OIOS

Office of Internal Oversight Services

INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2017/130

Audit of the strategic communications and public information programme in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

The Mission needed to develop an implementation plan for the strategic communications and public information strategy and establish effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for outreach projects

8 December 2017
Assignment No. AP2017/637/06

Audit of the strategic communications and public information 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 strategic communications and public information 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 governance, risk management and control processes over the strategic communications and public information programme in MINUSCA. The audit covered the period from July 2015 to June 2017 and included a review of strategic communications and public information governance framework, dissemination of public information and communication channels, clearance and archiving of public information outputs, media relations and capacity-building, and impact assessment of public information products.

MINUSCA developed its communications and public information strategy and informed its target audiences about its activities through its radio programmes, videos, outreach activities, publications and multimedia tools. However, MINUSCA needed to develop an implementation plan for its communications and public information strategy, increase awareness of its activities, and establish effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for outreach projects.

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

- Develop an implementation plan for its communications and public information strategy;

- Ensure effective participation of substantive sections in the development of specific messages and timely provision of their inputs;

- Develop and implement an action plan to increase the awareness of its activities and participation of its social media followers and website visitors;

- Develop and implement project management tools and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure timely and successful implementation of outreach projects;

- Ensure adherence to prescribed financial procedures for requesting, safeguarding and accounting for cash advances disbursed for outreach projects;

- Develop and implement clearance procedures on the release of public information;

- Establish archiving procedures to ensure that all public information materials are properly catalogued and archived in a common repository for easy retrieval;

- Develop standard operating procedures for media monitoring; and

- Make provision for sufficient training activities for local journalists and national staff in its annual work plans and ensure that these are implemented accordingly.

MINUSCA accepted all recommendations and has initiated action to implement them.

CONTENTS

Audit of the strategic communications and public information 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 strategic communications and public information programme in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

2.   Security Council resolution 2301, dated 26 July 2016, requested MINUSCA to continue using relevant and tailored communication tools, in particular radio, to help the local people better understand the mandate of the Mission and its activities, and to build trust of the Central African Republic citizens, parties to the conflict, regional and other international actors and partners on the ground as part of an effective political strategy. The MINUSCA Strategic Communications and Public Information (SCPI) Section was responsible for implementing this aspect of the MINUSCA mandate.

3.   The SCPI Section was headed by a Chief at the D-1 level who reported to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and was supported by a team of 103 staff comprising 23 international staff, 18 United Nations Volunteers, and 62 national staff. The SCPI Section implemented public information activities through five units: (a) Office of the Spokesperson and Media Relations Unit; (b) Outreach Unit; (c) Radio Unit; (d) Video Unit; and (e) Publications and Multimedia Unit, based in Bangui. The Section also had radio and outreach public information officers in 11 and 10 field offices, respectively.

4.   MINUSCA budgets for the strategic communications and public information programme for fiscal years 2015/16 and 2016/17 were $4.4 million and $4.8 million, respectively.

5.   Comments provided by MINUSCA are incorporated in italics.

II.   AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

6.   The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes over the strategic communications and public information programme in MINUSCA.

7.   This audit was included in the 2017 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to operational risks related to management of the strategic communications and public information programme in MINUSCA.

8.   OIOS conducted this audit from May to September 2017. The audit covered the period from July 2015 to June 2017. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risk areas in the strategic communications and public information programme, which included: (a) the strategic communications and public information governance framework; (b) dissemination of public information and communication channels; (c) clearance and archiving of public information outputs; (d) media relations and capacity-building; and (e) impact assessment of public information products.

9.   The audit methodology included: (a) interviews of key personnel; (b) reviews of relevant documentation; (c) analytical reviews of data; (d) sample testing of randomly selected public information outputs; and (e) physical observation.

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

III.   AUDIT RESULTS

A.   Strategic communications and public information governance framework

<u>MINUSCA needed to improve the implementation plan for the SCPI strategy</u>

11.   The Department of Public Information/Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support (DPI/DPKO/DFS) Policy for strategic communications and public information (the policy) requires the Chief SCPI Section to develop and deliver the Mission communications strategy in line with the Mission's overall concept of operations, Mission directives, SRSG compact with the Secretary-General and Mission support plan. The policy also requires the Chief SCPI Section to develop an implementation plan and means for evaluating the programme's impact.

12.   MINUSCA had developed the SCPI strategy in May 2017, which was planned to be implemented by May 2018. The strategy was in line with the policy, the Mission's strategic priorities, its current concept of operations and the 6 April 2017 SRSG directives. The strategy also analysed current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to MINUSCA not achieving its mandate. The strategy explained its general and specific objectives and expected results, target audiences, key overarching messages, activities of each communication tool and the role and responsibilities of the SCPI Section in its implementation including monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and tools to ensure that the strategy was producing the expected results. Relevant stakeholders, including substantive sections, had been consulted and their comments and suggestions were considered in the development of the strategy.

13.   However, the strategy was not supported by an implementation plan with specific details of activities to be carried out, performance indicators, resource requirements and timeframes to ensure it was implemented as planned. Additionally, not all five SCPI Units had prepared individual unit work plans that would serve as a basis for implementing the strategy. For example, the Radio Unit had no work plan for 2016/17, and although the Media Relations and Outreach Units had work plans for that period, they did not include established goals that were specific and measurable and did not include performance indicators to monitor achievements to ensure the SCPI strategy was implemented in a timely manner. The work plans for 2017/18 were being developed as of the date of the audit.

14.   The above resulted due to competing priorities as SCPI management was initially focused on reacting to the security situation and stabilization activities, which left gaps in the development of the implementation plan and ensuring that individual work plans included specific details of activities to be carried out, their resource requirements, timeframes for completion and performance mechanisms to monitor implementation. As a result, there was an increased risk that the SCPI strategy would not be implemented as envisaged.

> **(1) MINUSCA should take action to ensure the Strategic Communications and Public Information strategy is implemented as expected by making sure that individual units' annual work plans include the required activities to be carried out, resource requirements and timeframes and performance indicators to monitor achievements.**

> *MINUSCA accepted recommendation 1 and stated that the Mission was improving the implementation plan for the SCPI strategy and would ensure that individual units' annual work plans include activities to be carried out, performance indicators, resource requirements and timeframes for each activity.* Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt of copies of the updated implementation plan and individual units' annual work plans.

Need to improve collaboration between SCPI and substantive sections

15.   The Chief SCPI Section serves as the main advisor to the Mission leadership on communications and is part of the Mission senior management team. The SCPI strategy requires Mission-specific messages to various stakeholders on key themes/issues to be: (a) developed and updated on a regular basis in cooperation with substantive sections; and (b) shared with the senior leadership team.

16.   The Chief SCPI Section or his designate regularly attended senior management and senior leadership team meetings. However, there was a need to improve collaboration between and substantive sections in developing key themes/messages as the following were noted:

- The SCPI Section advised that during the audit period it developed 32 specific messages related to different issues based on recommendations from senior management meetings and/or the Crisis Management Team but only 6 of them could be provided to OIOS. This was because files were fragmented and kept on individual staff members' computers and therefore could not be easily retrieved.

- Five of the six messages were initiated between September 2016 and April 2017 and were still pending finalization as of July 2017 as the concerned substantive sections were yet to provide their inputs, suggestions and/or comments.

17.   While SCPI advised that it invited substantive sections to their meetings for consultation in developing and finalizing key messages, this process was not effective, as demonstrated by the time taken to finalize the five messages provided to OIOS that were initiated during September 2016 to April 2017. Therefore, there was a need for SCPI to implement improved coordination mechanisms to expedite their finalization. Delays and uncoordinated efforts in developing specific messages impact the effectiveness of ensuring senior management's selected themes were adequately communicated.

> **(2) MINUSCA should take action to ensure effective participation of substantive sections in the development of specific messages to expedite their finalization and communication.**
>
> *MINUSCA accepted recommendation 2 and stated that substantive sections were consulted at all times for messaging and were invited to participate in weekly SCPI meetings.* Recommendation 2 remains open pending OIOS verification of participation of substantive sections in SCPI meetings to develop public information messages.

B.   Dissemination of public information and communication channels

MINUSCA Radio Unit had designed programmes to engage and maintain dialogue with the local population

18.   The Policy requires United Nations peacekeeping operations to use contemporary and appropriate communication approaches to engage and maintain dialogue with locals to build support at the grassroots level.

19.   MINUSCA had set up a Radio Unit which used frequency modulation (FM) broadcasting to run its radio called Guira FM which covered more than 80 per cent of the Central African Republic population and spanned 12 different locations (5 in the west, 3 in the centre and 4 in the east) of the country. Guira FM broadcasted 14 news bulletins and 3 news flashes per day, 19 magazines (talk shows involving the local population) through 46 broadcasts per week in both French and Sango languages. Five containerized studios had been installed in five regions which enhanced the radio production capacity and the coverage of local events from the regions. OIOS concluded that MINUSCA had implemented programmes to engage and maintain dialogue with the local population.

Need to conduct media campaigns to increase social media followers

20.   SCPI components are required to be structured to focus on content production and delivery of high-standard multilingual content and campaigns, disseminated via the most appropriate platforms including web and social media. SCPI components are required to be equipped with appropriate communication tools to address key audiences, through both traditional and digital platforms and their staff to have sufficient bandwidth and access to websites and digital applications that enable them to perform their functions.

21.   The Publications and Multimedia Unit maintained a website where information about the Mission, news (including social media platform such as Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and YouTube), activities and resources were available in both English and French to inform and maintain dialogue with local and international audiences including the diaspora society on the Mission's activities. However, OIOS noted the following:

•   On the website, as of 31 August 2017, there were inaccuracies in the facts and figures section on the number of uniformed and civilian personnel deployed, number of fatalities that had occurred, and the activities being conducted by substantive sections. This resulted as the Unit did not regularly update the website. For example; facts and figures in the French language were not updated since May 2016 while those in the English language were not updated since September 2015. Likewise, activities of military, police and substantive sections were not up-to-date; outdated information pertaining to previous MINUSCA mandates and activities were still reflected.

•   A comparison of social media activity by various missions, including MINUSCA as at 7 November 2017 is shown in Table 1. Although there was a notable increase in social media users in 2016/17 compared to 2015/16 (for instance there were 2,106 tweets in 2016/17 compared to 560 in 2015/16 and 448 Facebook posts in 2016/17 compared to 221 in 2015/16), MINUSCA had not yet conducted special campaigns to increase its followers and awareness of its activities.

Table 1
Comparison of social media activity by Missions as at 7 November 2017

	Twitter followers	Tweets	Facebook followers	Total YouTube videos	YouTube views	YouTube subscribers	Flickr photos	Flickr followers
MINUSCA	11 320	3 559	15 113	558	203 923	558	11 590	84
UNAMID	8 673	5 210	23 249	57	55 867	228	4 999	275
MINUSMA	73 096	12 885	75 501	324	403 600	1 561	6 110	160
MONUSCO	233 270	21 084	36 676	523	65 694	496	5 035	273
UNMISS	20 943	6 162	42 403	279	163 760	561	11 528	80

22.   The above occurred as MINUSCA did not take timely actions to: (a) fill the vacant post of Multimedia Officer responsible for overseeing all platforms and content of the website; (b) resolve the slow

Internet connectivity issue; and (c) conduct special campaigns to increase the number of its followers and awareness of its activities. As a result, the local population and diaspora societies may not get up-to-date and timely information on and understanding of the Mission's activities, achievements, responses to situations or views from Mission's officials. Subsequent to the audit, MINUSCA took action to resolve the slow Internet connectivity and filled the vacant Multimedia Officer's post.

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(3) MINUSCA should develop and implement an action plan to increase the awareness of its activities and participation of its social media followers and website visitors with frequent status posts and updates on its website.

MINUSCA accepted recommendation 3 and stated that it would recruit a United Nations volunteer or Multimedia Officer who would be responsible for overseeing and evaluating all media platforms. Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of confirmation of deployment of dedicated resource to update the media platforms and web pages and/or confirmation that the web pages have been updated.

Need to improve management of outreach projects

23.   Project management best practices, as adopted in other peacekeeping missions, require MINUSCA to: (a) plan project activities by setting specific and measureable objectives, output indicators, and clearly defined project requirements; and (b) implement and monitor activities to ensure that the projects are successfully implemented in a timely manner.

24.   A review of project files for 10 out of 24 outreach and advocacy projects implemented during the audit period indicated the following:

- As MINUSCA had not developed a standard project initiation template, project managers were using different formats resulting in inconsistencies and absence of important information instead. For instance, some project initiation documents did not include one or more of the following basic content/structure line items: indicators of success, specific objectives, expected results, target population groups, description of activities to be carried out, project duration, beneficiaries, implementing partners, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and relevance of the projects to MINUSCA mandates and/or strategic priorities.

- Project initiation documents and narrative reports were neither signed nor dated by both the preparer and the Head of Unit to provide evidence of their review and approval. The names of officials who prepared them were also not indicated.

- Some project files were not complete. For instance, a plan for the distribution of promotional materials was missing in three project files, a narrative report of project activities was missing in one file, a detailed budget including cost estimates was not included in one file, and an approved request form for funding was missing in another file.

25.   The above resulted as the SCPI Section had not developed and implemented adequate project management tools and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, impacting on the effectiveness of project implementation. For example, there were delays in the completion of some projects, with 4 of the 10 projects reviewed completed between two and three months after the planned implementation date. Project managers were not required to submit progress reports to account for the slow progress in the implementation of their projects.

(4) MINUSCA should develop and implement project management tools and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure timely and successful implementation of outreach projects.

MINUSCA accepted recommendation 4 and stated that the development of project management toolkit was in progress and staff would be trained on its use. Recommendation 4 remains open pending receipt of evidence that the project management toolkit has been implemented.

There was a need to strengthen management of cash advances for outreach projects

26.   United Nations Financial Regulations and Rules require MINUSCA personnel provided with cash advances for undertaking programmatic activities to account for the funds in a timely manner. The 21 November 2015 Director of Mission Support memorandum on requests for funding of events and activities required the Outreach Unit to: (a) submit its projects/proposals for consideration and approval 45 days prior to their commencement; (b) sign the prescribed undertaking memorandum on the management of cash advances prior to funds being disbursed; (c) account for all funds disbursed within 10 days after the completion of project activities; and (d) maintain accurate and transparent financial records for all MINUSCA operations and transactions.

27.   A review of the financial records of 10 out of 24 projects showed the following weaknesses in the management of cash advances:

- Funds totaling $290,000 were advanced to Outreach Project Managers for nine of the projects, although the project manager did not sign to acknowledge understanding of the Mission recommended guidelines on the management of cash advances.

- None of the project initiation documents/proposals and budget estimates were submitted to the Director of Mission Support Office for review and approval 45 days prior to the estimated start date of the projects. The average submission time for the 10 projects reviewed was 12 days prior to the start of the projects.

- There was no mechanism in place for transferring and safeguarding funds for outreach projects in field offices.

- Expenditure reports for 5 of the 10 projects reviewed were submitted 86 days on average after the end of the project, and 3 of them were submitted 27 days on average after the completion of project activities. Implementers indicated that 10 days was insufficient in some cases, given the geographical and logistical impediments faced by the Mission.

- Copies of supporting invoices and receipts were filed haphazardly and not cross-referenced to entries on the statements of expenditure listing all individual expenditure items incurred, making the verification and reconciliation process difficult. Nonetheless, a review of the original supporting documents maintained by the MINUSCA Finance and Budget Section indicated that all funds disbursed for the 10 projects were accounted for.

28.   The above resulted due to lack of oversight by MINUSCA in monitoring compliance with established financial procedures for requesting, safeguarding, and accounting for payment and accounting for cash advances related to project activities. As a result, there is an increased risk of financial loss to the Organization and use of funds for non-related activities.

> **(5) MINUSCA should enforce the prescribed financial procedures for requesting, safeguarding and accounting for cash advances for outreach projects.**
>
> *MINUSCA accepted recommendation 5 and stated that it had referred the matter to the Finance and Budget Section for review of the existing standard operating procedure to ensure that the timeframes for requesting and accounting for cash advances were more realistic given the geographical and logistical impediments faced by the Mission.* Recommendation 5 remains open pending receipt of evidence of review and revision of the standard operating procedure for requesting, safeguarding and accounting for cash advances for outreach projects, and evidence that procedures are being complied with.

C.   Clearance and archiving of public information outputs

Need to develop and promulgate clearance procedures for public information outputs

29.   The policy requires the Chief SCPI Section to establish and document clearance procedures, including by: (a) designating public information component officials who may clear information in each unit for public release; (b) defining the type of information that may be cleared at each level; and (c) ensuring that all public information component staff are aware of these clearance procedures.

30.   The SCPI Section had not established and promulgated clearance procedures for the release of public information outputs. Instead, the Section used informal clearance procedures whereby draft press releases and notes to media by the Spokesperson and Media Relations staff were generally shared through email communications with relevant mission component chiefs and senior managers including the Deputy SRSGs, Force Commander, Police Commissioner and Chief of Staff for their inputs. Consequently, it was possible for information to be released without due clearance.

31.   The above resulted as the then Chief of the SCPI Section had not recognized the importance of promulgating specific clearance procedures for the release of public information outputs. As a result, there was a risk that the Mission's reputation could be negatively impacted if any highly-sensitive, inaccurate, unreliable and/or biased public information was released.

> **(6) MINUSCA should develop and implement clearance procedures on the release of public information to prevent the release of inaccurate and/or unreliable information.**
>
> *MINUSCA accepted recommendation 6 and stated that a system had been in place since the inception of the Mission, albeit not officially documented. The SCPI Section would develop clearance procedures and a process flow, which would be included in the standard operating procedures.* Recommendation 6 remains open pending receipt of a copy of the approved standard operating procedures for releasing public information.

Need to establish an adequate archiving system

32.   The policy requires SCPI components to be responsible for ensuring public information material is routinely archived throughout the entire life of the Mission. In addition, the DPKO/DFS Information Management Policy requires that multimedia contents such as audio, video and photographs are transferred to the DPI audio-visual library.

33.   Public information outputs in all the five SCPI Units were not systematically organized in a central location such as a shared drive and their completeness could not be determined as these were kept in

different folders across staff computers and/or in external drives. In addition, folders in which such materials were archived were not labelled and adequately catalogued; making the retrieval and tracking process difficult. Further, public information materials such as audios, videos and photographs were not transferred to the DPI audio-visual library as required.

34.   This resulted as the SCPI Section did not establish and implement appropriate archiving procedures. MINUSCA was in the process of launching COSMOS, a new central repository and archiving system; however, SCPI staff lacked familiarity with the system as they had not been trained on its use. The absence of an adequate archiving system meant that some public information outputs may be lost or difficult to locate and therefore not available for future reference.

> **(7) MINUSCA should establish archiving procedures to ensure that: (a) all public information materials are properly catalogued and archived in a common repository for easy retrieval; and (b) audio, video and photos are transferred to the Department of Public Information audio-visual library.**
>
> *MINUSCA accepted recommendation 7 and stated that, due to the size and volume of the audio file materials, the SCPI Section had agreed with the Geospatial, Information and Telecommunication Technology Service to maintain these files in the SCPI Section's shared drive. Audio-visual records/files would likewise be stored on the shared drive as the Department of Public Information had no capacity to store them.* Recommendation 7 remains open pending confirmation that outputs have been systematically organized in the Section's shared drive.

D.   Media relations and capacity-building

MINUSCA needed to develop formal procedures for media monitoring

35.   The policy requires the Spokesperson or Media Relations Unit to engage all relevant media, hold regular press briefings, issue regular press releases, respond to press inquiries, schedule interviews with mission officials, and prepare daily media summaries and analyses for use by Mission officials and United Nations Headquarters.

36.   A review of public information processes and outputs indicated that the SCPI Section conducted press briefings, issued press releases and distributed media summaries to stakeholders including MINUSCA senior management, Mission staff and senior management of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes on regular basis. However, MINUSCA did not develop and implement standard operating procedures with clearly defined guidance or dictionary of key words as to what should be monitored in various national and international media.

37.   This resulted as SCPI staff involved in the monitoring process were instructed to consider the news related to the United Nations, MINUSCA mandate, political, security and human rights situation in the Central African Republic and partners' support to the host country in order to avoid rumours. Since the media monitoring was done manually, it was time consuming and as a result there was a risk that MINUSCA may overlook political, security or other developments in the Central African Republic covered by various media.

> **(8) MINUSCA should develop standard operating procedures for media monitoring including clear guidance on topics and dictionary of key words to ensure clarity and consistency in its media monitoring process.**

> *MINUSCA accepted recommendation 8 and stated that, in coordination with the Best Practices Unit, the SCPI Section would draft standard operating procedures for media monitoring. In the meantime, the Section has developed explanatory notes for media monitoring.* Recommendation 8 remains open pending receipt of a copy of the standard operating procedures for media monitoring.

Need to improve communication and public information training

38.   The policy requires the Mission public information activities to support the development of a free and independent host country media, in particular adherence to the highest journalistic ethics and standards. In this context, MINUSCA and/or the United Nations country team should arrange training for local journalists as well as for government or non-governmental organization public information officers. The policy also requires the Chief SCPI Section to ensure that national staff develop their skills for employment after their United Nations service.

39.   MINUSCA did not make the necessary arrangements for regular training to be provided to local journalists, government or non-governmental organization public information officers, and national staff. Only few training opportunities were afforded to them during the audit period as noted below:

- •   The Media Relations Unit provided briefings on MINUSCA public information matters to newly recruited staff during bi-monthly induction training to create awareness; however, it did not provide any structured training course on public information to national staff during the audit period.

- •   The Video Unit hired a consultant to conduct a training on video production in September and October 2017 for the Video Unit staff and National Television personnel.

- •   The SCPI Section organized a training workshop for local journalists in July 2017 on judiciary reporting in partnership with national media organizations in which 44 local journalists from radio, television, newspapers and government representatives participated. This was the only training activity that was included in the SCPI annual work plans.

40.   The above resulted as SCPI units annual work plans did not make provision for sufficient training to be provided to local journalists, government or non-governmental organization public information officers, and national staff although the SCPI strategy included building institutional capacity of local media and civil society organizations. As a result, opportunity to improve the Mission's relationship with local journalists and reduce negative publicity and bias in their reporting were missed.

> **(9) MINUSCA should make provision for sufficient training activities for local journalists and national staff in its annual work plans and ensure that these are implemented accordingly.**
>
> *MINUSCA accepted recommendation 9 and stated that the SCPI Section had conducted three workshops for local journalists and its national staff. The Section would endeavour to continue relevant training for local journalists, subject to availability of financial resources.* Recommendation 9 remains open pending confirmation of inclusion of the training programmes in the Section's work plan.

E. Impact assessment of public information products

Need to assess the impact of communication efforts among target audiences

41. The policy requires the SCPI Section to ensure that the impact of communications is regularly evaluated both qualitatively and quantitatively. Specifically, provision should be made to measure the impact of the Mission radio, video and publication efforts through surveys among target audiences by public information component personnel or by a local firm specialized in this field.

42. The SCPI Section was unable to conduct an impact assessment of its public information products including radio, outreach projects, publications and multimedia products during the audit period. Efforts made by the Section to conduct impact assessments were either postponed due to insecurity or remained incomplete due to technical problems and/or unexpected interruptions as noted below:

- In July 2016, the SCPI Section planned and prepared a draft scope of works to carry out a survey to understand the perceptions and attitudes of the Central African Republic population towards the Mission's contribution to the peace process and protection of civilians but this survey was not possible due to the fragile and unpredictable security situation in the country.

- In May 2017, MINUSCA hired a consultant to conduct a quick survey on the perceived image of the Mission using the Short Message Service (SMS) facility of the Central African Republic main mobile telephone company. However, the actions initiated to launch the SMS survey could not be completed due to technical issues with the telephone company.

43. As a result, the SCPI Section was not able to assess the impact of its public information products such as radio, publications, website and social media to understand their effectiveness and the way forward for improvement. To address this problem, the May 2017 SCPI strategy provided for a national survey to be conducted every year on understanding of and support for: (a) the Mission's mandate, image and reputation; (b) knowledge of the Mission's achievements; and (c) radio listenership. Based on this plan of action, OIOS is not making a recommendation, but will monitor implementation of the action plan.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

44. 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.

(*Signed*) Eleanor T. Burns
Director, Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

**Audit of the strategic communications and public information 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 should take action to ensure the Strategic Communications and Public Information strategy is implemented as expected by making sure that individual units' annual work plans include the required activities to be carried out, resource requirements and timeframes and performance indicators to monitor achievements.	Important	O	Receipt of copies of the updated implementation plan and individual units annual work plans.	15 January 2018
2	MINUSCA should take action to ensure effective participation of substantive sections in the development of specific messages to expedite their finalization and communication.	Important	O	OIOS verification of participation of substantive sections in SCPI meetings to develop public information messages.	17 November 2017
3	MINUSCA should develop and implement an action plan to increase the awareness of its activities and participation of its social media followers and website visitors with frequent status posts and updates on its website.	Important	O	Receipt of confirmation of deployment of dedicated resource to update the media platforms and web pages and/or confirmation that the web pages have been updated.	15 January 2018
4	MINUSCA should develop and implement project management tools and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure timely and successful implementation of outreach projects.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that the project management toolkit has been implemented.	17 November 2017
5	MINUSCA should enforce the prescribed financial procedures for requesting, safeguarding and accounting for cash advances for outreach projects.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of review and revision of the standard operating procedure for requesting, safeguarding and accounting for cash advances for outreach projects, and evidence that procedures are being complied with.	17 November 2018

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[1] Critical recommendations address critical and/or pervasive deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance cannot be provided with regard to the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

[2] Important recommendations address important (but not critical or pervasive) deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance may be at risk regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

[3] C = closed, O = open

[4] Date provided by MINUSCA in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

**Audit of the strategic communications and public information 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]
6	MINUSCA should develop and implement clearance procedures on the release of public information to prevent the release of inaccurate and/or unreliable information.	Important	O	Receipt of a copy of the approved standard operating procedures for releasing public information.	15 January 2018
7	MINUSCA should establish archiving procedures to ensure that: (a) all public information materials are properly catalogued and archived in a common repository for easy retrieval; and (b) audio, video and photos are transferred to the Department of Public Information audio-visual library.	Important	O	Confirmation that outputs have been systematically organized in the Section's shared drive.	20 November 2017
8	MINUSCA should develop standard operating procedures for media monitoring including clear guidance on topics and dictionary of key words to ensure clarity and consistency in its media monitoring process.	Important	O	Receipt of a copy of the standard operating procedures for media monitoring.	15 January 2018
9	MINUSCA should make provision for sufficient training activities for local journalists and national staff in its annual work plans and ensure that these are implemented accordingly.	Important	O	Confirmation of inclusion of the training programmes in the Section's work plan.	4 July 2017

APPENDIX I

Management Response

United Nations   Nations Unies

MINUSCA

United Nations Multidimensional Integrated
Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

Mission Multidimensionnelle Intégrée des Nations Unies
pour la Stabilisation en République centrafricaine

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM   **MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR**

CONFIDENTIAL

TO: Mr. Arnold Valdez, OIC
A: Peacekeeping Audit Service
     Internal Audit Division, OIOS

DATE: 4 December 2017

REFERENCE: - OSRSG/033/2017

FROM: Parfait Onanga-Anyanga,
DE: Special Representative of the Secretary-General
      and Head of MINUSCA

SUBJECT: **Draft report on an audit of the strategic communications and public information**
OBJET: **programme in the United Nations Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central**
        African Republic (Assignment No. AP2017/637/06)

1.   With reference to your memorandum of 09 November 2017, on the above
captioned-subject matter, please find attached MINUSCA's response (Appendix 1) to
the draft report for your consideration.

2.   I further confirm the factual accuracy of the report.

Regards,

Attachments: 1

cc: Ms. Barrie Freeman, COS
    Mr. Herve Verhoosel, C/SCPI
    Mr. Laud Botchwey, Chief Resident Auditor for MINUSCA
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    Ms. Zeneda Feratllari, Audit Focal Point, MINUSCA

Management Response

**Audit of the strategic communications and public information 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 should take action to ensure the Strategic Communications and Public Information (SCPI) strategy is implemented as expected by making sure that individual units' annual work plans include the required activities to be carried out, their resource requirements, established timeframes and performance indicators to monitor achievements.	Important	Yes	Chief SCPI	15 January 2018	Ongoing. The SCPI is currently working on the improvement of the implementation plan for the SCPI strategy and will ensure that individual Units' annual work-plans include activities to be carried out, performance indicators, resources requirements, and timeframes for each activity.
2	MINUSCA should take action to ensure effective participation of substantive sections in the development of specific messages to expedite their finalization and communication.	Important	Yes	SRSG DSRSG/P DSRG/RC/HC Force Commander PC DMS Chief of Staff Chief SCPI All others as required GITTS for design of COSMOS platform	Since Mission inception in 2014 for consultation with Substantive Sections 17 November 2017 for upload in COSMOS	Substantive section are consulted at all times for messaging and are invited participate in to weekly SCPI meetings. The draft *Directive on interaction with the media for MINUSCA personnel* has been completed and is awaiting approval. As on 17 November 2017, specific messages have been uploaded in COSMOS.

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[1] Critical recommendations address critical and/or pervasive deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance cannot be provided with regard to the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

[2] Important recommendations address important (but not critical or pervasive) deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance may be at risk regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

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Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation Date	Client comments
						-Reports (A standard format for activity implementation reports is now in place). -Statistical reporting (Existing) -Guidelines for managing outreach funds(Existing) -Documents de décharges/fonds (Existing) -Grille devaluation des propositions de projects outreach (New to be linked with the Log Frame; staff to be trained on its use) -Standard format for project budget proposal: existed also before. -Request for Shopping Cart standard format with specifications for promotional material (Existing) -Monitoring requisitions, procurement and reception of materials (Existing) -Format for request for creating a shopping cart/LVA in Umoja (Existing)
5	MINUSCA should enforce the prescribed financial procedures for requesting, safeguarding and accounting for cash advances disbursed for outreach projects.	Important	Yes	Chief SCPI Office of DMS/Finance	17 November 2018	The SCPI has referred the matter to Finance and Budget Section for review of the existing standard operating procedure to ensure that timeframes for requesting and accounting for cash advances are more realistic given the geographical and logistical impediments faced by the Mission.

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6	MINUSCA should develop and implement clearance procedures on the release of public information to prevent the release of inaccurate and/or unreliable information.	Important	Yes	SRSG FC PC Chief of Staff Chief SCPI All others as required	15 January 2018	A system has been in place since the inception of the Mission, albeit not officially documented. In line with recommendation no. 8, SCPI will develop clearance procedures and a process flow, which shall be included in the Standard Operating Procedure.
7	MINUSCA should establish archiving procedures to ensure that: (a) all public information materials are properly catalogued and archived in a common repository for easy retrieval; and (b) audio, video and photos are transferred to the Department of Public Information audio-visual library.	Important	Yes	Chief SCPI	20 November 2017 13 June 2017	(a) While SCPI engaged the assistance of the Geospatial, Information and Telecommunication Technology Service (GITTS) for proper archiving of radio/audio materials in COSMOS, GITTS has agreed that the current location of audio materials should be maintained in the SCPI shared drive due to the size and volume of the audio files. (b) While SCPI contacted the Audio Visual (AV) Unit at DPI Headquarters for the transfer of audio visual files in its archives, DPI/AV Library responded that it "has no capacity to accept AV records/files produced and maintained by field missions"
8	MINUSCA should develop standard operating procedures for media monitoring including clear guidance on topics and dictionary of key words to ensure clarity	Important	Yes	Chief SCPI Chief of Staff Best practices	15 January2018	In coordination with the Best Practices Unit, SCPI shall draft a Standard Operating Procedure for media monitoring; see also comments in recommendation 6.

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	and consistency in its media monitoring process.					In the meantime, and based on the Audit recommendations, SCPI has developed a *Note Explicative* for Media Monitoring
9	MINUSCA should make provision for sufficient training activities for local journalists and national staff in its annual work plans and ensure that these are implemented accordingly.	Important	Yes	Chief SCPI	4 July 2017	SCPI has conducted the following workshops for local journalists and its national staff:

4-7 July 2017 – Media workshop for covering of judicial affairs and reporting, conducted in conjunction with MINUSCA Justice and Corrections Unit

2-13 October 2017 – Training on video production for local journalists and national staff

5 October 2017 – Sensitization of journalists on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse, conducted in conjunction with MINUSCA Conduct and Discipline Team

SCPI will endeavor to continue providing relevant training for local journalists and shall consider such in its work plan, contingent on its financial resources. |