

Annex 4: UNOPS 2021 annual report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit

I. Summary

1. This annex presents responses of UNOPS management to the recommendations issued by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) in the reports relevant to UNOPS. The provision of this annex is in accordance with the recommendation given in the JIU management letter JIU/ML/2016/14 ‘*Acceptance and Implementation of JIU Recommendations by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)*’ that the UNOPS Executive Director set up a system to report to the Executive Board on JIU reports and recommendations.

2. In line with General Assembly resolution 59/267 of 23 December 2004, and as reiterated in resolution 62/246 of 3 April 2008, the present report provides a synopsis of management responses to the recommendations and draws attention to the recommendations directed to the legislative bodies of United Nations system organizations.

3. During 2021, UNOPS implemented 52 out of 71 outstanding recommendations issued by the JIU between 2017 and 2020. Six more recommendations were closed in early 2022, thus leaving 13 unresolved recommendations from 2019-2020, which are discussed in detail in section IV of this report. Five of these unresolved recommendations were issued in 2019 and the remaining 8 recommendations were issued in 2020. Combined with the 17 recommendations issued in 2021 and yet to be resolved, there are currently 30 recommendations to be implemented by UNOPS.

4. The topics addressed by the recommendations implemented during 2021 included, for example, the progress made in the UN system organizations in strengthening the investigation function, the United Nations common premises: current practices and future prospects and blockchain applications in the United Nations system.

5. In 2021, the JIU issued five reports directed to UNOPS, which are presented in table 1 below. The annexure also highlights recommendations directed to the legislative bodies of the United Nations system organizations, especially those aspects that have particular relevance for the work of UNOPS.

II. Overview of Joint Inspection Unit reports issued in 2021

6. Of the 25 recommendations relevant to UNOPS, 19 are addressed to management, and six to the legislative body.

Table 1: JIU reports directed to UNOPS in 2021

Summary of recommendations					Implementation status		
Reference	Name of report	Addressed to executive head	Addressed to governing body	Total directed to UNOPS	Not accepted/not relevant	Implemented	In progress
JIU/REP/2021/2	Review of United Nations system support for landlocked developing countries to implement the Vienna Programme of Action	2	1	3	3	-	-
JIU/REP/2021/3	Cybersecurity in the United Nations system organizations	1	1	2	-	1	1
JIU/REP/2021/4	Review of the management of implementing partners in United Nations system organizations	8	2	10	-	2	8
JIU/REP/2021/5	Review of the ethics function in the United Nations system	3	1	4	-	1	3
JIU/REP/2021/6	Business continuity management in United Nations system organizations	5	1	6	-	1	5
Total		19	6	25	3	5	17

III. Synopsis and review of relevant Joint Inspection Unit reports and recommendations in 2021

(a) Review of United Nations system support for landlocked developing countries to implement the Vienna Programme of Action (JIU/REP/2021/2)

7. To address the special development needs and challenges faced by the 32 landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), the General Assembly adopted the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) in 2014. The JIU review focuses on how UN system entities have supported the VPoA and makes suggestions for improvement to implement the VPoA with a view to enhancing the capacity of LLDCs to address the needs and challenges that arise from being landlocked.

8. The report makes three recommendations to UNOPS: two are addressed to the executive head and one is addressed to the legislative body. All three recommendations were found not relevant by UNOPS, due to the fact that UNOPS is a non-programmatic entity delivering projects on behalf of its partners. The recommendation addressed to the Executive Board is discussed in section V of this report.

(b) Cybersecurity in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2021/3)

9. The main purpose of this review was to: (a) Identify and analyse common cybersecurity challenges and risks faced by the United Nations system, as well as their respective response thereto, bearing in mind organizations' context specific requirements and (b) Examine current inter-agency dynamics facilitating a system-wide approach to cybersecurity for better coordination, collaboration and information sharing, and, where appropriate, the potential for shared solutions.

10. The JIU issued two recommendations to UNOPS, one of which was issued to the governing body. This recommendation is disclosed in section V of this report. The recommendation issued to the UNOPS executive head has been accepted by the organization and is in the process of being implemented.

(c) Review of the management of implementing partners in United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2021/4)

11. The review examined the methods and practices used by United Nations organizations system-wide to select and manage implementing partners for programme and project delivery, to identify issues, strengths and weaknesses in current practices and to explore areas for further improvement for an effective and efficient management of implementing partners. The review aimed at enhancing accountability for the management of implementing partners, identifying and supporting the dissemination of good practices in selecting, engaging and managing implementing partners, encouraging inter-agency cooperation and addressing issues of efficiency and effectiveness.

12. The report contains ten recommendations for UNOPS action, two of which are addressed to the Executive Board and the other eight to the executive head. The final review report was published during the preparation of this 2021 annual JIU report, which is why the acceptance of recommendations is tentative, especially with regards to the timeline for implementation recommended by the JIU. The Chief Executives Board comments are yet to be made available and any feedback from the Board shall be reflected in the acceptance and implementation of these recommendations. The recommendations addressed to the Executive Board are disclosed in section V of this report.

(d) Review of the ethics function in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2021/5)

13. In the report, the JIU informed governing bodies and the executive heads of United Nations system organizations about the current state of the ethics function across the United Nations system and the progress made since the last review in 2010. The JIU concluded that substantial progress has been made with regard to establishing a dedicated and fully effective ethics function and implementing the related 2010 JIU standards and recommendations. The JIU proposed good practices and lessons learned so as to support organizations in validating and strengthening their ethics function, and highlighted the new developments and challenges that require further review by the organizations. These include the respective organizational arrangements, independence and mandates of the function, the commitment to the ethics function, and ways to improve inter-agency cooperation and coherence.

14. The JIU issued four recommendations to UNOPS: one addressed to the governing body and three to the executive head of UNOPS. The final review report was published during the preparation of this 2021 annual JIU report, which is why the acceptance of recommendations is tentative. The Chief Executives Board comments are yet to be made available and any feedback from the Board shall be reflected in the acceptance and implementation of these recommendations.

(e) Business continuity management in United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2021/6)

15. Effective business continuity management is necessary to ensure the continuity of operations at all organizational levels as United Nations system organizations often operate in volatile environments and can be exposed to disruptions due to natural and human-made disasters. The purpose of the review was to inform legislative organs and respective executive heads on the status of business continuity management policies, plans, processes and practices across United Nations system organizations, and to identify good practices and lessons learned. Business continuity management accountability and oversight measures were examined with particular attention. The review also analyses how business continuity management across the United Nations system operated to manage the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

16. The report contains six recommendations for action by UNOPS, five of which are addressed to the executive head and one to the Executive Board. At the time of preparation of this 2021 annual JIU report, the Chief Executives Board comments were not yet available. UNOPS tentatively accepts all six recommendations, noting that any feedback from the Board shall be reflected in the acceptance and implementation of these recommendations. The recommendation addressed to the Executive Board is disclosed in section V of this report.

IV. Unresolved Joint Inspection Unit recommendations 2019-2020

Recommendation summary 2019-2020		
Reference and name of report	Recommendation description	Latest implementation status
JIU/REP/2019/9 Review of contemporary practices in the external outsourcing of services to commercial service providers by United Nations system organizations	Recommendation 3 The executive heads of United Nations system organizations should instruct all requisitioning offices to actively work towards assessing their use of sources of supply from vendors in developing countries and economies in transition, and increase it, as applicable, based on such assessment, with the provision that such activities shall not contravene policies established by organizations to ensure effective competition.	Implementation of this recommendation depended on finalizing the common definition of outsourcing as per Recommendation 1 from this report. The common definition of outsourcing was agreed in the HLCM Procurement Network autumn session held on 28 October 2021. UNOPS is working towards the implementation of this recommendation and aims to make significant progress in implementation during 2022.
	Recommendation 4 The executive heads of United Nations system organizations should encourage all offices to ensure that, by the end of 2021, the sourcing of any strategic, sensitive or high-value service and related goods from a commercial service provider is preceded by the conduct of a clearly-documented strategic analysis that includes short and long-term considerations and costs, and that the analysis has been reviewed and approved by the appropriate authority, prior to a formal decision on the sourcing option.	Implementation of this recommendation depended on finalizing the common definition of outsourcing as per Recommendation 1 from this report. The common definition of outsourcing was agreed in the HLCM Procurement Network autumn session held on 28 October 2021. UNOPS is working towards the implementation of this recommendation and aims to make significant progress in implementation during 2022.
	Recommendation 5 The executive heads of United Nations system organizations should instruct all offices to ensure that, by	Implementation of this recommendation depended on finalizing the common definition of

	<p>the end of 2021, strategic, sensitive and high-value commercially outsourced services under their purview are subject to periodic review, including risk assessments, to ascertain whether appropriate risk management measures are developed by the relevant functions in each organization.</p>	<p>outsourcing as per Recommendation 1 from this report. The common definition of outsourcing was agreed in the HLCM Procurement Network autumn session held on 28 October 2021.</p> <p>UNOPS is working towards the implementation of this recommendation and aims to make significant progress in implementation during 2022.</p>
	<p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>The executive heads of United Nations system organizations should instruct relevant offices to develop criteria that need to be met for outsourced service contracts to be considered for extensions beyond standard time frames, and to present such criteria to the relevant decision-making authority for adoption and incorporation into policy documents by the end of 2021.</p>	<p>Implementation of this recommendation depended on finalizing the common definition of outsourcing as per Recommendation 1 from this report. The common definition of outsourcing was agreed in the HLCM Procurement Network autumn session held on 28 October 2021.</p> <p>UNOPS is working towards the implementation of this recommendation and aims to make significant progress in implementation during 2022.</p>
	<p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>The executive heads of United Nations system organizations should instruct all offices to ensure that, by the end of 2021, following any decision to source a service and related goods of strategic, sensitive or high value from a commercial service provider, the requisitioning office should develop clearly detailed guidelines for managing vendor transition, including corresponding backup arrangements, and ensure that solicitation documents clearly outline the responsibility of the vendor as regards transitional assistance and knowledge transfer to the organization and incoming vendor.</p>	<p>Implementation of this recommendation depended on finalizing the common definition of outsourcing as per Recommendation 1 from this report. The common definition of outsourcing was agreed in the HLCM Procurement Network autumn session held on 28 October 2021.</p> <p>UNOPS is working towards the implementation of this recommendation and aims to make significant progress in implementation during 2022.</p>
<p>JIU/REP/2020/2</p> <p>Policies and platforms in support of learning: towards more coherence, coordination and convergence</p>	<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should integrate the evaluation findings on learning into the learning management systems and use them effectively to inform decision-making processes on future learning activities.</p>	<p>UNOPS accepted this recommendation. Work is currently being carried out to accommodate this recommendation.</p>
	<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>The executive heads of United Nations organizations should take the actions they deem appropriate to better integrate staff learning plans into their respective performance assessments and to ensure that managers are also held accountable for implementation.</p>	<p>UNOPS accepted this recommendation. Work is currently being carried out to accommodate this recommendation.</p>
	<p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations, if they have not already done so, should establish criteria for the more systematic use of external platforms, based on judicious curating of their courses and realistic learning objectives.</p>	<p>UNOPS accepted this recommendation. Work is currently being carried out to accommodate this recommendation.</p>
	<p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should, through inter-agency agreements, recognize relevant learning programmes followed on</p>	<p>UNOPS accepted this recommendation. Work is currently being carried out to accommodate this recommendation.</p>

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	external platforms, for which appropriate credentials are presented, and reflect that recognition in the learning management systems.	
JIU/REP/2020/6 Multilingualism in the United Nations system	Recommendation 3 The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations that have not yet done so, should, where appropriate, introduce or enhance, by the end of 2022, their policies for attracting new translators and interpreters and retaining talented and skilled language professionals, including the preparation of succession plans with specifications for required languages and language combinations, as well as the expansion of outreach programmes.	UNOPS accepted this recommendation. Work is currently being carried out to accommodate this recommendation.
JIU/REP/2020/8 Review of mainstreaming environmental sustainability across organizations of the United Nations system	Recommendation 5 The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2022, ensure that all recruitment and selection processes, as well as performance appraisal systems, incorporate and give adequate weight to environmental sustainability understanding and behaviours, and report on the implementation to their legislative organs and governing bodies from 2023.	UNOPS accepted this recommendation. Work is currently being carried out to accommodate this recommendation.
	Recommendation 7 The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should, by the end of 2022, make all conferences, events and meetings organized by their respective organizations “paper smart”, while providing printed material only upon official request and with adequate cost recovery measures following a differential pricing system in respect of different customer groups – such as official delegates, research institutions, other conference participants and students – and report on the implementation to their legislative organs and governing bodies from 2023.	In line with recommendation 8, the planned Sustainable Events Guidance will address, among other topics, the use of printed materials that will be only on an exceptional basis.
	Recommendation 8 The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations that have not yet done so should, by the end of 2022, task the relevant offices responsible for organizing conferences, meetings and events with developing a policy for incorporating provisions relating to environmental sustainability considerations into policies, procedures, manuals and guidelines, including through the relevant inter-agency mechanisms, as necessary.	UNOPS Shared Services Centre is planning to draft and release in Q2/2022 a guidance on Sustainable Events, that will be integrated in the Social & Environmental management system and contain minimum mandatory performance requirements.

V. Review of relevant JIU recommendations in 2021 for consideration by the governing body

Report description and recommendations	Remarks
Review of United Nations system support for landlocked developing countries to implement the Vienna Programme of Action (JIU/REP/2021/2)	
<p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>The legislative organs and governing bodies of United Nations system organizations should issue directives, if they have not already done so, by the end of 2022, for their organizations to mainstream the priorities of the programme of action for landlocked developing countries that are pertinent to their mandated work and request that their organizations report periodically on its implementation.</p>	<p>UNOPS does not find the recommendation relevant as UNOPS is a non-programmatic entity delivering projects on behalf of our partners. However, the importance of key service lines for UNOPS, Infrastructure and Public Procurement, for LLDCs and the implementation of the VPoA, is recognised within UNOPS Strategic Plan 2022-2025, and associated guidance is in place.</p>
Cybersecurity in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2021/3)	
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>The legislative and governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should consider the reports on the elements contributing to improved cyberresilience prepared by the executive heads and provide strategic guidance on further improvements to be implemented in their respective organizations, as necessary.</p>	<p>UNOPS accepts the recommendation and welcomes the opportunity to raise it to the attention of the Executive Board, taking note of the “Cybersecurity Minimum Baseline Standard” from HLCM - Digital and Technology Network.</p>
Review of the management of implementing partners in United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2021/4)	
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>The legislative organs and governing bodies of organizations of the United Nations system should, starting in 2024 and on the basis of reports submitted to them annually by their respective executive heads, provide overall strategic guidance and legislative oversight to the management of their implementing partners, including in the framework of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, especially with regard to capacity-building, inter-agency coordination and information-sharing.</p>	<p>UNOPS accepts the recommendation within the limit of its unique business model, i.e. a non-programmatic entity implementing projects on behalf of our partners, and welcomes the opportunity to raise it to the attention of the Executive Board.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9</p> <p>The legislative organs and governing bodies of United Nations system organizations should, beginning in 2023, assess their approaches to capacity-building of implementing partners and strengthening national capacities and ownership, in the framework of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, including the effectiveness of such efforts since 2013, progress made and lessons learned, based on reports prepared by their respective secretariats, and adopt specific measures to strengthen national capacities and ownership and build the capacities of their implementing partners.</p>	<p>UNOPS accepts the recommendation and welcomes the opportunity to raise it to the attention of the Executive Board. However this must take into consideration the constraints of UNOPS business model as a non-programmatic entity implementing projects on behalf of our partners.</p>
Review of the ethics function in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2021/5)	

<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>The legislative organs and governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations that have not yet done so should request that organizations update the terms of reference of their respective audit and oversight committees by the end of 2023 to include, where necessary, provisions for ethics, and ethics as a desirable area of expertise for new committee members.</p>	<p>UNOPS accepts the recommendation. The relevant provisions are already included in the Terms of Reference for the UNOPS Audit Advisory Committee (Ref. EOI.ED.2019.01)</p>
<p>Business continuity management in United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2021/6)</p>	
<p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>The legislative organs and governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should consider, at the earliest opportunity, the conclusions of the internal management assessment of the continuity of operations during the COVID-19 pandemic prepared by the executive heads of their respective organizations and, on that basis, take appropriate decisions to address the identified gaps and risks and to ensure continuity of business operations.</p>	<p>UNOPS accepts the recommendation and welcomes the opportunity to raise it to the attention of the Executive Board.</p>