



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
29 July 2022

Original: English

---

## Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme

Seventy-third session

10-14 October 2022

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

**Consideration of reports relating to programme  
and administrative oversight and evaluation**

## Report on activities of the Inspector General's Office

### Report of the High Commissioner

#### *Summary*

This report covers the work of the Inspector General's Office for the period from July 2021 to June 2022. It is provided pursuant to the decision of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme to consider reports relating to programme and administrative oversight and evaluation during its annual plenary session ([A/AC.96/1003](#), para. 25(1)(f)(vi)). The Executive Committee has requested further that "summary reports covering inquiries and the main categories of investigations, the number of such types of investigations, the average time taken to complete investigations and a description of related disciplinary action" be made available regularly ([A/AC.96/1021](#), para. 24(e)).



## **I. Executive summary**

1. This report outlines activities undertaken by the Inspector General's Office from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022.

2. The Inspector General's Office continues to deliver on its mandate, as set out in the UNHCR Policy on Independent Oversight<sup>1</sup> and, internally, in the administrative instruction on conducting investigations in UNHCR. This mandate requires the Inspector General's Office to ensure coherence and coordination of independent oversight activities; the provision of an independent investigations function; and the delivery of assurance, strategic analysis and insight, as well as the identification of significant risks to UNHCR.

## **II. Inspector General's Office**

### **A. Strategy of the Inspector General's Office 2021-2026**

3. The Inspector General, who took up his functions as of March 2020, commenced his term by developing a clear strategy for his period in office. While this strategy has been kept under close review in the period covered by this report, to ensure it aligns with the changing context and activities of UNHCR, the strategy remains valid. Its core objective is to ensure that UNHCR has an effective independent oversight system.

4. Progress has been made during the period regarding the more systems and process-oriented elements of the strategy. The Inspector General's Office is now turning its attention to progressing on the more qualitative components of the strategy, having ensured the mechanics of implementation are in place.

### **B. Improving the work of the Inspector General's Office**

5. The Inspector General's Office is committed to excellence. It has taken several steps during the reporting period to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness, in line with best international standards and practice.

#### **1. Intake review**

6. In light of increasing demands on its investigation capacity, a time-bound project was undertaken by the Inspector General's Office to address its backlog of complaints. This project temporarily reassigned investigators to intake activity. The project resulted in restoring the intake pipeline to current complaints only and put in place an intake assessment methodology that will more efficiently and effectively prioritize complaints that require an investigation, while ensuring the referral of others, prima facie non-misconduct or less serious matters, for appropriate managerial action.

#### **2. Investigation systems**

7. An upgrade of the case management system of the Inspector General's Office was completed during the reporting period. This upgrade enhanced operability and the capacity of the system to support the complaints and investigations work and to facilitate enhanced qualitative analysis. The Inspector General's Office also increased its capability to gather data remotely from the information technology systems in UNHCR. This has enhanced investigations in the field through strengthened remote investigative mechanisms. It also supported increased speed of investigations, data analysis and the integrity of data gathered, thereby improving the efficiency and confidentiality of investigations work.

---

<sup>1</sup> Available from <https://www.unhcr.org/5e21d0cb4/>.

### 3. Communications

8. The Inspector General's Office has recognized that improving its communications internally within UNHCR, and publicly to all of its stakeholders, is a priority. During the reporting period, it restructured and updated its presence on the intranet and public website. This included publishing a range of products to explain and situate the work of individual integrity and oversight entities within the overall framework of independent oversight (UNHCR and United Nations system-level). This work is ongoing in 2022.

9. The Inspector General's Office has also worked to enhance the visibility and understanding of the work of independent oversight actors, to improve the engagement of management with the work, and promote learning and development from it. To this end, it publishes a regular and systematized schedule of reports for senior management at UNHCR Headquarters and in the regional.

### 4. Staff training

10. During the reporting period, the Inspector General's Office maintained a programme of professional development. Training included support for the implementation of a victim-centered approach to investigations. A training event by the National Academy for Judicial Police of the *Gendarmerie nationale* in Paris, France, strengthened critical skills for international investigators regarding sexual offences. Other events included open-source research training, updates on latest judicial developments in the United Nations system, and a range of internal UNHCR systems and process training.

### 5. Qualitative data analysis

11. The Inspector General's Office began using a new qualitative data analysis tool, designed to provide a clearer and more intellectually sound basis for modern and flexible oversight data analysis. Technical training on the use of the new tool was carried out and capacity-building was provided for senior staff of the Inspector General's Office in the design of qualitative data analysis frameworks. Training will continue through 2022.

### 6. Participation in the Conference of International Investigators

12. Over 600 investigators, with 6 in-person and 12 virtual UNHCR attendees, participated in the twenty-second conference of international investigators in May 2022, hosted by the European Investment Bank in Luxembourg. The conference theme reflected the rapidly changing times due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, new technology, digital currencies, the environment and other events. It brought investigators together from 56 international organizations and aimed to strengthen the efforts of investigators and their offices in tackling integrity issues.

## C. Working in partnership

13. The Inspector General's Office continued to work in close collaboration with both internal and external stakeholders, in order to optimize oversight effectiveness and efficiency.

### 1. Collaboration with external actors

14. During the reporting period, the Strategic Oversight Service provided secretariat support to three sessions of the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee, held in November 2021 (in person), March 2022 (virtual) and June 2022 (in person). The sessions included consultations with key internal and external oversight entities, as well as senior management in UNHCR from relevant divisions and the regional bureaux. The Independent Audit and Oversight Committee shared its observations with the High Commissioner and the Deputy High Commissioner at the conclusion of each session and will present its annual report to the eighty-fifth meeting of the Standing Committee of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme.

15. The Inspector General's Office continued to liaise with the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations System in its capacity as the UNHCR focal point for this body's work. It coordinated contributions from UNHCR to ten system-wide reviews during the reporting period, including feedback on terms of reference and participation in questionnaires. These reviews included finalized reports on cybersecurity (JIU/REP/2021/3), implementing partnership management (JIU/REP/2021/4), ethics (JIU/REP/2021/5) and business continuity (JIU/REP/2021/6), in addition to the coordination of ongoing reviews related to racism and racial discrimination, internal appeal mechanisms, accountability frameworks, flexible working arrangements, mental health and well-being, and health insurance. On behalf of UNHCR, the Inspector General's Office submitted two detailed proposals to the 2023 programme of work of the Joint Inspection Unit. In close coordination with relevant headquarters entities, the Strategic Oversight Service continued to provide updates to the Joint Inspection Unit, resulting in the closure of a considerable number of outstanding recommendations. As of 30 June 2022, there were 31 open recommendations dating before 2021 and 21 open recommendations from 2021 onwards.

## **2. Collaboration with internal actors**

16. The Inspector General's Office provided updates, advice and early warning to executive and senior management through regular and informal meetings on matters relevant to its mandate. These included ad hoc briefings on oversight and integrity issues for a range of management colleagues, in particular for newly appointed representatives. Comments were also sought from the Inspector General's Office and provided on a range of policy initiatives.

17. In addition, the Inspector General's Office worked closely with the Division of Human Resources and the Legal Affairs Service on investigation-related matters and disciplinary proceedings. It also worked with the wider integrity community to ensure improvements to both protect complainants and improve outcomes following complaints.

18. The Inspector General's Office continued to collaborate with the regional bureaux and country operations. The Inspector General went on mission to visit the regional bureaux for the Middle East and North Africa, and for the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes. He also visited UNHCR operations in Jordan, Kenya and Lebanon. These missions reinforced that political, social, demographic and cultural contexts play a crucial role in the work of UNHCR and reconfirmed the importance of quality leadership of UNHCR operations.

## **III. Oversight and assurance system**

19. The Inspector General's Office is mandated to ensure the effectiveness and coherence of independent oversight. This includes consideration of the effectiveness of the whole ecosystem of oversight, assurance and learning. This encompasses, therefore, the independent third line, as well as their effective cross-working with management second- and first-line activities.

### **1. Coordinated oversight planning**

20. During the reporting period, the Inspector General's Office facilitated quarterly coordination meetings with internal and external oversight providers for UNHCR, in order to ensure their collective efficiency and effectiveness. Participating internal actors comprised the Evaluation Service, the UNHCR Internal Audit Service in the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the United Nations, and the Enterprise Risk Management Service (as a key second-line counterpart), while external actors comprised the Joint Inspection Unit and the United Nations Board of Auditors. The Inspector General's Office worked with oversight providers to ensure their overall balance in terms of organizational, financial and risk coverage.

21. In addition to enabling coherent, cross-provider planning for 2022, the Inspector General's Office facilitated specific planning for oversight work on the Business Transformation Programme and the UNHCR humanitarian response in Ukraine, both areas

of high risk and interest to all oversight providers. These plans were designed to ensure a well-sequenced and effective use of the work of oversight providers.

22. The Inspector General's Office launched an online platform which enables UNHCR management to track and analyse, in one place, recommendations from all oversight providers. This tool complements the previously developed online consolidated oversight plan.

## **2. Strategic oversight**

23. The Inspector General's Office continues to deliver on its mandated role to highlight and identify significant risks to UNHCR management. It has done this both formally and informally.

24. In support of this work, the Inspector General's Office undertook internal risk reviews of second-line management oversight in the context of the Business Transformation Programme, and decentralization and regionalization. A separate assessment of risk was also performed of the Business Transformation Programme. Both of these advisory reviews were shared with UNHCR management for their consideration.

## **3. Internal Audit Service**

25. The Inspector General's Office continued to be the point of contact for the relationship between UNHCR and the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the United Nations (OIOS) for the provision of internal audit services to UNHCR, in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions and a memorandum of understanding signed in March 2018. The existing memorandum of understanding is in the process of being revised, in consultation with OIOS, and will reflect a shared commitment to ensure that the internal audit service continues to be fit for purpose as organizational development continues in UNHCR.

# **IV. Integrity system**

26. The Inspector General's Office is mandated to ensure the effectiveness and coherence of independent integrity work. During the reporting period, it took steps to work across UNHCR to enhance the overall effectiveness of the UNHCR integrity prevention and response systems.

## **1. Protection against retaliation**

27. The Inspector General's Office carried out the operational changes to undertake the factual investigatory work in support of determinations by the UNHCR Ethics Office of both prima facie and final claims for protection against retaliation by staff. These changes enhance the objectivity, efficiency and effectiveness of the protection against retaliation system.

## **2. Support Desk**

28. The Inspector General's Office has supported the operationalization of an enhanced approach to the handling of workplace concerns through the establishment of a multi-entity Support Desk established to handle staff workplace concerns that are not obviously protected, through protection against retaliation; misconduct matters handled by the Inspector General's Office; or matters for the Ombudsperson. The Support Desk's management and independent entities, with the Inspector General's Office as an observer, are working to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of handling complaints, ensuring appropriate action is taken by the most appropriate management or independent entity in UNHCR, while ensuring the protection of complaints where appropriate. Referrals to the Support Desk are made directly by contacting the Desk online, via the Inspector General's Office, or the Speak Up helpline.

## **3. Speak Up helpline**

29. The Speak Up helpline transferred its point of data entry into UNHCR from the Ethics Office to the Inspector General's Office. This change ensures that complaints, which may require protection of the complainants, and which are handled by the Inspector General's

Office, Ethics Office or Ombudsperson, are managed confidentially prior to onwards submission to UNHCR management colleagues and others.

**4. Witness and victim protection**

30. The Inspector General’s Office is working with the Legal Affairs Service of UNHCR to enhance protocols and practice for the protection of witnesses and victims within the investigations process. Over the past five years, challenges related to witness protection have constituted 10 per cent of the overall number of investigations, and these include physical as well as psychosocial threats to the witnesses and their families. Options being explored include mitigating measures to reduce or curtail the visibility of witnesses in investigations, while balancing the due process rights of all parties to an investigation.

**V. Complaints and investigations**

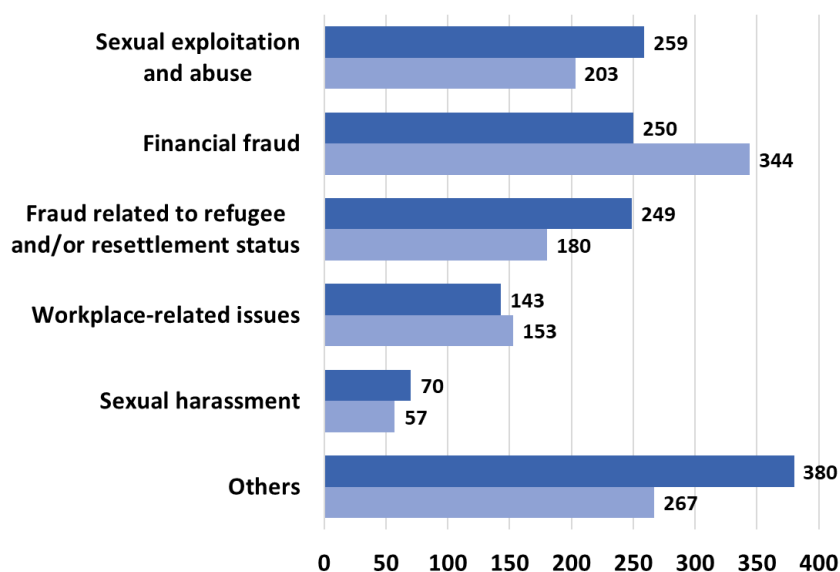
**A. Caseload and reporting**

31. During the reporting period, the Office recorded 1,570 misconduct complaints, a 22 per cent increase compared to 1,290 during the previous reporting period. The increase may be attributable to awareness-raising sessions organized by the Investigation Service; strengthened emphasis by executive management on integrity and people matters; increased deployment of risk managers in the field; and the lifting of COVID-19 related restrictions on movement.

32. As shown below, the three main categories of complaints of misconduct were: (i) fraud with financial implications (16 per cent); (ii) sexual exploitation and abuse (16 per cent); and (iii) refugee status determination and resettlement fraud (16 per cent). These were the main three categories in the previous reporting period. 51 per cent of complaints of misconduct implicated UNHCR personnel and 27 per cent implicated implementing partner personnel, while 6 per cent implicated government officials and 4 per cent persons of concern.

33. In terms of breakdown by region, Africa (46 per cent) followed by the Middle East and North Africa (28 per cent) recorded the highest proportion of complaints, a similar trend and distribution compared to recent years.

**Figure I**  
**Distribution of registered misconduct complaints 2021/2022 compared to 2020/2021**  
 (selected display referring to the top misconduct categories)

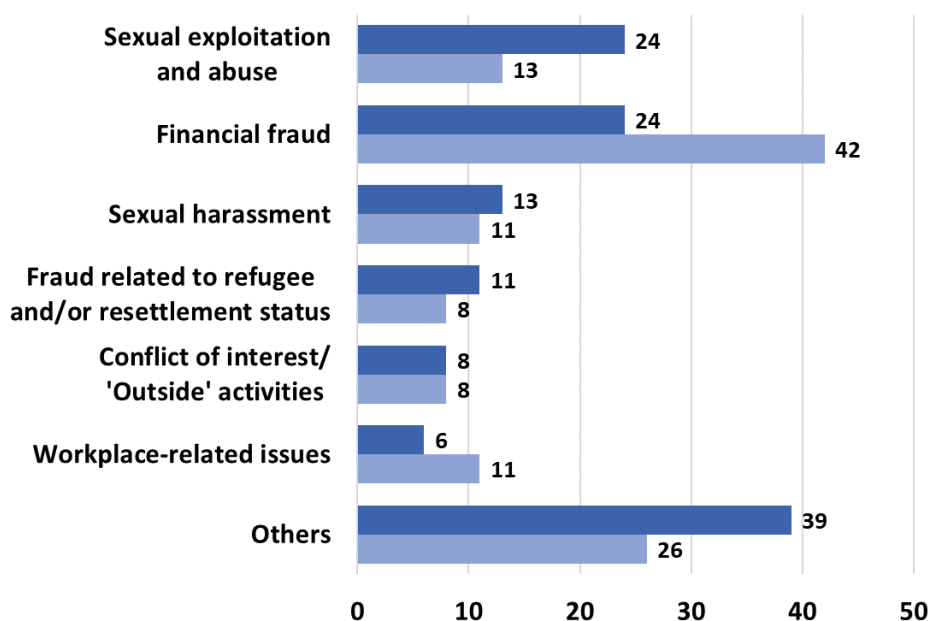


\* Workplace related issues refer to Abuse of Authority, Discrimination and Harassment

\*\* Others refer to all other types of misconduct complaints

34. 125 investigations were opened, representing a slight increase compared to 116 during the previous reporting period. The main categories of investigations opened related to: (i) sexual exploitation and abuse (24); (ii) fraud with financial implications (24); (iii) sexual harassment (13) and RSD/RST fraud (11).

**Figure II**  
**Distribution of opened investigation 2021/2022 compared to 2020/2021 (selected display referring to the top misconduct categories)**



35. Investigations implicating 143 individuals were finalized, representing the same number finalized in the previous reporting period. 65 out of 133 cases implicating UNHCR personnel were substantiated and referred to the Division of Human Resources for disciplinary action. 22 investigations were closed for other reasons, and the remaining 46 cases were closed, as the complaints could not be substantiated or were unfounded.

36. A total of 41 disciplinary measures were imposed on 35 UNHCR staff members, with 22 (54 per cent) being dismissed or separated. The contracts of 4 individuals with affiliate workforce contracts were terminated and 3 others resulted in another sanction. A further 4 individuals left UNHCR before the completion of the investigatory or disciplinary processes.

37. During the reporting period, the cases of 6 staff members were referred, through the Legal Affairs Service, to respective national authorities for criminal accountability for a total of 7 cases.

38. The Investigation Service strived to address its workload in a timely manner, despite resource limitations. 61 per cent of complaints relating to misconduct were assessed within 8 weeks. 73 per cent of the assessments of complaints relating to sexual exploitation/abuse and sexual harassment were finalized within 4 weeks. 52 per cent of all investigations were finalized within 6 months.

39. 43 per cent of all complaints received were closed after the initial intake follow-up; 8 per cent led to the opening of investigations; and 8 per cent required further information. 47 per cent were referred to the relevant entities:

- (a) UNHCR internally (56 per cent)
- (b) To implementing partners for potential investigative follow-up (34 per cent)

(c) To the Office Internal Oversight Services Investigations Division for cases where there was a conflict of interest, as well as to investigative bodies of other United Nations entities and those of national authorities (6 per cent).

## **B. Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment**

### **1. Trends and data**

40. During the reporting period, the Inspector General's Office received 155 complaints relating to sexual exploitation and abuse with identified or identifiable victims, meeting the criteria for reporting to the United Nations Secretary-General, as compared to 162 complaints received during the previous year.

41. There were 33 complaints implicating UNHCR personnel. Of those, 9 cases were closed at the complaint level and 8 were pending assessment. A total of 16 investigations were opened, of these, 5 remained under investigation, while 5 were substantiated and 6 were closed because the allegations were unsubstantiated (4) or for other reasons (2).

42. There were 122 complaints implicating implementing partner personnel. Of those, 17 were closed at the complaint level and 12 were pending assessment. The investigative bodies of the concerned partners opened 89 investigations, of which 47 are ongoing. 42 investigations were finalized, of which 18 were unsubstantiated, 1 was closed because the subject resigned and 23 were substantiated and the results of the remaining investigations are pending. Of the 23 substantiated, 20 cases involved dismissal and two subjects resigned during the investigation. One case is still pending disciplinary process. Four cases involving implementing partner personnel were investigated, two were unsubstantiated and two were substantiated.

43. The number of complaints of sexual harassment increased during the reporting period, from 52 compared to 49 during the previous reporting period. 31 complaints implicated UNHCR personnel, 21 implicated implementing partner personnel. Of the 31 cases implicating UNHCR personnel, 12 victims decided not to pursue a formal process. The Inspector General's Office opened 15 investigations and 3 are pending assessment.

### **2. Implementing partner investigations training**

44. During the reporting period, the Inspector General's Office finalized, together with the UNHCR Global Learning and Development Centre, an e-learning course to help partners enhance their capacity in investigating allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse against beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance. This course is one of the deliverables of the High Commissioner's Inter-Agency Standing Committee Championship on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment (September 2019 to December 2020).<sup>2</sup>

### **3. Investigators' return to the field**

45. While the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed the Inspector General's Office to engage with and use new, remote and flexible online working modalities, there are several matters that require field missions from investigators as a matter of necessity. Investigators were able to make a welcome return to the field during the period, including to investigate complaints of sexual misconduct.

## **C. Commitment to prevention of misconduct**

46. The Inspector General's Office is committed to ensuring learning from investigations activity. During the reporting period, it increased the quantity, depth and quality of its reporting to UNHCR management in support of this commitment.

---

<sup>2</sup> Available from [www.disasterready.org](http://www.disasterready.org).



## **1. Management implication reports**

47. The Inspector General's Office continued to issue management implication reports to executive and senior managers at UNHCR Headquarters and in the field, in situations where deficiencies in control systems and operational processes were identified in the course of the investigative work. A total of 46 reports were issued in 2021-2022, compared to 36 in 2020-2021. The reports covered the following thematic areas: fraud with financial implications, including procurement fraud (11); process deficiencies and policy matters (11); operational and managerial issues (6); sexual exploitation and abuse (5); human resources (6); and other misconduct-related areas (7). The compliance rate remained high, with management being required to inform the Inspector General's Office about the actions that had been taken to remedy the identified weaknesses.

## **2. Investigation briefings and awareness-raising**

48. In order to support and improve integrity risk management, the Inspector General's Office regularized its reporting to senior headquarters and regional bureaux management on investigations statistics and analysis. To meet the reporting obligations of the United Nations, enhanced reporting was provided to country representatives on incidences of sexual misconduct. The Inspector General's Office enhanced the transparency of its investigations work, while remaining mindful of confidentiality and the need to maintain the integrity of the investigation process.

49. During the reporting period, the Inspector General's Office provided 8 presentations at UNHCR Headquarters and in the field, reaching over 500 personnel. These presentations aimed to raise awareness of the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment, fraud, corruption and other types of misconduct, as well as how to report incidents.

## **VI. Conclusion**

50. As UNHCR transitions through a period of significant organizational reform and continues to operate within a challenging global context, the Inspector General's Office will remain focused on its mission to ensure that UNHCR has an effective independent oversight and integrity system. This serves to both support and challenge the executive management team, and UNHCR as a whole, to ensure effective learning and risk mitigation from oversight work, towards the successful delivery of the mandate of the Office.