

Annex 4: Internal oversight arrangements

I. Background

1. This annex is submitted in accordance with Executive Board decision 2022/22. It provides a concise summary of the UNOPS oversight functions responsible for audit, investigations and ethics, in accordance with the template provided by the Executive Board Bureau.¹

II. Internal audit and investigations

A. Mandate, purpose, reporting requirements and partnerships

Introduction

2. The mandate of the Internal Audit and Investigations Group (IAIG) flows from UNOPS Financial Regulations and Rules under EOD.ED.2017.04 (Regulation 6.01-6.03; Rules 106.01- 106.03) and dictates that “the Internal Audit and Investigations Group shall be responsible for the internal audit of UNOPS” and “for assessing and investigating allegations of fraud and corruption committed by UNOPS personnel or committed by others to the detriment of UNOPS.”

3. IAIG is a key component of UNOPS’ independent internal oversight system. Its purpose is to strengthen UNOPS ability to create, protect, and sustain value by providing the Executive Board and UNOPS management with independent, risk-based, and objective assurance, investigation, advice, insight, and foresight. IAIG supports UNOPS in achieving its objectives, it also assists UNOPS in enhancing the organization governance, risk management and control processes.

4. The IAIG has operational independence in the performance of its oversight functions. It has the independent authority to initiate and carry out its activities with respect to any matter that it considers necessary to fulfill its responsibilities, as well as to report to the Executive Director and/or the Executive Board on any matter it deems relevant. It exercises independent judgment in the selection, scope, procedures, frequency, and timing of its activities, and in its communication of the results.

5. The independent activities of IAIG cover all of UNOPS activities, including all programmes, operations, and activities undertaken by UNOPS at its headquarters and its regional offices (including all systems and processes) and activities undertaken by UNOPS and its personnel, its institutional contractors, implementing third parties and other third parties, in any location. Core functions of IAIG are assurance (internal audits and project audits), investigations, consultancy services, and data analytics.

Reporting requirements

6. The IAIG presents an annual report to the Executive Board summarizing its findings from audits and investigations, and includes an ‘Opinion’ on the effectiveness of UNOPS systems of governance, risk management and control.

7. In addition to its Charter, the Group’s independence is ensured through its direct and independent reporting lines to the Executive Director, the Executive Board and the Audit Advisory Committee.

8. IAIG works with other assurance and oversight providers (including the United Nations Board of Auditors and the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit) to maximize the oversight value for the Executive Director and the Executive Board. The office also liaises with other United Nations oversight units, and, as appropriate with Member States. The IAIG also closely collaborates with other business units within UNOPS, particularly those that are also part of the organization’s integrity framework (e.g. Ethics Office, Internal Grievances).

9. The work of IAIG is subject to external quality assessments, generally once every five years. The Group conducts its work in conformance with applicable professional standards, including the standards issued by the Institute of Internal Auditors and the principles and guidelines of the Conference of International Investigators.

¹ See annex 1 in this document for a schematic overview.

Policies, rules and regulations

10. The mandate, scope, responsibilities, accountability, and standards of IAIG are defined by the [OD.ED.2022.01 Internal Audit and Investigation Charter](#), which was last updated and approved in August 2022. The Charter is currently being updated to ensure alignment with the new Global Internal Audit Standards and its latest version will be promulgated in 2025. The Charter ensures full independence of the UNOPS internal audit and investigation mechanisms and strengthens the independence and communication between IAIG, the Audit Advisory Committee, and the Executive Board.

11. The mandate and functions for internal audit and investigations within UNOPS are approved by the Executive Director pursuant to [EOD.ED.2017.02 Organizational Principles and Governance Model](#) and [EOD.ED.2017.04 Financial Regulations and Rules](#) (FRRs). The EOD.ED.2017.02 states that the IAIG “shall be responsible and accountable to provide independent assurance of how the organization manages its activities in line with UNOPS governance model, legislative framework and strategy, in particular with regard to how UNOPS manages its risks, how effective UNOPS units are operating, and make recommendations to the Executive Director in this regard”. Article 6 of the FRRs states the regulations and rules of IAIG authority and responsibility in terms of independence, objectivity, conformity with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing, free access to organization’s record, and reporting requirements.

Partnerships

12. The IAIG works under governance arrangements consistent with those of other United Nations organizations. The Executive Director is accountable to the Executive Board and the Secretary-General. The United Nations Board of Auditors provides external audits for Member States in the Executive Board and the Fifth Committee, while the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions advises on relevant matters.

13. The IAIG has internal oversight functions that are aligned with the UNOPS non-programmatic mandate. The IAIG was established in 2007.

14. For more than a decade, the Audit Advisory Committee or its predecessors have provided external, independent advice to the Executive Director and annual reports to the Executive Board. In addition, the Secretary-General established a client board where partners can advise the Executive Director on operational matters.

B. Structure

15. The IAIG is led by a Director, who reports directly to the Executive Director, the Audit Advisory Committee, and the Executive Board. The Director of IAIG leads both the audit and the investigations sections. During 2024, the audit section consisted of one audit manager, two internal auditors, four audit specialists and two audit specialists with project management and infrastructure expertise. The investigations section was composed of a manager, three senior investigators, four investigators, two investigators for intake of complaints, one forensic auditor and two senior investigations assistants. One investigations senior analyst for stakeholder reporting, one data analytics specialist and one data analytics assistant are directly reporting to the Director of IAIG. The Director is further supported on administrative matters by a senior administrative assistant. In total in 2024, IAIG had 27 posts, of which 23 are already filled, and recruitment processes are ongoing for two vacancies. The remaining two unfilled positions will be abolished, since, for 2025, the Group has opted for an internal reallocation between budget lines to further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its structure. The two investigators for intake of complaints on IICA-2 contracts will be replaced by one position on a P3 contract. The position of senior data analytics assistant will be abolished, and the IAIG data analytics specialist will be supported by retainers familiar with UNOPS IT environment on a request basis. The savings arising from these decisions enabled IAIG to finance the technical expertise required for two important reviews planned for 2025, namely the external evaluation of the UNOPS Process Innovation and Digitalization Programme, and the second interim review of the status of implementation of the remaining recommendations from the Comprehensive Response Plan. Twenty of these positions are located in Copenhagen, one in New York and four are home-based.

16. The total budget for IAIG in 2024 was \$6.821 million. On a temporary basis and for 2025 only, the Group decided to support UNOPS by decreasing its budget by \$150,000 to \$6,671,000.

III. Ethics

A. Mandate, purpose, reporting requirements and partnerships

Introduction

17. The UNOPS Ethics Office was established in 2009 pursuant to the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2007/11 and is based on the principles of independence, impartiality and confidentiality. The office, based in Copenhagen, provides services to approximately 5,550 UNOPS personnel (about 13 per cent staff and 87 per cent international and local individual contractors, as of 31 December 2024) in over 85 countries around the world.

18. The mandate of the office is to “cultivate and nurture a culture of ethics, integrity and accountability, and thereby enhance the trust in and credibility of the United Nations, both internally and externally”. Consistent with the mandate of the ethics offices of other separately administered organs and programmes, the Office has specific responsibility for:

- (a) developing standards, training and education on ethics issues;
- (b) providing guidance to management to ensure that UNOPS policies and procedures promote the standards of integrity called for under the Charter of the United Nations;
- (c) providing confidential advice and guidance to personnel on ethical issues;
- (d) raising awareness of ethical standards and expected behavior;
- (e) receiving requests for the protection of personnel against retaliation in accordance with the respective policy;
- (f) administering the UNOPS financial disclosure programme; and
- (g) providing an annual report on its activities to the executive head.

Reporting requirements

19. An annual report is submitted in accordance with decision 2010/17 of the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, covering the activities of the UNOPS Ethics Office.

20. Also, in accordance with section 3(h) of the Secretary-General's bulletin “United Nations system-wide application of ethics: separately administered organs and programmes” (ST/SGB/2007/11), the UNOPS Ethics Office submits an annual report to the Executive Director.

21. Additionally, in accordance with Section 5.4 of amendment 1 to that bulletin, the Ethics Panel of the United Nations reviews the draft report prior to completion. A copy of the draft is also provided for review to the UNOPS Audit Advisory Committee.

22. The most recent reports are:

- (a) Activities of the UNOPS Ethics Office in 2024 (current report)
- (b) Activities of the UNOPS Ethics Office in [2023](#)
- (c) Activities of the UNOPS Ethics Office in [2022](#)
- (d) Activities of the UNOPS Ethics and Compliance Office in [2021](#)
- (e) Activities of the UNOPS Ethics and Compliance Office in [2020](#)
- (f) Activities of the UNOPS Ethics and Compliance Office in [2019](#)
- (g) Activities of the UNOPS Ethics Office in [2018](#)
- (h) Activities of the UNOPS Ethics Office in [2017](#)

Policies, rules and regulations

23. The following policies, rules and regulations govern the Ethics Office and ensure its independence:

- (a) [ST/SGB/2005/22](#), ‘Ethics Office - establishment and terms of reference’
- (b) [ST/SGB/2007/11](#), ‘United Nations system-wide application of ethics: separately administered organs and programmes’
- (c) [ST/SGB/2007/11 - Amend. 1](#), ‘Amendment to the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2007/11’

Partnerships

24. The UNOPS Ethics Office is a member of and meets regularly with the Ethics Panel of the United Nations. The Panel, comprising nine members, consists of the heads of the ethics offices of the separately administered organs and programmes of the United Nations and the Ethics Office of the United Nations Secretariat.

25. The UNOPS Ethics Office is also a member of the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations, which comprises the ethics offices of over 40 multilateral organizations (including international financial institutions).

B. Structure

26. In 2024, the Ethics Office operated with a structure consisting of a Director (D-1), two Ethics Advisors at the P-4 level, two Ethics Specialists at the P-3 level, and an Ethics Associate at the G-6 level, totalling six fixed-term positions. At the time of the writing of this report, the Ethics Office is fully staffed.

27. Duty station for all staff is Copenhagen, Denmark. The 2024 budget of the Ethics Office amounted to \$2 million,

Annex 1: Schematic overview of internal oversight arrangements

