

**Agenda item 134****A/70/68 - JIU/REP/2014/7****Review of Management and Administration of the  
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights****Statement by  
Gopinathan Achamkulangare, Inspector  
Joint Inspection Unit**

Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of the Joint Inspection Unit, I am pleased to present to the General Assembly its report titled “Review of Management and Administration of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights” (JIU/REP/2014/7) contained in document A/70/68 of 09 March 2015.

The JIU review was prepared in response to the specific request made by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 22/2 of 21 March 2013, to “undertake a comprehensive follow-up review of the management and administration of the Office of the High Commissioner, in particular with regard to its impact on the recruitment policies and the composition of the staff”, and as requested by the Council, presented a report thereon to the Council, although only to the twenty-eighth session of the Council in March 2015.

The report contains six formal recommendations covering governance and oversight by Member States, risk management, strategic planning, geographical distribution of staff, human resources management and mainstreaming of human rights across the United Nations system.

One of the recommendations, on governance-related issues, is addressed specifically to the General Assembly, and another on mainstreaming human rights across the United Nations system, is addressed to the Secretary-General. The remaining four recommendations are addressed to the High Commissioner for Human Rights as the executive head of OHCHR. Of these, two request the High Commissioner to submit reports on their implementation to the General Assembly

through the Secretary-General. Even in respect of the remaining two, the report requests the High Commissioner to present reports on their implementation to the governing bodies. The six formal recommendations are complemented by a number of informal or ‘soft’ recommendations for strengthening and reinforcing management and related practices at OHCHR, with reference to the standards and good practices prevailing in the United Nations system.

The first full-fledged review of OHCHR by JIU in more than a decade supports OHCHR in its ongoing reform and identifies areas for improvement. It takes account of the specificities of OHCHR, recognizes the important role played by the Office, and ensures that nothing in the review would infringe, or impact adversely on, the High Commissioner’s independence. It was prepared in conformity with the JIU norms and standards and procedures. It adopted a consultative approach involving intensive interactions with diverse stakeholders. The JIU received full cooperation from OHCHR while conducting the review.

The overarching objective of the report is to help improve the working of the Office, enhance its effectiveness and efficiency, introduce greater transparency and accountability, and reinforce its strategic positioning as the leading United Nations entity in the area of human rights. It analyses the growth of the Office in the past two decades: from a primarily normative, headquarters-based organization into an operational, field-based one; studies the challenges posed by dependence on extra-budgetary resources that have grown considerably during this period; and underscores the consequent need to review and update accordingly its organizational structure, rules and regulations and practices. The report makes a compelling case for substantially increasing the regular budget resources of the Office. It acknowledges the progress achieved by the Office in various areas, and points out room for further improvement in many of them. The report seeks to enhance the accountability of the Office, without in any way infringing upon the independence of the High Commissioner.

The review reaffirms that Member States have the primary responsibility for addressing governance and oversight-related issues. A shared vision of OHCHR should help Member States to enhance their capacity to provide strategic guidance, exercise oversight and to monitor its performance, thereby increasing their sense of ownership of the Office, and enhancing its effectiveness and efficiency. The review illustrates the complexity of the governance structure and practices of OHCHR; outlines aspects of the current governance arrangements and the resultant dynamics; and, suggests the need for a constructive dialogue among Member States.

**Recommendation 1 calls on the General Assembly to initiate an action-oriented review of the governance arrangements of OHCHR, through an open-ended working group or an open-ended ad hoc committee with a definite time frame and an agreed agenda, to review the governance framework and recommend measures for improvement so as to strengthen the capacity of Member States to provide strategic guidance and monitor the work of OHCHR.**

The review acknowledges positive developments and initiatives undertaken by OHCHR in strategic planning, results-based management and human resources. It makes an overall positive assessment of the internal reform processes, including the organizational effectiveness programme and the functional review. It makes suggestions for further improvement of the corporate culture through operational procedures and working practices, including in strategic planning, results-based management and increased attention to risk management. It identifies the significant risk areas faced by the Office and makes a specific recommendation.

**Recommendation 2 calls on the High Commissioner to establish, by the end of 2016, and regularly update thereafter, a risk management policy for OHCHR, comprising all the elements of a comprehensive risk management framework, and report annually to the governing bodies on its implementation.**

The review identifies problems arising from the absence of full alignment between the two strategic planning processes – the strategic framework of the Secretary-General, covering programmatic activities on a biennial basis and submitted to and considered by the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the General Assembly; and the OHCHR management plan (OMP) covering a four-year period, outlining the Office’s priorities and including not only the activities mandated by decisions of legislative bodies, but also activities undertaken at the initiative of the High Commissioner.

The report acknowledges progress made in recent years in improving performance monitoring and reporting; it also points to the inconsistencies and incoherence as a result of having two different planning processes. The rules, regulations and practices followed in the preparation of the OMP, and whether/how they are in full alignment with the pertinent United Nations policies and practices, are not fully clear. Whereas the strategic framework is discussed and endorsed by the General Assembly, no such endorsement of the OMP by a legislative body takes place. Member States are only consulted informally, and questions have been raised regarding adequacy of these consultations, lack of

adequate time given to study the plan and offer comments, and the absence of any obligation on the part of the Office to take on board the comments. These concerns give rise to issues relating to transparency, especially on the setting of priorities, use and allocation of extra-budgetary resources and their reporting and monitoring.

**Recommendation 3 suggests that, in addressing these concerns, the High Commissioner should establish a working group, composed of the Senior Management Team and other senior staff as necessary, to review the OHCHR strategic planning process(es) in consultation with other relevant departments as necessary, and submit to the General Assembly, through the Secretary-General, the report of the working group, for its consideration by no later than the seventy-first session of the Assembly.**

The management of human resources has been a critical area for OHCHR: the review acknowledges significant efforts made in this regard and progress achieved. It analyses comprehensively the human resources management and related aspects within the Office, paying special attention to the request made by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 22/2 on geographical distribution and gender balance. The review recognizes that OHCHR, while being a part of the United Nations Secretariat, faces the challenge of transforming itself from a headquarters-based organization to a field-based one, as 40% of its staff members are now in the field, requiring adaptation of the rules and regulations.

**Recommendation 4 requires that the High Commissioner should update, by the end of 2015, the existing action plan with specific measures, targets and timetables to broaden the geographical diversity of the professional workforce, and continue to report annually to the Human Rights Council and to the General Assembly on its implementation.**

**Recommendation 5 calls upon the High Commissioner to develop, by no later than the end of 2016, a comprehensive strategy and related action plan to adapt to the specific circumstances and requirements of OHCHR the Secretariat's human resources management strategy and policies; he should inform the governing bodies of the adoption of the strategy and action plan, update them regularly as necessary, and report to the governing bodies periodically on their implementation.**

The report recommends increased efforts for mainstreaming of human rights across the system and improving coordination among OHCHR and other entities with mandates and activities in the field of human rights, in the context of the Secretary-General's Rights Up Front initiative.

**Recommendation 6 calls upon the Secretary-General, in the context of the Rights Up Front initiative, to review, in consultation with the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination as appropriate, the mandates, activities and work of different entities with human rights mandates, with a view to streamlining their work, mainstreaming human rights across the United Nations system and enhancing synergies. The results of the review should be submitted, along with the Secretary-General's own recommendations, to the General Assembly for consideration at its seventy-first session.**

The review makes additional suggestions, in the form of 35 informal recommendations, to OHCHR for effecting further improvements related to a number of management policies, structures and practices. These include: optimizing the organizational structure, including field presences; strengthening results-based management; effectively implementing the Secretariat's accountability framework; developing a resource mobilization, outreach and partnership strategy; enhancing the capacity of the Office for rapid response for emergency and crisis situations; addressing the challenges posed by 'dual reporting'; enhancing transparency and accountability in the management of trust funds; improving information-sharing and knowledge-management; and, increasing transparency in the funding of special procedures mandate holders. I look forward to hearing comments of distinguished delegates to the report, and would be happy to answer questions and provide clarifications, as necessary. I thank you all for your kind attention.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.