

74th Meeting of the Standing Committee

March 2019

Speech of the Inspector General

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates

The Inspector General's office is an independent oversight entity, which supports effective, efficient and accountable management of UNHCR operations and plays a key role in upholding an environment of integrity in UNHCR.

Today I will provide you with an update on the work of the Inspector General's Office, including highlights from 2018 and some projections for 2019. This complements the document entitled "Oral update on the activities of the Inspector General's Office".

Distinguished Delegates,

Two years ago I was appointed Inspector General with a mandate to lead the oversight reform process in order to bring greater coherence and coordination among the different oversight entities, and transition to an Inspector General open to external recruitment. I am pleased to report that we have achieved significant progress as nearly all of the oversight recommendations have been successfully implemented.

Changes have taken place in the IGO's structure as well as in its roles and responsibilities. Relationships have been strengthened with other internal and external oversight entities, and key counterparts in member state institutions and sister agencies. Collaboration has also improved with key counterparts within the organization, including with executive and senior management where constructive and regular dialogue has been institutionalized. The internal audit function, provided by OIOS, has been strengthened and standard inspections have been discontinued. A new capacity entitled "Strategic Oversight" has been established to analyze recurring risks, emerging trends and areas of vulnerability, and perform enquiries into specific management areas of concern. These changes have been designed to bring additional assurance to the High Commissioner and member states and, while some work on oversight reform still remains, I am confident that solid foundations have been laid to meet the needs of the organization for the coming years.

I will now turn to investigation of misconduct. In 2018 the IGO received 1,186 misconduct complaints, nearly 80% of which implicated UNHCR and partner personnel or contractors. This was almost double the number of misconduct complaints from the previous year. The top three categories of misconduct complaints remained the same as in 2017, namely: fraud with financial implications, sexual exploitation and abuse, and refugee status determination and resettlement fraud. Complaints relating to sexual exploitation and abuse, where a

victim was identified or identifiable, rose from 39 in 2017 to 117 in 2018. 83/117 or 70% of the 2018 complaints concerned partner personnel which was a significant rise over 2017. Robust organizational efforts, including strong leadership, has significantly raised awareness in the organization and with our partners of the importance of reporting sexual exploitation and abuse. Increased reporting was therefore to be expected and the IGO has put measures in place to prioritize the assessment and investigation of these complaints while also working closely with the organization to implement measures to improve prevention, earlier detection and improved support to victims.

Another priority is sexual harassment where complaints tripled from 15 in 2017 to 49 in 2018. Statistics also indicate that one in three sexual harassment complaints registered against UNHCR personnel is not pursued further, as decided by the victim. The reasons for these decisions are manifold. The IGO will thus continue to work closely with the organization to better understand root causes, and develop approaches to specifically address this form of misconduct and provide improved support to victims.

With regard to investigations, in 2018 new investigations were opened in 113 cases, and investigation reports were concluded for 144 individuals. Allegations of misconduct were substantiated in nearly 50 per cent of the cases. The High

Commissioner imposed disciplinary measures on 35 UNHCR staff members, 14 more than in 2017. Twenty-one cases resulted in dismissal or separation.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

In May 2018 Strategic Oversight also welcomed its new Head, Mr. Pierre Pradal. In the latter half of the year three inquiries were opened into management areas where recurring and/or reputational problems had been identified. These concerned partnership management, the implementation of the Emergency Policy in seven operations, and refugee registration in Uganda. One inquiry has been finalized and the findings have been shared with executive management. Two are still ongoing and are expected to be completed soon. Finally, to support the analysis of oversight data, Strategic Oversight is also working with the Innovation Service to design a modern and powerful tool.

I will now turn to 2019. The IGO projects that the increase in misconduct complaints will likely continue to rise, primarily due to a sustained focus of executive management on integrity and risk management. The rise in the number of complaints and the increasing complexity of the cases have proven to be a challenge for the IGO. At the closure of the year some 300 complaints were pending assessment and 90 investigations were on-going. We will need to remain actively engaged in our core activities while also continuing to lend our

experience and knowledge to several important organizational initiatives such as the regionalization process. However, to continue to deliver high quality work and meet rising expectations for rapid response, the IGO will need additional resources for the medium term. These needs have been brought to the attention of executive management.

In closing Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to also thank member states for their interest in and support of, the work of the IGO.

Thank you.