

74th Session of the Executive Committee

October 2022

Speech, Inspector General's Office

Mr. Anthony Garnett, Inspector General

Chairperson / Deputy Chairperson

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning / afternoon.

I want to complement my *Report on activities of the Inspector General's Office (A/AC.96/1226)*, for the year ended June 2022, with my comments today. I will cover both oversight delivery and coordination, and investigations, within the context of my Office's five-year strategy,

IGO strategy

Your excellencies, I believe the IGO's strategy for 2021-2026, to achieve the intended overall outcome; that 'UNHCR has an effective independent oversight system giving confidence to UNHCR's stakeholders', remains valid. A strategy is not an abstract statement of intent, nor a set of strategic soundbites, but is a coherent set of actions, over a period of time, to deliver meaningful and lasting change; in this case to UNHCR's oversight systems and, thereby, UNHCR's delivery of its mandate. My Office is making good progress on the more systems and process-oriented actions within the strategy. There is, however, more to do to tackle the more qualitative aspects of oversight.

In order to enhance, meaningfully and sustainably, UNHCR's oversight systems, oversight and integrity actors must see themselves in context, and as a coherent whole. Significant progress, supported and facilitated by my Office, has been made here. I am pleased to report real solidarity, and an ongoing and lively dialogue within the oversight and integrity communities.

On oversight, the newly installed Board of Auditors member from France and the Ombudsperson have joined the regular formal and informal planning and liaison meetings facilitated by the IGO.

Although independent, the oversight and integrity entities have worked collectively to improve the ‘handshake’ and cross working with management colleagues, particularly second line entities, recognising that real change comes only from organisational learning enacted by executive management.

My final comment on strategy is to recognise the crucial role leadership plays in the delivery of strong oversight and integrity outcomes. I would like to express my thanks for the High Commissioner’s and Deputy High Commissioner’s unwavering support. I feel empowered to tackle integrity lapses and speak out on assurance matters without fear or favour. I welcome, therefore, the recent extension to the High Commissioner’s mandate.

Oversight

I want to turn now to the oversight component of my Office’s work. In addition to providing the Secretariat for UNHCR’s Independent Audit and Oversight Committee and being the focal point in UNHCR for the OIOS-provided internal audit service and the Joint Inspection Unit, my Office has two main roles: ensuring oversight delivery and coordination.

My Office continued to facilitate quarterly oversight providers meetings to share, within a protected independent space, workplans, risk assessments, qualitative and quantitative data, and intelligence on risk. We also support a range of deeper, less formal, conversations, to enable more than just avoidance of overlaps, but to ensure that the right oversight tool is used to address the risks faced by UNHCR. UNHCR’s challenging work provides ample opportunities for risk focused assurance work. There is, however, a tendency for all oversight providers to focus on the most prominent risks. These require careful planning to ensure effective sequencing and use of oversight tools. My Office has supported the development of a single oversight approach to the business transformation programme and Ukraine emergency response.

For Ukraine, live assurance conversations between UNHCR management, the IGO, and internal audit, took place in the early phases of the emergency. These were followed by a proactive, preventative fraud

risk review of cash programming by the IGO. The Evaluation office supported the management-led real time review. These will be followed by an internal audit in 2022 and finally, an evaluation in 2023.

My Office has continued to support the Joint Inspection Unit's effective engagement with UNHCR to ensure their analysis has meaning in a UNHCR context. My Office is working with colleagues to explore ways to reduce the transaction costs of their work, whilst ensuring maximum learning and insight results.

UNHCR's internal auditors, have made a welcome return to the field and their programme of work has recovered post-pandemic. My Office has advised on the refresh of the memorandum of understanding under which internal audit is provided. Given UNHCR's increasing risk maturity and modernisation, now is the time for the arrangements to reflect, and take advantage of, the opportunities presented by a more risk based and agile UNHCR client. The IGO has been working on this with OIOS colleagues, and across the UN system.

The Strategic Oversight team in my Office, also seeks to ensure organisational learning from oversight work. It does this, in part, through independent reviews of selected complex strategic risks and issues. The reviews of management oversight in the context of decentralisation and regionalisation, and of the business transformation programme, were selected because of their strategic impact on UNHCR. They were delivered in an agile and risk-based manner to provide UNHCR's management team with advice and support, as both change programmes are 'in flight'. Scheduled internal audits, will follow. Whilst both change programmes do attract risk, there is a 'golden thread' of coherence and logic to the overall transformation programme within which they sit, that, when delivered, will considerably strengthen UNHCR.

Finally, as Inspector General, I keep a close eye on the balance and capacity of the overall oversight system. I was pleased to support the Evaluation Office's refresh of the evaluation policy and I support the objective, to increase overall, the judicious use of evaluation across UNHCR.

Integrity

Your excellencies, I will turn to my Office's work on integrity. My Office has been working with both management and other independent counterparts to enhance UNHCR's *overall* integrity response. We have now regularised the delivery of the changes to protection against retaliation complaints with the Ethics Office. The Support Desk, a multi-entity referral mechanism to ensure quick and effective referral of workplace concerns to the best-placed entity to address the complaint, including line management, is now in place. Finally, the Speak Up Helpline now feeds into my Office's intake function. This, and the design of the Support Desk, seek to ensure the protection and confidentiality, if required, of complainants.

Looking forward, my Office has received some resource to support improvement of UNHCR's capacity on integrity matters. Specifically, to improve the interaction with management colleagues on resettlement misconduct matters; to enhance further our working with implementing and operating partners of UNHCR on misconduct complaints; and to improve how we address financial fraud committed against UNHCR. We also have an ongoing project to review witness protection issues.

Investigations

On investigations, *your excellencies*, my report sets out the statistics for integrity matters handled by my Office in the reporting period. I note that the number of complaints continue to increase. Our expectation for this calendar year is for complaints to reach more than 1,600. I consider this to be positive, reflecting a post covid return and, in my view, an increased willingness and confidence to report. My Office has taken steps internally to streamline our intake and referral processes to handle the increased workload, but resourcing will continue to be an area of focus for me.

Sexual misconduct continues to be an area of focus for my Office and the numbers of complaints have remained broadly flat year-on-year. As a majority of these complaints relate to implementing partners of UNHCR, we continue to provide online and in-person training and support to partners to enhance and build their capacity. We have also returned to the field to deliver in-region workshops including at

headquarters and in West Africa. We have planned workshops in Southern Africa, the Americas, and two in Europe (supporting the Ukraine response), these are to be delivered before the end of 2022.

We also continue to issue management implication reports to management colleagues, setting out risks and learning points. We are issuing both more strategic, and systems focused reports, to ensure substantive organisational learning results from our work.

Efficiency

Your excellencies, my Office is keenly aware of the need to do more with less, and to this end we have embarked on a range of efficiency and effectiveness measures within our oversight and integrity work. Examples include our use of data analytics software for qualitative data analysis; investment in our investigations case management and remote data extraction and analysis software; specialist victim centred sexual misconduct investigations training; and enhancing the visibility of our work to UNHCR colleagues. We continue to work across the international system to share intelligence, benchmark, and advocate for improved best practice standards.

Conclusion

In closing, *Distinguished Delegates*, please accept my continued thanks for your support and engagement in my Office's work and in my strategic mission to modernise and reform UNHCR's oversight and integrity systems.