



REVIEW OF GOVERNING BODY STRUCTURES IN THE WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

MAY 2026

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Background

In July 2025, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) received a request from the Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), on behalf of the Executive Council, to review the WMO governance framework. The topic was added to the Unit's 2025 work programme.

JIU has delivered three previous reviews on WMO. In 2007, JIU issued a review of management and administration in WMO and a review of the working capital fund in WMO and, in 2021, another review of management and administration in WMO. In addition to the above-mentioned reviews, the Unit also issued confidential letters in 2004 and 2008 responding to management issues and internal controls.



What the JIU found

The WMO governance model still reflects its origins in the International Meteorological Organization, a non-governmental body founded in 1873. While the secretariat has integrated more closely with the United Nations system, the governance framework has evolved only incrementally. This is reflected in the Convention of the World Meteorological Organization, which contains outdated provisions that are misaligned with sustainable and effective governance standards. As a result, WMO is an outlier in several key governance areas, with notable risks related to the Secretary-General's accountability to the Members of the Organization, insufficient segregation of duties, cross-representation across governance structures and gaps in oversight.

The report contains 12 formal recommendations, of which 11 are addressed to Congress or the Executive Council of WMO and 1 to the Secretary-General. These recommendations are complemented by 33 informal recommendations.



Objective and Purpose

The aim of the review was to examine the effectiveness and efficiency of the WMO governance structure with a view to identifying areas for improvement and benchmarking its governance against that of other United Nations specialized agencies to pinpoint the areas in which WMO diverges from common practices.

Approach & Methodology



Desk review



Benchmarking based on best practices in governance across the UN system



Comparative analysis of governance practices with 11 UN specialized agencies



Questionnaire



Interviews with stakeholders



Online survey to members of WMO governing bodies



Direct observation of sessions of WMO governing bodies



WMO Convention

Clarifications added to the General Regulations show that Members and the WMO secretariat recognize that the Convention no longer meets the Organization's needs. Although amending foundational documents is complex, the review identified seven articles suitable for targeted revisions. The first step for amending the Convention would be for the Executive Council to establish a task force to draft options and recommendations for Congress in this regard (**recommendation 1**).



Leadership and membership

WMO is the only United Nations specialized agency whose executive head lacks accountability to its Members, a core United Nations governance principle; Congress should address this gap and reconsider the role of the President, which still reflects the non-governmental origins of WMO (**recommendation 2**). The review identified an insufficient separation of duties and excessive workloads for certain functions. This is largely due to cross-representation, whereby governing body officers serve on multiple bodies, duplicating efforts and limiting diversity of perspectives (**recommendation 3**).



Congress and the Executive Council

Congress and the Executive Council have not undergone governance reforms in the past, and their current functioning reflects only incremental adjustments. Congress needs clearer rules, a sharper mandate, more effective debate practices and greater agility. The four-year intersessional period, now used by only two other United Nations specialized agencies, is increasingly impractical and has required extraordinary sessions to fill the gap (**recommendation 4**).

Members have raised concerns about representation on the Executive Council, unclear regional seat distribution and its focus on technical rather than oversight matters. The high volume of resolutions adopted by the Executive Council may also warrant review. WMO differs from peer United Nations specialized agencies in a few key areas, including having an executive body without intergovernmental status that reviews its budget and expenditures (**recommendation 5**) and that provides voting rights to its 10 ex officio members. Reassigning these ex officio seats to members specifically elected for the Executive Council would broaden representation and prompt a reassessment of regional seat distribution (**recommendation 6**).



Regional associations and technical commissions

Regional associations have been central to recent governance reform discussions, as their mandates have expanded while resources have not. Coordination challenges with technical commissions have further strained capacity, prompting the creation of parallel scientific and technical teams within regional structures, in part to compensate for limited representation of Members in technical commissions. A pragmatic revision of the role of regional associations should leverage their proximity to Members to identify regional needs and priorities and align their functions with regional governance requirements (**recommendation 7**).

Technical commissions underwent a major reform in 2019, and their number was reduced from eight to two. However, the terminated structures have re-emerged in other forms, and additional scientific and technical bodies have appeared outside the commissions' scope, which has produced siloed discussions and overlapping mandates. These systemic issues support the recommendation to review the establishment of subsidiary bodies outside the commissions and integrate them into commission workstreams (**recommendation 8**), reducing duplication and improving coherence.



Committees and task forces of the Executive Council

The review identified significant overlap between Executive Council members and the membership of most of its subsidiary bodies, limiting diversity of perspectives and reinforcing insular decision-making. Scientific and strategic issues are repeatedly discussed across multiple forums, creating duplication and inefficiency. Stakeholders highlighted redundant discussions held at the level of the Policy Advisory Committee and the Technical Coordination Committee. Merging the two committees responsible for technical coordination and strategic planning may streamline deliberations. (**recommendation 9**).



Oversight in governance

For oversight of the secretariat, Congress and the Executive Council rely on the Financial Advisory Committee, comprising Member representatives, and the Audit and Oversight Committee, comprising individual external experts – both advisory bodies. The Financial Advisory Committee lacks the mandate, independence and authority required for effective financial oversight and reflects broader governance issues, such as cross-representation and limited geographical balance. Revising its terms of reference and transforming it into a regionally balanced, elected oversight committee would strengthen the WMO governance framework (**recommendation 10**).



Interactions within the United Nations system

The participation of WMO in the United Nations system is essential for aligning WMO with United Nations priorities and compensating for its somewhat limited diplomatic presence in governance structures. Although WMO maintains institutional links with the United Nations Secretariat, its role in system-wide processes, such as contributing to and reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals, remains narrow, limiting its influence. This underpins the recommendation, addressed to the Secretary-General, to develop a formal outreach plan to position WMO within upcoming United Nations system-wide goals (**recommendation 11**).



Costs related to supporting governance

The costs of creating and supporting governing bodies are opaque, with no clear accountability for decisions to establish or terminate subsidiary structures. The Executive Council could request the Secretary-General to present such information (**recommendation 12**).

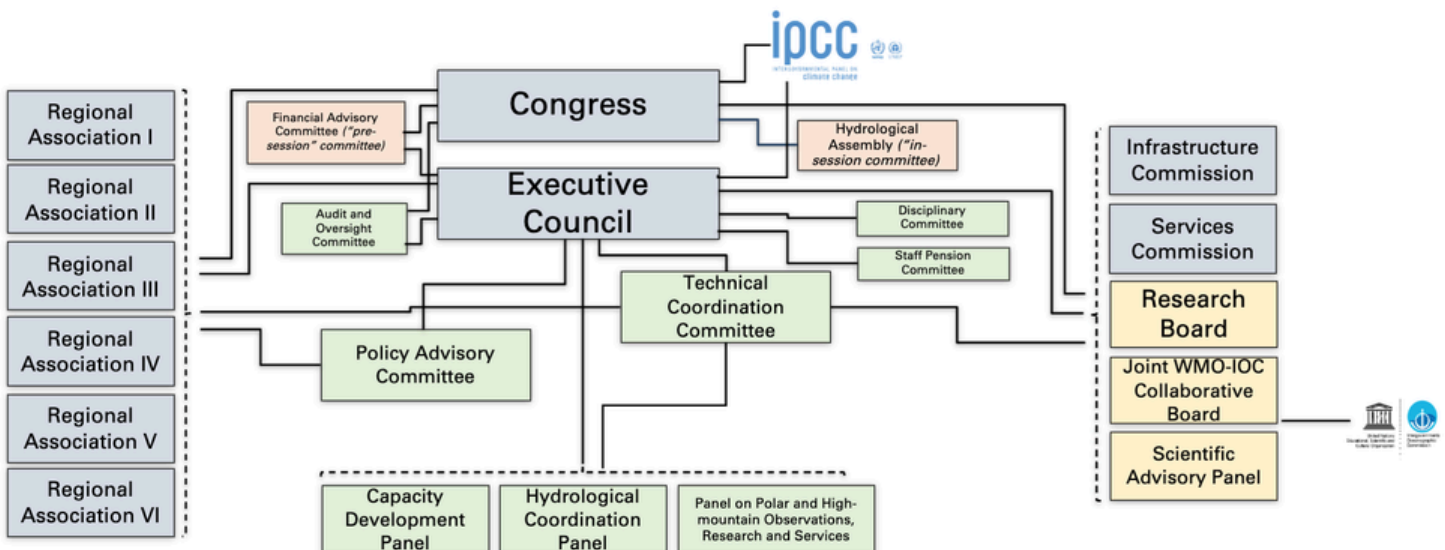


What the JIU concludes

WMO Members have consistently demonstrated a commitment to modernizing the Organization's governance, yet significant structural weaknesses persist, largely rooted in its non-governmental origins and its founding document, the Convention. WMO diverges from United Nations governance norms, in particular due to the fact that its executive body is not intergovernmental, the limited authority and accountability exercised by the Financial Advisory Committee and the blurred leadership responsibilities between the Secretary-General and the President of WMO. Addressing these structural flaws is essential to ensure clear authority lines, proper accountability and sustainable governance.



WMO governance structure (2025)



- Constituent body
- Additional body
- Subsidiary body of the Executive Council
- Bodies meeting on the occasion of sessions of Congress and the Executive Council



What the JIU recommends (formal recommendations)

Formal recommendations addressed to Congress:

2 Congress should, no later than its twenty-first ordinary session, in 2031, establish a task force to assess the role of the President and the accountability arrangements of the Secretary-General, with a view to proposing recommendations that better align WMO governance practices with United Nations system norms.

Congress should, no later than its twenty-first ordinary session, in 2031, consider assigning a two-year frequency for ordinary sessions of Congress.

4

5 Congress should, no later than its twenty-second ordinary session, consider assigning intergovernmental status to the Executive Council.

Congress should, no later than its twenty-second ordinary session, consider assigning all seats with voting rights in the Executive Council to representatives of Members of the Organization.

6

7 Congress should, by its twenty-first ordinary session, consider amending annex II to the General Regulations regarding the functions of regional associations, with a view to focusing them on fewer tasks and prioritizing where the most added value can be provided.

Congress should, no later than its twenty-first ordinary session, revise the terms of reference of the Financial Advisory Committee, to elect Members for an intergovernmental, regionally representative committee with a mandate to holistically oversee financial, budgetary and oversight matters on behalf of Congress and the Executive Council

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Formal recommendations addressed to the Executive Council:

1 The Executive Council should, at its eighty-second ordinary session, in 2027, form a task force to formulate recommendations to Congress regarding potential amendments to articles 4, 6, 8, 10, 13, 14 and 22 of the Convention, as well as related General Regulations.

The Executive Council should, no later than its eighty-second ordinary session, in 2027, form a task force to review the terms of reference of all governance structures with a view to promoting wider participation of members or Member representatives, as relevant, and limiting or avoiding cross-representation and ex officio participation arrangements.

3

8 The Executive Council should, no later than its ordinary session in 2028, establish a task force to review subsidiary bodies with scientific and technical mandates and prepare recommendations to Congress on options for integrating them into the technical commissions' workstreams.

The Executive Council should, no later than its ordinary session in 2028, explore merging the Policy Advisory Committee and the Technical Coordination Committee into a single joint body with an overarching mandate over technical coordination and strategic planning.

9

12 The Executive Council should request the Secretary-General to provide information on the number of created and terminated subsidiary bodies in the respective intersessional period by all constituent bodies, as well as the estimated secretariat costs associated with supporting governing bodies, to be included in the reports presented by the Secretary-General as from 2028, at the latest.

Formal recommendation addressed to the Secretary-General

By the end of 2027, the Secretary-General should develop an outreach and engagement plan to enhance resource mobilization efforts and increase the visibility of WMO within the United Nations diplomatic community ahead of the next iteration of system-wide goals and other United Nations system-wide initiatives.

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2024-2026 JIU Reports and Notes

Reports:

[JIU/REP/2026/1](#), Review of management and administration in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

[JIU/REP/2025/6 & JIU/REP/2025/6](#) [\[Expanded report\]](#)
Review of the Health Services in the United Nations system

[JIU/REP/2025/5 & JIU/REP/2025/5](#) [\[Expanded report\]](#)
Review of the Ombudsman and Mediation function in the United Nations system organizations

[JIU/REP/2025/4](#) [\(Comparative analysis\)](#) & [JIU/REP/2025/4](#) [\[Expanded report\]](#) [\(Comparative tables\)](#),
Review of the policies and practices for determining the rates of programme support costs in organizations of the United Nations system

[JIU/REP/2025/3 & JIU/REP/2025/3](#) [\[Expanded report\]](#),
Review of donor-led assessments of United Nations system organizations and other oversight-related requests from donors in the context of funding agreements and the United Nations single audit principle

[JIU/REP/2025/2 & JIU/REP/2025/2](#) [\[Expanded report\]](#),
Review of policies and practices to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse in the United Nations system organizations

[JIU/REP/2025/1 & JIU/REP/2025/1](#) [\[Expanded report\]](#),
Review of management and administration in the United Nations Environment Programme

[JIU/REP/2024/4](#), Review of the implementation of the principle of mutual recognition within the United Nations system

[JIU/REP/2024/3](#) Part I [\(Comparative analysis\)](#) & [JIU/REP/2024/3](#) Part II [\(Reference tables\)](#),
Budgeting in organizations of the United Nations system Part II [\(Reference tables\)](#)

[JIU/REP/2024/2](#), Review of consideration of and action taken on the reports and recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit by United Nations system organizations

[JIU/REP/2024/1](#), Review of management and administration in the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)

Notes:



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[JIU/NOTE/2024/2](#), Note to the International Telecommunication Union from the review of the quality, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of health insurance schemes in the United Nations system organizations

[JIU/NOTE/2024/1](#), Note to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees from the review of quality, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of health insurance schemes in the United Nations system organizations



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11 Inspectors



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28 participating organizations