

**Ninety-second meeting of the Standing Committee**  
**11-13 March 2025**

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

**Introduction** – In 2024, the Inspector General's Office continued to make significant strides in fulfilling its mandate, in accordance with the Policy on Independent Oversight and Administrative Instruction on Conducting Investigations in UNHCR. The strategy of the Inspector General's Office 2021-2026 defines the scope and interlinkages of its investigations remit, seeks to enhance the delivery of its investigations work, and ensures effective learning and risk prevention, as well as the gathering and analysing of independent oversight data. The Inspector General's Office undertook several initiatives to bring forward key deliverables for UNHCR's oversight system. This involved coordinating and ensuring the coherence of independent oversight activities; carrying out thorough, professional, independent investigations; providing strategic insight and analyses of lessons learned to senior management and external stakeholders; and comprehensively analysing strategic risks for UNHCR.

**Strategic oversight** – The remit of the Strategic Oversight Service in the Inspector General's Office includes gathering information and bringing together relevant entities; understanding issues and risks through analysis; and providing meaningful learning in the form of strategic advice to executive management.

The Service coordinated and reviewed the work of the internal and external oversight assurance providers, such as the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services, the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit, the United Nations Board of Auditors and the Evaluation Office of UNHCR to ensure coherence among their respective assurance activities. This was done through a range of measures including: maintaining online dashboards for oversight planning and the tracking of recommendations; convening meetings of oversight entities; mapping assurance activities to risks identified; completing risk-based analyses for the attention of senior management; following up on oversight recommendations; and providing advisory reports. In addition, it continued to serve as secretariat of the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee and act as the focal point for the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit and for the internal audit service provided by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services.

**Investigations** – The Investigation Service, within the Inspector General's Office, serves as a vital steward of accountability, ensuring that all individuals associated with UNHCR uphold the highest standards of integrity. By receiving and assessing complaints of misconduct involving UNHCR personnel, partners, and other contractual parties, the Service conducts thorough investigations and issues management implication reports to identify and mitigate risks. This rigorous approach reinforces UNHCR's commitment to ethical conduct and accountability to its stakeholders. In line with previous years, the Investigation Service received misconduct complaints primarily related to sexual exploitation and abuse, financial fraud, and workplace-related concerns, which were the top three forms of misconduct reported in 2024. Most allegations implicated UNHCR personnel, with complaints stemming primarily from two main regions where UNHCR's largest operations are based: the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes, and the Middle East and North Africa. In response, the Investigation Service finalized 172 investigations in 2024, of which 57 investigations related to financial fraud, with an overall substantiation rate of 51 per cent. In addition to its core investigations remit, the Service undertook risk-based analyses of integrity data; worked with the rest of the Inspector General's Office and UNHCR management to improve systems, policies and processes relating to integrity issues; issued 38 management implication reports to ensure learning from its work; and led capacity-building sessions for various partners of UNHCR, including other United Nations entities and international and national non-governmental organizations. The Service also continued its cross-cutting review of duplicate claims for payment by UNHCR partners to UNHCR and other funders, as a proactive fraud detection and investigation activity.

**Investigations data** – In 2024, the Inspector General's Office registered a total of 2,123 complaints of misconduct, out of a total of 2,800 complaints identified from 150,000 communications received and processed. For the first time in six years, the Inspector General's Office has observed a plateau in the number of complaints received compared to the prior year. Historically, each year had seen steady increases, except for 2024, which experienced a spike of 23 per cent from over 1,700 complaints in 2022 to 2,196 in 2023. As the figures for 2023 and 2024 remained nearly identical, the Investigation Service will closely monitor how this trend unfolds in 2025.

Of the 2,800 assessed complaints, 600 were outside of the mandate of the Inspector General's Office, not fitting the criteria for misconduct, and 2,200 reported alleged misconduct. A majority of the reported complaints of misconduct were closed after intake assessment or referred: 42 per cent were outside the remit of the Inspector General's Office and were referred to internal or external parties to be addressed; 50 per cent were closed; and 8 per cent were investigated directly by the Inspector General's Office.

There were 230 complaints of sexual exploitation and abuse, with identified or identifiable victims, received in 2024, compared to 256 in 2023. Of these, 77 per cent of the complaints implicated partner personnel, compared to 80 per cent in 2023. These complaints led to 20 investigations carried out by the Inspector General's Office, compared to 29 investigations in 2023, and 99 investigations carried out by UNHCR partners where allegations concerned partner staff; of these, 69 were closed and not investigated. The reasons preventing the undertaking of investigations were, insufficient information to assess the allegations; lack of victim cooperation; and preliminary assessments determining the cases did not amount to sexual exploitation and abuse. In 22 per cent of the reported cases of sexual exploitation and abuse by UNHCR and its partners, the victim was either not identified or unreachable. This rendered it more difficult to record assistance provided to the victims, with only 68 per cent of cases reported to the Inspector General's Office indicating that support was being provided. Overall, when the victim is identified, there is enhanced awareness of the victim-centred approach adopted by UNHCR, and assistance is provided. The Inspector General's Office received 74 complaints of sexual harassment, with identified or identifiable victims, compared to 65 complaints in 2023. An estimated 21 per cent of these complaints implicated partner staff, compared to 30 per cent in 2023.

In 2024, a total of 172 investigations were finalized, of which 51 per cent were substantiated, as compared to a substantiation rate of 45 per cent in 2023. Substantiation rates for investigations into sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment stood at 38 per cent and 53 per cent, respectively.

In light of the foregoing workload, the Inspector General's Office has worked hard to improve its own efficiency through the use of artificial intelligence for complaints intake, where the Inspector General's Office is in an advanced position in the United Nations system. It has also improved its use of digital forensics; upgraded and enhanced its information technology system; and helped foster capacity-building for implementing partners and United Nations system counterparts.

**Strengthening competencies with operations and partners** – The Investigation Service has prioritized building the capacity of UNHCR's partners in accountability and oversight by conducting extensive training sessions and outreach at the operational level. These initiatives underscore the commitment of the Inspector General's Office to a robust oversight system that ensures integrity and trust, helping partners better understand the expectations of UNHCR and the importance of upholding humanitarian values in their work. In 2024, the Investigations Service delivered training sessions across different regions, including workshops in Bangladesh, Egypt, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as a comprehensive five-day investigator training in Türkiye, which was specifically designed for new junior and senior United Nations system investigators. The Inspector General's Office also ensured transparency by communicating on oversight and investigation activities through frequent engagement opportunities with UNHCR staff and stakeholders.

**Conclusion** – Despite the resource reductions implemented in 2024 across the organization, the third line functions collaborated effectively with UNHCR's first- and second-line management to strengthen oversight. The Inspector General's Office strengthened UNHCR's oversight and integrity framework by enhancing assurance, policies, processes, tools, and capacity. Central to these efforts were the close collaboration with internal and external oversight bodies, the issuance of management implication reports to instill learning from procedural weaknesses identified through investigations findings, and strategic policy advice provided to the senior leadership of UNHCR.