

**56<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee**

**5-7 March 2013**

**Speech of the Inspector General**

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

I would like to draw your attention to the document entitled: “Oral Update on the Work of the Inspector General’s Office” which was made available to you prior to this meeting and which contains complementary information on the recent activities of my Office.

Before turning to the IGO’s inspection and investigation activities, I would like to update you on where we currently stand on the review of the provision of internal audit services to UNHCR. Following the Board of Auditors request, in 2012, that UNHCR conduct a comprehensive appraisal of options for the provision of internal audit services to UNHCR and develop a business plan for the chosen option, a Canadian consultancy firm was commissioned by the IGO, in collaboration with UNHCR’s Organizational Development and Management Service, to undertake this study.

Phase 1 of the study was completed in November 2012. I am pleased to report that it recommended that UNHCR should favour the option of establishing its own internal audit service. This recommendation is also in line with the view expressed by the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee that UNHCR should establish its own internal audit service. The High Commissioner further agreed that phase 2 of the study, the development of the business plan, should proceed, and, yesterday, we received, for comments, the draft report of this second phase of the study.

Throughout the various stages of the study, the IGO has worked not only in close collaboration with UNHCR’s Organizational Development & Management Service, the Division of Human Resources Management, the Division of Financial & Administrative Management, and with the Office of Internal Oversight Services. I pledge to you that my Office will continue to work closely with the afore-mentioned entities throughout the process, and will ensure that ExCom Members are kept fully informed of future developments on this critically important issue.

Finally, on the subject of the provision of internal audit service to UNHCR, it is important to stress the study’s assertion that transitioning to an in-housed arrangement would need to be phased in over a period of time. This approach would allow time for UNHCR to build up the personnel, infrastructure, and procedures required to meet international standards for internal audit and to safeguard quality control during the establishment phase. Arrangements would be worked out with the Office of Internal Oversight Services to ensure the non-disruption of services during the transitional period.

*Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,* in my speech to the 63rd Session of the Executive Committee last October and, more recently, in my meeting last week with ExCom Members who responded positively to my invitation to a “Friends of the IGO” meeting, I highlighted the IGOs on-going critical resource situation.

UNHCR’s overall budget has doubled since 2008. Increased emphasis has hence been placed on stringent oversight. Yet, in the last 2 years, the IGO’s administrative budget has decreased by nearly 30 per cent, compared to its peak in 2007. Furthermore, its staffing component has remained static since 2006.

To illustrate the resource difficulties the IGO is facing, I would like to provide you with some statistics.

The Investigation Service receives over 1,700 complaints a year and currently has 96 open investigation cases. All complaints are registered and initially assessed by the Service’s Intake Unit which is composed of only one regular established General Service position, and no Professional positions. We thus rely essentially on staff in between assignments to carry out the critical intake functions. As for the 96 currently open cases, these are assigned between the 2 Senior Investigation Officers and the 2 Senior Investigation Specialists of the Investigation Service. Thus, at any given time, each one is required to work on between 20-25 cases each. This situation is not sustainable. Delays in finalizing investigations inevitably create an atmosphere of impunity.

In an effort to address somewhat this critical resource situation, I have placed emphasis in recent months on capacity building. In this respect, 2 important capacity building workshops have been organized and convened respectively by the Inspection and Investigation Services of the IGO in recent weeks.

On the inspection side, 18 colleagues, both from Headquarters and field offices, attended an Advanced Inspection Training Workshop in Geneva last month. The aim of this Workshop was to equip participants with a range of skills pertinent to the conduct of inspection missions and report writing, and who, thus trained, could be called upon to participate, alongside members of the Inspection Service, in inspection missions.

On the investigation side, 9 of UNHCR’s major NGO partners responded positively to our invitation to attend an Advanced Investigation Training Workshop, also held in the Geneva region in February 2013. The workshop covered a broad and representative spectrum of possible investigation scenarios relevant to large NGOs, and aimed at building capacity not only for NGOs to carry out investigations of misconduct independently, but also to participate in joint UNHCR/NGO investigations. We plan to replicate similar workshops, at a regional level, for the grass-roots NGOs.

This Investigation Training Workshop is part of the IGOs broader, on-going project to strengthen UNHCR’s investigative cooperation with its NGO partners. Under this project to date, Terms of Reference for joint UNHCR/NGO investigations as well as for Standard Operating Procedures for case referrals and for the sharing of sensitive information have been prepared. I am pleased to inform you that, as a result of the IGO’s efforts and initiatives, a standard clause on Partners’ obligations as to the conduct of investigations and the sharing of information with UNHCR, has been included in the Standard Project Agreement with Governmental and Non-Governmental Implementing Partners.

I consider this project to be a highly critical and important initiative since, of the 294 complaints of misconduct received in the IGO in 2012, 94 of these related to Implementing Partner staff. I would thus appeal to our donors to consider either supporting a specific budget line in the Partner Agreements, or providing funding for the pool/roster of investigators that UNHCR would like to establish, to be used by partners who lack an internal investigative capacity.

*Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,* in closing, I would like to reiterate my gratitude for your support over the past 18 months since I took up my functions as UNHCR's Inspector General, and, at this juncture, particularly wish to reiterate my appreciation and thanks to the Norwegian Government for having made available experienced trainers for the IGOs two recent Workshops. I would furthermore wish to impress upon you the importance I place on your continued guidance, advice and support.

Thank you.