

86th Meeting of the Standing Committee

March 2023

Statement by Mr. Anthony Garnett, Inspector General

Chairperson,

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. I am now halfway through my tenure as UNHCR's Inspector General. This, and the fact that my report to this meeting covers the year 2022, leads me to be somewhat reflective. My brief remarks will review progress made by my Office and set out a forward look to complement my paper. My aim as Inspector General is always to use the special value of third line oversight, with its unique qualities of independence and objectivity to best effect, to ensure UNHCR delivers organisationally on its mandate to protect and serve. This requires not only that the IGO is efficient and effective, but that the systems of both oversight and integrity are functioning well and holistically. As such, I provide a systems, risk, process, oversight and organisational development lens to my reporting, supplemented by insights from travel to the field to understand the context of UNHCR's work.

Delivery of the IGO's mandate

Your Excellencies, the IGO's mandate and work continues to be guided by UNHCR's *Policy on Independent Oversight* to ensure that 'UNHCR has an effective independent oversight system'.

A range of improvements in policy and process have taken place, ensuring a stronger oversight system, and improved handling of integrity matters. There is, however, more to be done and a range of projects, across both the oversight and the integrity communities, are sequenced for implementation during 2023. The IGO, through its coordination mandate, will both support, and in parts, deliver these.

Oversight coordination

Distinguished delegates, I turn to my Office's Strategic Oversight function.

Its role to independently gather, understand, analyse and provide meaningful insight from oversight work, across UNHCR, has been fully established in 2022. Strategic Oversight issued a number of internal

advisory products during 2022, primarily in support of senior executive management. This work will continue in greater depth, quality and quantity in 2023.

The IGO also facilitated the various independent oversight entities to act, and see themselves, as a coherent system. Assurance plans were, and continue to be, coordinated across the various independent entities, with specific plans developed for areas of common interest. At present OIOS audit colleagues are auditing both the humanitarian response in Ukraine, including fieldwork on the ground, and the Business Transformation Programme. Evaluation Office colleagues have also recently started the first phase of reviewing the response in Ukraine. Coordination and rich conversations between the various oversight entities took place in 2022, with the oversight community welcoming new Board of Auditor members, from the Cour des Comptes of France.

There are now a range of tools for management colleagues to use in relation to oversight work, including a dashboard for Consolidated Oversight Planning and a Consolidated Oversight Recommendations tracker. Additionally, my Office tracks the management implication reports we issue.

As part of my Office's role as the internal audit focal point, work is ongoing to refresh the terms of UNHCR's arrangements with the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) for internal audit, with expected finalization in quarter 2, 2023. This includes the introduction of an internal audit charter.

Delivery of integrity response

Distinguished delegates, I now turn to my Office's investigations and integrity coordination work.

As you see from my report, the IGO received and registered a record number of complaints of misconduct in 2022. This trend has continued in 2023, with both complaints, and investigations opened in response, at unprecedented levels. Preparatory work, in anticipation of this trend, to recalibrate my Office's complaints intake process, and broader work across UNHCR to rebalance complaints towards informal and management-led resolution where possible and appropriate, has paid off and has been essential. I thank my head of investigations, Henrik Malmquist, in this public forum, for this significant achievement. The number of finalized investigations remained high with a substantiation rate of 54%. The median time to conclude an investigation in 2022 was five months and 60% of investigations were concluded within 6 months.

We have continued to prioritise work in relation to sexual misconduct with enhancements to the IGO's capacity to investigate, including training in open-source intelligence gathering, and remote, and mobile device, digital forensics. The existing online training for partners on investigating sexual misconduct was supplemented with six regional workshops provided in-person during 2022, and further workshops are planned for 2023. We continued to both apply, and refine, our victim centred approach in 2022, which adopts principles and practice, including trauma-informed interviewing, designed to be sensitive, and give a measure of control, to victims during the investigative process.

The IGO, through the Investigation Service, has seen a similar cohesion of thinking and approach by the various independent integrity entities as for oversight entities. The IGO has also supported various changes to UNHCR's integrity system in 2022, these include, the establishment of the Support Desk to handle staff workplace concerns not necessarily amounting to misconduct; the move of the Speak Up Helpline under the IGO, to enhance the confidentiality and anonymity of concerns raised; IGO delivery of the investigative input into protection against retaliation complaints; and supporting increased and improved use of informal and management-led resolutions of workplace conflict.

In 2023, the IGO is supporting projects on the review of the Support Desk's operation; finalization of a revised Ombudsperson policy; reviewing the SpeakUp Helpline's operation; reviewing data held by integrity entities for gathering collective insight; and enhancing UNHCR's approach to tackling financial fraud.

To ensure learning from the IGO's investigations expertise and work, we issued 41 management implication reports in 2022 with advice and recommendations to management colleagues.

Conclusion

In closing, *Distinguished Delegates*, I am pleased to re-iterate the conclusion from my paper, that UNHCR *has* strengthened its oversight and integrity systems during 2022. UNHCR's control frameworks can, however, be more consistent in the quality of their definition and application, and this is a persistent theme from both oversight and integrity work. UNHCR also should continue to push forward its level of risk maturity with a definitive move from risk *assessment* to risk *management*, thereby building and capitalizing on the progress made to date. The step change in supporting information technology systems

enabled by the Business Transformation Programme is both a risk and an opportunity, and I, and the oversight community, will follow this closely in 2023.

Finally, for our part, my Office will work to ensure clearer, risk based, root cause and lessons learned insights are brought from oversight and integrity work, to UNHCR's management team, for action in the coming year. I thank you for your continued support of, and interest in, my Office's work and that of the oversight and integrity communities.

Thank you.

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