

HANDLING OF JIU REPORTS BY WFP

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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 the United Nations (including 4 of its affiliated bodies: UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP) and the 12 participating organizations (ILO, FAO, UNESCO, ICAO, WHO, UPU, WMO, 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 WFP, followed by JIU comments and recommendations addressed to the Executive Director of WFP.

The Joint Inspection Unit looks forward to working closely with WFP’s Executive Director, and her 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 WFP

JIU reports are not distributed generally. Instead, according to the Secretariat paper, "*Copies of all reports ... may be obtained from the Documentation and Meetings clerk.*" (WFP/EB.A/98/7, 31 March 1998).

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 WFP, JIU intends to make its reports available on-line through its planned Website.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

- (1) *With a view to ensuring that JIU reports are available to WFP Executive Board members, the JIU reports submitted for action in accordance with the JIU Statute, Article 11, paragraph 4 and recommendation 2(2) below, should be transmitted to the Executive Board in full as part of the documents containing the statutorily-required comments of the Executive Director/ACC. This should be done sufficiently in advance of the Executive Board meetings to allow appropriate time for review of the reports (see also section 4).***
- (2) *Furthermore, as a supplement to the above, the Executive Director, upon receipt of JIU reports, may wish to inform Executive Board 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 WFP

"Reports relevant to the work of WFP and the Executive Board" are taken up.*

** Actually, JIU reports were not submitted to the Executive Board prior to 1998.*

2.2 JIU Comments and Recommendations

The current practice of WFP, as indicated 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 Executive Director would:**
 - (a) indicate whether the report is, in her opinion, relevant to WFP; and, if not, indicate why; and**
 - (b) ensure that the comments are specific in addressing each of the recommendations of the report, including indication whether some or all of the recommendations could be accepted by her without legislative action.**
- (2) JIU would take the comments in (1) above into account in deciding whether the Unit believes the report in final form should be submitted to the Executive Director, in accordance with Article 11, paragraph 4(a) of the Statute, for consideration by the Executive Board.**

3. Agenda items under which JIU reports are considered

3.1 Current practice of WFP

JIU reports are considered under a separate agenda item "*Reports by the Joint Inspection Unit*".

3.2 JIU Comments and Recommendations

For the purpose of facilitating effective consideration of JIU reports by the WFP Executive Board, it is important to place the reports under appropriate substantive agenda item(s), as a contribution from a subsidiary body of the Board, assuring at the same time sufficient time for consideration.

In this context, it should be noted that 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 Executive Director 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 WFP

- (a) Secretariat papers* on JIU reports submitted to the Executive Board contain a brief summary of the JIU reports which are relevant to the WFP, together with the comments thereon by WFP. Other JIU reports are also listed in the paper for information purposes.

* *"Pursuant to the decision taken on the methods of work by the Executive Board ..., the documentation prepared by the Secretariat for the Board has been kept brief and decision-oriented."* (WFP/EB.A/98/7 of 31 March 1998)

- (b) In connection with (a):

- (i) The WFP Secretariat is facilitating examination of JIU reports by the Board members in advance of the Board meetings by providing them with opportunities; i.e.:

"The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to the document, to contact the WFP staff member(s) listed below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting. This procedure is designed to facilitate the Board's consideration of the document ..." (Ibid.)

- (ii) In taking note of the Secretariat's paper on JIU reports (Ibid.), the Executive Board, at its 1998 Annual Session, recommended that *"the Bureau review future JIU reports, and present its observations for the Board's consideration"* (decision 1998/EB.A/7).

- (c) As a result, according to the WFP Secretariat, decisions taken by the Executive Board are supposed to be *"on the advice of the Board's Bureau, and following through discussion of the issues by the membership of the Board."*

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 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 4² below.

² A similar recommendation had already been made in the JIU annual report contained in United Nations General Assembly document A/38/34, which was subsequently adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 38/229 of 20 December 1983.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

The Executive Director is urged to encourage the Executive Board 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 Executive Director (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 WFP

The WFP Secretariat has indicated: "*In so far as JIU reports were not submitted to the Executive Board prior to 1998 for decision or action [see 2.1 above], there has been no systematic follow-up to JIU reports. The new procedure, however, should ensure, in future, a more coherent response and follow-up as appropriate.*"

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/52/34³.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

- (1) ***The Executive Director is invited to proceed with the implementation of the follow-up system on JIU reports along the line proposed in the annex of JIU annual report A/52/34.***
- (2) ***In this context, and on the basis of Article 12 of the JIU Statute as well as following the good practices in some other organizations⁴, the Executive Director may wish to submit regularly to the Executive Board 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 Executive Director and/or ACC.***

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

³ The proposed follow-up system contained in JIU annual report A/52/34 has now been endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 54/16 of 29 October 1999

⁴ (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 (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 (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"