

65th Meeting of the Standing Committee

March 2016

Speech of the Inspector General, a.i.

Ms. Claire Bourgeois

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to you today and to share with you the main elements of the IGO's work objectives during my tenure as Inspector General, *ad interim*. My presentation will complement the contents of the document entitled "Oral update on the Work of the Inspector General's Office", which is available to you in this conference room, and which summarizes the main activities and achievements of my Office over recent months.

However, before sharing with you the main elements of the IGO's work objectives for the coming months, I would like to update you on the current situation with regard to the future structure of the IGO. The conduct of an external review of all of UNHCR's oversight functions, supported by High Commissioner Grandi, will be undertaken in the coming weeks. Thus, any decision as to optimal structure of the IGO, and well as the scope of its mandate, has thus been deferred until the completion of this external review.

Further, the Terms of Reference of a separate external review of UNHCR's inspection function, as recommended by the Internal Audit and Oversight Committee, will take into account the outcome and recommendations of this review.

I would, nonetheless, wish to reassure you that the conduct of this – or these – reviews is not preventing my Office from moving ahead and implementing its planned activities and initiatives which are centred around the following four main pillars:

- 1) To contribute to strengthening UNHCR's oversight function;
- 2) To contribute to enhancing accountability and integrity in UNHCR;
- 3) To build confidence amongst staff in the work of the Inspector General's Office, and finally
- 4) To develop the IGO's collaboration and partnerships, both internally and externally.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to provide you with some details of the activities planned by my Office in order to implement the objectives of these four pillars:

Pillar One: In view of the rapidly-evolving environment in which UNHCR operates, the IGO must also continually review its *modus operandi*. The IGO

will thus contribute to strengthening UNHCR's oversight function by ensuring that: *ad hoc* inspection, as well as investigation, missions are conducted as per identified needs; that recommendations of all missions are shared in a timely manner for implementation, and that monitoring of compliance with recommendations is systematic.

The IGO will also continue to enhance its professionalism through the presence of expert staff and specialized training of new IGO staff. The creation at the beginning of this year of a small Resource Management Unit in the IGO's Front Office is already proving effective in better managing the IGO's funds and prioritizing its activities according to availability of funds.

Finally, under this pillar, the results of the external review of UNHCR's oversight functions will provide elements to guide the High Commissioner's decision as to whether the current position of Inspector General should be encumbered by an internal or external candidate.

Pillar Two: With regard to enhancing accountability and integrity in UNHCR, the IGO is currently prioritizing, in close collaboration with concerned in-house entities, the implementation of a corporate data base tool for monitoring compliance with all oversight recommendations issued by UNHCR. Once a decision has been made as to the optimal software for this purpose and funds identified, the IGO proposes to pilot the use of the data base, and subsequently,

with the appropriate safeguards in place, its use could be extended to all in-house oversight entities.

The IGO will also continue to work close with the Risk Management Unit; the risk register will be an additional tool to determine, jointly with the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), countries to be inspected in 2017. Acknowledging the potential impact on victims and the high reputational risk for UNHCR in the area of protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, related allegations remain the number one priority of the IGO's Investigation Service. The IGO will further ensure that such investigations are handled in a most timely manner, respecting both the vulnerability of the victims and the potential need for protection.

Finally, the IGO's recently created proactive investigation function is, *inter alia*, increasingly involved in reviewing policy documents, in their draft stages, with a view to preventing and detecting potential misconduct. The Investigation Service is also working closely with the UNHCR's Procurement Management and Contracting Service (PMCS) on the establishment of a Vendor Ethics Committee. Both PMCS and the IGO will participate in this Committee which will review all cases of ethical breaches by vendors.

Pillar Three: I am firmly of the view that there is a need to demystify the work of the Inspector General's Office, and reassure staff, as well as external partners and persons of concern, of the IGO's impartiality, independence and added-value to the organization. To this end, the IGO is currently developing a communication strategy, the aims of which are to increase awareness, understanding and build confidence in the IGO's work and mandate.

Finally, I turn to Pillar Four, which concerns collaboration and partnerships. In view of the limited resources available to the IGO, partnerships are indeed crucial for an effective delivery of the IGO's oversight activities. With regard to UN system-wide oversight entities, the IGO coordinates and collaborates closely with both the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and OIOS. Building on lessons learned from joint missions conducted in 2014 and 2015, and taking into account the evolving environment, we are currently reviewing with OIOS ways of working together in a more strategic manner with the aim of complementing each other in our respective areas of expertise, ensure added-value and eliminate areas of overlapping. Similarly, the IGO will continue to develop the close partnership it has established with the World Food Programme's Office of the Inspector General, and will also continue to conduct joint missions with WFP.

With regard to NGO partners, the IGO is continuing its worldwide training aimed at providing them with the necessary tools to conduct internal

investigations into allegations of misconduct. It is also developing mechanisms to raise awareness on fraud for staff of partners, and is working with donors and other international actors on a common approach to tackling potential fraud in certain specific situations.

The NGO Investigation Specialist Roster, administered for UNHCR by the Danish Refugee Council, and aimed at assisting NGO partners who do not have their own capacity to conduct investigations into allegations of misconduct, is currently under review due to lack of use by partners since its creation in 2014.

Finally, *Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen*, the IGO will continue to keep both the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee, as well as to ExCom and Standing Committee Members, regularly informed of developments in its work, and will continue to look to you for your ongoing support and advice.

Thank you.

