

68th Meeting of the Executive Committee

October 2017

Speech of the Inspector General

Mme Chairperson

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates

The Inspector General's Office (IGO) is an independent internal oversight body which supports effective, efficient and accountable management of UNHCR operations and plays a positive role in upholding an environment of integrity in UNHCR. During the reporting period I have kept the High Commissioner informed on the progress of our work and can confirm that the Inspector General's Office has been entirely independent in the conduct of its work.

The last twelve months have seen several changes in the Inspector General's Office following the High Commissioner's decision in August last year to implement many of the recommendations contained in a consultant's report entitled "Review of the oversight functions in UNHCR". While much progress has been made, some recommendations will require implementation over time as new skills and tools are gradually acquired in the Inspector General's Office to improve services and capabilities that are essential to fulfilling our new roles and responsibilities.

Following the update on oversight reforms I will also briefly report on our regular activities, achievements and priorities concerning the Inspection and Investigation Services. My presentation complements the document entitled “Report on activities of the Inspector General’s Office”, covering the period July 2016 to June 2017.

Distinguished Delegates,

In his report, the consultant made several recommendations calling for rationalization of UNHCR’s oversight functions so as to maximize efficiency and bring greater coherence and coordination among the different oversight entities. Several of these recommendations either pertained to or affected the Inspector General’s Office.

I am pleased to report that progress has been achieved on many of the recommendations, with some in advanced stages of implementation or already completed. The consultant recommended the transfer of the internal audit interface from the Division of Financial and Administrative Management to the Inspector General’s Office, and this took place on 1 August. It provided an opportunity for all parties to streamline and simplify processes and re-define roles and responsibilities which are being reflected in a new Memorandum of Understanding for the provision of internal audit services.

Fully appreciating the independence of the internal audit function provided by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), the consultant nevertheless identified a need for the OIOS UNHCR Audit Service to be better integrated into UNHCR's oversight architecture. OIOS internal auditors now have full access to UNHCR's learning programmes, and recent collaboration between the OIOS UNHCR Audit Service, the Inspector General's Office and the Division of International Protection, to update risk-based audit tools, has been a mutually beneficial experience.

The consultant also recommended that UNHCR undertake a comprehensive mapping of its risk management and control processes to ensure there are no gaps or unnecessary duplications. The Inspector General's Office has been actively engaged with this advisory engagement being undertaken by the OIOS UNHCR Audit Service, the first phase of which is expected to be completed by year-end.

Finally, one of the key findings in the consultant's report concerned the need to strengthen the organization-wide response to oversight findings. On 1 August a new Strategic Oversight Service was established to analyze oversight findings and identify root causes or recurring systemic issues; to provide recommendations on significant oversight matters requiring management action; and to conduct *ad hoc* inspections in response to specific management challenges.

It will also enhance coherence of oversight functions by providing secretariat support to the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee (IAOC), and coordinating matters relating to the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations System (JIU). The recruitment of a new Head of Service is under way, together with a P4 expert. The Service is expected to be fully operational in the course of 2018.

I would now like to turn to the Inspection Service, which was discontinued on 31 July. During the reporting period the Service prioritized the closure of outstanding standard inspection cycles and finalized pending inspection reports. Seven inspection cycles and 212 recommendations for the period 2010 to 2015 were closed, leaving 156 recommendations open, many of which concern inspection reports issued earlier this year. We will continue to monitor progress in the implementation of the recommendations, with a view to closing the remaining standard inspection recommendations as soon as possible.

Distinguished Delegates,

Another important activity in the Inspector General's Office is the investigation function. In the reporting period the Investigation Service received over 2,100 complaints. Approximately 70% of these related to protection and assistance concerns and were referred to Regional Bureaus and country offices for response. However, 500 complaints related to misconduct and resulted in 100 new

investigations being opened after assessment. The largest category is refugee status determination and resettlement fraud, followed closely by financial fraud. In the first six months of 2017, allegations of misconduct also increased in comparison to previous years. While the reasons for the increase continue to be analyzed, the most likely explanation is that this is a result of several awareness raising activities undertaken in 2016.

The Investigation Service is guided by internationally accepted investigation standards and sets several key performance indicators to measure its work. The key performance indicators for this period have, unfortunately, been negatively affected and the trend is expected to continue into 2018. This is primarily due to several complex and resource-intensive investigations into fraud schemes committed by partners (two in Africa and one in the Middle East) and by our personnel in a country in Africa. Following these investigations the organization reviewed many procedures and processes and is considering in more depth its approach to risk management. This was mentioned by the High Commissioner in his opening address on Monday and again today by the Deputy High Commissioner. The Investigation Service also took the opportunity to review its investigation practices, particularly with regard to the implications of investigations on witnesses, and developed a witness support protocol in consultation with management.

Professionalization and regionalization of the investigation function continues to remain a priority for the Inspector General's Office. The Investigation Service currently comprises nine investigation specialists, with three additional temporary hires due to increased workload. Eight of the twelve investigation specialists are based in Nairobi and Bangkok. Having staff in the field has enabled us to provide quicker responses to allegations of misconduct; improve our understanding of regional contexts; improve access of UNHCR personnel to investigators; improve trust with personnel and partners; and increase our overall visibility. The professionalization of the Service has improved the quality of our work, with high quality investigation reports forming the basis for disciplinary proceedings and management decisions.

Allegations concerning sexual exploitation and abuse of persons of concern (SEA) are of particular importance. We prioritize these allegations and act on them quickly. The IGO also actively and regularly engages with management on this issue, providing technical advice and support on a wide range of initiatives.

Excellencies, and Distinguished Delegates,

Overall, the IGO has received reasonable financial support from management, particularly with the addition of the three temporary hires of investigation specialists mentioned earlier. However, trends such as increasing allegations, growing complexity of investigations and regular calls for rapid assistance and

response will likely result in the need for more predictable, additional capacity for the IGO and some other Headquarter entities, for which we seek your support and that of the organisation. Your support is also needed to ensure that referrals to national authorities of misconduct cases that could amount to criminal conduct, are acted upon.

Finally, while the IGO must continue to ensure full confidentiality in the investigation process, we also recognize the importance of sharing timely information with key stakeholders and management. This includes: systematically informing senior management when an investigation is opened, closed or completed; sharing information on root causes and weaknesses in control systems observed while carrying out investigations; increasing our collaboration with investigation counterparts of other UN agencies and partners; and working with management to keep member states appropriately informed.

Distinguished Delegates,

In conclusion, the IGO is fully engaged in implementing oversight reforms which will strengthen its ability to support effective, efficient and accountable management of UNHCR operations, and uphold an environment of integrity in UNHCR.

By year end, I am confident we will have made significant progress on many of the recommendations contained in the consultant's report. This will have been achieved through excellent cooperation with the OIOS UNHCR Audit Service, the Ethics Office, the Division of Financial and Administrative Management, the Chief Risk officer, the Evaluation Service, senior management at Headquarters and in the field, and of course, the senior executive team.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Executive Committee for the interest and support you have shown in the work of the Inspector General's Office and we continue to look to you for your support and advice. We will keep you and members of the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee and Standing Committee regularly informed concerning our work.

Thank you.