



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2023/062

Audit of the human rights programme in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA)

The Mission had largely implemented its human rights mandated activities but needed to enhance the development of human rights related field office work plans, formalize agreements with implementing partners and monitor the behaviour of support recipients during and after the receipt of support

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Audit of the human rights programme in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the human rights programme in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the planning, implementation, and management of the human rights programme in MINUSCA to achieve the Mission's mandate. The audit covered the period from 1 July 2020 to 31 March 2023 and included a review of: (a) planning; (b) work plan implementation and monitoring; and (c) coordination mechanisms.

MINUSCA Human Rights Division (HRD) established strategic priorities aligned with Security Council resolutions, guidance from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Mission Leadership to implement its mandate. The Division largely implemented its mandated activities, and provided adequate explanations for those that were not achieved. HRD had also implemented adequate coordination mechanisms with internal and external human rights stakeholders. However, there was a need to strengthen field offices' work planning and finalize agreements with implementing partners to uphold the reputation of the United Nations.

OIOS made five recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, MINUSCA needed to:

- Implement an adequate review and clearance procedure to ensure that field offices develop specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound work plans aligned with the Divisional work plan.
- Develop and sign memoranda of understanding with implementing partners and ensure that non-governmental organizations that have entered cooperative arrangement with MINUSCA have been informed of the United Nations code of conduct and have confirmed that they accept these standards.
- Provide training for its support providers from Mission components to ensure they conduct continuous monitoring and report of support recipients' behavior.
- Conduct the required evaluation of its human rights activities and projects to measure their effectiveness against their objectives and impacts and make adjustments to the programme, as appropriate.
- Liaise with with the Integrated Operational Team at Headquarters to strengthen the mechanism for the human rights report with structured steps and timelines to prevent delays, and to ensure that mandated deadlines are met.

MINUSCA accepted all recommendations and has initiated action to implement them. Actions required to close the recommendations are indicated in Annex I.

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Audit of the human rights programme in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the human rights programme in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).
2. MINUSCA was mandated by United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2552 (2020), 2605 (2021), and 2659 (2022) to: (a) monitor, help investigate, report annually to the Security Council, and follow up on violations of international humanitarian law and on violations and abuses of human rights committed throughout the Central African Republic; (b) monitor, help investigate and ensure reporting on violations and abuses committed against children and women, including rape and other forms of sexual violence in armed conflict, in connection with the Mixed Unit for Rapid Intervention and Repression of Sexual Violence to Women and Children (UMIRR); and (c) assist the State authorities in their efforts to protect and promote human rights and prevent violations and abuses and to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations. These mandates are implemented through Human Rights Division (HRD).
3. HRD is headed by a Director at the D-1 level who reports to the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, (DSRSG) and to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) based in Geneva. The Director of HRD also serves as the representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Central African Republic. The Director is assisted by one deputy chief at P5 level. HRD had 72 posts, comprising 29 international, 21 national and 22 United Nations Volunteers.
4. Additionally, HRD received budget from both MINUSCA and OHCHR for the programme and training activities. MINUSCA HRD budgets for financial years 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 were \$932,700, \$836,300, and \$837,000, respectively. OHCHR, on the other hand, provided budgets on calendar year basis; \$98,310, \$79,100, \$96,050, and \$84,750 for 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023, respectively.
5. HRD has its main office at the Mission Headquarters in Bangui and operates its programmes in 12 MINUSCA field offices: Bangassou, Bangui, Berberati, Bria, Bouar, Kaga Bandoro, Bossangoa, Paoua, Bambari, Ndele, Obo, and Birao. The Division is divided into five units: (i) transitional justice and institutional support; (ii) justice and accountability; (iii) monitoring, investigation, early warning and mobile; (iv) reporting, planning and documentation; and (v) human rights due diligence policy (HRDDP), vetting and profiling. In 2017, OIOS conducted an audit of the human rights programme in MINUSCA. Recommendations raised in that audit (Report 2017/637) report were implemented by management with the exception of one relating to the need for timely issuance of the public reports.
6. Comments provided by MINUSCA are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

7. The objective of the audit was to assess the the adequacy and effectiveness of the planning, and implementation of the human rights programme in MINUSCA to achieve the Mission's mandate.
8. This audit was included in the 2022 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the criticality of protection of civilians and human rights issues in the mandate and operations of MINUSCA.

9. OIOS conducted this audit from March to July 2023. The audit covered the period from 1 July 2020 to 31 March 2023. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risks areas in the human rights programme, which included: (a) planning; (b) work plan implementation and monitoring; and (c) coordination mechanisms.

10. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel, (b) review of relevant documentation, (c) analytical review of Results based budget (RBB), budget performance reports and planned and executed work plan activities for 2020/2021, 2021/22, and 2022/23 in the 12 field offices; and (d) random and judgmental sampling test of: (i) 42 of 426 requests processed by HRDDP for support provided to non-United Nations forces, and (ii) 11 of 46 programme activities initiated and implemented in 2022/2023.

11. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Planning

Human Rights Division has developed strategic priorities to implement its mandate

12. Effective design of appropriate strategies and actions for implementing its human rights programmes in Central African Republic requires HRD align its work with MINUSCA priorities and to conduct monitoring and investigation activities, which are done through its five units within the Division.

13. HRD had identified and developed a set of strategic priorities in a strategic plan in 2021/22 based on guiding principles aligned with Security Council resolutions, guidance from OHCHR and the Mission Leadership through the MINUSCA strategic priorities, political strategy, protection of civilians' strategy, and the Results-based budget (RBB) framework to fully support the implementation of the Mission's mandate. The plan was duly approved by the DSRSG. The process of developing the strategies and priorities involved clear engagement with staff from the HRD units and field offices during HRD annual retreat where experiences, challenges and lesson learned were shared among all staff to strategize a better and improved way for the Division to achieve its objective to meet the Mission's human rights mandate. The Division had identified objectives/goals, responsibilities, key stakeholders and how coordination should be conducted by each of its five units.

14. These priorities included security; protection of civilians and human rights; fight against impunity; and supporting the peace and transitional justice process as well as the full implementation of the National Action Plan on the prevention of hate speech and incitement to violence. HRD also focused on building the operational capacity of national human rights institutions, civil society organizations, early warning networks and local human rights forums through training and awareness sessions. Related expected accomplishments included: (i) improving the environment for the protection of civilians; (ii) improving protection and promotion of human rights in the Central African Republic, including through the strengthening of national and local capacity; and (iii) strengthening transitional justice mechanisms, including the Special Criminal Court, and improving capacity to fight impunity.

15. These priorities formed the basis of the development of expected accomplishments in the human rights aspects of the Mission's RBB and annual work plans.

16. OIOS concluded that MINUSCA HRD had adequately aligned its strategic priorities with its mandate, Organizational and Mission strategic priorities.

Human Rights Division geared its work toward strengthening civil society and government and non-government organizations to continue the promotion and protection of human rights in the event of MINUSCA withdrawal from the country

17. The Policy on Human Rights in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Political Missions requires that " OHCHR, Department of Peace Operations (DPO), Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and the Department of Operational Support (DOS) shall ensure that a sufficient human rights presence is maintained during and after drawdown and liquidation phases of field mission or operation to guarantee continuity of key human rights activities in the host country". The DPO/DOS Mission Start-up Field Guide requires MINUSCA to prepare an exit strategy to ensure that the Mission, and by extension, HRD can have sequenced steps to ensure human rights are sustainably maintained in case there is an unexpected withdrawal of the Mission from the country.

18. MINUSCA HRD has not developed an exit strategy. However, to ensure continuity of human rights activities in the event of a scaling down or withdrawal of MINUSCA, HRD has taken measures and developed a guiding document that highlighted the process for transitioning its work to local capacity to implement human rights related activities on their own. The guiding document included:

- The establishment by the Transitional Justice and Institutional Support Unit within HRD of a civil society organizations' (CSO) thematic group to provide continuous support and necessary trainings to enhance the capabilities of the group to implement HRD planned human rights programme.
- Providing support for the operationalization of the national human rights commission, as well as the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission by increasing national capabilities to protect civilians.
- Integrating HRD work within the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), to fully mainstream human rights in all humanitarian activities.

19. Specific actions, including trainings conducted by HRD to implement the guiding principles are elaborated in the section on work plan implementation. By investing in such training, the Mission strengthened local capacity to ensure that the work of human rights could be continued in the event of the Mission's withdrawal. OIOS noted HRD trained and built the capacity of civil society, non-governmental and government organizations, and human rights focal points in the promotion and protection of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Need to enhance the development of field office work plans

20. The MINUSCA Joint Mission Planning Unit (JMPU) is responsible to provide guidance on integrated work plan development. With guidance and assistance from JMPU, HRD prepares an annual work plan for the Division. This work plan then cascades to the field offices. JMPU provided guidelines for substantive sections and field offices to develop specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound indicators of achievement and outputs.

21. HRD developed annual work plans for 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 in line with activities that were outlined in the RBB frameworks for the respective years and included expected accomplishments. The 12 field offices also developed annual work plans aimed at aligning with the Divisional work plan. A

review of the Divisional work plans for 2021/22 and 2022/23 showed that the work plans duly included activities, outputs and related targets to achieve priority objectives. The plans also identified other non-HRD partners involved in the implementation of activities. However, a review of 12 field offices work plans for 2021/22 and 2022/23 identified the following weaknesses:

- 10 field offices workplans showed vague timeframes for some expected accomplishments. For example, a period of one year was indicated rather than a specified time allocated based on the planned activities as required by the integrated work planning guidance;
- The Divisional work plan required 30 training sessions to be conducted on protection of civilians (POC), human rights, and international humanitarian law (IHL) for Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (FACA) and Internal Security Forces (ISF) members. This should have cascaded into concrete plans by each field office in terms of their contribution to the achievement of the overall 30 sessions. However, two field offices copied and pasted the same required training rather than customizing it to meet their specific office needs, considering staff availability and other work requirements. As a result, these offices could not meet this requirement, highlighting the need for proper planning and coordination and management oversight; and
- Three field offices did not specify number of participants for their planned activities, indicating that they did not have the information to pre-plan attendees to the planned activities.

22. The above occurred because HRD did not have an adequate procedure for compilation, review and clearance of the field offices' work plans to ensure that field offices develop specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound expected accomplishments and indicators to meet the Divisional workplan.

23. The lack of specificity of planned programme, number of target groups, implementation timeframe, management review of the workplan, and risk assessment and mitigation measures led to inability to fully implement some field offices work plans. This could further lead to improper execution of the planned activities and ultimately hamper the progress and impact of the Division's ability to effectively promote and protect human rights.

(1) MINUSCA Human Rights Division should implement an adequate review and clearance procedure to ensure that field offices develop specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound work plans aligned with the Divisional work plan.

MINUSCA accepted recommendation 1 and stated that the Human Rights Division (HRD) Deputy Director would assume responsibility for ensuring the consistency of work plans of human rights field offices with the annual work plan of the HRD. Processes will be established to ensure consistency in the development of the HRD annual work plan.

B. Work plan implementation and monitoring

MINUSCA Human Rights Division largely implemented its mandated activities, and where not achieved provided adequate explanations

24. The RBB provides the framework for setting targets/expected accomplishments and measuring performance of the Organization. In addition to the RBB expected accomplishments, the Divisional work plan sets out additional activities to be implemented by the HRD. A review of the RBB framework in respect of the HRD work plan for 2022/23 noted that generally the expected accomplishments were

achieved. The following expected accomplishments which were approved for the work plan and their corresponding results set out in table 1 were pertinent:

Table 1: RBB expected accomplishments and results

Expected accomplishment	Indicator	Approved Target	Result	Remarks
Improved protection and promotion of human rights in the Central African Republic, including through the strengthening of national and local capacity in this area, with a specific focus on women and children	Number of cases of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including grave violations of the rights of children and conflict-related sexual violence, that are brought to the attention of national authorities and armed groups and actions taken	500	1179	Many more cases of violations were reported to the relevant State authorities through the HRD monthly reports that were systematically shared with them. Additionally, HRD reported on cases of arbitrary detention. The increase included results of visits to detention facilities as well during the period, which were previously not included.
	Total number of internal security force personnel trained in human rights, the protection of civilians, the protection of children, the prevention of conflict-related violence and sexual and gender-based violence and civil-military relations	2500	2432	1,472 FACA elements and 960 police and gendarmes (including 224 women) were trained.
	Number of commitments to halt and prevent sexual violence signed by parties to the conflict	2	3	Zonal commanders of three anti-Balaka groups issued orders to halt and prevent sexual violence.
Progress towards the implementation of the national security policy and the national security sector reform strategy, including sectoral plans	Number of vetted personnel of national defence and internal security forces, including ex-combatants	1,000 ISF and 1,300 national defence personnel	550 ex-combatants	The vetting of ex-combatants is controlled by the Government, so HRD can only vet those referred to it but increased advocacy with State authorities.
Strengthened transitional justice mechanisms, including the Special Criminal Court, and improved capacity to fight impunity	Number of transitional justice mechanisms (in addition to the Special Criminal Court), that are operational and comply with international standards for human rights	2	1	The current landscape of the country has not allowed the development of an additional transitional justice mechanism.

Source Results-based budget

25. In addition to the RBB expected accomplishments, OIOS review of 11 of 46 programme activities noted that training, awareness and support activities were conducted by HRD as part of its work plan to

strengthen civil society and government and non-government organizations' human rights focal points to continue the promotion and protection of human rights in the event of MINUSCA withdrawal from the country. For example, in 2021/2022 HRD:

- Through the CSO thematic groups established by The Transitional Justice and Institutional Support Unit, organized 60 training workshops and awareness sessions on transitional justice mechanisms, prevention of hate messages and incitement to violence, transitional justice mechanisms in the country, and promotion and protection of civic space.
- Conducted 27 (20 planned) training sessions on the protection of civilians, human rights and international law for the national defense and internal security forces and local administrative officials to strengthen the capacity of State actors to contribute to a protective environment.
- Conducted 26 planned training sessions on the protection of civilians and human rights for members of civil society and community focal points working on hate speech and the prevention of genocide and other atrocity crimes.
- Provided technical and logistical support for 30 field visits of national human rights institutions, including 10 visits of the High Council for Communication to support the full implementation of the national action plan on hate speech to prevent the spread of violence, 10 visits of the National Committee on the Prevention of Genocide to support implementation of its preventive mandate against mass atrocities and 10 visits of the National Human Rights Commission to support implementation of its human rights promotion and protection mandate.
- Conducted 70 planned training sessions on human rights investigation, monitoring and reporting for members of human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society and/or journalists to support a human rights-based approach to their work.
- Assisted in promoting economic, social and cultural rights, preventing discrimination and establishing focal points for the National Committee on prevention of Genocide. HRD was assisting the High Council of Communication to draw up a National Prevention Plan to deal with hate messages and incitement to violence. The support included 15 training sessions in 2021/22 on the protection of civilians and human rights for members of civil society and community focal points working on hate speech and the prevention of genocide and other atrocity crimes. HRD also provided technical support to the National Human Rights Commission for the elaboration of human rights plans.

26. HRD faced difficulties in accessing various parts of the country to provide full human rights monitoring and investigation activities. These limitations which were identified by HRD were mainly due to factors outside the control of the Division, including: (a) insecurity in various parts of the country that inhibited travel to those places; (b) poor or non-existent roads as well as inaccessibility during rainy periods; (c) lack of regular flights to some locations; (d) presence of armed elements placing restrictions on movement of persons; (e) presence of explosive devices making it impossible to move in some locations and (f) movement restrictions due to military operations by State actors. Actions taken by HRD to address the limitations included advocacy meetings with relevant State authorities. OIOS concluded that HRD largely implemented its mandated activities and where not achieved, adequate explanations were provided.

Formal agreements that included standard of conduct between MINUSCA and non-governmental organizations needed to be formulated

27. Secretary-General's Bulletin ST/SGB/2003/13 requires that United Nations entities entering into cooperative arrangements with non-United Nations (non-UN) entities should inform them of the standards of United Nations Code of Conduct and such non-UN entities shall provide a written undertaking that they are fully aware of the standards and agree to uphold them. The selection, monitoring and reporting of work done through implementing partners were in accordance with the standard operating procedures for quick impact projects.

28. HRD has made strides in implementing its human rights programme throughout the country by partnering with 22 non-governmental organization (NGOs), 8 women's organizations, and 6 youth organizations over the audit period. However, there were no memoranda of understanding between these organizations and HRD beyond an acknowledgement receipt that the organizations signed in respect of funding that MINUSCA provided to them. Moreover, there were no written agreements concerning commitment to the standards of conduct.

29. While the review of documents covering all the implementing partners did not identify any issues pertaining to partners not delivering on their work commitments, there was still a risk that in the absence of signed agreements, accountability could be limited if problems arise. Furthermore, there was no mechanism to monitor the execution of tasks by the selected NGOs to ensure that their personnel were not engaged in any misconduct.

30. The lack of agreements was due to an oversight on the part of the HRD.

(2) MINUSCA Human Rights Division (HRD) should develop and sign memoranda of understanding with implementing partners and ensure that non-governmental organizations that have entered cooperative arrangement with HRD have been informed of the United Nations code of conduct and have confirmed that they accept these standards.

MINUSCA accepted recommendation 2 and stated that HRD has recently developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was currently under review by the Senior Legal Advisor. Upon receiving the finalized MOU, HRD will promptly implement it within the current financial year. In addition, MINUSCA will conduct due diligence checks on the concerned partners and engage them on United Nations code of conduct prior to the signing of the MOU and in the course of programme implementation.

Need to monitor and report on the behavior of support recipients to attest that they are not violating applicable laws

31. The HRDDP unit is a vital component for support to non-United Nations security forces. One of the key aspects of this unit's work is to receive and process risk assessments conducted by MINUSCA components that includes: (a) identified risk of the intended support recipient entity committing grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights laws or refugee law during the period of support and afterwards; and (b) mitigating measures for the identified risk.

32. In collaboration with MINUSCA United Nations Police (UNPOL), the HRDDP unit conducts screening check of individual support recipients to ensure that the individual had not committed grave human rights violations in the past. Through HRD advocacy efforts, in 2023 the Force Commander and the Police Commissioner respectively issued directives to their components to ensure all support provided to non-United Nations security forces were contingent upon HRDDP reviews.

33. The HRDDP Unit used a risk rating system to rate the likelihood of recipients committing grave violations on a scale of low, medium, or high based on the identified risk and the screening result. The HRDDP task force made decisions considering the HRDDP Unit rating, identified risk and mitigation measures to approve or reject support recipients. Support recipients with high-risk rating were rejected and those with low and medium risk rating were approved based on appropriate mitigation measures identified to address the risks. Support providers must continuously monitor and report the support recipient behavior to ensure that their actions align with the organization's obligations under relevant bodies of law.

34. During the audit period, the HRDDP Unit of MINUSCA received and processed 426 requests covering 7,783 intended support recipients to receive support from various Mission components including, the Force, UNPOL, Security Sector Reform Section, Disarmament Demobilization Reintegration Section, Political Affairs Division, Justice and Corrections Section (JCS), Civil Affairs Section, and Heads of Field Offices (HoOs). The HRDDP task force approved 7,669 support recipients, including members from the Internal Security Forces, Parliament, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Mines and Geology, and Water and Forestry, who received logistical support and capacity-building training to strengthen their capacity in their area of work but excluded 114 support recipients from receiving support as they were found to have been involved in human rights violations or abuses. OIOS review of documentation supporting 42 HRDDP requests noted that support was only provided after due diligence had been conducted. Where issues were flagged, the proposed recipients were excluded from the support.

35. The HRDDP Unit provided trainings to various members of government and non-government organizations, as well as to HRDDP focal points covering substantive sections, commanders from troop contributing countries and formed police units; individual police officers and HoOs. However, these trainings did not adequately cover the need to monitor and report on human rights violations by recipients of support during and after the receipt of such support.

36. As a result, during the provision of support and after, the support providers did not monitor or report the behavior of support recipients to attest if they had not committed human rights violation while receiving the support from the Mission. For example, the UNPOL training coordinator was not aware of the requirements on monitoring and reporting the behavior of support recipients during and after the support. The coordinator further stated that no training or guidance were provided to UNPOL officers who were directly involved in providing support to service recipients at different field offices on monitoring and reporting techniques to assess the support recipient's behavior.

37. The consequences of support recipients committing grave violations of international humanitarian, human rights, or refugee laws can be detrimental not only to the individuals directly affected, but also to the reputation of the organization. If these violations are not timely detected and appropriately addressed, the population may lose confidence in the Mission's ability to effectively combat impunity as they witness those receiving support from the Mission committing violations without being held accountable. This lack of accountability may also undermine the Mission's efforts to fight against impunity.

(3) MINUSCA should provide training for its support providers from Mission components to ensure they conduct continuous monitoring and reporting of support recipients' behavior to attest that recipients do not commit any human rights violation, uphold the Organization's reputation, maintain public trust and support the Mission's efforts to fight against impunity.

MINUSCA accepted recommendation 3 and stated that HRD would continue training and engagements with relevant mission components, including training on HRDDP to both Force and UNPOL personnel to ensure ongoing compliance. HRD will enhance collaboration with other relevant Divisions/Sections/Units to closely monitor and report on the behavior of recipients.

Need to conduct evaluation of human rights programme

38. The Administrative instruction on evaluation of United Nations Secretariat (ST/AI/2021/3) dated 6 August 2021 required MINUSCA to have an evaluation policy and carry out evaluation of all its programmes and sub-programmes on a regular and periodic basis to assess the overall relevance, effectiveness, impact, and efficiency of its programmes/sub-programmes at least once every six years.

39. Due to lack of resources, MINUSCA had not yet established a policy to periodically conduct self-evaluations and had not assessed the overall relevance, effectiveness, impact, and efficiency of its human rights programme since the inception of the Mission. As a result, there was no sufficient evidence to determine its continued relevance, the extent to which HRD was achieving its programme objectives and to identify areas that required adjustments to ensure effective implementation of its mandate. However, it is pertinent to note that the OIOS evaluation report of the support provided by MINUSCA for the fight against impunity, the extensions of State authority and the rule of law in the Central African Republic in February 2023 (Report A/77/739) concluded that despite recurring cycles of violence and armed rebellion, MINUSCA played a vital role in strengthening the fight against impunity, the institutional presence of and activities of the State and the rule of law.

(4) MINUSCA should conduct the required evaluation of its human rights activities and projects to measure their effectiveness against their objectives and impacts and make adjustments to the programme, as appropriate.

MINUSCA accepted recommendation 4 and stated that the Mission committed to advancing a whole Mission approach to increasing self-evaluation capabilities and expertise in line with UNEG governing self-evaluation policy within the overall Programme, Planning, Budget Monitoring and Evaluation (PPBME) without prejudice to OIOS-IED or any external evaluation should the resources permit.

Need for timely reporting on the status of the human rights situation in Central African Republic

40. National stakeholders and the international community should be timely informed on the human rights situation to formulate coherent and consistent strategies to address the situation. According to the Policy on public reporting by Human Rights Components of United Nations Peace Operations, human rights components prepare bi-annual or annual public reports. The bi-annual reports should be issued within a month from the last day of the relevant reporting period and the annual report should be issued within two months from end of reporting period.

41. During the audit period, the HRD prepared and issued three public reports, including two annual reports, and contributed to the quarterly Secretary-General report to the Security Council. In addition, the independent expert report for the Central African Republic was prepared and issued for fiscal years 2020/21 and 2021/22.

42. However, the annual report for 2021/22 was issued six months after the end of the reporting period due to prolonged and untimely internal and external review process. Delayed reporting on the human rights situation in the country may jeopardize the timely response by national stakeholders and the international community.

43. For 2022/23, while the Mission had prepared the annual report within the established timelines, the coordination, review and publication of the report with the Integrated Operational Team at Headquarters has been delayed. The report was not yet issued by the end of September 2023.

- (5) MINUSCA, in conjunction with the Integrated Operational Team at Headquarters, should strengthen the mechanism for the human rights report with structured steps and timelines to prevent delays and to ensure that mandated deadlines are met.**

MINUSCA accepted recommendation 5 and stated that the Mission would ensure that upcoming mandated human rights reports are prepared in accordance with realistic and structured steps and timelines commonly agreed between the Mission and Headquarters.

C. Coordination mechanisms

Coordination with internal and external human rights stakeholders were effective

44. HRD partnered with MINUSCA substantive sections, MINUSCA Force and Police, United Nations Country Team, Government of Central African Republic, and NGOs to effectively promote and protect human rights across Central African Republic. The Division working in coordination with other partners including JCS, Child Protection Unit (CPU) and UNPOL visited detention facilities throughout the country to monitor conditions of detainees (illegal and pre-trial). The Division shared information on detainees whose rights had been breached with JCS and reported such cases in daily and monthly situational reports as well as reports to the government authorities. Additionally, working with JCS, United Nations Population Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), HRD met with government officials to advocate for changes to the national legal framework to allow better protections for persons accused of witchcraft. Further to this, HRD, in conjunction with CPU, UNPOL, JCS, UNCT and affiliated NGOs met regularly to plan, consider and coordinate responses to protect and assist persons accused of witchcraft as part of a more global sectoral approach on protection and prevention of violence against women.

45. HRD had one Force and Police focal person integrated into the HRDDP Secretariat to follow up on cases of human rights violations within their respective offices when support for non-United Nations security forces was being requested under the HRDDP scope. The Division also assisted the Mission to respond when actions of State actors were contrary to humanitarian and human rights law, or a breach of the SOFA occurred. For example, in response to an incident where Central African Republic Military Forces (FACA) in Bouar confiscated five MINUSCA Force trucks in August 2022, after the release of the trucks, HRD conducted awareness raising training sessions to the FACA command and local authorities in Bouar for the strengthening of discipline and respect for human rights.

46. HRD also integrated its work within the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), and this allowed for a more coordinated approach towards mainstreaming human rights. For example, HRD participated in all the monthly meetings of the UNCT, attended regular meetings of the protection cluster within the country, and shared information with the humanitarian organizations about the situation of internally displaced persons, refugees and other activities as elaborated in the section on coordination mechanisms. In addition, HRD, along with other members of the UNCT supported the Transitional Justice process through operationalizing the Central African Republic Commission on Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation (CVJRR), established in July 2021. In October 2021/22, the Commission was able to hold a retreat where its rules of procedure were finalized. The Commission finalized legal and internal documents and started communication activities in 20 locations. HRD completed 20 awareness raising field missions to enhance popular participation in the transitional justice process. With the Mission's financial and technical support, the Commission facilitated workshops attended by 600 civilians, informing them about the Commission's mandate and the outcomes of its proceedings. By March 2023, the Commission was able to organize its first roundtable in Bangui to provide update on its three-year plan and priorities for 2023.

47. HRD coordinated with the Government of the Central African Republic officials through providing reports identifying trends of the human rights situation in the country, which showed a rising trend of incidents from 2021 to 2023 but a slight drop in the number of victims affected by 2023. The reports highlighted documented incidents committed by different actors including armed groups who were signatories to the Political Agreement, national defense forces and other security personnel. Through regular engagement, HRD supported the Minister for Justice in creating a special commission of inquiry in response to a report on allegations of serious crimes and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by national armed forces and bilaterally deployed and other security personnel in 2020/21.

48. HRD provided coordination support to National Human Rights Institutions to deploy and adopt key documents and plans focused on preventing incitement of hatred and violence. For 2021/22, the Division in coordination with other stakeholders conducted 10 joint protection missions of civil society, local human rights forums, early warning networks and national human rights institutions to support the full and effective operationalization of early warning mechanisms established at the national and regional levels.

49. OIOS concluded that MINUSCA had implemented effective coordination mechanisms for human rights.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

50. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of MINUSCA for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the human rights programme in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ^{1/} Important ²	C/ O ³	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁴
1	MINUSCA Human Rights Division should implement an adequate review and clearance procedure to ensure that field offices develop specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound work plans aligned with the Divisional work plan.	Important	O	Receipt of copies of the next approved work plans showing alignment with the Divisional work plan.	31 July 2024
2	MINUSCA Human Rights Division (HRD) should develop and sign memoranda of understanding with implementing partners and ensure that non-governmental organizations that have entered cooperative arrangement with HRD have been informed of the United Nations code of conduct and have confirmed that they accept these standards.	Important	O	Receipt of: (a) a copy of the finalized memorandum; and (b) confirmation of the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding.	31 July 2024
3	MINUSCA should provide training for its support providers from Mission components to ensure they conduct continuous monitoring and reporting of support recipients' behavior to attest that recipients do not commit any human rights violation, uphold the Organization's reputation, maintain public trust and support the Mission's efforts to fight against impunity.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of training provided to the Force, Police and other relevant components incorporating the need for continuous monitoring and reporting of support recipients' behaviour.	31 July 2024
4	MINUSCA should conduct the required self-evaluation of its human rights activities and projects to measure their effectiveness against their objectives and impacts and make adjustments to the programme, as appropriate.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that an evaluation of the programme has been completed.	30 August 2024
5	MINUSCA, in conjunction with the Integrated Operational Team at Headquarters, should strengthen the mechanism for the human rights report with structured steps and timelines to prevent delays and to ensure that mandated deadlines are met.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that the next human rights report has been finalized and published within established timelines.	30 November 2024

¹ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

² Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

³ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁴ Date provided by MINUSCA in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Management Response

**INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM****MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR**

TO: Ms. Fatoumata Ndiaye
A: Under-Secretary-General for OIOS

DATE: 29 November 2023

FROM: Valentine Rugwabiza
DE: SRSG and Head of MINUSCA

REFERENCE: MINUSCA/OSRSG/211/2023

SUBJECT: **MINUSCA's comments on the Draft report on an audit of the Human rights programme in MINUSCA (Assignment No. AP2022-637-06)**

OBJET: **MINUSCA's comments on the Draft report on an audit of the Human rights programme in MINUSCA (Assignment No. AP2022-637-06)**

1. With reference to your interoffice memorandum dated 9 November 2023 on the above captioned subject, kindly find attached MINUSCA's comments on the Draft report of an audit of the human rights programme in MINUSCA.
2. I take this opportunity to thank your team for the findings and recommendations issued in this audit.

Annex (1): – MINUSCA's comments on the Draft report on an audit of the human rights programme in MINUSCA

cc: Mr. Byung-Kun Min Chief, Peacekeeping Audit Service,
Internal Audit Division, OIOS
Ms. Joanne Adamson, Deputy SRSG, MINUSCA
Mr. Sory Sangaré, Director of Mission Support, MINUSCA
Mr. Souleymane Thioune, Chief of Staff, *a.i.*, MINUSCA
Ms. Hanan Talbi, Director, Human Rights Division, MINUSCA
Mr. Jeffrey Lin, Professional Practices Section, Internal Audit Division, OIOS
Mr. Laud Botchwey, Chief Resident Auditor for MINUSCA, Internal Audit Division, OIOS
Ms. Tiphaine Dickson, Risk Management and Compliance Officer, MINUSCA

Management Response

Audit of the human rights programme in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	MINUSCA Human Rights Division should implement an adequate review and clearance procedure to ensure that field offices develop specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound work plans aligned with the Divisional work plan.	Important	Yes	Deputy Director	July 2024	MINUSCA accepts the recommendation. The Human Rights Division (HRD) Deputy Director will assume responsibility for ensuring the consistency of work plans of human rights field offices with the annual work plan of the HRD. Processes will be established to ensure consistency in the development of the HRD annual work plan .
2	MINUSCA Human Rights Division (HRD) should develop and sign memoranda of understanding with implementing partners and ensure that non-governmental organizations that have entered cooperative arrangement with HRD have been informed of the United Nations code of conduct and have confirmed that they accept these standards.	Important	Yes	Deputy Director	July 2024	MINUSCA accepts the recommendation. HRD has recently developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that is currently under review by the Senior Legal Advisor. Upon receiving the finalized MOU, HRD will promptly implement it within the current financial year. In addition, MINUSCA will conduct due diligence checks on the concerned partners and engage them on United Nations code of conduct prior to the signing of the MOU and in the course of programme implementation.
3	MINUSCA should provide training for its support providers from Mission components to ensure they conduct continuous monitoring and reporting of	Important	Yes	Deputy Director	July 2024	MINUSCA accepts the recommendation. HRD will continue training and engagements with relevant mission components including, training on

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² Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

Management Response

Audit of the human rights programme in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ₂	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
	support recipients' behavior to attest that recipients do not commit any human rights violation, uphold the Organization's reputation, maintain public trust and support the Missions efforts to fight against impunity.					HRDDP to both Force and UNPOL personnel to ensure ongoing compliance. HRD will enhance collaboration with other relevant Divisions/Sections/Units to closely monitor and report on the behavior of recipients.
4	MINUSCA should conduct the required evaluation of its human rights activities and projects to measure their effectiveness against their objectives and impacts and make adjustments to the programme, as appropriate.	Important	Yes	Deputy Director	August 2024	MINUSCA accepted recommendation 4 and commits to advancing a whole Mission approach to increasing self-evaluation capabilities and expertise in line with UNEG governing self-evaluation policy within the overall Programme, Planning, Budget Monitoring and Evaluation (PPBME) without prejudice to OIOS-IED or any external evaluation should resources permits.
5	MINUSCA, in conjunction with the Integrated Operational Team at Headquarters, should strengthen the mechanism for the human rights report with structured steps and timelines to prevent delays and to ensure that mandated deadlines are met.	Important	Yes	Deputy Director	November 2024	MINUSCA accepts the recommendation and will ensure that upcoming mandated human rights reports are prepared in accordance with realistic and structured steps and timelines commonly agreed between the Mission and Headquarters.