

95th Meeting of the Standing Committee

March 2026

Statement by Mr. Henrik Malmquist, Inspector General a.i.

Chairperson,

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I address you today in my capacity as Officer-in-Charge of the Inspector General's Office following the expiry of Anthony Garnett's tenure. I normally serve as Head of the Investigation Service, a role I have held for more than ten years.

This year's statement comes at a moment of important institutional transition for UNHCR— a transition that also affects the IGO. Despite a 24 per cent budget reduction and the loss of 13 staff positions, the Office has remained firmly focused on fulfilling its mandate.

Transparency and Independent Oversight

Independent oversight is essential for credibility, accountability, and effectiveness. Throughout 2025, the IGO coordinated the work of UNHCR's internal and external oversight providers— to maximize overall assurance coverage and avoid duplication.

To support management engagement, we continued to operate the online oversight dashboards, bringing transparency to planning and recommendation follow-up. We also convened regular quarterly oversight meetings and held a dedicated workshop to examine how downsizing affects risk and assurance coverage.

Externally, the Office has maintained a clear, no-surprises approach in its communication on integrity matters.

Fraud, Waste, Abuse, and Integrity Risks

A major focus in 2025 remained the investigation of integrity breaches— particularly financial fraud and sexual misconduct, areas where UNHCR continues to face serious risk.

Despite reduced capacity, the Investigation Service opened 173 investigations and finalized 193— the highest number ever recorded by the Office. This was achieved through sharper prioritization and efficient workflows.

We received over 1,800 misconduct complaints, most involving financial fraud, workplace misconduct, and sexual exploitation and abuse. The largest number again came from operations in the East and Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes, and the Middle East and North Africa.

We also advanced proactive detection of duplicate claims by partners, identifying significant potential financial losses and strengthening system-wide mitigation measures.

Efficiency, Digitisation, and Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence

The Office has had to operate with fewer resources while demand remains high. This has accelerated our transition toward digitisation and AI-enabled tools. Building on digital forensics and automated transcription, we expanded the use of AI in the intake process— improving triage consistency, early risk detection, and the handling of more than 100,000 emails each year.

At the same time, we emphasise the need for strong safeguards, bias-mitigation measures, and continued human oversight.

Supporting a Speak-Up Culture and Victim-Centred Approaches

We welcome the new High Commissioner's emphasis on accountability and integrity, as set out in his recent all-staff broadcast. As 2025 was marked by a particularly turbulent year for UNHCR's workforce, the IGO strengthened efforts to promote reporting through the Integrity Counts campaign in all UN languages and maintained the availability of the SpeakUp Helpline offering colleagues a channel to raise concerns anonymously.

We continued to prioritise sexual-misconduct complaints, ensuring victim-centred support and closely monitoring partners' responses to allegations involving their personnel.

Conclusion

Chairperson,

In a year marked by restructuring and reduced resources, the IGO has remained a guardian of transparency, integrity, and accountability. Through collaboration, innovation, and strict adherence to its mandate, the Office delivered independent investigations and the strategic analysis essential for safeguarding UNHCR's credibility.

Let me reassure you: it is business as usual during this leadership transition. Productivity remains strong, workflows are stable, and our commitment to high-quality, impartial oversight is unchanged.

The independence of the Inspector General's Office— vital to effective oversight and to maintaining the trust of Member States, partners, and the people we serve— remains fully upheld.

Thank you.

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