

Introductory statement to the Fifth Committee circulated by
the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, Carman L. Lapointe,

27 October 2011

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the United Nations Secretariat's Public Information Organizational Framework (A/66/180)

“Public information activities were undertaken by 2,113 Secretariat-affiliated staff members”

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

I have the honor to provide for the Committee's consideration the OIOS report on our review of the United Nations Secretariat's Public Information Organizational Framework (A/66/180).

The review was undertaken by OIOS's Inspection and Evaluation Division further to a request from the Secretary-General, in response to a request by the General Assembly in resolution 62/236. The objective of the review was to assess, as systematically and objectively as possible, the Secretariat's public information organizational framework, including the resources dedicated to public information in the Secretariat and Secretariat-affiliated departments, duty stations, field missions and entities.

The report indicates that public information is a cross-cutting Secretariat-wide function and involves any activity which raises public awareness of the ideals, activities, goals and accomplishments of the United Nations. The related activities have been undertaken initially by the Department of Public Information (DPI), but these functions have expanded over time to include work undertaken by other programmes, offices, departments and missions in the course of promoting their respective mandates and activities. The resources dedicated to the Secretariat-wide public information function totaled 2,113 posts, equivalent to four per cent of the combined Secretariat staff.

- The majority of these posts (74 per cent or 1,571 posts) were located away from Headquarters in other offices and field missions.
- General service level posts accounted for 45 per cent of these posts, professional level posts for almost 30 per cent, and other post categories for the remaining 25 per cent.
- Entities also reported an additional 130 posts at both the general service and professional levels that undertake public information activities as additional to their primary job functions.

Public information posts are funded from different budgetary sources, as follows:

- Regular budget (48 per cent);
- Peacekeeping budget (39 per cent);
- Extra-budgetary resources (12 per cent); and
- Peacekeeping support account less than 1 per cent.

There were also non-post (financial) Secretariat-wide resources of approximately \$50 million (from all funding sources) utilized for public information activities for a variety of purposes such as TV and video production, translation and website maintenance.

Although DPI is the main department dedicated to disseminating public information, it does not have a formally mandated role for coordinating these functions throughout the Secretariat. In fact, formal coordination of public information occurs system-wide by the United Nations Communication Group (UNCG), while coordination occurs informally among Secretariat entities (including with DPI) and by other ad-hoc informal networks. The coordination focus was on preventing duplication of work, saving time and ensuring a common message, and was viewed as efficient by the focal points.

In response to the review, DPI noted that the results emphasize the importance of public information as a key component of the Secretariat's work. DPI fully endorsed the conclusion of the report, in that effective communication is critical to generating public support for the Organization. Accordingly, the Department stated that the resource level provided for public information should be commensurate with the central importance of communication to the work of the United Nations. Both the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and DPI raised concerns regarding the recommendation on the need for a strategic plan for public information and resources dedicated to these efforts.

OIOS wishes to express its appreciation for the cooperation extended by DPI and the focal points assigned for this review.

I look forward to your deliberations on this report and hope that you will find our analyses useful.

Thank you.