



## The Origins and Institutionalization of the Joint Inspection Unit

*This article is part of a series commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations system highlighting its mandate, evolution and contribution to the United Nations system over the last six decades.*

### The Origins

In the early 1960s, the United Nations was confronted with a serious financial crisis, which precipitated the proposal for an independent administrative and financial oversight body. In 1965, The General Assembly, through the Fifth Committee (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”. This led to the adoption of resolution 2049 (XX), by which an Ad Hoc Committee of Experts was assigned to examine the financial situation of the UN and of the specialized agencies across the system.

### Operating on a Temporary Basis

At the time, external oversight of financial management in the UN system was limited. The Ad Hoc 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. Following a report published by the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts, the Joint Inspection Unit was established one year later by the General Assembly during its 21st session under Resolution 2150 (XXI) on 4 November 1966 as an external control body. The Assembly determined that the Unit should become operational by 1 January 1968 at the latest, on an experimental basis and for an initial period of four years. This marks the starting point for the JIU’s pioneering role in system-wide oversight. From 1966 to 1978, the Unit initially operated as a temporary body. The Unit consisted of eight Inspectors, who were chosen for their expertise in national or international administrative and financial matters. The JIU was thus established as the only external, independent oversight body of the United Nations system, mandated by the General Assembly to provide an independent perspective through inspection and evaluation aimed at improving management and methods and at achieving greater coordination among organizations.

This experiment was approved for an initial period of four years. The main characteristics of the JIU, as we know it today, were established in this agreement. The Unit was envisioned and designed to be administratively attached to the Secretary-General, in his/her capacity as chief administrative officer of the United Nations Secretariat and as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (predecessor of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination). Funding for the operations of the JIU was established through a cost-sharing scheme between the participating organizations.

### From Experiment to Permanent Institution

In the subsequent years following its temporary establishment, the General Assembly reaffirmed the JIU’s mandate and extended its operations several times under various resolutions. The unanimously adopted Resolution 2360 (XXII) of 1967 strengthened coordination procedures and established a more cooperative relationship between the JIU and the Panel of External Auditors, which helped to avoid overlap and increase efficiency. The JIU also received the authority to review the work of all the organizations in the UN family and the allocation of the voluntary funds entrusted to them. At the same time, the resolution recognized the independence of the JIU in its operations, responsibilities and functions.

In 1970 and 1972, Resolutions 2735 A (XXV) and 2924 (XXVII) 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 from various members of the General Assembly, 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 Assembly 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 coordinating nature to minimize any redundancy between them.

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) noted that the UN system would benefit from the continued services of the JIU and encouraged all UN organizations to continue their active participation and cooperation 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”. This statement 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 in the years leading up to its formal institutionalization, the JIU produced an average of 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, assessing policies for coherence and risk-management as well as evaluating performance and reform aspects. Topics covered a range of activities undertaken by UN system organizations and focused mostly on matters surrounding operation, coordination and cooperation. During these early years, the JIU was praised for its identification of surplus costs, performance measuring and modern management methods. Two examples of reports conducted by the Unit exemplify how the work of the Unit, as well as its evaluation techniques, were positively appraised during these early years:

- In response to the JIU report (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 report (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 that its “reporting and network analysis are most pertinent” (A/6343/Ad Hoc Committee of Experts).

## Independence of Inspectors

The Unit is composed of 11 Inspectors who, according to article 5 of the JIU 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”. To emphasize its independence, the JIU Statute establishes that Inspectors are not staff members of the United Nations. Instead, they serve in a personal capacity as officials of the United Nations.

This means that Inspectors’ reports are published under their own signature. Inspectors are appointed by the United Nations General Assembly in accordance with a selection procedure in which Member States, the President of the General Assembly, the President of Economic and Social Council and the Secretary-General in his or her capacity as Chairman of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (formerly the Administrative Committee on Coordination) participate.

The inaugural group of Inspectors 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). When the current statute came into effect on 1 January 1978, the number of Inspectors increased after 1976 from 8 Inspectors to 11 Inspectors.

## The Institutionalization

The Unit’s Statute, which changed the status of the JIU from a temporary body to a permanent body, was adopted by the General Assembly in 1976 and came into effect in 1978. Resolution 31/192 established the JIU as the only permanent independent external oversight body empowered with a system-wide mandate. As such, the Unit became a standing subsidiary organ of the General Assembly and other legislative bodies of UN organizations that accepted its statute, which is a unique feature.

The elements included in the 1966 report by the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts provided the basis for the Unit’s Statute. The report emphasizes the independence of the Inspectors and reaffirms that the JIU was created to assist intergovernmental bodies in management review and reform processes. The Statute defines the mode of operation, conditions of service and the administrative, budgetary and financial arrangements of the JIU.

In addition to its system-wide mandate, the JIU’s financing model represents another innovative approach. In accordance with article 20 of the Unit’s Statute, its 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 participating organizations have agreed to finance the JIU on the basis of a cost-sharing agreement.

**Why the Establishment of the JIU Still Matters Today**

Sixty years after its establishment, the Joint Inspection Unit remains a cornerstone of accountability and system-wide learning within the United Nations system. The principles that guided its creation—*independence, objectivity, and a focus on efficiency and effective use of resources*—are as relevant today as they were in the context of the 1960s financial crisis. In an environment marked by growing complexity, resource constraints and evolving global challenges, the JIU continues to provide Member States and participating organizations with independent, evidence-based insights that support reform, strengthen governance and enhance the performance of the UN system as a whole.

**Explore the JIU’s History**

Discover how the Joint Inspection Unit has evolved over six decades of oversight through the JIU60 timeline, highlighting key milestones, reforms and achievements since 1966.

“ *The JIU has come a long way since its founding and is now an integral component of the United Nations system. While we reflect on six decades of progress, we remain focused on the future and on continuing to add value through independent, evidence-based oversight.* ”



**Inspector Conrod HUNTE,**  
Chair of the JIU for the year 2026

**KEY MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE**

# JIU

- 1965

Ad Hoc Committee of Experts assigned to examine the financial situation of the United Nations and the specialized agencies.
- 1966

Joint Inspection Unit established under Resolution 2150 (XXI) on 4 November.
- 1968

First JIU report issued.
- 1970 - 1972

Resolution 2735 A (XXV) and Resolution 2924 (XXVII) extended JIU for a period of 4 years.
- 1976

JIU Statute adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (Resolution 31/192).
- 1978

JIU Statute goes into effect.
- 1999

First follow-up agreement established with the United Nations.
- 2000

89th plenary meeting : Decides to consider the annual reports of the Unit on an annual basis
- 2008

First JIU self-evaluation
- 2010

JIU Strategic Framework 2010-2019 presented to the General Assembly.
- 2012

Second JIU self-evaluation.
- 2013

JIU External Peer Review.
- 2016

JIU celebrates 50 years.
- 2019

Strategic framework of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2020-2029
- 2022

JIU self-Assessment
- 2026

JIU celebrates 60 years.