

Activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on peace operations for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2020

A/75/301 (Part II)

**Statement to the Fifth Committee by the
Under Secretary General for Internal Oversight Services
Fatoumata Ndiaye
3 May 2021**

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of the Fifth Committee,

I am pleased to introduce the report A/75/301 (Part II) on peace operations activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2020.

The present report provides an analysis of implementation of OIOS recommendations and a list of reports covering peace operations. Copies of individual OIOS internal audit and evaluation reports can be found on the website of OIOS.

During 2020, the Office issued 244 oversight reports relating to peace operations. They included 361 recommendations, all of which were accepted by programme managers. Three of these were classified as critical, that is, addressed risk issues that required the immediate attention of management, and were related to management of safety and security risk related to ammunition storage facilities at UNMISS, and strategic planning and risk management oversight by DPO/DPPA in the context of mission drawdown and transition.

OIOS received effective cooperation from management and staff in entities covered by OIOS oversight activities during the reporting period. OIOS also coordinated its activities with the Board of Auditors and the Joint Inspection Unit to enhance synergies and efficiencies in the discharge of respective mandates.

I am also pleased to report that there were no inappropriate scope limitations that impeded the work or independence of OIOS during the reporting period.

OIOS aims to provide recommendations to improve risk management, governance and operations of entities implementing peace operations. In 2020, the Office's workplan gave priority to four areas: (a) implementation of the Secretariat reforms; (b) organizational culture; (c) procurement and supply chain; and (d) missions in transition. It also focused on strengthening the second line of defence, which includes the centralized, business-enabling functions that support the performance for mandate implementation of peace operations. The present report provides further details on the work that was done in these areas during 2020.

The onset of COVID-19 challenged the delivery of expected results by the Internal Audit Division. Some of the challenges were related to reduced availability of mission and Headquarters staff and longer lead times for obtaining information. The remote working modality also did not allow for the physical verification of assets and direct observation of office climate. There were also limitations to conducting audits of information and communications technology infrastructures remotely because of the specific security risks associated with their remote access. As a result, the Division repurposed its workplan to ensure that internal audit resources were effectively utilized to cover the risks arising from the pandemic and areas that added the most value to entity performance.

The Division provided advice on: (a) initial responses by missions to COVID-19 to ensure business continuity of critical functions and staff safety; (b) measures put in place by missions to manage the recently increased delegations of authority; and (c) risk management practices. Furthermore, some audit resources were allocated to the ongoing review of the United Nations accountability system and to support the Department of Operational Support in pre-audits of emergency COVID-19-related procurement. The Division also used the downtime created by the crisis to strengthen its remote auditing techniques, use of data analytics and reporting.

The Inspection and Evaluation Division revised its work planning approach for peacekeeping evaluations in 2020. It developed a new criteria-based model, combining risk and evaluability considerations and focusing on substantive peacekeeping outcomes. It also started to use the substantive results-based budgeting components of peacekeeping operations as its main units of analysis for work planning purposes. These components include the unique grouping within each peacekeeping operation of its substantive mandate and organization units (e.g. divisions, units,

sections) based on resource requirements, working towards common expected accomplishments.

In addition, thematic, cross-cutting topics across multiple peace operations were also identified for outcome evaluations. These themes will continue to be adjusted in the future through regular and continuous scans of the peace operations environment to identify suitable priority topics. Missions will be included in thematic outcome evaluations if the specific theme selected for evaluation applies to their mandate or operational context.

In response to the evaluation needs resulting from COVID-19, the Division supported the following entities: (a) the Department of Global Communications in developing its COVID-19 misinformation and disinformation monitoring initiative; (b) the Department of Operational Support for pre-audits of emergency procurement; and (c) the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for its real-time evaluation of the COVID-19 responses by UNRWA camps.

Despite the global pandemic, the Investigations Division's caseload remained steady and its outputs increased during 2020. The Division adapted quickly, implementing remote interviewing of victims and witnesses. While the onset of the pandemic coincided with an initial reduction in reporting to OIOS, the overall number of matters reported to and handled by OIOS decreased only slightly from 724 matters in 2019 to 649 in 2020. The year saw a continuation of the upward trend in the number of reports received, investigations opened and reports issued. In 2020, the Division issued 199 reports, a 19 per cent increase from the 167 reports issued in 2019. For 2020, the average time taken to complete an OIOS investigation was 10.6 months, compared with 9.6 months in 2019.

In conclusion, on behalf of all of us in OIOS, I would like to thank Secretariat management and staff for their valuable cooperation in our oversight work, and for their collegiality. I would also like to express appreciation to all Member States for your invaluable support. I look forward to the dialogue that this session brings and welcome your questions.

Thank you.

Evaluation of the Organizational Culture in Peacekeeping Operations

A/75/803

**Statement to the Fifth Committee by the
Under-Secretary-General for the Office of the Internal Oversight Services**

Fatoumata Ndiaye

3 May 2021

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of the Fifth Committee,

I am pleased to introduce the report of the OIOS evaluation of the organizational culture in peacekeeping operations (A/75/803).

Although the United Nations does not explicitly prescribe an organizational culture for its personnel, its normative frameworks aim to create a culture that reflects the norms and values of the Organization. The Secretary-General has also identified specific cultural elements critical to the success of the Organization, such as effective leadership, accountability, results-focus, and transparency. In addition, the United Nations Security Council has encouraged peacekeeping missions to “standardize a culture of performance”.

The evaluation of the organizational culture in peacekeeping operations assessed the extent to which organizational culture in 14 peacekeeping operations was aligned with the normative framework of the United Nations and supported the effective functioning of the missions.

The evaluation focused primarily on the perceptions and experiences of mission personnel about selected dimensions of organizational culture, including: leadership and management; accountability, ethics and integrity; teamwork, collaboration, and information-sharing; risk appetite; sensitive issues; and gender. These perceptions are important for mission leaders to understand since they influence the actions of personnel within missions.

The evaluation showed that perceptions on these dimensions of organizational culture differ from mission to mission, as well as within missions.

Uniformed personnel were generally more positive about the organizational culture in their mission compared with civilian staff.

Female international civilian staff consistently expressed the lowest levels of satisfaction with the Organizational culture across these dimensions.

Overall, in part owing to their difficult operating environments and internal diversity, often the existing perceptions about organizational culture in missions were not fully aligned with the high standards adopted by the Organization and need to be improved to fully support the effective functioning of missions.

The evaluation made two critical and nine important recommendations. The two critical recommendations related to actions for improving trust in the handling of misconduct and for addressing the causes of low morale and dissatisfaction, particularly among female personnel. Ten of the recommendations were accepted, although one critical recommendation was only partially accepted.

We hope this report's analysis will inform your deliberations on the specific issue of organizational culture in peacekeeping operations and stand ready to support you in your discussions on this important evaluation.

Thank you.

Evaluation of the prevention, response and victim support efforts against sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations Secretariat staff and related personnel

A/75/820

**Statement to the Fifth Committee by the
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services**

Fatoumata Ndiaye

Monday 3 May 2021

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of the Fifth Committee,

I am pleased to introduce the OIOS evaluation report on the prevention, response and victim support efforts against sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by United Nations Secretariat staff and related personnel (A/75/820).

This evaluation focused on the relevance and effectiveness of prevention, response and victim support efforts under the Secretary-General's "new approach" to addressing SEA (A/71/818). It focused on UN and related personnel in peacekeeping and political missions, as well as selected departments, offices and duty stations across the Secretariat. The evaluation covered the period 2015–2018, although up-to-date data, when available and relevant, were included to support the evaluation results.

The evaluation concluded that the Organization has made visible progress in the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse and in bringing together different parts of the system in this effort. The Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate contributed to this progress.

Although every step of processing allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse took longer than stipulated, measures for prevention and response were found to be relevant and effective.

Administrative sanctions imposed by the Organization for substantiated allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse demonstrated the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy, with sanctions imposed in 85 per cent of substantiated cases and the remainder in progress.

However, sanctions imposed by troop- and police-contributing countries varied markedly, with many cases remaining pending. Moreover, efforts to ensure criminal accountability for crimes of sexual exploitation and abuse for officials and experts on mission through referral by the United Nations were so far mostly unsuccessful.

Victim support remains a critical area in which some progress has been made, but more robust actions are required to further the victims' first approach. The victims' rights approach in addressing SEA was regarded as highly relevant by stakeholders, but was yet to be fully operationalized, with support to victims found to be generally insufficient.

Overall, while significant progress has been made, long-standing and systemic issues remain to be addressed, which will require the continued highest level of attention and cooperation of the many stakeholders involved.

The evaluation made 17 recommendations to address these issues and 16 of them have been accepted by the relevant Secretariat entities.

I would like to express my appreciation to the management and staff of those entities involved in this evaluation for the assistance and cooperation extended to the OIOS team during the assignment.

We hope the analysis and the recommendations of the report will help inform your deliberations and stand ready to support you in your discussions on this important topic of the Organization's work.

Thank you.