

Sixty-fifth meeting of the Standing Committee

15-17 March 2016

Agenda item 4(b)

Oral update on the work of the Inspector General's Office

This update covers the period since the Inspector General's statement to the sixty-sixth session of UNHCR's Executive Committee in October 2015.

I. Management

- Pending the appointment of a new Inspector General by the incoming High Commissioner, Ms. Claire Bourgeois took up her functions as Inspector General, a.i. on 1 January 2016. The newly-appointed Head of the Inspection Service, Mr. Oussemi Compaoré, also took up his functions in the Inspector General's Office (IGO) at the beginning of the year. In September 2015, Mr. Henrik Malmquist was appointed Head of the Investigation Service, following the reclassification of this position as an expert post.
- In line with the strategy to strengthen UNHCR's oversight capacity by bringing the oversight functions closer to the field, the IGO filled its third out-posted position in Nairobi, that of Senior Oversight Officer (Audit), in the last quarter of 2015. A newly-created position of Senior Investigation Specialist in this location is currently being filled. This brings the total number of IGO positions in its two out-posted locations to six (five in Nairobi and one in Bangkok).

II. Inspection

- A newly appointed Senior Inspection Coordinator and a Senior Inspection Officer took up their functions on 1 January 2016, bringing the Inspection Service to its full capacity. In addition to the Head of Service, the Inspection Service also includes two other Senior Inspection Officers, one Senior Auditor, one Senior Oversight Officer (Audit) and one Inspection Associate. Notwithstanding the full staffing table, the Service will still need to rely on external resources to conduct inspection missions.
- The IGO conducted five inspections using multifunctional teams. These teams, composed of protection, programme and administrative specialists, help ensure that the functional areas inspected are done so with the expertise required. One inspection was of the Private Sector Fundraising Service, which recently relocated to Copenhagen. Two of the inspections were carried out in collaboration with the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and reviewed the operations in South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. The fourth inspection was of UNHCR's operation in Ukraine. The first inspection mission of 2016, conducted in January, reviewed UNHCR's operation in northern Iraq, with visits to Erbil, Dohuk and Suleymania.
- Four inspection reports were issued during the reporting period. Three were related to inspections carried out in Ethiopia, Kenya and Sri Lanka. The inspection mission to Kenya was conducted jointly with the World Food Programme (WFP) and reviewed the biometrics identification system for food distribution. The fourth report was on the coordinated compliance mission conducted to Mauritania with WFP, following up on the two agencies' ad hoc inspections in 2013.

- The IGO has begun implementing a new approach to the preparation of its inspection work plan, whereby operations are selected on the basis of identified risk, according to specific criteria. This is done in close collaboration with the regional bureaux and divisions, as well as with OIOS. This approach was used to prepare the 2016 inspection plan prior to submission to the High Commissioner. In 2016, the IGO will be enhancing the criteria developed thus far, as UNHCR learns from and adjusts to its enterprise risk management process.
- Ten inspections are planned in 2016, including five to the field (northern Iraq, Ecuador, Hungary, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Morocco); one inspection at Headquarters (related to the assignments and postings process in the Division of Human Resources Management (DHRM)); three oversight missions coordinated with OIOS (reviewing the Regional Office in Senegal, the operation in Burundi and several offices in Southeast Europe), and one compliance mission to Malaysia. Depending on funding availability, the Inspection Service may need to reduce the number of inspections from ten to six.
- With regard to compliance with recommendations, feedback has been provided on a regular basis to inspected operations. By the end of January 2016, of the 688 recommendations included in outstanding inspection cycles from 2010-2015 concerning 19 inspections, more than 50 per cent have been fully implemented or closed.
- The adoption of an online follow-up mechanism to support and leverage inspection activities, as well as all oversight functions, may again be postponed due to budgetary constraints.
- With respect to collaboration with the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), the IGO contributed to the preparation of the 2016 JIU programme of work and to the 2017-2018 roster.
- Following a review of the acceptance and implementation of JIU recommendations between 2006 and 2012, the JIU reported to the General Assembly in 2015 that UNHCR's acceptance rate was 86.2 per cent, compared to the average of 65 per cent for all participating organizations, while its implementation rate was 89.2 per cent, compared to the average of 80.4 per cent for participating organizations. As a result of enhanced IGO efforts and inputs from the regional bureaux and divisions, UNHCR's compliance performance with acceptance and implementation of JIU recommendations is among the top 10 system-wide.

III. Investigation

- Between October 2015 and January 2016, the Investigation Service registered 676 complaints, of which 146 related to possible staff misconduct. The majority of complaints (73 per cent) are linked to protection and assistance activities and are referred to the relevant regional bureaux and divisions within UNHCR. The Investigation Service works closely with them to determine how best to respond to complaints from beneficiaries in a prompt and meaningful manner.
- During this same period, the Service opened 28 investigations relating to alleged staff misconduct; closed 25 investigation cases that were either unfounded or lacking a sufficient degree of evidence to substantiate the case; and forwarded 16 investigation reports to the Director of the Division of Human Resources Management for action.
- With regard to inter-agency collaboration, the IGO responded positively to a request from another United Nations agency for UNHCR to provide one of its Senior Investigation Officers to co-lead an external quality assessment of this agency's investigation function. Furthermore, the IGO undertook two investigation missions on behalf of the OIOS office in Nairobi.

- In accordance with the Secretary General’s request to United Nations agencies for annual data collection and reporting on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, the IGO submitted its report, noting that in 2015, it received 17 allegations of SEA (13 against UNHCR staff, 1 against a UN staff member and 3 against staff working for UNHCR under contract from the United Nations Office for Project Services). The bulk of the allegations concern exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex. Ten allegations originated from Africa, six from the Middle East and North Africa region, and one from the Americas. The data reported by all agencies will be compiled in a report by the Secretary-General, which is scheduled for issuance in February 2016.
- The IGO is a member of the newly created internal “protection from sexual exploitation and abuse coordination team,” which consists of the Ethics Office; the IGO; DHRM; the regional bureaux; the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply; the Division of Programme Support and Management; and the Division of International Protection. The purpose of this group is to revise existing policies, take stock of current efforts, and identify actions and improvements needed.
- The IGO continued to work on an individual basis with country offices, the regional bureaux and divisions at Headquarters (notably with the Division of International Protection and the Division of Programme Support and Management) in order to advise on anti-fraud measures. As an advisory member of the drafting committee responsible for the development of UNHCR’s policy and guidelines on fraud perpetrated by persons of concern, the IGO has shared its expertise in investigation and the standards used to investigate fraud allegations within UNHCR operations. Within the Investigation Service itself, all staff underwent training provided by a specialist on procurement fraud.
- In order to heighten fraud awareness throughout the organization, a series of presentations about the work of the IGO was prepared, including one on “Fraud, corruption and conflict of interest.” These presentations are delivered to staff in field locations where the IGO travels to undertake investigations, once the investigatory work has been completed.
- With a view to avoiding potential fraud related to the activities of UNHCR’s implementing partners and vendors, the Investigation Service is enhancing cooperation with donor countries and other international organizations to determine whether any misconduct has already been identified by these other entities. Based on the information available from external sources, the Investigation Service will be able to take a more proactive approach. Internally, the Investigation Service is also liaising with other entities, notably the Enterprise Risk Management Unit and the Controller’s office, to allow for a more coordinated approach. The Service is reviewing all available data within UNHCR in order to assess how potential misconduct can be analysed holistically, thus leading to more targeted investigations.
- The Inspector General, a.i. initiated an ad hoc inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of a UNHCR staff member and the death of an NGO staff member in December 2015. This inquiry focused on the responsibilities, actions and decisions of UNHCR in relation to the events. A fact finding mission was also conducted by the Investigation Service to a country in Africa following the death of a staff member there.

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