

# HANDLING OF JIU REPORTS BY FAO

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## HANDLING OF JIU REPORTS BY FAO

### I. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations General Assembly resolution 50/233 of 7 June 1996 has established the principle that *“the impact of the Unit (JIU) on the cost-effectiveness of activities within the United Nations system is a shared responsibility of the Member States, the Unit and the secretariats of the participating organizations.”*

In this context, the Joint Inspection Unit, for its part, has been making efforts to fulfill its own responsibility which is certainly one of the necessary conditions for enhancing the effectiveness and impact of its activities.

While continuing its own efforts, JIU has reviewed the practices of the participating organizations in their handling of JIU reports.

The organizations covered in the exercise are, in addition to FAO, the United Nations (including 4 of its affiliated bodies: UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP) and the 11 other participating organizations (ILO, UNESCO, ICAO, WHO, UPU, ITU, WMO, IMO, WIPO, UNIDO and IAEA), using the JIU reports produced during the last five years (1994 - 1998) as samples.

The matters examined in the exercise are mainly:

1. Distribution practices of JIU reports to the States members;
2. Criteria for selecting JIU reports to be taken up by legislative organs;
3. Agenda items under which JIU reports are considered;
4. Secretariat comments on JIU reports submitted to legislative organs, and decisions by legislative organs on JIU reports/recommendations (e.g., specific decisions on recommendations or only ‘take note’ of reports and comments thereon, or no decision at all), and
5. Follow-up actions by secretariats on the implementation of JIU recommendations.

On each of these matters, this Note<sup>1</sup> presents the current practice of FAO, followed by JIU comments and recommendations addressed to the Director-General of FAO.

The Joint Inspection Unit looks forward to working closely with FAO’s Director-General, and his secretariat, on ways to improve the handling of its reports.

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<sup>1</sup> Separate Notes are being prepared for each organization.

## II. MATTERS OF CONCERN RELATING TO THE HANDLING OF JIU REPORTS

### 1. Distribution practice of JIU reports to the States members

#### 1.1 *Current practice of FAO*

According to the FAO secretariat, JIU reports taken up by the FAO Council are issued in full as information documents to all States members of FAO under cover of secretariat comments on the reports (see 4.1(a)). It is noted, in this connection, that JIU reports are considered, in principle, by both the Council's Programme Committee and the Finance Committee delegated to do so by the Council.

#### 1.2 *JIU Comments and Recommendations*

JIU Statute Article 11, paragraph 4(c) stipulates that "upon receipt of [JIU] reports, the executive head or heads concerned shall take immediate action to distribute them, with or without their comments, to the States members of their respective organizations".

The availability of JIU reports to the States members of the respective organizations is indeed the very first step for enhancing "the impact of the Unit on the cost-effectiveness of activities within the United Nations system", and, in this context, the current practice of FAO, as indicated in 1.1 above, is considered to be a good one on practical grounds.

Nevertheless, as a supplement to the current distribution practice of FAO, JIU intends to make its reports available on line through its planned Website.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 1:**

***As a supplement to the current distribution practice of FAO , the Director-General, upon receipt of JIU reports, may wish to inform States members of FAO of the titles of the reports received as well as of the available option of accessing the JIU Website (once established) for the reports.***

## 2. Criteria for selecting JIU reports to be taken up by legislative organs

### 2.1 Current practice of FAO

Reports “of interest to FAO” (including all system-wide reports) are taken up.

### 2.2 JIU Comments and Recommendations

The current practice of FAO on this matter is satisfactory and requires no particular recommendations.

## 3. Agenda items under which JIU reports are considered

### 3.1 Current practice of FAO

According to FAO’s explanation, within the Programme Committee and Finance Committee sessions, JIU reports appear under the agenda item “Joint Inspection Unit Reports”. When the legislative organs believe it would be appropriate, a JIU report can be listed under a separate substantive item<sup>2</sup>.

### 3.2 JIU Comments and Recommendations

For the purpose of facilitating an effective consideration of JIU reports by legislative organs, it is important to place the reports under appropriate substantive agenda item(s).

Accordingly, the United Nations General Assembly resolution 50/233, in operative paragraph 4, requested the United Nations Secretary-General, and invited other executive heads, “to take the necessary measures to ensure that the thematic reports of the Unit are listed under the appropriate substantive agenda items of legislative organs”.

### **RECOMMENDATION 2:**

***On the basis of the spirit behind operative paragraph 4 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 50/233 and with a view to further improving the FAO’s current arrangements on the matter, the Director-General may wish to inform JIU, prior to each session of the Programme Committee and the Finance Committee, of the preliminary list of items to be included in the provisional agenda, for possible suggestions from JIU regarding under which agenda item(s) it would be most appropriate to list the Unit’s reports that are to be considered.***

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<sup>2</sup> For example, the JIU report on “More coherence for enhanced oversight in the United Nations system” (JIU/REP/98/2) was placed under the agenda item “Oversight matters” at the Finance Committee at its 92nd session (May 1999), in addition to being listed under the agenda item “Joint Inspection Unit Reports” at the Programme Committee at its 81st session (May 1999).

#### 4. Secretariat comments on JIU reports submitted to legislative organs, and decisions taken by legislative organs on JIU reports/recommendations

##### 4.1 Current practice of FAO

- (a) As noted already in 1.1, JIU reports (of interest to FAO) are submitted in full to both the Programme Committee and Finance Committee of the Council, together with the comments of the Director-General, and ACC (Administrative Committee on Coordination) when available<sup>3</sup>.
- (b) The Director-General's comments on each JIU recommendation range from simply 'taking note' to specific suggested actions, and according to the FAO secretariat, both the Programme Committee and Finance Committee, after their consideration of JIU reports, submit reports to the Council, either recommending that 'note' be 'taken', or making specific recommendations where appropriate regarding the JIU reports. In practice, however, the two Committees usually 'take note' of JIU reports, without recommending actions on each of the JIU recommendations.

##### 4.2 JIU Comments and Recommendations

By inviting "*the legislative organs of ... participating organizations to take concrete action on the recommendations of the Unit*", the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 50/233, intended to improve the impact and effectiveness of the JIU, and to facilitate the follow up on (implementation of) JIU recommendations approved by the respective legislative organs.

In this context, it is important that:

- (a) the statutorily-required comments<sup>4</sup> on JIU reports by the executive heads and/or ACC should be prepared in time for the relevant meetings of legislative organs in order to facilitate an effective and timely consideration of JIU reports before they have become obsolete;
- (b) secretariat comments submitted to legislative organs should assist in leading to concrete actions on each of the recommendations contained in JIU reports as indicated in (c) below; and
- (c) legislative organs do not limit action on JIU recommendations to just taking note of them, or to endorsing the comments by the executive heads and/or ACC. Instead, legislative organs are urged to take specific actions along the lines proposed in Recommendation 3<sup>5</sup> below.

Furthermore, the current practice of taking up JIU reports by both the Programme Committee and the Finance Committee may have merits as far as deliberations by the two Committees are complementary to each other. It appears, however, that the practice could sometimes result in different views on the same JIU reports<sup>6</sup>, which may make it difficult to arrive at clear and definitive decisions by the Council on the Unit's reports/recommendations.

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<sup>3</sup> In this context, it is noted that system-wide JIU reports were occasionally taken up with the Director-General's comments only (i.e., without ACC comments) and the ACC comments were taken up later when they became available.

<sup>4</sup> The statutorily-required comments on JIU reports (Article 11 4 (d) and (e)) are not always prepared in a timely manner. Furthermore, these comments, generally speaking, are not necessarily consistent with the earlier comments made on the first draft of JIU reports.

<sup>5</sup> Similar recommendations have already been made in the JIU annual report contained in United Nations General Assembly document A/38/34.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the report of the Programme Committee (CL 116/14, para. 78) and the report of the Finance Committee (CL 116/16, para. 42) on the JIU report (JIU/REP/98/2) on "More coherence"

**RECOMMENDATION 3:**

- (1) *The Director-General is urged to encourage the relevant legislative organ(s) of FAO to take specific decisions (endorse, modify or reject) on each of the recommendations contained in the JIU reports, basically along the following lines:*
  - (a) *Approves recommendations ..., and ...;*
  - (b) *Approves recommendations ..., and ...taking into account the comments thereon by the Director-General (and/or ACC; and/ or the debate in the session);*
  - (c) *Reserves its position on recommendations ...,*
  - (d) *Does not approve recommendations ..., and ....*
  
- (2) *Furthermore, with the aim of facilitating coherent decision-making along the lines indicated above and avoiding the possibility of different positions being taken on JIU reports by each of the two Committees as noted in 4.2 above, the Director-General may wish to review the current practice of JIU reports being taken up by both the Programme Committee and the Finance Committee separately, and possibly propose a new procedure whereby JIU reports would be considered:*
  - (a) *either by the Programme Committee or by the Finance Committee, depending on the substance of the reports; or*
  - (b) *by joint sessions of the Programme and Finance Committees.*

## 5. Follow-up actions by secretariats on the implementation of JIU recommendations

### 5.1 Current practice of FAO

According to the secretariat, the Organization takes actions, ranging, in theory, from 'taking note' of JIU reports to general or specific actions in response to JIU recommendations. However, FAO does not have a formal follow-up system.

### 5.2 JIU Comments and Recommendations

- (a) The implementation of JIU recommendations is the final and most important step in assuring the effectiveness of JIU activities.

In this context, Article 12 of the JIU Statute stipulates:

*"Executive heads of organizations shall ensure that recommendations of the Unit approved by their respective competent organs are implemented as expeditiously as possible. Such implementation may be subject to verification by the competent organs of the organizations ..."*

- (b) This issue has been addressed in an annex ("Towards a more effective system of follow-up on reports of the Joint Inspection Unit") to the JIU annual report contained in United Nations General Assembly document A/52/34.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 4:**

- (1) On the basis of Article 12 of the JIU Statute, and following the good practices in some other organizations<sup>7</sup>, the Director-General of FAO may wish to submit regularly to the relevant legislative organ(s) status reports concerning the measures taken on the implementation of the approved JIU recommendations, as well as on the recommendations not requiring legislative actions but agreed-upon by the Director-General and/or ACC.**

***Such status reports could also include information and analysis on the impact derived from implementation of JIU recommendations.***

- (2) The Director-General may also wish to encourage the relevant legislative organ(s) to approve the follow-up system on JIU reports proposed in the annex of JIU annual report (A/52/34).**

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<sup>7</sup> (1) The United Nations General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it report on the implementation of the recommendations of the JIU as early as 1972 (res 2924B (XXVII) of 24 November 1972). Subsequently, in one of its most recent resolutions (res 52/220 of 13 February 1998), the General Assembly requested "that the individual sections of the programme budget for the biennium 2000 - 2001 contain a summary of the relevant recommendations of the internal and external oversight bodies and, for each recommendation, information on the follow-up action taken." (2) UNESCO's Executive Board included, in one of its recent decisions, a provision to the effect that the Director-General should report regularly on the implementation of the approved recommendations. (3) WMO Executive Council recently approved a resolution which contains a provision that the WMO Secretary-General should give careful consideration to the implementation, as appropriate, of the JIU recommendations which are pertinent to WMO, and to report to the Council. (4) IMO Council endorsed "the intention of the IMO Secretary-General to make every effort to observe the new procedures (i.e., the follow-up system contained in the annex of JIU annual report A/52/34) at least in respect of the JIU reports which are of direct relevance to the work of IMO"