



General Assembly

Distr.: General
9 August 2000

Original: English

Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 123
Joint Inspection Unit

Note by the Secretary General

In accordance with article 9, paragraph 2, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the work programme of the Unit for 2000 and the preliminary list of potential reports for 2001 and beyond.

Programme of work of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2000 and preliminary listing of potential reports for 2001 and beyond

I. Introduction

1. The following work programme has been drawn up in accordance with article 9, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 31/192 of 22 December 1976, and takes into account the guidelines laid out in successive Assembly resolutions on the functioning of the Unit, in particular resolution 50/233 of 7 June 1996 and 54/16 of 19 November 1999. Section II of the present document contains the Unit's programme of work for 2000; and section III, a preliminary listing of potential reports for 2001 and beyond, which includes subjects the Unit has identified to be dealt with after the completion of the ongoing reports. As hitherto, the programme of work is subject to change in the course of the year: new reports may be added; planned reports may be modified, postponed or cancelled when circumstances warrant; and titles may be changed to reflect the new thrust of reports. The Unit would highly appreciate receiving any comments from the legislative organs, other external and internal oversight bodies and the secretariats of participating organizations on the content of the programme of work for 2000 and/or the preliminary listing of potential reports for 2001 and beyond.

II. Work programme for 2000

A. Common and joint services in Vienna

2. The item was included in the work programme for 1999 but was not initiated during that year. The report is part of the ongoing series of Joint Inspection Unit reports on common administrative services for United Nations system organizations co-located at different duty stations. Previous reports in the series include: United Nations system common premises and services in the field (A/49/629); common services at United Nations Headquarters (A/51/686), as well as the Secretary-General's comments contained in document A/51/686/Add.1 and the Unit's comments thereon (A/51/686/Add.2); and, more recently, United Nations system common services at Geneva: overview of

administrative cooperation and coordination (A/53/787), the second part of which, containing case studies of selected common services at Geneva, will be issued shortly. The shared objectives of those reports is to provide impetus and a rational framework for the development and management of common administrative services in order to scale down overhead structures and costs and achieve more cost-effective methods and tools of programme delivery.

B. Review of management and administration in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

3. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been facing administrative and managerial problems despite its ongoing reform process, which was introduced in 1988. The Director-General of UNESCO proposed that the Joint Inspection Unit should carry out a management review to help UNESCO find solutions to those problems. The review will focus on: (a) results-based planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation; (b) management information system; (c) external and internal oversight and control; (d) human resources management; and (e) field representation and decentralization. The Unit report will be submitted to the Executive Board of UNESCO at its one hundred sixtieth session, to be held in October 2000.

C. Report on delegation of authority in the United Nations Industrial Development Organization

4. The Joint Inspection Unit included in its 1999 programme of work a report on delegation of authority. The subject had been proposed by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The report originally intended to take stock of the current situation in the secretariats of the United Nations and UNIDO, to evaluate experience gained so far and to develop certain standards for delegation of authority to be applied in future cases. During the preparation of the report the Inspectors came to the conclusion that the question was so important that it deserved to be the subject of separate reports addressed to individual organizations. The first report, which will be issued shortly, is addressed to the United Nations. The second report will be devoted to UNIDO.

D. Review of management and administration in the World Health Organization

5. The report will be the third in a series following up on the Joint Inspection Unit report on accountability, management improvement and oversight in the United Nations system (A/50/503) and the Joint Inspection Unit report on more coherence for enhanced oversight in the United Nations system (A/53/171). A first report on the International Labour Organization (ILO) was issued in 1999 and a second on UNESCO is included in the present work programme. The report will review recent major management reforms and initiatives at WHO, and consider the applicability of the recommendations contained in the two Joint Inspection Unit reports on oversight mentioned above.

E. Planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation in the United Nations system: learning from best practices

6. In spite of its management objective, a planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation system has not worked coherently within the United Nations system. In particular, the interconnection of each step of the cycle has not been effective, resulting in an improper functioning of such a system. A number of United Nations system organizations have initiated results-oriented reform processes to improve their planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation systems, in order to cope more adequately with requirements for efficiency and accountability. However, proper design and review of the current systems cannot be done without systematic consideration of the cycle as a whole. The review aims at clarifying the concept of the new results-oriented approach, identifying the impact of its application to the whole cycle, and suggesting principles and ways to improve, within the framework of the results-based approach, the current methodologies for planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation of United Nations system organizations. Through analysis and action-oriented recommendations, the report will assist Member States and United Nations system organizations in designing and reviewing results-based systems with a view to using them as an effective management tool. The review has been included in the work programme upon suggestions made by a number of secretariats of the organizations participating in the Joint Inspection Unit: Food and Agriculture

Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), International Maritime Organization (IMO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Universal Postal Union (UPU), UNIDO, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), United Nations and UNESCO.

F. Report on support costs on programmes and activities financed from extrabudgetary resources

7. The question of support costs has been a long-standing issue in the United Nations system. Given the ever-increasing activities financed from extrabudgetary funds, a comprehensive and clear methodology for the administration of programme support costs would need to be established on a United Nations system-wide basis. So far, the Joint Inspection Unit has carried out several reviews on the subject. The proposed report of the Joint Inspection Unit will first review the concept of programme support costs, and then examine different methods currently used for determining the percentage of overhead charged, as well as the donors' policies and the legal framework for payment of programme support costs. The issue will be reviewed on a system-wide basis, in order to recommend standard policies, practices and procedures, but particular focus will be placed on those organizations and programmes whose activities are financed from voluntary contributions.

G. Comparative analysis of the management of junior professionals in the organizations of the United Nations system

8. The demographic profile of staff in most organizations of the United Nations system, where up to half of the members of the secretariats are due to retire during the present decade, combined with evolving mandates and policies requiring new types of skills not always available among the staff, call for a rejuvenation of the human resources of the secretariats. At the same time, some of the organizations are faced with a growing number of resignations of staff in the lower echelons of the Professional category that migrate to other labour markets. The major objective of the report will be to compare policies and practices in the organizations of the system with regard to the recruitment and management of entry-level of

professional staff as well as the rate of retention of their professional staff with a view to identifying possible causes of this migration trend, highlighting the best and most cost-efficient practices for the recruitment and management of junior Professionals and making concrete recommendations as to ways to prepare a cadre of dedicated and competent professionals for the participating organizations.

H. Handling of oversight reports by legislative organs

9. The objective of the report is to examine the practices of the legislative organs of the Joint Inspection Unit participating organizations in the handling of oversight reports, and to present recommendations to enhance overall effectiveness and impact of oversight activities on the basis of shared responsibility. The proposed report is complementary to the previous Joint Inspection Unit report entitled "More coherence for enhanced oversight in the United Nations system" (A/53/171), and is basically a synthesis, with an expanded coverage, of a series of notes on the handling of Joint Inspection Unit reports by various participating organizations produced during the course of 1999 and early 2000. The report will deal with questions such as coordination among oversight mechanisms at each organizational level, forums where and how oversight reports are to be considered and follow-up on the recommendations made by oversight bodies by duly taking into account the development of the ongoing interaction of the Joint Inspection Unit with the participating organizations.

I. Review of management and administration of the United Nations Office at Geneva

10. The objective of the review is to examine the structure of the United Nations Office at Geneva, and its management and administration practices, with a view to recommending concrete measures to improve its cost-effectiveness. The review will provide an assessment of the capacity of the United Nations Office at Geneva as potential provider of additional common services to the United Nations system organizations based in Geneva. It will also review the quality of the services provided by the United Nations Office at Geneva to other United Nations offices in Geneva with a view to improving these services and making them more cost-effective. There will be an inspection of outsourcing practices with the aim of exploring further

possibilities in this area. The report will also consider issues arising from the degree of delegation of authority to the United Nations Office at Geneva. This review will build on an earlier report of the Unit, which reviewed United Nations system common services at Geneva (A/53/787) by focusing on the potential for enhancement of the current role and performance of the United Nations Office at Geneva.

J. Management of buildings: case study of United Nations Headquarters

11. The past report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the management of buildings in the United Nations system (A/50/753) provided early warning that negligence in systematic maintenance of properties of the organizations, due to chronic underfunding, was both dangerous and expensive in the medium and long term. To cope with the needs of repair, replacement of equipment and upgrading of buildings, the report recommended, inter alia, the establishment of buildings funds supported by fixed regular contributions. Responding to the suggestion from the United Nations Secretariat, the Unit will review this subject, in particular in the context of urgent needs of major repairs and upgrading works in the United Nations Headquarters buildings. Profiting from the experience of other organizations of the United Nations system, the planned report is aimed at examining and recommending financial and operational options to address the present situation, as well as measures to avoid such problems in the future.

K. Administration of justice in the organizations of the United Nations common system: options for higher recourse instances

12. The main objective of the report, which is a corollary to the Joint Inspection Unit report on the administration of justice at the United Nations (A/55/57), is to provide an in-depth review of the various systems of administration of justice at the organizations in the United Nations system, particularly as regards higher instances of appeal in respect of decisions of the lower judicial and semi-judicial bodies. The review is aimed at formulating recommendations designed to ensure maximum efficiency and expediency in the administration of justice in the organizations in the United Nations common system, bearing in mind the possibility of reducing costs and effecting savings through the

merging of existing judicial institutions and the pooling of their resources. Subjects for analysis in the context of the proposed report include: the International Court of Justice as the principal judicial organ in the United Nations system; the relationship between the two main administrative tribunals in the United Nations system — the United Nations Administrative Tribunal and the ILO Administrative Tribunal; the establishment of a unified higher appeal instance for the United Nations system as a whole, offering a recourse against decisions of the tribunals and ensuring consistent application of legal standards among the lower-instance bodies at the system organizations; and different options for a second-tier appellate mechanism.

III. Preliminary listing of potential reports for 2001 and beyond

13. The following are indications of subjects that the Inspectors have identified for potential reports to be prepared during the course of 2001 and beyond. The list is tentative and does not necessarily imply that the Unit is committed to taking up those subjects:

- (a) Review of the financial situation in the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA);
- (b) Review of management and administration in FAO;
- (c) United Nations revenue-producing activities: income generation and cost recovery;
- (d) Evaluation of international drug control activities in the United Nations system;
- (e) Evaluation of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV);
- (f) Evaluation of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS);
- (g) Successfully extending technical cooperation projects to the end beneficiaries;
- (h) Effectiveness of the Performance Appraisal System in the United Nations system.

IV. Notes

14. According to article 11, paragraph 5 of its statute, the Unit produces notes submitted to the executive heads for use by them as they may decide. In this regard the Unit plans to issue notes on the following subjects:

- (a) Handling of reports of the Joint Inspection Unit by IMO;
- (b) Handling of reports of the Joint Inspection Unit by the World Food Programme;
- (c) Handling of reports of the Joint Inspection Unit by UNIDO;
- (d) Handling of reports of the Joint Inspection Unit by the International Atomic Energy Agency;
- (e) Handling of reports of the Joint Inspection Unit by UNESCO;
- (f) Handling of reports of the Joint Inspection Unit by the United Nations;
- (g) Review of the reform process in the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO;
- (h) Shipment entitlement in the United Nations system and option of a lump sum.