

Strategic framework of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2020–2029 and medium-term plan for 2020–2024

A. Introduction

1. In its resolution [73/287](#), the General Assembly looked forward to the presentation by the Unit of its medium- and long-term strategic framework for the period from 2020 to 2029. The strategic framework presented in the present annex succeeds the strategic framework for the period from 2010 to 2019, which had been presented to the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session.¹

2. As encouraged by the General Assembly, its formulation was informed by conclusions drawn from the implementation of the strategic framework from 2010 to 2019 (the results achieved can be found in appendix 2) and from the insights garnered in various contexts from participating organizations and Member States.

3. The present strategic framework rests on the foundation of the Statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution [31/192](#), notably its chapter III, which defines the Unit's functions, powers and responsibilities. It reflects General Assembly resolutions [70/257](#), [71/281](#), [72/269](#) and [73/287](#), in which the Assembly stressed the importance of the oversight functions of the Unit in identifying concrete managerial, administrative and programming questions within the participating organizations and providing the General Assembly and other legislative organs of participating organizations with practical and action-oriented recommendations to improve and strengthen the governance of the United Nations as a whole. The Assembly also recognized the need to continue to enhance the impact of the Unit on the management efficiency and transparency of the participating organizations and to make suggestions within the United Nations system.

4. The strategic framework reflects the need expressed by the General Assembly in its resolution [73/287](#) to consider the dynamics and challenges of the environment in which the Unit undertakes its activities and to focus its programme of work on the priority areas of the participating organizations and the Member States of the organizations in the United Nations system. The implementation of the Joint Inspection Unit's strategic framework requires therefore that the Unit, while remaining within its mandate, be agile in aligning with the evolving needs and strategic priorities of legislative bodies and organizations.

5. The Joint Inspection Unit has been established as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly and of the legislative bodies and organizations that accept its Statute. Its core functions are inspection, evaluation and investigation. In carrying out those functions, the Unit may propose reforms and/or make recommendations to the executive heads and/or governing bodies of participating organizations. The unit also develops benchmarking frameworks to facilitate work from a common set of standards and to facilitate effective sharing of information. The Unit's main deliverables are reports, notes and management letters that provide recommendations, information and guidance for use by governing bodies and executive heads of participating organizations.

¹ [A/66/34](#), annex I.

B. Guiding principles

6. In carrying out its work, the Joint Inspection Unit will continue to apply fundamental principles of:

(a) **Independence and impartiality.** The Unit is independent and as such carries out its work free from undue influence or control by others and in the sole interest of the organizations. Independence is critical to ensure objectivity and impartiality and is central to the credibility of the Unit.

(b) **Relevance.** The Unit seeks to be attuned, as suggested by the General Assembly, to the dynamics and challenges of the environment in which it works so as to be both responsive and responsible in focusing on priority items, while balancing various stakeholder demands.

(c) **Leveraging the system-wide mandate to add value.** In an environment where there are established independent internal and external oversight functions in United Nations system organizations, the advantage of the Unit is its ability to address system-wide issues of significance to the United Nations system, and issues that cannot be addressed by other oversight entities.

(d) **Efficiency.** The Unit will limit the cost to organizations by ensuring effective coordination, collaboration and partnerships in its planning and delivery with due regard to the mandate of the respective bodies. The Unit will also seek to maximize the use of knowledge and information it produces, as well as that produced by other independent oversight bodies.

(e) **Transparency and consultation.** The Unit will exercise transparency in the methods it uses for producing evidence. In the design of its studies and at all stages of its reviews, the Unit will consult and collect information and views from all participating organizations.

C. Strategic goals

7. The long-term goals of the Joint Inspection Unit are anchored in its Statute and the guidance of the General Assembly, and remain consistent. The only changes with respect to those goals are in relation to: a sharper delineation of four thematic areas of focus; the formulation of programmes of work to align with strategic priorities, such as the support of the United Nations system for Agenda 2030; and measures to improve follow-up to the implementation of recommendations and strengthen wider resonance of the Unit's work through more effective dissemination, outreach and communications.

8. The long-term goals are:

(a) To assist the legislative organs of the participating organizations in meeting their governance responsibilities in respect of their oversight function concerning management by the secretariats of human, financial and other resources;

(b) To help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the respective secretariats in achieving the legislative mandates and the mission objectives established for the organizations;

(c) To promote greater collaboration among the organizations of the United Nations system;

(d) To identify best practices, propose benchmarks and facilitate information-sharing throughout the system.

D. Thematic areas of focus

9. The Joint Inspection Unit will carry out its work in the following thematic areas:

(a) Accountability and oversight functions and systems of organizations, as well as the functions for administration of justice and for ethics and integrity;

(b) Management and administration practices and methods of the United Nations system in the areas of human and financial resources, administration, results-based management, strategic planning and management, change management, risk management, security and safety, and the use of digital technologies;

(c) Internationally agreed goals and conventions addressing policies, strategies, and programmes, as well as coordination and collaboration on the realization of internationally agreed development goals, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(d) Governance arrangements and mechanisms, as well as inter-agency coordination.

E. Strategic approach

10. The following describes the strategic approach of the Joint Inspection Unit for achieving the goals and objectives outlined above. Appendix 1 below provides the performance indicators and targets for monitoring performance, as well as a basis for making mid-course corrections, if needed. It shows progress in targets set based on advances over the past 10 years, as highlighted in appendix 2.

1. System-wide reviews: coverage and approach

11. The Joint Inspection Unit will align the selection of topics for system-wide reviews with the four main thematic areas identified. Priority will be given to system-wide reviews with a focus on priority themes issues, including support for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and assessment of reform initiatives.

12. To enhance the relevance of system-wide reviews, the choice of topics will take into account the programmes of work of legislative bodies where available, as well as requests by legislative bodies, consultations with participating organizations and coordination mechanisms, such as CEB, and close coordination with oversight bodies.

13. The Unit will use multiple methods in its approach to carry out system-wide studies for inspection and evaluation. The Joint Inspection Unit has developed experience over the past 10 years in a variety of approaches, modalities and methods and will apply this experience to improve quality and efficiency. The approach will be influenced by the subject matter, level of complexity, scope of the study, the nature of existing knowledge and evidence. The approach will also consider the stage of development of the ongoing reforms in order to provide relevant and timely information to enhance improvement and success.

2. Single organization management and administration reviews: coverage and approach

14. In its resolution [73/287](#), the General Assembly encouraged the Joint Inspection Unit to include single organization reviews every year in its programme of work and to complete them within that time frame. The Unit will endeavour to do both during this strategic framework period, while noting that operational factors within participating organizations and resource limitations within the Unit may have a bearing on what is feasible in any given circumstance. The Unit is developing tools

to inform its consideration of which organizations to prioritize for such reviews, taking into account that the Unit's participating organizations are all different, particularly regarding their mandates and governance structure.

3. Strengthening the quality and rigour of the Unit's products

15. The Joint Inspection Unit appreciates the feedback it has received indicating appreciation for its work, including the relevance and quality of its products. Nevertheless, it remains committed to an ongoing process of improvement. It has recently supplemented its internal working procedures with guidance to enhance rigour at all stages of the project cycle. It is consulting internally and with participating organizations on possible measures of quality that could help strengthen internal guidance on how evidence is generated, analysed and presented.

16. The Unit will also continue its work to enhance the development of capabilities of the staff in the secretariat. Data analytics, communications and updating skills in oversight and evaluation methodologies will be among the focus areas.

4. Strengthening the outcome and impact of the Unit's products

17. The rates of acceptance of the Joint Inspection Unit's recommendations and the implementation of accepted recommendations have increased significantly. The Unit will continue to engage with both organizations and legislative bodies on the consideration, endorsement and implementation of its recommendations. As requested by the General Assembly, attention will be paid to the impact of the implementation of the Unit's recommendations, while recognizing the practical limitations in terms of its capacity for independent verification.

18. An important feature in strengthening the impact of the Unit's products is updating the web-based tracking system of the Unit during the medium-term plan period to improve its functionality and accessibility. This includes enhancing the system's application to allow effective use for data analysis and working with participating organizations and their oversight bodies to make it easier to record the implementation of recommendations in a manner that can be validated, verified and supported with data relating to the impact of the implementation.

19. The Unit plans to carrying out an interconnected synthesis of its work in one thematic area, using multiple focused reports on aspects of that theme, as a way to gain an insight on the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations system in that broader subject area.

5. Joint Inspection Unit benchmarking framework

20. The Joint Inspection Unit's benchmarking frameworks, developed for various subject areas, provide a system-wide standard for comparability, coherence and the sharing of good practices. Organizations have indicated, including at the 2019 meeting of the Unit's focal points, that these frameworks are considered by organizations to be among the Unit's most enduring and valued products. The Unit will ensure the frameworks remain available and will explore ways to effectively engage and share them with its stakeholders.

6. Support to the evaluation function of the United Nations system

21. In line with article 5.4 of its Statute, the Joint Inspection Unit remains available to assist intergovernmental bodies in carrying out their responsibilities for external evaluations of programmes and activities, as well as to support the development of the internal evaluation function in meeting the demands of global changes and challenges and of the 2030 Agenda.

7. Investigations

22. The mandate of the Joint Inspection Unit to conduct investigations is based on article 5.1 of its Statute. The Unit's general principles and guidelines for investigations spell out, among other things, the details of that mandate and its scope, the investigation standards and process, as well as the handling of the outcomes of investigations.

F. Resources

23. Undertaking reviews of a complex nature, including reviews that involve greater focus on reforms at the country and regional levels, will have implications for the financial and human resources of the Unit. The General Assembly, by its resolution [73/287](#), decided to consider any resources associated with the implementation of the medium- and long-term strategy approach in the context of future programme budgets. It is hoped that, in order to enable the General Assembly to consider the matter, the Secretary-General will consult with the Unit on the representation of those requirements in future proposed programme budgets.

24. In any event, the Joint Inspection Unit will continue to optimize the use of its financial and human resources. It will also seek to mobilize extrabudgetary resources, when and where appropriate.

G. Key performance indicators

25. The Joint Inspection Unit has established a performance plan to monitor and to perform a comprehensive assessment of the strategic framework. An assessment will be made at the midpoint, in 2024 and, if required, changes will be made to indicators and/or targets. A selection of key performance indicators from the plan is outlined in appendix 1 and will be used for annual reporting of the Unit's performance. Performance criteria are both quantitative and qualitative and are time-bound to support effective management.

Appendix 1

Results, indicators and performance criteria

1. Coverage

1.1 System-wide coverage

Result 1: Significant coverage of system-wide reviews.

Indicator: Focus of the Joint Inspection Unit's programme of work is on system-wide issues that can be assessed across all or multiple organizations.

Performance criterion for result 1:

At least 75 per cent of JIU reports and notes for all or several participating organizations over the 10-year period address significant system-wide issues that can be assessed across all or multiple organizations.

Result 2: System-wide coverage addresses the four thematic areas.

Indicator: The system-wide studies are in the four main thematic areas of the strategic framework.

Performance criterion for result 2:

All reports in the annual programme of work are related to the four strategic objectives of the strategic framework.

Result 3: Linkage of both system-wide and single organization studies with the 2030 Agenda and reforms.

Performance criterion for result 3:

JIU inspections and evaluations address the 4 main thematic areas of the strategic framework, with due consideration for how performance is aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the United Nations system reforms and with changing trends and challenges, including in the use of digital technologies.

1.2 Single organization management and administration reviews

Result: A strategic and comprehensive approach to conducting management and administration reviews of participating organizations.

Performance criteria:

The selection of organizations is guided by:

- (a) Applying economies of scale as needed, making most effective use of existing information from assessments by other oversight bodies of the United Nations system;
 - (b) A risk-based approach developed by the end of 2020, validated and piloted for identifying organizations for management and administrative reviews;
 - (c) An identified need to address issues in the organization or selected areas deemed critical (either from past reviews or as requested by the executive heads and/or Member States).
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1.3 Good practice and benchmarking framework for system-wide reviews

Result: Improved quality and use of benchmarking frameworks for validity, comparability, consistency in assessment, and sharing of good practices among organizations working from the same defined framework.

Performance criteria:

- (a) Standards and procedures to improve the quality and rigor of benchmarking frameworks and to increase the consistency across frameworks;

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- (b) Effective platforms developed and implemented to share good practices and knowledge in the various thematic areas of the Unit's work.
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2. Quality: Transparency and credibility from a common frame of reference for quality

Result: Strengthened rigour in evidence and transparency of the quality of the work of the Unit.

Performance criterion:

Quality criteria and standards for the Unit's reviews developed based on its norms and standards and on stakeholder input on quality. The criteria are piloted and validated and are used by 2022.

3. Value and impact of the work of the Unit

Result: Improved use and strengthened impact of the Unit's products.

Performance criterion (a):

Rate of acceptance of recommendations of the Unit's reports and rate of implementation of its recommendations.

System-wide target:

- (a) Rate of acceptance is above 70 per cent in all strategic objectives of system-wide reviews and in all United Nations system organizations;
- (b) Rate of implementation of accepted recommendations is above 80 per cent.

Target for management and administration reviews of single organizations:

- (a) Rate of acceptance is above 75 per cent;
- (b) Rate of implementation of accepted recommendations is above 80 per cent.

Performance criterion (b):

Improve the functionality of the web-based tracking system for effective and valid reporting:

- (a) Validation process in place for acceptance and implementation;
- (b) Impact section completed and validated;
- (c) Data platform developed for analytical purposes.

Performance criterion (c):

Impact or difference made by the Unit:

- (a) Synthesis of selected strategic objectives or major themes of the Unit's work and implications for strategy and programme of work;
- (b) Impact analysis of selected strategic objectives or major themes of the Unit's work and implications for strategy and programme of work.

Performance criterion (d):

Communication, outreach and engagement:

- (a) Differentiated products for stakeholder use;
- (b) Platforms for (social) engagement with stakeholders on products and good practices;
- (c) Engagement with external partners for added value and the global leadership role of the United Nations system for knowledge production and management.

4. Efficiency

Result: optimal use of resources of the Unit and that of the United Nations system.

Performance criteria:

- (a) Enhanced validation process, improved scoping, use of inception papers or design matrix;
 - (b) Enhanced collaboration and partnership with other oversight and evaluation bodies;
 - (c) Use of secondary data or synthesis of existing knowledge from internal reviews and studies.
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Appendix 2

Performance assessment of the strategic framework of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2010–2019

<i>Expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement for the period (2010–2019)</i>	<i>Accomplishment Performance against targets set and alternative actions significant for meeting objectives</i>
Use of Joint Inspection Unit products	The Unit's web-based tracking system is fully operational as of 2012.
(a) Strengthened system of follow-up on the acceptance and implementation of recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) New web-based information system for follow-up of recommendations in place. 	New functionalities added between 2012 and 2019 in response to demand from stakeholders (participating organizations and Member States).
Associated target: new system for legislative bodies and secretariats available and fully operational by the end of 2012.	70.7 per cent acceptance rate for the period from 2010 to 2017.
(ii) Rate of acceptance of recommendations by the participating organizations.	The Unit met the target. There are some variations in performance: (a) among organizations, and (b) among the various strategic objectives.
Associated target: percentage of acceptance of recommendations in the medium-term period should not be less than 60 per cent.	Note: Statistics only go to 2017, since on average it takes two years from the date of publication for the respective legislative and governing bodies to consider the reports.
Coverage in alignment with main objectives – system-wide	All reports related to at least one of the objectives of the strategic framework for the period from 2010 to 2019.
(b) Increased system-wide focus of the programme of work of the Unit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Balanced number of reports related to each of the defined strategic areas. 	
Associated target: all reports produced by the Unit should be related to at least one of the strategic areas.	81.2 per cent of reports between 2010 and 2019 were of system-wide issues and they covered all participating organizations or multiple organizations.
Coverage – system-wide	
(ii) Percentage of system-wide reports or reports on several organizations issued during the period.	Associated target: at least 70 per cent of the total number of reports produced in the period.
Coverage – single organization reviews of management and administration	8 out of 28 participating organizations have not been reviewed in a systematic way:
(c) Systematic review of the management and administration of participating organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New York-based funds and programmes: UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN-Women;

- (i) Number of reviews of management and administration of participating organizations.

Associated target: all participating organizations are reviewed at least once every eight years.

- (ii) Number of reviews of management and administration of participating organizations.

Associated target: at least two reviews per year.

Relevance and stakeholder involvement and outreach

- (d) Improved relevance and outreach of the reports of the Unit:

- (i) Percentage of the programme of work that is based on proposals and/or suggestions made by participating organizations, Member States and oversight bodies.

Associated target: 75 per cent.

Use of Unit reports and notes – internal and external

- (ii) Number of visitors to the revised website of the Unit.

Associated target: 100,000 visits per year.

Quality of Unit products – conditions for quality

- (e) Enhanced qualifications and tools of evaluation staff: average number of relevant training days per year.

Associated target: at least 10 days per Professional staff member.

- Nairobi-based: UNEP and UN-Habitat;
- Other: ITC, UNRWA.

Some organizations were reviewed twice. During the reporting period, three organizations became participating organizations of the Unit (UN-Women, ITC and UNAIDS), thereby increasing the workload for reviews.

The Unit undertook an average of 1.8 management and administrative reviews of single organizations per year during the period from 2010 to 2019.

For enhanced effectiveness and consistency in the conduct of the reviews, and to permit synthesis findings across organizations, the Unit developed a benchmarking framework for management and administration reviews.

71 per cent of topics of system-wide products originated from stakeholders (participating organizations, Member States and oversight bodies).

- (i) Focus on enhancing the use of the Unit's recommendations – based on a report on outcomes of follow-up and through management letters.

Focus on more intensive assessment of suggestions by organizations and their validation using a methodology and criteria to ensure value added of recommendations.

The Unit's website attracted in excess of 100,000 visits per year during the reporting period.

The Unit's secretariat staff met the standards set for United Nations staff members (five days of training per year) but did not meet the Unit's own target of 10 days.

The Unit took advantage of opportunities to send staff on secondments to other organizations to enhance their skills; one staff member successfully applied for a study sabbatical. Furthermore, the Unit held regular events to discuss professional practices with external experts.

Staff involvement in the development of a number of corporate products and activities also provided the opportunity for learning and professional development (examples: peer review of the Unit; and development of the Unit's norms and standards, internal working procedures, guidelines and technical papers).