



Joint Inspection Unit
of the United Nations System

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"Independent
system-wide
inspection, evaluation
and investigation"

Review Highlights

JIU/REP/2024/2

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REVIEW OF CONSIDERATION AND ACTION TAKEN ON THE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT BY UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ORGANIZATIONS

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Background

A proper consideration of JIU reports and notes and adequate measures to follow-up on recommendations contribute to the effectiveness of the Unit in fulfilling its system-wide evaluation, inspection and investigation mandate, as stressed several times by the member States. Articles 11 and 12 of the JIU statute provide the legal basis in this respect and spell out in detail the procedures for handling and processing JIU reports by the Unit itself, its participating organizations and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), as well as the procedures for the implementation of JIU recommendations and verification thereof.



Objectives & Purpose

The main objective of the review was to determine the current situation regarding the consideration of JIU reports and the decision-making process relating to acceptance and implementation of its recommendations by participating organizations and their legislative organs and governing bodies, and to assess the progress made since 2017 when the Unit reviewed and made proposals on the same subject matter (JIU/REP/2017/5). Furthermore, the review intended to identify good practices in the handling and consideration of JIU reports and the decision-making on the recommendations made therein. The recommendations of the present report aim to address the persisting gaps and deficiencies.



What the JIU found



1. Improvements identified in the handling and consideration of JIU reports and recommendations by its 28 participating organizations and the Unit, resulting from the proposals contained in the 2017 JIU report.

Overall, the process of handling JIU reports by its participating organizations and their consideration by the legislative organs and governing bodies, including the acceptance and implementation of JIU recommendations, have clearly improved over the years. The 28 JIU participating organizations and the Unit itself have made considerable efforts and taken effective actions to address the lacunae identified in the 2017 JIU report.

In terms of consideration of reports:

- Regarding the consideration of reports by the legislative organs and governing bodies, all – except seven organizations, which fall under the umbrella of the General Assembly, and IAEA – now consider JIU reports either regularly or on an as-needed basis.
- Some legislative organs and governing bodies have delegated the consideration of JIU reports to their respective subsidiary bodies. Such delegation of oversight matters to subsidiary bodies is considered a valuable means for enhancing decision-making on JIU recommendations and monitoring their implementation, as recommended in a recent JIU report on governance and oversight of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women (JIU/REP/2023/7).
- JIU reports constitute standing annual agenda items in the sessions of 18 legislative organs and governing bodies and are treated as stand-alone agenda items in 14 organizations.
- Reports of the executive heads to the legislative organs and governing bodies listing all relevant JIU reports and notes issued during the preceding year are submitted to 19 legislative organs and governing bodies.
- The frequency with which JIU reports are considered differs among organizations but is generally once a year.

In terms of acceptance and implementation of recommendations:

- The overall rate of acceptance of recommendations has significantly increased, from 65 per cent in 2017 to 74 per cent in 2023.
- Only 5 per cent of long-outstanding recommendations (i.e., unimplemented for 10 years or more) remain. Twenty-seven participating organizations have almost no long-outstanding recommendations to be accepted, and only very few to be implemented.
- There is now a generalized buy-in and use of the web-based tracking system by all JIU participating organizations to report on their action on recommendations.

In terms of time taken by CEB to issue the S-G note with comments of participating organizations:

- A positive finding was an almost 50 per cent decrease in the average time taken by the CEB to issue the Secretary-General's notes on JIU reports with comments from the CEB between 2014/2015 (10.5 months) and 2020/2021 (5.5 months). The average time is now within the statutory six-month time frame prescribed in article 11.4 (e) of the JIU statute.

In terms of recommendations to enhance system-wide coordination and cooperation:

- Recommendations by the JIU intended to enhance coordination and cooperation among the United Nations system organizations are now better integrated into the CEB machinery. In 2016, JIU made concrete proposals on the formulation of system-wide recommendations. Since 2018, the High-level Committee on Management and its related networks have been considering and taking follow-up action informed by JIU reports.

2. Deficiencies and shortcomings identified that must be addressed

In terms of a formal follow-up system for the consideration and action taken on JIU reports:

- **Effective follow-up is still a concern.** Based on the JIU proposal towards a more effective system on follow-up on JIU reports and recommendations (endorsed by the General Assembly in 1999), between 2001 and 2005, fourteen participating organizations took decisions on follow-up systems by approving the 1997 model framework for follow-up or adjusting it to their needs. To date, five organizations still have no formal follow-up system in place. The review found that striving for decisions on a formal follow-up system is still relevant. A formal follow-up system will be more up to date, specific and detailed than the general obligations under the JIU statute and thus will make an important contribution towards improving the follow-up to JIU reports and recommendations.

In terms of dissemination and distribution of JIU reports:

- **Opportunities for improvement in the internal dissemination of JIU reports and its distribution to member States.** While about half of the participating organizations indicated that they had formalized the dissemination of JIU reports, their statements were not supported by internal directives, circulars or other administrative instruments. Almost none of the participating organizations – except WFP and UNIDO – immediately distribute JIU reports, as required under the statute.

In terms of the new CEB terminology for classifying JIU recommendations:

- **The CEB uses the terms “support” and “partially support” to classify JIU recommendations, instead of the previously used terminology “support” and “generally support”.** This terminology is not compatible with the criteria used by the Unit. Therefore, misunderstandings can arise from the information provided in the Secretary General's notes with comments from the CEB on the JIU recommendations.

In terms of consideration of reports and related decision-making:

- **There is no sufficient time allocated for the consideration of oversight matters in general, and of JIU reports in particular,** in the work programmes of the legislative organs and governing bodies.

- **There is a need to improve the decision-making of legislative organs and governing bodies on the follow-up to JIU reports that goes further than taking note.** Only four organizations propose to their legislative organs and governing bodies a concrete course of action (i.e. a draft decision or resolution) to be taken on JIU reports and recommendations as suggested by the 2015 JIU report.
- **There is a need for increased participation by JIU in the sessions of legislative organs and governing bodies to improve substantive discussions.** The opportunities for JIU to participate in the sessions of the legislative organs and governing bodies of participating organizations are still limited; more frequent participation of JIU Inspectors would considerably contribute to a substantive discussion of JIU matters and to improved decision-making on JIU recommendations.
- **The current fragmented and bundled submission of JIU reports by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly impedes a proper assessment of their implementation progress.** The thematic bundling of JIU reports with reports of the Secretary-General for submission to the General Assembly fragments the work of the JIU and fails to provide a complete picture of the Unit's outputs. As a result, the General Assembly and its committees do not have a comprehensive overview of actions taken by the General Assembly and the Secretary-General on JIU reports.
- **There is a need to include information on newly released JIU reports.** Only 13 participating organizations provide information on newly released JIU reports. 12 of them report on both recommendations addressed to the legislative organs and governing bodies and recommendations addressed to the executive heads.

In terms of acceptance and implementation of JIU recommendations:

- **Half of the participating organizations do not include in their reporting a reference on the status of previous years' JIU recommendations.** At present, 13 participating organizations do not provide the required level of detail – that is, a dedicated section and a matrix – on the status of JIU recommendations from previous years until their full implementation in their reporting to legislative organs and governing bodies.
- **A wide range of methods for tracking and updating the implementation of recommendations do exist across participating organizations.** Only a few organizations have dashboards that track all oversight recommendations (internal and external), including those of JIU, which allow a complete picture of their status and timeliness for implementation.

- **Reporting of organizations on the status of acceptance and implementation of JIU recommendations in the JIU web-based tracking system are lagging.** While the organizations are expected to periodically update the status of acceptance and implementation of each recommendation, and include appropriate documentary evidence, an analysis of the input regarding JIU reports issued between 2019 and 2021 showed that only 10 organizations had provided such information.
- **The increasing obsolescence of the JIU web-based tracking system requires the engagement of member States for the replacement by a more up-to-date and versatile database.** The JIU web-based tracking system no longer meets the technical standards prescribed by the Office of Information and Communications Technology of the United Nations Secretariat, which hosts the platform. This constitutes a rapidly growing cybersecurity risk. The continued availability of the current application is uncertain. As stated in several General Assembly resolutions, the monitoring of the status of JIU recommendations is crucial and the tracking system offers a unique wealth of information for both participating organizations and member States. It is therefore indispensable that it be replaced as soon as possible.
- **The creation of a new category labelled “closed recommendations” is required.** Internal and external audit recommendations have a shorter time frame for implementation than JIU recommendations, which are broader and system-wide in scope. JIU recommendations are not binding, their acceptance and implementation are not mandatory. Setting a specific time frame for closing long-outstanding JIU recommendations (i.e. those issued 10 or more years ago) is considered beneficial. It would require acceptance of the risk on the part of the participating organizations concerned for not accepting and not implementing such recommendations.
- **The effectiveness of the role of JIU focal points depends on their level, location and reporting line, as well as on the importance given to their JIU responsibilities.** JIU focal points coordinate and mainstream all JIU matters within their organizations. The focal point plays a key role in the review and report preparation process, but also for a successful follow-up process. The 2017 JIU report recommended a direct reporting line of JIU focal points to the senior management of the organizations as critical. Not much progress has been made since then. 15 focal points still do not have such a direct reporting line. Furthermore, among the other responsibilities generally assigned to JIU focal points, there should be sufficient weight provided for their JIU related duties.
- **The role of the independent audit and oversight committees has expanded, but there is room for improvement.** Some good practices were identified regarding the consideration of JIU reports and recommendations in the sessions of the committees and reflection on them in the annual reports. These committees can play a key role in monitoring the implementation of JIU recommendations. However, there is room for improvement as many of the committees do not yet cover JIU reports and recommendations adequately in their sessions and reports.



Approach & Methodology

The review was conducted from February 2023 to December 2023 on a system-wide basis and covered 28 JIU participating organizations.

JIU used a mixed-method research approach, which included qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis, and drew on multiple sources, including:



A desk review and an in-depth analysis of the policies and procedures relating to the consideration of and decision-making on JIU reports and the recommendations therein, such as relevant documentation of the legislative organs and governing bodies of JIU participating organizations and annual reports of executive heads, internal oversight functions and audit and oversight committees.



A corporate questionnaire and two supplementary questionnaires sent to 28 JIU participating organizations.



Interviews with 80 individuals from 25 participating organizations (in-person or remotely), including representatives of executive offices, JIU focal points – in some cases in the secretariats of legislative organs and governing bodies – and the chairs of audit and oversight committees.



What the JIU recommends

The JIU makes 6 formal recommendations to participating organizations: 2 are addressed to the legislative organs/ governing bodies and 4 are addressed to the executive heads.

The executive heads of United Nations system organizations are called on to:

1 Present to their legislative organs and governing bodies a proposal for a follow-up system for JIU reports and recommendations based on the 1997 JIU model framework and the good practices of other United Nations system organizations, and seek the approval of their legislative organs and governing bodies thereon not later than by the end of 2025. (recommendation 1).

3 Take individual or collective action, in consultation with the executive heads of other CEB member organizations, preferably within the framework of the CEB inter-agency coordination mechanisms, to revise the current CEB terminology relating to JIU recommendations by the end of 2025, with the aim of making it compatible with the criteria used by JIU so that factually correct information on the acceptance of JIU recommendations, based on the comments of CEB entities, is provided in the Secretary General's notes on JIU reports. (recommendation 3).

5 Provide detailed comments and appropriate information, as well as supporting evidence on the implementation of accepted recommendations in the JIU web-based tracking system so as to allow the monitoring of their full implementation (recommendation 5).

6 Ensure that detailed information and justification are provided in the JIU web-based tracking system for all JIU recommendations that are marked as "not accepted" or "not relevant", and include this information in their periodic reporting to their legislative organs and governing bodies. (recommendation 6).

The legislative organs and governing bodies of United Nations system organizations are called on to:

2 Re-examine their processes for the consideration of JIU reports and recommendations, including their decision-making thereon and the monitoring of the implementation of JIU recommendations from previous years, by taking into account the good practice examples identified in the present report, as appropriate (recommendation 2).

The General Assembly is called on to:

4 Support the request for the additional financial resources required to replace the current JIU web-based tracking system, which will be funded through the contributions of the participating organizations as part of the existing cost-sharing arrangements for the 2025 JIU budget (recommendation 4).



2023-2024 JIU Reports

JIU/REP/2024/1. Review of management and administration in the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)

JIU/REP/2023/9, Review of the quality, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of health insurance schemes in the United Nations system organizations

JIU/REP/2023/8, Review of the use of non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities in the United Nations system organizations

JIU/REP/2023/7, Review of governance and oversight of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women

JIU/REP/2023/6, Review of flexible working arrangements in United Nations system organizations

JIU/REP/2023/5, Review of management and administration in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

JIU/REP/2023/4, Review of mental health and well-being policies and practices in United Nations system organizations

JIU/REP/2023/3, Review of accountability frameworks in the United Nations system organizations

JIU/REP/2023/2, Review of the internal pre-tribunal stage appeal mechanisms available to staff members in the United Nations system organizations

JIU/ML/2023/1, Findings, conclusions and recommendations relevant to the work of the High-level Committee on Management on mental health and well-being policies and practices in United Nations system organizations

JIU/REP/2023/1, Review of management and administration in the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

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