Lozinskiy (Russian Federation) (2022)
Sukai Elie Prom-Jackson (Gambia) (2022)
Gönke Roscher (Germany) (2020)

2. As at 1 January 2021, the composition of the Joint Inspection Unit was as follows:

Gopinathan Achamkulangare (India) (2022)
Jean Wesley Cazeau (Haiti) (2022)
Eileen A. Cronin (United States) (2021)
Jorge T. Flores Callejas (Honduras) (2021)
Keiko Kamioka (Japan) (2024)
Nikolay Lozinskiy (Russian Federation) (2022)
Jesús Miranda Hita (Spain) (2025)
Victor Moraru (Republic of Moldova) (2025)
Sukai Elie Prom-Jackson (Gambia) (2022)
Gönke Roscher (Germany) (2025)
Tesfa Alem Seyoum (Eritrea) (2025)

3. In accordance with article 18 of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, which provides that each year the Unit shall elect from among the inspectors a chair and a vice-chair, the Bureau of the Unit for 2021 is as follows:

Jorge T. Flores Callejas (Honduras), Chair
Gönke Roscher (Germany), Vice-Chair

Annex V

Programme of work for 2021*

<i>Project No.</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Type</i>
A.456	Review of management and administration in the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)	Single
A.457	Review of policies, measures, mechanisms and practices to prevent and address racism and racial discrimination in the United Nations system	System-wide
A.458	Review of business continuity policies and practices in United Nations system organizations	System-wide
A.459	Review of the management of implementing partners in organizations of the United Nations system	System-wide
A.460	Review of the internal pre-tribunal stage appeal mechanisms available to staff members in the United Nations system organizations	System-wide
A.461	Review of management and administration in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Single
A.462	Review of accountability frameworks in the United Nations system organizations	System-wide

* Subject to change during the year.

