

**71<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee**

**March 2018**

**Speech of the Inspector General**

*Thank you, Mme. Chair.*

*Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The Inspector General's Office is an independent internal oversight body, which supports effective, efficient and accountable management of UNHCR operations and plays a key role in upholding an environment of integrity in UNHCR.

My presentation today will focus on key activities and complements the document entitled "Oral update on the work of the Inspector General's Office", which is available in this conference room.

In order to allow for sufficient time for discussion I will briefly update you on:

- the status of approved oversight reforms;
- progress in establishing Strategic Oversight;
- the work of the Investigation Service;
- sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment; and
- investigations in Kenya and Uganda.

*Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I would like to begin with an update on the status of the recommendations emanating from the oversight review which called for greater coherence and coordination among the different oversight entities in UNHCR. Several of the recommendations either pertained to or affected the Inspector General's Office and I am very pleased to report that many have now been implemented. Some recommendations require new skills and tools, which are gradually being acquired in the Inspector General's Office. By year-end I expect the IGO to be fully staffed with the right mix of experts and experienced UNHCR colleagues to take the oversight reform process to the next level.

While fully appreciating the independence of the OIOS UNHCR Audit Service, several activities were undertaken in 2017 to ensure its better integration into UNHCR's oversight architecture. The transfer of the internal audit interface from the Division of Financial and Administrative Management to the Inspector General's Office took place and the Audit Coordination Unit, which acted as a liaison between UNHCR and the OIOS UNHCR Audit Service, was dissolved. The OIOS UNHCR Audit Service now has direct contact with UNHCR managers and personnel in internal audit planning, execution and reporting which is expected to improve understanding between the two entities and consequently enhance the quality and value of internal audit over time. The Head of the OIOS UNHCR Audit Service now also meets regularly with UNHCR senior

management to discuss audit issues. These discussions have improved knowledge, information sharing, collaboration and follow-up on audit recommendations as well as understanding of key challenges that the organization faces today and in the future.

While changes were underway to improve the oversight architecture and coherence in UNHCR, the OIOS UNHCR Audit Service also undertook several initiatives to improve its service delivery to UNHCR. In addition to enhancing protection skills and knowledge of its staff through trainings provided by UNHCR's Global Learning Centre, it developed, together with the Inspector General's Office and the Division for International Protection, standard audit programmes on protection matters resulting in tools better attuned with UNHCR's current operating environment. Additionally, two Senior Protection Officers from UNHCR are being seconded this year to OIOS audit teams to assist them on selected audit engagements.

The OIOS UNHCR Audit Service also introduced client satisfaction surveys after each audit. The surveys provide an opportunity for UNHCR to present feedback on the audits, and the results assist the auditors to adjust their audit approach where necessary.

Finally, a new memorandum of understanding for the provision of internal audit services was recently agreed between UNHCR and OIOS. The memorandum of understanding brings greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the two organizations in the conduct of internal audit, which is also expected to further contribute to enhanced quality of the internal audit function.

Another key element of oversight reform has been the establishment of a new Service in the Inspector General's Office called "Strategic Oversight", which will analyze oversight findings, root causes and recurring systemic issues; provide recommendations to senior management on significant oversight matters requiring action; and conduct ad hoc inspections in response to specific management problems or needs. Using available resources from the dissolution of the Inspection Service, jobs were re-defined and vacant positions were advertised. By year-end both expert positions, including the Head of Service, had been identified. One expert joined us last week and the Head of Service will join the team in May at which time the Service, comprising only six persons, will be fully staffed. Work still remains however to identify and populate a suitable data management tool needed to collect and analyse large amounts of oversight data.

Coordination of matters related to the work of the Joint Inspection Unit and the provision of secretariat services to the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee are already underway. As three members of the Committee are due to

leave this year, the IGO is currently engaged in the coordination of the recruitment of the new members which will be done, as required, in consultation with the Executive Committee Bureau.

*Mme. Chair, Distinguished Delegates,*

Another important activity in the Inspector General's Office is the investigation function. In 2017 the Investigation Service received 664 misconduct complaints primarily implicating UNHCR personnel, implementing partners and vendors with whom UNHCR has a contractual relationship and a mandate to investigate. This represented an increase of approximately 60% when compared to 2016. The two largest categories of allegations, representing 42% of total allegations, concern refugee status determination and resettlement fraud, and financial fraud. However, not all allegations result in investigations as frequently insufficient evidence is obtained to proceed further. At year-end and after assessment of the allegations, 112 new investigations had been opened and a record number of 134 cases had been concluded.

While the reasons for the overall increase continue to be analyzed, likely explanations are increased media attention to certain types of misconduct thereby encouraging others to step forward, improved awareness of reporting mechanisms, global messaging from the High Commissioner and other members of the senior management team, and a growing confidence in the organization's

ability to respond, including through the professionalization and strengthening of the Investigation Service.

Misconduct relating to sexual exploitation and abuse is a priority for UNHCR and for the IGO. Allegations we receive are taken very seriously and special measures are in place in the Investigation Service to prioritize the allegations and the investigations. Allegations are assessed on the basis of plausibility, which is a lower threshold than for other types of misconduct. Investigations are conducted by Senior Investigations Specialists who have received specialized training and three of our eight Senior Investigation Specialists are women. In 2017, a total of 64 allegations were received. Of these, only 39 reached the threshold of “sufficient evidence” to investigate, which requires the identification of a victim. 19 acts concerned UNHCR’s workforce and 20 concerned implementing partner personnel. The remaining 25 allegations concerned other organizations, other entities or situations in which an act of sexual exploitation and abuse was unable to be detected. Sexual exploitation and abuse allegations also saw an increase of 73% last year when compared to 2016 when only 37 allegations had been received. In 2018, the rising trend continues with already 22 allegations received thus far. The exact reasons for the increase are also unknown but it is most likely a consequence of several activities launched by the organization including targeted awareness raising on how to report misconduct. Nine new investigations

were opened in 2017 and 11 were concluded, with 4 of the cases being substantiated.

Allegations of sexual harassment and assault also increased in 2017 with a total of 18 allegations being received as compared to 13 in 2016. Interestingly, the majority of the allegations were received in the last quarter of 2017, most likely due to the media attention generated by the #metoo campaign which may have encouraged more people to come forward. Seven investigations were opened in 2017, two of the allegations were substantiated and five cases are pending completion.

*Madame Chair, Distinguished delegates,*

You will recall that the IGO was also conducting several complex and resource-intensive investigations into allegations of misconduct in Kakuma and Dadaab, Kenya. In Kakuma, five UNHCR staff members were found to have committed misconduct by accepting bribes from refugees and by threatening and intimidating refugees and UNHCR personnel. Two of the staff members resigned and three were dismissed. To date, four of the five cases have been referred to national law enforcement authorities in Kenya, with the fifth case soon to be referred. Investigations into three additional staff members continue due to new information having been received in 2017. As for Dadaab, the investigations have been for similar misconduct, and will soon be concluded. However, a different

investigative approach was utilized in Dadaab limiting contact with witnesses as much as possible due to earlier experiences in Kakuma of serious witness intimidation.

The investigations in Kenya provided many lessons for the organization and for the Inspector General's Office. We reviewed our internal procedures when working in high-risk locations, and the implications of investigations on UNHCR's teams as well as witnesses. In large scale investigations it has become increasingly clear that psychosocial support is often required to support teams on the ground, and serious intimidation of witnesses required the development, in consultation with management, of a witness support protocol. The Investigation Service also further tested a joint investigative approach, supplementing investigation specialists with subject matter experts from UNHCR's various divisions. This approach proved effective as it pooled resources and skills, and ensured flexibility. Finally, a task force was established to review and improve UNHCR reporting to donor countries. The Inspector General's Office is a member of the task force which is expected to make its recommendations to senior management in the coming months.

*Madame Chair, Distinguished delegates,*

I will now turn to Uganda. In 2017, 34 allegations out of a total of 664 were received concerning Uganda. Until the last quarter of 2017 these mainly

concerned various types of misconduct related to individuals. However, in the latter part of 2017 allegations increased and indicated more systemic forms of misconduct. This trend has continued and 18 further allegations have been received in the first two months of this year. All allegations are being assessed as a matter of priority and the first investigation mission to Uganda took place in January. Since mid-February the Investigation Service has four investigation specialists in Uganda conducting internal investigations into five lines of enquiry.

These are related to:

- Fuel embezzlement
- Sexual exploitation and abuse (one allegation)
- Tendering of water trucking
- Fraud in food distribution (UNHCR has proposed a joint investigative approach to WFP)
- Procurement fraud

Some of the investigations will be finalised in the coming weeks while others may take several months. Allegations concerning other UN agencies or implementing partners have been referred to the respective organisations for investigation and we will closely monitor the outcome of these.

Allegations concerning government individuals or entities have also been referred by UNHCR to the Government of Uganda for investigation. In the interest of administration of justice, UNHCR is cooperating with the Government of Uganda in these investigations on a voluntary basis, in accordance with the framework of the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, to which Uganda is a party. We will also closely monitor the outcome of these investigations.

Finally, the IGO is also collaborating closely with other UN organisations, particularly with WPF with whom UNHCR proposes to conduct joint investigations, where appropriate.

*Madame Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Responding rapidly and professionally to serious misconduct allegations requires the Investigation Service to be appropriately resourced and have the necessary expertise to undertake its work. In response to the Kenyan investigations, the Inspector General's Office received adequate financial support from management. However, to effectively assess the rising number of allegations; investigate growing numbers of complex misconduct cases which are resource-intensive, and meet expectations for calls for rapid response, additional resources are urgently required.

*Madame Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

In conclusion, the Inspector General's Office has made significant progress on implementing oversight reforms and establishing analytical capacity; in reaching out to our investigation counterparts in other organisations to collaborate together, pool resources and share best practice; and in responding to allegations of misconduct. However, 2018 is already shaping up to be a very challenging year for the Organisation and for the Inspector General's Office. As we tackle these challenges together, I would like to express again my deep appreciation for your guidance and continued support.

Thank you.