

**Eighty-sixth meeting of the Standing Committee
7-9 March 2023**

Agenda item 5

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

Introduction – In 2022, the Inspector General's Office continued to deliver on its mandate to ensure coherence and coordination of independent oversight activities; the provision of an independent investigations function; and the provision of assurance, strategic analysis, insight, follow-up and identification of significant risks to UNHCR.

Progress on the 2021-2026 strategy – The Inspector General's Office made progress on its five-year strategy, the overall objective of which is to ensure that “UNHCR has an effective independent oversight system, giving confidence to UNHCR's stakeholders over UNHCR's efficiency, economy and effectiveness”. The delivery of the systems and process-oriented elements of the strategy were consolidated; analysis and review of oversight data were initiated; and a number of learning and advisory products were produced. The Inspector General's Office also facilitated the various independent oversight entities to act and to consider themselves as part of a coherent system. A similar cohesion of thinking and approach by the various independent integrity entities was also facilitated by the Investigation Service.

Strategic Oversight – The Strategic Oversight section gathers, consolidates, coheres, and seeks to provide meaningful learning from oversight work in UNHCR. It also supports the work of the Joint Inspection Unit; the internal audit provider, the Office of Internal Oversight Services; and the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee. Coordination platforms for tracking oversight plans and recommendations were refined, updated and improved for the use of management. Additionally, a number of tracking tools for the internal use of the Inspector General's Office were developed to strengthen in-depth analysis and efficiency. Oversight work was coordinated and sequenced in relation to the Business Transformation Programme and the humanitarian response in Ukraine. This will continue in 2023. The Inspector General's Office commenced delivery of its independent advisory work for senior management, focusing on emerging strategic risks. An internal review was carried out on the Business Transformation Programme, further work was conducted on second line oversight, and strategic advice was provided on the ongoing reshaping and reform of the oversight structures of UNHCR. Advice was provided on UNHCR's refresh of its internal audit arrangements with the Office of Internal Oversight Services and on the new policy on evaluation. Efforts were made to support improved timeliness of management action in response to oversight recommendations. Work also commenced to more systematically analyze the root causes of issues and risks identified through oversight work, supported by qualitative data analysis software.

Investigation Service – The Inspector General's Office, through its Investigation Service, supported the reshaping and reform of the integrity system. A Support Desk was established to manage the workplace concerns of staff which do not necessarily amount to misconduct; the Speak Up Helpline was placed under the Inspector General's Office to enhance the confidentiality and anonymity of concerns raised; delivery of the investigative input into claims for protection against retaliation, in support of the Ethics Office, which continues to make determinations; and support was provided for increased and improved resolutions of workplace conflict by management, through the Senior Advisor on Management Support in the Division of Human Resources. Learning from investigations work continued, with 41 management implication reports issued that provide advice and recommendations related to concerns requiring attention or remedial action, as observed in the course of the Inspector General's Office's investigative work. These have been well received, with recommendations typically made to representatives in country operations, directors at headquarters, as well as to the Director of the Division of Human Resources and the Controller. The Inspector General's Office also undertook a number of proactive fraud risk reviews, including a review of the cash-based interventions programme in Ukraine and neighbouring countries. Furthermore, a shift towards proactive consultations and advice being sought from the Inspector General's Office was noted across a range of integrity-related areas in 2022.

Investigations data – In 2022, the Inspector General's Office registered an unprecedented total of 1,702 complaints of misconduct, with a total of 2,187 received. This marked an increase of 17 per cent in complaints registered compared to 1,450 in 2021 and 1,146 in 2020. With the exception of the drop in 2020, most likely resulting from restrictions related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, an increase in complaints registered has been observed since 2016. Within six years, the number of registered complaints of misconduct has increased fourfold. This upward trend is expected to continue in 2023. A total of 1,628 complaints were assessed in 2022. Of these, 39 per cent were closed; 44 per cent were outside the remit of the Inspector General's Office and were referred to internal or external parties to be addressed; 8 per cent were referred to implementing partners for action; and 8 per cent were investigated by the Inspector General's Office. One hundred and seventy-eight complaints of sexual exploitation and abuse, with identified or identifiable victims, were received (compared to 150 in 2021) with 83 per cent implicating partner personnel (83 per cent in 2021). These led to 19 investigations

compared to 20 in 2021. There was an increase in complaints outside of the mandate of the Inspector General's Office's and also of complaints without an identified or identifiable victim. This reflects enhanced reporting from UNHCR country operations. The Inspector General's Office received 55 complaints of sexual harassment with identified or identifiable victims (as compared to 52 in 2021), with 45 per cent implicating partner staff (44 per cent in 2021). In 2022, a total of 142 investigations were finalized, of which 55 per cent were substantiated. Substantiation rates for investigations into sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment stood at 37 per cent and 80 per cent respectively.

Enhancement of capacity – The Inspector General's Office continued to focus on its efficiency and effectiveness. Efforts were also made to shape the integrity response system so that the most effective and efficient solution, often not investigation, was used to address the issues identified. Intake processes and structures were strengthened through restructuring and refocusing to ensure the efficient handling of the greater number of complaints received. The Inspector General's Office devoted considerable time and resources to put in place a professional development training programme. It also continued to exchange good practices with the United Nations Representatives of Investigation Services and the investigations community in the broader humanitarian and development sectors. An information-sharing agreement was signed with the European Anti-Fraud Office, OLAF. The Inspector General's Office co-led and coordinated six regional training sessions aiming to build the investigations capacity of partners. The improved use of digital tools continued, with formal training in the use of qualitative data analysis software; increased use of digital forensics capacity, including remote data gathering; and the development of enhanced data dashboards to facilitate the analysis of integrity and oversight data. Efforts to enhance the Inspector General's Office's approach to fraud will commence in 2023.

Conclusion – UNHCR strengthened its oversight and integrity systems in 2022. A range of improvements in policy and process took place to ensure that UNHCR has stronger oversight systems and that integrity matters are handled in a more efficient and effective manner. A range of projects for both the oversight and the integrity communities are planned for 2023 and the Inspector General's Office, through its coordination mandate, will both support and deliver them.

The control frameworks of UNHCR are, however, still variable in the quality of their definition and application, and this is a consistent theme emanating from both oversight and integrity data. UNHCR also needs to advance its level of risk maturity with a definitive move from risk *assessment* to risk *management*, building and capitalizing on the progress made to date. The step change in supporting information technology systems, enabled by the Business Transformation Programme, is both a risk and an opportunity. This will be followed closely by the Inspector General's Office and the oversight community in 2023. The Inspector General's Office will continue to make efforts to ensure that clearer insights into risks, root causes and lessons learned, arising from oversight work, are brought to the attention of UNHCR's management team for action.

UNHCR, 28 February 2023