

HANDLING OF JIU REPORTS BY WMO

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I. INTRODUCTION

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 WMO, the United Nations (including 4 of its affiliated bodies: UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP) and the 11 other participating organizations (ILO, FAO, UNESCO, ICAO, WHO, UPU, ITU, 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 regarding JIU reports;
2. Criteria for selecting JIU reports to be taken up by legislative organs;
3. Agenda items under which JIU reports are considered;
4. Secretariat papers/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 Note¹ presents the current practice of WMO, followed by JIU comments and recommendations addressed to the Secretary-General of WMO.

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

¹ Separate Notes are being prepared for each organization.

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

1. Distribution practice regarding JIU reports

1.1 Current practice of WMO

Current practice is that JIU reports “are made available for consultation at the time of the Executive Council (EC-L)” (EC-L Document 18 dated 24 September 1998, Appendix C, para. 1).

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 considered to be the very first step for enhancing “the impact of the Unit on the cost-effectiveness of activities within the United Nations system”.

Towards this end, and as a supplement to the current practice of WMO, JIU intends to make its reports available on-line through its planned Website.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

- (1) *In compliance with JIU Statute, Article 11, paragraph (c), and on the basis of Recommendation 2(2) below, the Secretary-General of WMO is invited to “take immediate action to distribute” JIU reports upon receipt of them. However, if the immediate distribution is considered impractical, then, as an alternative, the reports should be transmitted to the Executive Council in full as part of the documents containing the comments thereon of the Secretary-General of WMO as well as those of ACC when statutorily required. This should be done sufficiently in advance of the Executive Council meetings to allow appropriate time for review of the reports (see also section 4).***
- (2) *Furthermore, as a supplement to the above, the Secretary-General, upon receipt of JIU reports, may wish to inform WMO States members of the titles of the reports received, as well as of the available option of accessing the reports on the JIU Website (once established).***

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

2.1 Current practice of WMO

“Relevant” JIU reports (including annual reports) are taken up (EC-L/Doc. 18, Appendix C, para. 1).

2.2 JIU Comments and Recommendations

The current practice of WMO, as indicated in 2.1 above, could be reinforced through meaningful interactions and dialogues, as recommended below.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

- (1) Upon receipt of the first draft of a JIU report for comments, the Secretary-General would indicate whether the report is, in his opinion, of relevance to WMO; and**
- (2) JIU, by taking into account the comments in (1) above, would indicate which reports the Unit believes should be considered by the Executive Council of WMO when JIU submits “the original version [of the report]” to the Secretary-General, in accordance with Article 11, paragraph 4(a) of the Statute.**

3. Agenda items under which JIU reports are considered

3.1 Current practice of WMO

According to the current practice, JIU reports are considered by the Executive Council under the item “United Nations”, which is one of the sub-items of the agenda item “Cooperation with United Nations and other International Organizations”.

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), as a contribution from a subsidiary body of WMO, assuring at the same time sufficient time for consideration.

Accordingly, 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 3:

On the basis of the intent of operative paragraph 4 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 50/233, the Secretary-General may wish to arrange that:

- (a) JIU reports are placed under appropriate substantive agenda item(s) in the light of their subject matter; and**
- (b) sufficient time is allocated for consideration of JIU reports, with Inspector(s) introducing reports as an established practice.**

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

4.1 Current practice of WMO

- (a) Secretariat papers on JIU reports submitted to the Executive Council contain a very brief summary of the JIU reports, as well as brief comments thereon by the Secretary-General of WMO.
- (b) At the same time, however, the papers in 4.1(a) above contain, as a recent practice, a draft resolution suggested by the Secretariat, which includes a provision that:

“The Executive Council requests the Secretary-General [of WMO] to give careful consideration to the implementation, as appropriate, of the recommendations included in the reports ... which are pertinent to WMO; and to report to the Executive Council under the relevant agenda items.” (EC-L/Doc. 18, Appendix B)

- (c) Decisions actually taken by the Executive Council are basically along the lines as suggested by the Secretariat in 4.1(b) above (the Executive Council does not make a specific decision on each recommendation).

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 comments² 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 papers on JIU reports 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 just 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 4³ below.

² 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, appear to be, once in a while, at variance with the earlier comments made on the first draft of JIU reports.

³ Similar recommendations have already been made in the JIU annual report contained in United Nations General Assembly document A/38/34.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

The Secretary-General is urged to encourage the Executive Council to take specific decisions (endorse, modify or reject) on each of the pertinent 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 Secretary-General (and/or ACC; and/ or the debate in the session);*
- (c) Reserves its position on recommendations ...; and*
- (d) Does not approve recommendations*

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

5.1 Current practice of WMO

- (a) Although the Executive Council currently does not make any specific decision as referred to in 4.1(c) above, and the implementation of recommendations is left to the discretion of the Secretariat, some recommendations are actively followed up according to the Secretariat (JIU understands that WMO takes all the relevant recommendations emanating from the JIU into account when planning and implementing its programme activities).
- (b) With regard to the proposed follow-up system ("*Towards a more effective system of follow-up on reports of the Joint Inspection Unit*")⁴ as contained in the JIU annual report (United Nations General Assembly document A/52/34), WMO stated that the proposals "*were found reasonable and are being followed by WMO as appropriate*". (EC-L/Doc. 18, Appendix C, para. 2)

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) As indicated in 5.1(b) above, WMO's positive stance on the JIU proposal for a follow-up system has been noted.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

In the context of the positive stance of WMO regarding the proposed follow-up system as referred to in 5.2(b) above, and on the basis of Article 12 of the JIU Statute, as well as following the good practices in some other organizations⁵, the Secretary-General may wish to submit regularly to the Executive Council 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 accepted by the Secretary-General.

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

⁴ This follow-up system has just been endorsed by the Fifth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly (GA document A/C.5/54/L.5).

⁵ (1) The United Nations General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it a 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 (155 EX/52) taken in October 1998, a provision to the effect that the Director-General should report regularly on the implementation of the approved recommendations.