



# WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

**EXECUTIVE BOARD**  
**115th Session**  
**Provisional agenda item 7.6**

**EB115/24**  
**9 December 2004**

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## **Reports of the Joint Inspection Unit and related matters: recent JIU reports**

### **Report by the Secretariat**

1. In 2003, the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) issued seven reports. Six were not of direct relevance to WHO.<sup>1</sup>
2. Comments on the remaining report – Multilingualism and access to information: case study on the World Health Organization (JIU/REP/2003/4) – together with JIU’s main findings and recommendations, are contained in the Annex to this document.
3. The Executive Board also had the opportunity to discuss the subject of multilingualism at its 114th session in May 2004. The topic generated considerable interest, giving rise to a number of specific queries that went beyond the issues dealt with in the JIU case study. The Secretariat has therefore prepared a second document on this issue, (document EB115/3), which contains a summary of the main questions and concerns raised as well as the Secretariat’s response.
4. In 2004, JIU has to date issued eight reports, two of which were not considered to be of direct relevance to WHO.<sup>2</sup> The other six reports are: Review of the headquarters agreements concluded by the organizations of the United Nations system: human resource issues affecting staff (JIU/REP/2004/2); Administration of justice: harmonization of the statutes of the United Nations

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<sup>1</sup> • JIU/REP/2003/1: Review of management and administration in the United Nations Industrial Organization (UNIDO);  
• JIU/REP/2003/2: Review of the United Nations budgetary process;  
• JIU/REP/2003/3: From the Optical Disk System to the Official Documents System (ODS): status of implementation and evaluation;  
• JIU/REP/2003/5: Achieving the universal primary education goal of the Millennium Declaration – new challenges for development cooperation;  
• JIU/REP/2003/6: Management review of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; and  
• JIU/REP/2003/7: Evaluation of the United Nations Volunteers Programme.

<sup>2</sup> • JIU/REP/2004/1: Multilingualism and access to information: case study of the International Civil Aviation Organization (please note, however, that paragraph 44 of this report suggests linking the web site of the International Civil Aviation Organization to WHO’s web site entitled “International Travel and Health”);  
• JIU/REP/2004/4: Review of management and administration in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Administrative Tribunal and the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal (JIU/REP/2004/3); and four reports issued together in the Series on managing for results in the United Nations system, comprising Overview of the series of reports on managing for results in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2004/5), Part I: Implementation of results-based management in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2004/6), Part II: Delegation of authority and accountability (JIU/REP/2004/7), and Part III: Managing performance and contracts (JIU/REP/2004/8).

5. Although all of these reports are considered to be of relevance to WHO, to date the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination has not provided its comments and the reports have not yet been submitted to the General Assembly. The reports deal with important issues that have system-wide significance and, to an extent, implications for harmonization. Given their nature, it would appear indispensable to have the official views of the United Nations on these matters and it would therefore be better to postpone consideration of the reports to a later session of the Executive Board.

#### **ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

6. The Executive Board is invited to take note of the reports and the accompanying report by the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee.

## ANNEX

## REPORT OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT – 2003

Title	Purpose	Recommendations	Position of the WHO Secretariat
<p><b>JIU/REP/2003/4</b></p> <p><b>Multilingualism and access to information: case study of the World Health Organization</b></p>	<p>To evaluate the extent to which the practice of multilingualism within WHO enables the different target audiences to access the information made available to them.</p>	<p><b>Rec.1:</b> The Health Assembly could:</p> <p><b>Rec.1(a):</b> Better define the expectations of Member States with regard to the implementation of resolution WHA50.32 (1997) on respect for equality among the official languages, by being more selective about the information products to which the Secretariat should give priority, taking into account both existing provisions relating to multilingualism and budgetary constraints.</p>	<p><b>Rec.1(a):</b> WHO governing bodies regularly review the use of languages within the Organization and, over time, have adopted a number of resolutions on this topic. Multilingualism is also being proposed as one of the agenda items for the Fifty-eighth World Health Assembly and the Secretariat hopes that some of the Member States' expectations have already been met. For example, a number of high-impact WHO publications are now issued in the six official languages; the top pages of the WHO web site (<a href="http://www.who.int">http://www.who.int</a>) are being translated into all six official languages (currently only available in three); outbreak news, press releases, and WHO fact sheets on the Internet are henceforth to be published in all six official languages. In addition, pilot projects for the "Health topics" and "Countries" sites have started or will begin shortly. The Lusophone E-Health Network initiative was launched in November 2004. The Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative (HINARI), developed by WHO, already operates in English, French and Spanish. The WHO library provides online access to the full text of selected WHO publications in all six official languages as well as non-official languages. The Secretariat would welcome additional suggestions on priorities for the use of languages and related modes of financing. This is particularly important as it is sometimes quite difficult to reconcile the two equally worthy objectives of promoting multilingualism and enforcing greater budgetary rigour.</p>

Title	Purpose	Recommendations	Position of the WHO Secretariat
		<p><b>Rec.1(b):</b> Invite the Director-General to submit to the Fifty-eighth World Health Assembly a draft medium- and long-term plan of action setting out measurable indicators linked to predetermined objectives and concerning the Organization as a whole.</p> <p><b>Rec.1(c):</b> Decide to establish, as part of such a plan, a special fund for the purpose of gradually translating into the official languages those information products deemed to have priority.</p>	<p><b>Rec.1(b):</b> The Director-General has already started implementing a package of short- and medium-term measures for improving the use of languages in the Organization. The majority of the short-term measures have been listed among the comments to Rec.1(a) above. The medium-term measures concern, in addition, the translation of the summary records into the two remaining official languages, together with a greater translation effort directed at WHO publications, both those issued recently and which remain relevant and those under preparation. The WHO library plans to make the different language versions of all WHO information materials available electronically; training materials for HINARI users will also be made available in all six official languages. A progress report on all these efforts will be submitted to the Fifty-eighth World Health Assembly.</p> <p><b>Rec.1(c):</b> The Secretariat considers that the proposed special fund might indeed offer some advantages, as it would permit the channelling of concrete support for multilingualism-related initiatives, which in the past have sometimes been hampered by a shortage of funds. However, the Secretariat also believes that raising and utilizing extrabudgetary funds for certain languages in this manner must be carefully balanced with the need for strict equity in the treatment of all official languages.</p>

Title	Purpose	Recommendations	Position of the WHO Secretariat
		<p><b>Rec.2:</b> The Executive Board and the Health Assembly might care to re-examine the scope of resolution WHA50.32 (1997) in order better to define their expectations regarding the strict application of rules setting out linguistic practice applicable within the Secretariat, given that, contrary to the practice of several other organizations within the United Nations system, there is no formal document that defines the working languages of the Secretariat of WHO.</p>	<p><b>Rec. 2:</b> Contrary to some of its sister agencies in the United Nations system, WHO is a highly decentralized organization with several regional centres and this is reflected in its current flexible use of working languages. At WHO headquarters, administrative information is normally provided in English and French; between the regions, however, there are variations in the languages used by the Secretariat for such information. This flexible approach has so far proven to be well-suited to the needs of the Organization as it makes it possible for the Secretariat to reflect more closely the language mix prevailing in its various locations. Thus, viewed as a whole, the use of most official languages, and indeed, of additional official languages at the regional level (such as Portuguese in the African Region or German in the European Region) is already common throughout the Secretariat. As the current arrangements have worked well, the Secretariat sees no compelling reason to alter them at this point, particularly since that would lessen regional flexibility and require substantial additional translation resources. Furthermore, any changes would be made at the expense of the translation of information for the benefit of countries, since it is from this activity that the necessary resources would most probably be withdrawn, rather than from translation work for WHO's internal use.</p>

Title	Purpose	Recommendations	Position of the WHO Secretariat
		<p><b>Rec.3:</b> The Director-General should review, in close consultation with the Directors of the regional offices, the information production and dissemination processes and mechanisms with a view to:</p> <p><b>Rec.3(a):</b> Ensuring greater respect for the multilingual approach to the content of information products and remedying the lack of coordination and communication among the various departments of the Secretariat responsible for overall information management, by carrying out, if appropriate, the required structural adjustments on the basis of the relevant recommendations made by the internal audit of publications policies and procedures carried out in 1999.</p> <p><b>Rec.3(b):</b> Reporting to the Executive Board and to the Health Assembly within the framework of the plan of action proposed in recommendation 1(b) above.</p>	<p><b>Rec.3(a):</b> WHO agrees with this recommendation, but would like to point out that, in view of the complexities involved, this will be a long term effort that will take time to be fully implemented. Important steps in this direction have, however, already been taken, including the implementation of structural changes, taking account of both the report cited by the Inspectors and WHO's new publishing needs since 1999. These changes comprise the establishment by the Director-General, in early 2004, of a department of knowledge management and sharing in the cluster on evidence and information for policy in order to help strengthen health systems in countries and support knowledge management throughout WHO. A task force on multilingualism has been established by this Department to tackle this important issue in the various contexts in which it is present, such as WHO's library, web site and publications. In addition, a publishing unit is being established to ensure consistent policy formulation for WHO publications.</p> <p><b>Rec.3(b):</b> As indicated in its comments to Rec.1(b) above, the Secretariat proposes to include its briefing to the WHO governing bodies on these matters in its progress report on the short- and medium-term plan of action for improving the use of languages in WHO.</p>

Title	Purpose	Recommendations	Position of the WHO Secretariat
		<p><b>Rec.4:</b> The Director-General should issue a standing instruction to the departments responsible for human resources management and Internet sites to ensure that:</p> <p><b>Rec.4(a):</b> Online or paper vacancy announcements are issued simultaneously in at least two of the Organization's official languages.</p> <p><b>Rec.4(b):</b> The basic information currently available in English under the heading "Employment" on the Organization's home page should gradually be translated into the other official languages covered by the web site and reproduced on the sites of the regional offices by means of hyperlinks.</p>	<p><b>Rec.4(a):</b> All WHO fixed-term vacancy announcements are already issued in English and French, except in the Region of the Americas. In the latter region, where French is not an official language, such announcements are issued in English and will soon also be available in Spanish. Dual-language vacancy notices for temporary appointments are already prepared whenever feasible and efforts are continuing to extend this practice to all temporary vacancies.</p> <p><b>Rec.4(b):</b> The entire employment web site is already available in English and French; part of the site is also accessible in Spanish. Applicants can therefore apply in English and French, and the Spanish site will soon be completed, permitting further applications in this language. In so far as the other official languages are concerned, pending a more comprehensive translation of the employment site, special recruitment briefing and training efforts (such as the recent recruitment seminar in China) are being undertaken by the department of human resources. Vacancies listed on the WHO web site include regional office vacancies and headquarters encourages regional offices to link to the WHO "Employment" heading from their own web sites.</p>

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		<p><b>Rec.5:</b> The Director-General should, after having heard the views of the different departments concerned, both at headquarters and in the regional offices:</p> <p><b>Rec.5(a):</b> Update the evaluation of current processes and practices in respect of online publishing with a view to determining the most appropriate ways and means of improving access to information and the multilingual content of the Organization's web sites, and report thereon to the governing bodies within the framework of the plan of action referred to in recommendation 1(b).</p> <p><b>Rec.5(b):</b> Draw up uniform rules, in the form of an administrative circular, setting out general instructions for online publishing, duly taking into account the potential for linkage between the sites maintained at headquarters and those of the regional offices, and between WHO sites and those of other bodies.</p>	<p><b>Rec.5(a):</b> WHO agrees with this recommendation and informs the Executive Board that the web team has developed and disseminated detailed policies and guidelines for publishing on the WHO web site, which can be accessed at the following address: <a href="http://intranet.who.int/homes/web">http://intranet.who.int/homes/web</a>. The policy and guidelines web pages include a web editorial style guide; image guidelines, a draft domain name policy and a copyright notice. Links are also provided to and from the WHO web site. In addition, clear procedures have been established for training technical unit staff with responsibility for online publishing.</p> <p><b>Rec.5(b):</b> The WHO web team is preparing an administrative circular presenting the unit responsible for this area of work. The circular will be issued to all staff members in the form of an information note that will outline policy and process ownership and provide contact information for follow-up.</p>

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