

## **62<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee**

**3-5 March 2015**

### **Speech of the Inspector General**

**Mr. Mengesha Kebede**

*Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Since addressing you at the Executive Committee meeting last October, I am pleased to report that there have been a number of significant developments, as well as achievements, in the work of my Office which I wish to outline to you today.

First, I am pleased to report that our efforts to strengthen and bring about improvements to the inspection function have borne fruit, including the timelier issuance of inspection reports.

Furthermore, as risk-assessment and risk management are an increasingly critical aspect of UNHCR's oversight activities, the selection of operations and entities to be inspected in 2015 was reached through a stringent risk-based approach. This approach was conducted both in consultation with the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and UNHCR's Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES) in order to avoid duplication or overlap; and with Regional Directors and members of UNHCR's Senior Management to ensure that their priorities and perceptions were taken into consideration. The relevant risks to the operations and entities identified during these discussions were subsequently assessed and classified by the IGO under the following five pillars: Strategic Risk, Reputational Risk, Operational Risk, Financial Risk and Security Risks.

Building on both the Memorandum of Understanding signed between UNHCR and OIOS in December 2014 and on the positive impact of the inspection mission undertaken jointly in 2014 with OIOS, of the ten inspection missions planned for 2015, two are foreseen to be joint missions with OIOS, and two with the World Food Programme. These joint missions will serve to further build synergies and complement our work in areas of common interest.

Also, in regard to inspection missions, both *ad hoc* and standard inspections will be conducted and, in 2015, some will include a pre-audit component following the inclusion in our inspection methodology of relevant aspects of audit standards and methodology and the incorporation of a Senior Auditor in the Inspection Service towards the end of 2014.

Finally, on the inspection side of the work of the IGO, with regard to compliance with recommendations, I am pleased to report that, by the end of January 2015, 63 per cent of the 266 recommendations from outstanding inspection cycles between 2010 and 2013 had been fully implemented; 30 per cent were in progress; and five per cent were closed without implementation due to a change of circumstances. As part of our efforts to reinforce the

inspection function and to ensure timely reporting to bodies dealing with compliance, notably the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee and the Internal Compliance and Accountability Committee, my Office has recommended the establishment of a corporate, online follow-up mechanism for all oversight functions in UNHCR. This would serve to follow up not only on inspection recommendations, but also on those issues by other oversight entities.

Before turning to developments and achievements relating to the investigation function, I would, *Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen*, like to take this opportunity to update you on my office's outreach efforts. The IGO now has five out-posted positions in two locations: Bangkok and Nairobi. Positions in the latter are currently being filled and the IGO Unit in Nairobi is expected to be functional by mid-2015. The IGO Unit in Bangkok, functional since October 2014, has proved to be not only a cost-effective initiative, but has brought some IGO functions closer to field operations, notably through a more rapid deployment of missions. While the creation of additional out-posted IGO positions will be requested for 2016, if the financial situation of the organization permits, I am firmly of the view that it is necessary that the IGO's capacity at Headquarters must remain at its current level.

On the investigation side, I would first like to draw your attention to the ever increasing number of complaints received in the IGO. To illustrate this, for the period from October 2014 to January 2015, the total number of complaints received increased by some 33 per cent, as compared to the same period 12 months earlier, and the number of complaints relating to possible staff misconduct increased by 80 per cent. We believe this to be the result of UNHCR's increased operational activities.

Recent investigation initiatives include an information-sharing protocol on ongoing investigations for Representatives and Bureau Directors, which was devised in response to concerns expressed by managers about the impact of investigations on their operations. This initiative, which preserves the confidentiality aspect of the investigation process, has been welcomed by the senior managers around the world.

Another policy currently being developed by the IGO, in collaboration with the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply, is a comprehensive vendor fraud policy. The creation of this policy responds to recommendations from the United Nations Board of Auditors, the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee and the European Anti-Fraud Office.

I would now like to brief you on recent and important developments on the IGO's project with the Danish Refugee Council, (DRC) which is aimed at strengthening UNHCR/NGO cooperation in third-party investigations. A specialist Roster, the "NGO Investigation Specialist Roster" was officially activated in December 2014 - three months after the signing of a partnership agreement with the DRC - and an Induction Training was held the same month in Copenhagen for its newly-recruited members. The Roster currently comprises 11 persons with substantial and specialized investigation backgrounds and experience and

who are available to undertake, on short notice, investigations into allegations of misconduct for NGO partners in cases such as sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud, corruption, programme management and procurement. We are pleased to note that some partners have already availed themselves of the services of the roster.

A second recruitment drive is underway to increase the membership of this roster, and we are now specifically looking for investigators with French and Arabic language skills. We predict that this roster will serve to reduce incidents of abuse of persons of concern; ensure more efficient use of financial, physical and human resources and strengthen the credibility of our partners.

Parallel to this initiative, the Investigation Service has continued its series of investigation workshops at the regional level for national NGOs, focusing on forensics, interviewing techniques and report-writing. To date, four such workshops have been held: in Islamabad for our partners in Afghanistan and Pakistan; in Kenya for our partners from Eastern African countries and South Sudan; in Amman for our partners working in the Syrian situation; and, finally, only last week, in Bangkok for our partners in South/South East Asia who did not attend the workshop in Islamabad. Two other workshops in this series for our partners in Central Asia and North Africa are scheduled to take place this year, as well.

To conclude, *Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen*, I would like to express to you my appreciation for the interest you continue to show in the work of my office, as well as for your support and guidance. I call upon ExCOM Members to continue extending their support to ensure that the Office of the Inspector General remains adequately resourced during the expected turbulent period ahead.

Thank you.