

77th Meeting of the Standing Committee

March 2020

Speech, Inspector General's Office

Mr. Henrik Malmquist, Head of Investigation Service

Mister Chairperson,

Excellencies,

My presentation today will focus on activities undertaken by the Inspector General's Office in 2019, which complements the document entitled "Oral update on the work of the Inspector General's Office".

Distinguished Delegates,

I will first briefly speak about important policy level changes made. Then, I will provide you with an overview of the work of the Investigation Service, the Strategic Oversight Service and the OIOS UNHCR Audit Service.

In January this year, a new umbrella policy on oversight entered into force which clearly defines, brings together and confirms the authority and responsibilities of the different oversight functions in UNHCR. In light of UNHCR's regionalization and decentralization process and to ensure follow-up of findings of the various oversight functions, the policy clearly articulates the roles and responsibilities of

the UNHCR Country Representations as the first lines of defense, the Regional Bureaux and Headquarters Divisions as the second lines of defense, and oversight functions as the third lines of defense.

In conjunction with the Policy on Independent Oversight, the High Commissioner endorsed a detailed Administrative Instruction on Conducting Investigations that also entered into force in January of this year. This document provides detailed instructions on the investigation process and the related roles, responsibilities, authorities and obligations of all stakeholders involved. It also incorporates an increased focus on sexual misconduct and a victim-centered approach.

I now turn to the work of the Investigation Service. After a sharp increase of misconduct complaints up until 2018, the figures stabilized with around 1,200 misconduct complaints being registered in both 2018 and 2019. A similar level is projected in 2020, based on complaints received so far this year.

With the rise in the number of misconduct complaints, we conducted more investigations in 2019 compared to previous years. Our substantiation rate increased from 49 per cent in 2018 to 55 per cent in 2019, and this resulted in a record number of investigation reports being forwarded to the Division of Human Resources for the institution of disciplinary proceedings.

When the IGO identifies weaknesses in the application of policies or internal controls during the course of an investigation, we issue Management Implication Reports to the relevant managers with advice or recommendations for remedial action aimed at mitigating risk and with a requirement to report back. Seventeen reports were issued in 2019.

The IGO will continue to prioritize investigations relating to sexual misconduct. In 2020, we will develop an online training for UNHCR's implementing partners on how to conduct investigations relating to sexual exploitation and abuse, as part of the High Commissioner's role as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (or IASC) Champion on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment; and as a response to a high number of SEA allegations against implementing partner personnel. In addition, we are in the process of finalizing an internal guidance note on the application of a victim-centered approach, and we are liaising closely with relevant internal entities in the organization.

The Investigation Service continues to strengthen its field presence in order to respond to allegations more quickly and to better understand the regional context. We are now present in four regional locations in addition to our central presence in Geneva. It should be noted that the IGO and its field units will continue to be a central function reporting only to the High Commissioner.

As part of international best practice, the Investigation Service is subject to an external peer review every five years. In 2019, the investigative function of UNDP conducted a peer review of our Investigation Service. While the final report noted that the Service is overall effective, a number of recommendations were also issued, several of which require additional resources in order to be implemented.

I will now turn to the work of the Strategic Oversight Service. In 2019, the Service continued to develop a tool that allows for the meta-analysis of trends in oversight findings, with an aim to assist the Inspector General in providing independent advice to executive management. Currently, the tool consists of data extracted from audit and evaluation reports, and in 2020, will be further populated with data from other oversight functions. With the tool and staffing in place, the year 2020 will serve as a period of ‘proof of concept’ for the Service.

I finally turn to the work of the OIOS UNHCR Audit Service, which we continue to collaborate closely with. In 2019, the Service successfully implemented its work plan by achieving a 100 per cent completion rate. The implementation of the 2020 plan is progressing well.

In closing, Mister Chairperson, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to member states for the interest in and support for the work of the IGO. We will continue to keep you updated on our work.

Thank you for your attention.

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