Governing Body

343rd Session, Geneva, November 2021

Programme, Financial and Administrative Section   PFA

Audit and Oversight Segment

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Eleventh item on the agenda

Matters relating to the Joint Inspection Unit

Purpose of the document

This document summarizes the annual report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) for 2020 and its programme of work for 2021, and five reports published in 2020 on the following United Nations system-wide issues: investigation function; policies and platforms in support of learning; common premises; enterprise risk management; and multilingualism.

The Governing Body is invited to provide guidance on the information contained in this document and on any of the recommendations addressed to the ILO in those five JIU reports, as well as on the status of the follow-up to the recommendations presented to the Governing Body in the past three years (see the draft decision in paragraph 21).

Relevant strategic objective: None.

Main relevant outcome: Enabling outcome B: Effective and efficient governance of the Organization.

Policy implications: Subject to guidance from the Governing Body.

Legal implications: Subject to guidance from the Governing Body.

Financial implications: None.

Follow-up action required: Subject to guidance from the Governing Body.

Author unit: Strategic Programming and Management Department (PROGRAM).

Related documents: This document is submitted annually, in accordance with the procedure established in GB.294/PV, paragraph 210; GB.343/PFA/11/REF/1; GB.343/PFA/11/REF/2.

▶ Report of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2020 and programme of work for 2021

1. The 2020 annual report [1] of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) provides information on, among other things, JIU reports issued in 2020 [2] and the follow-up to recommendations by the participating agencies. It also lists the reviews planned for 2021, including on five issues that concern the ILO as part of the United Nations (UN) system, namely: policies, measures, mechanisms and practices to prevent and address racism and racial discrimination; business continuity policies and practices; management of implementing partners; internal pre-tribunal stage appeal mechanisms available to staff members; and accountability frameworks.

2. Annex III to the 2020 JIU annual report shows that the ILO's share (US$121,948) of the JIU budget for that year represents 1.8 per cent of the total contributions of all participating organizations.

▶ Selected JIU reports published in 2020

3. In accordance with the established procedure, the Office submits to the Governing Body annually a summary of JIU reports containing recommendations addressed to the ILO among other UN system organizations, along with a summary of the comments of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and the comments by the Office. A summary of five such JIU reports is being presented to the Governing Body at its current session, as set out in paragraphs 6–20 below.

4. The status of the ILO's follow-up to each JIU recommendation is presented in a separate reference document, which is available on the Governing Body website. [3] Out of a total of 33 recommendations addressed to the ILO, 23 were accepted, with 13 implemented, 8 in progress, and 2 not started, while 6 are under consideration and 4 have not been accepted. In line with previous practice, the Office has also made available an additional reference document that provides details of the updated status of the follow-up to those JIU recommendations that were presented to the Governing Body in the previous three years. [4] Relative to the last update submitted to the Governing Body, [5] of the total 132 recommendations addressed to the ILO, an additional 8 either have been implemented or are in progress.

5. The Governing Body is invited to provide guidance on this document and on any of the recommendations addressed to the ILO as set out in the two reference documents.

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[1] United Nations, *Report of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2020 and Programme of Work for 2021*, Official Records of the General Assembly, Supplement No. 34, General Assembly, 75th Session, New York, 2021 (A/75/34).

[2] All the JIU reports that have been published to date are available on the JIU website in English, French and Spanish, among other UN official languages.

[3] GB.343/PFA/11/REF/1 (in English only).

[4] GB.343/PFA/11/REF/2 (in English only).

[5] GB.341/PFA/10/REF/1 and GB.341/PFA/10/REF/2.

Review of the state of the investigation function: Progress made in the UN system organizations in strengthening the investigation function

6. The report [6] includes nine recommendations that are addressed to the ILO for action, among other relevant UN system entities. Seven of them were accepted; five have been implemented and two are in progress. The other two recommendations are under consideration, pending the outcome of an ongoing consultative process (recommendation 3) and with respect to the incompatibility of one recommended change with the ILO's current staff rules and regulations (recommendation 5).

7. In their comments, [7] the CEB members welcomed the report for providing a useful update on the state of the investigation since the previous report on the subject issued in 2011. [8] They also noted that it contains relevant suggestions that may be tailored to the needs of individual entities, subject to their risk exposure to various types of wrongdoing, considering that they vary significantly depending on business model, culture, nature of intervention, field environment and geographical spread.

8. The Office joins the CEB members in welcoming the report. It fully supports taking a tailored approach to the suggestions made in the report, and will accordingly continue to make progress where appropriate, in the context of the ILO.

Policies and platforms in support of learning: Towards more coherence, coordination and convergence

9. The report [9] includes seven recommendations that are addressed to the ILO for action, among other relevant UN system entities. Three of them were accepted; two have been implemented and one is in progress. Three other recommendations are under consideration, subject to relevant UN system-wide action to be taken (recommendations 3 and 8) and in terms of the technical and administrative constraints and cost implications of the recommended measure (recommendation 7), although their thrust is supported. The remaining one, concerning the establishment of criteria for more systematic use of external learning platforms, was not accepted (recommendation 6) for two reasons: its limited effect on an increased learning uptake; and an inadequate level of diversity in the external course content, to be delivered in a multilingual and multicultural environment.

10. In their comments, [10] the CEB members welcomed the report for providing valuable insights to support learning and development in the years to come. They recognized that the learning landscape is rapidly changing, owing to fast evolving delivery technology, and that innovation in learning with new technologies is needed more than ever in the COVID-19 context. Meanwhile, they recognized that the report heavily focused on formal learning programmes, without fully capturing the dynamic and informal aspects of the future of learning. They further noted that it would have benefited from a greater recognition of multilingualism in achieving a harmonious workplace and an agile workforce. Overall, they partially supported the recommendations in the report. On recommendation 6, for instance, they recognized the benefit of external platforms for ensuring the availability of the training opportunities for various learning needs in

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[6] JIU/REP/2020/1.

[7] The full text of the CEB comments is available in document A/75/719/Add.1.

[8] JIU/REP/2011/7.

[9] JIU/REP/2020/2.

[10] The full text of the CEB comments is available in document A/75/713/Add.1.

different parts of the world; at the same time, they observed the lack of diversity in the course content and delivery, the need for assessments on cost-effectiveness for the widespread use of the platforms, and security requirements.

11. The Office concurs with the CEB comments. It will pursue efforts in this area, where appropriate and feasible in the context of the ILO, while participating in relevant UN system-wide initiatives.

Common premises in the UN system: Current practices and future prospects

12. Of the seven recommendations included in the report [11] that are addressed to the ILO for action, among other relevant UN system entities, six were accepted, each with a different implementation status. The remaining one is under consideration, subject to what can be learned from among the UN organizations in terms of public–private partnerships in this area (recommendation 5).

13. In their comments, [12] the CEB members welcomed the analysis in the report on the subject of common premises, at both the national and regional levels. They noted that the ensuing recommendations encompass topics beyond common premises and include statements on the UN reform. They considered action on common premises to be beyond the mandate of any single organization and further commented that the role of the host Governments could have been articulated more prominently in the formulation of the recommendations.

14. The Office concurs with the CEB comments. It will continue to be part of the UN system-wide coordination efforts in this area and to take necessary action, including in the context of UN reform.

Enterprise risk management: Approaches and uses in UN system organizations

15. The report [13] includes four recommendations that are addressed to the ILO for action, among other relevant UN system entities. Three of them were accepted; two are in progress, and one has been implemented. The remaining one was not accepted, due to its lack of added value to the current ILO procedure and practice (recommendation 1). It concerns the incorporation of enterprise risk management into meetings of the governing bodies at least annually.

16. In their comments, [14] the CEB members welcomed the report for its relevance to their enterprise risk management processes and generally supported its findings and recommendations. With respect to recommendation 1, they highlighted the prerogative of the governing bodies to decide their agenda, considering competing priorities and limited time, and commented that Governing Body meetings are not the only events in which the risk management discussions are held.

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[11] JIU/REP/2020/3.

[12] The full text of the CEB comments is available in document A/75/730/Add.1.

[13] JIU/REP/2020/5.

[14] The full text of the CEB comments is available in document A/75/718/Add.1.

17. The Office joins the CEB members in welcoming the report and will take necessary action to implement the accepted recommendations.

Multilingualism in the UN system

18. The report [15] includes six recommendations that are addressed to the ILO for action, among other relevant UN system entities. Four of them were accepted and have been implemented. The other two recommendations were not accepted, considering that other relevant inter-agency arrangements have been put in place. They concern the establishment of a working group to prepare a UN system language framework for adoption (recommendation 5) and the development of a system-wide, comprehensive and coordinated approach to multilingualism (recommendation 6).

19. In their comments, [16] the CEB members welcomed the findings of the report, and most of them supported the underlying rationale of the ensuing recommendations. They recognized the critical importance of leveraging new technologies in support of multilingualism, including for translation and interpretation services. While advocating the value and necessity of achieving a multilingual workforce, the UN Secretariat noted that language requirements should be driven by operational needs in relation to functions, in view of the potential unintended consequences of not doing so on attracting and retaining talent that matches all the functional requirements. Concerning recommendation 5, the CEB members recalled the need to use existing structures and refrain from creating new ones, as repeatedly underscored by the Secretary-General in his reform agenda, and recognized the relevance of the Human Resources Network and the UN system-wide network of multilingualism focal points. With regard to the latter, they considered it to be well placed to support the implementation of recommendation 6.

20. The Office concurs with the CEB comments. It will continue to promote multilingualism through its policies and practices, in keeping with the available resource level.

▶ Draft decision

21. **The Governing Body took note of the information contained in documents GB.343/PFA/11, GB.343/PFA/11/REF/1 and GB.343/PFA/11/REF/2 and provided guidance to the Office.**

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[15] JIU/REP/2020/6.

[16] The full text of the CEB comments is available in document A/75/960/Add.1.