



United States Mission to the United Nations

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**Statement by Cherith Norman, Counselor,
on Agenda Item 140: Report on OIOS Activities and the Joint Inspection Unit Report on
the Investigations Function in the UN System and Agenda Item 129: Review of Efficiency,
Report of Independent Audit Advisory Committee,
before the Fifth Committee,
October 8, 2012**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States thanks Assistant Secretary General Mr. David Kanja for his presentation of the annual report on the work of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and we welcome him to his new post as Assistant Secretary General. We also send our regards to Under Secretary General Carman Lapointe as she undergoes surgery and wish her a speedy recovery.

We also thank the Vice Chairman of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee (IAAC), Mr. Adrian Strachan, for introducing his Committee's annual report to the Fifth Committee and for the insight the Committee provides on several important issues. In addition, we thank the Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit Mr. Mohamed Zahran for his introduction of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit report on "The investigations function within the United Nations System." This report presents several key recommendations which we believe warrant Member States' serious consideration related to investigations and how to enhance professional standards and capacity across the UN system.

Mr. Chairman, as we noted in our statement at the opening of this session, we are pleased that the General Assembly will once again have an opportunity to advance UN transparency by approving the public disclosure of audits of the UN Secretariat, as proposed by the head of OIOS some time ago. We look forward to engaging colleagues on this important initiative and are hopeful that we will rise to the occasion and adopt this initiative.

Mr. Chairman, the work of OIOS continues to be of critical importance to the ongoing viability and effectiveness of the United Nations. OIOS has played, and will continue to play an important role in enhancing the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of the United Nations by exercising appropriate internal oversight, by promoting responsible use of resources, and by identifying and reporting instances of waste, fraud and mismanagement.

While we are pleased with the significant efforts undertaken by the Under Secretary General for OIOS to enhance and improve the capacity and functions of OIOS in the audit, investigation and inspection and evaluation areas, we remain concerned that key capacities are still under-

developed and not performing to their full potential which places the United Nations at serious reputational and operational risk.

In particular, as stated on previous occasions, the United States continues to be concerned about the state of the investigative capacity within OIOS, and in particular its capability to investigate complex financial and procurement cases. We note the external review that has just been completed on the Investigation Division as well as the other Divisions. It is our hope that this will lead to concrete improvements in the way investigations are pursued and conducted. We are concerned about the low number of investigations that were done over the last reporting period compared to previous years. While we hope that improvements to rules and procedures and efforts to build a culture of ethical conduct have contributed to the decrease, these factors alone would not explain how a large organization such as the UN would have so few cases to investigate. We strongly believe OIOS must step up its efforts to proactively pursue cases and ferret out fraud and corruption as well increase its forensic audit capacity.

In other matters, the United States commends Ms. Lapointe for her impressive efforts to reduce the vacancy rate which has decreased from a high of 27% to 12% at the end of August and encourages her to continue these efforts. The United States also notes the work OIOS has done over the past year to improve audit ratings as well as more efficient monitoring of recommendations including those that are critical. But we encourage OIOS to implement the IAAC recommendation for it to “attain a fully risk-based workplan” for both the audit and investigations division. We believe that these initiatives will contribute to improved management effectiveness and accountability in the UN.

As noted by the Under-Secretary-General in her foreword to the annual report, there are many initiatives and efforts underway to make OIOS the strong and independent oversight entity envisioned by member states and the United Nations. We look forward to continuing to partner with Ms. Lapointe and colleagues in this Committee to do just that.

Thank you.