

Report of the Board of Auditors on the handling of information and communications technology affairs in the Secretariat

Statement of the Chairman of the ACABQ

ACABQ report: A/67/770; Related reports: A/67/651 & Add.1

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to introduce the Advisory Committee's report on the report of the Board of Auditors on the handling of information and communications technology affairs in the Secretariat.

The Advisory Committee commends the Board for the continued high quality of its work. The independent assessment of the Board constitutes a valuable tool for analyzing lessons learned and charting a course of action for the future development of information and communications technology, or ICT, at the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman,

The Advisory Committee has frequently stressed the need for a coherent, coordinated and accountable approach to managing ICT activities. The lack of effective governance and leadership in this area has resulted in the creation of multiple ICT units, the lack of common standards and processes, the piecemeal development of systems, and the proliferation of duplicate and incompatible databases. The ICT strategy approved by the General Assembly in 2008 aimed to address these issues.

The Advisory Committee is therefore disappointed to note the Board's overall conclusion that the Organization was unsuccessful in enforcing a more centralized ICT implementation and delivery strategy and addressing the high-level of fragmentation of the current ICT environment. The Board notes that the difficulties mirror those experienced recently by the United Nations in delivering major business transformation projects such as Umoja.

The Advisory Committee shares the Board's view that information and communications technologies are an integral part of business transformation initiatives, which use technology to enable and deliver change. In this regard the Board notes that the current ICT strategy places insufficient emphasis on the ERP system which is the single largest ICT-enabled business transformation project of the United Nations. The Board further indicates that the current ICT strategy does not sufficiently cover information security issues or peacekeeping activities which account for some 75 per cent of overall ICT expenditures. The Committee fully concurs with the Board's analysis.

In its report, the Advisory Committee comments on numerous specific aspects of the handling of ICT affairs in the Secretariat. Let me highlight its main conclusions.

Given the large number of major business transformation/ management reform initiatives currently underway, the Advisory Committee is of the view that the Secretary-General should prioritize its efforts, develop a practical course of action and, to the extent possible, adopt a sequential approach to the implementation of the ICT strategy, should it not be feasible to implement all aspects simultaneously.

The Advisory Committee believes that the highest priority should be given to identifying and putting into place the measures that are required to ensure successful implementation of all the phases of Umoja. These include, for instance, the implementation of an application management strategy to deal with the decommissioning of the 700 applications that will be replaced by Umoja and centralized standards for desktops interfacing with the ERP system.

With regard to information security, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to proceed with the implementation of his action plan as a matter of priority. The Secretary-General should take prompt remedial action to address any hindrances which may prevent effective implementation of the action plan or the application of information security policies throughout the Secretariat.

The Advisory Committee also recommends that the Secretary-General should be requested to consider all options for prioritization and redeployment of resources, and to avoid, to the extent possible, submitting requests for additional resources.

With regard to the Chief Information Technology Officer, or CITO, the Advisory Committee was informed that the position had been vacant since July 2012 and was under recruitment. Given the criticality of the function it recommends that the Secretary-General should be requested to fill the position without further delay.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.