



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2018/074

Audit of support provided to cluster II special political missions by the Department of Political Affairs

Support to cluster II special political missions was adequate and effective but certain administrative functions needed improvement

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Assignment No. AP2017/560/02

Audit of support provided to cluster II special political missions by the Department of Political Affairs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the support provided to cluster II special political missions (SPMs) by the Department of Political Affairs (DPA). Cluster II SPMs are expert groups and panels established to support the enforcement and monitoring of the Security Council's sanctions regime. The objective of the audit was to assess adequacy and effectiveness of the administrative and substantive support provided by DPA to these SPMs in achieving their mandates. The audit covered the period from January 2016 to December 2017 and included the following areas: substantive and administrative support to sanctions experts; work planning, implementation and monitoring of DPA support activities; and safety and security arrangements for experts on mission.

Overall, DPA provided adequate and effective support to cluster II SPMs in achieving their mandate. DPA recruited experts for the relevant panels and groups within the established timelines and effectively managed the roster of experts. It provided timely substantive advice, guidance and support on drafting reports to enable effective and prompt delivery of mandated reports to the Security Council. DPA also developed a comprehensive action plan and initiated actions to implement the accepted recommendations of the Board of Inquiry related to the safety and security of experts. However, DPA needed to strengthen the recruitment of experts and enhance certain administrative support functions.

OIOS made 11 recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, DPA needed to:

- Publish vacant expert positions on Inspira;
- Strengthen further the technical expertise of the monitoring and reporting team of the Implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) SPM;
- Document the methodology for determining the support capacity for cluster II SPMs and apply it consistently in the preparation of budget proposals;
- Provide training on the documents required to support payment of cost of living allowances to sanctions experts;
- Improve the timeliness of processing travel expense reports and regularly update the master records of sanctions experts in Umoja;
- Establish a methodology and process for determining monthly expert fees and maintaining adequate documentation to support the determination;
- Periodically measure performance of activities in support of cluster II SPMs; and
- Implement mechanisms for centrally monitoring the status of identified experts' needs, implementation of recommendations of security risk assessments and completion of mandatory training by sanctions experts.

DPA accepted the recommendations, implemented seven of them and initiated action to implement the remaining.

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Audit of support provided to cluster II special political missions by the Department of Political Affairs

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of support provided to cluster II special political missions (SPMs) by the Department of Political Affairs (DPA).
2. DPA, through its Security Council Affairs Division (SCAD), assists the Security Council in carrying out its critical responsibilities, including supporting the administration of its sanctions regimes. Mandatory sanctions are an enforcement tool when peace has been threatened and diplomatic efforts have failed. The range of sanctions includes comprehensive economic and trade sanctions and more targeted measures such as arms embargoes, travel bans, and financial or diplomatic restrictions. Each sanctions regime has a dedicated committee, which is a subsidiary organ of the Security Council that assists the Council in enforcing and monitoring specific sanctions measures. The Council also establishes groups or panels of experts that support the sanctions committees and monitor the implementation of the sanctions. For administrative and budgetary purposes, these expert groups and panels have been categorized as cluster II SPMs.
3. In accordance with the Secretary-General's bulletin on the organization of DPA (ST/SGB/2009/13), within SCAD, the Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch (SCSOB or "the Branch") provides support to the Council in their administration of the sanctions regimes, including the substantive and administrative support for the related SPMs.
4. SCSOB has 18 staff (10 Professional and 8 General Service) and is headed by a Chief (D-1 level), who reports to the Director of SCAD. Additionally, each SPM has dedicated staff positions funded from the SPM budget to support the work of experts. Table 1 shows the composition of the cluster II SPMs supported by the Branch, including United Nations staff positions. As of December 2017, one expert position was vacant.

Table 1: Composition and budgetary information on cluster II SPMs supported by DPA (amounts in thousands of United States dollars)

	Name of SPM	Budget		Experts	United Nations staff	Experts' Base	Original mandate
		2017	2016				
1	Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea	2,247	2,266	8	7	Nairobi, Kenya	S/RES/1907 (2009)
2	Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo	1,231	1,270	6	1	Home-based	S/RES/1533 (2004)
3	Panel of Experts on The Sudan	1,102	1,080	5	1	Home-based	S/RES/1591 (2005)
4	Panel of Experts on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea	2,524	2,600	8	6	New York, USA	S/RES/1874 (2009)
5	Panel of Experts on Libya	1,327	1,360	6	2	Home-based	S/RES/1973 (2011)
6	Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic	1,172	1,172	5	2	Home-based	S/RES/2127 (2013)
7	Panel of Experts on Yemen	2,685	3,017	5	8	Home-based	S/RES/2140 (2014)
8	Panel of Experts on South Sudan	1,319	1,428	5	3	Home-based	S/RES/2206(2015)
9	Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities; and the Office of the Ombudsperson established pursuant to resolution 1904 (2009)	6,729	6,306	11	21	New York, USA	S/RES/1526 (2004) S/RES/2253 (2015) S/RES/1904 (2009)
10	Implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015)	2,137	1,291	0	11	N/A	S/RES/2231 (2015)
11	Panel of Experts on Mali	1,297	N/A	4	1	Home-based	S/RES/2374 (2017)
	Total	23,772	21,790	63	63		

5. Comments provided by DPA are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

6. The objective of the audit was to assess adequacy and effectiveness of the administrative and substantive support provided by DPA to cluster II SPMs in achieving their mandates.

7. This audit was included in the 2017 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the operational importance of cluster II SPMs to the achievement of DPA's mandate as well as significant issues pertaining to safety and security of experts on mission identified by recent events.

8. OIOS conducted this audit from December 2017 to March 2018. The audit covered the period from January 2016 to December 2017. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risks areas in the activities related to providing substantive and administrative support to cluster II SPMs including: (a) substantive support covering recruitment of experts, induction and orientation and provision of advice, guidance and support in drafting reports; (b) administrative support for budget preparation, payment of monthly expert fees, processing travel requests, and attendance

monitoring; and (c) work planning, implementation and monitoring of support activities; and (d) safety and security arrangements for experts on mission.

9. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel of DPA, and the Coordinators of expert groups; (b) reviews of relevant documentation; (c) analytical reviews of data; (d) detailed process documentation and walk-throughs of key processes; (e) testing of a random sample of monthly experts' fees, recruitment cases, travel arrangements, compliance with mandatory security training programmes, performance management and evaluations; and (f) survey of experts¹.

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

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Substantive support

Recruitment of experts was effectively managed but broader outreach was needed

11. Subject to approval by the relevant sanctions committee, DPA is mandated to recruit qualified experts in a timely and efficient manner with due regard to regional and gender representation.

12. DPA recruited 49 and 53 experts during 2016 and 2017, respectively. When the expert positions become available, DPA issues notes verbales to Member States to propose qualified candidates. DPA also identifies potential candidates from its roster of experts and invites them to apply for the positions. The roster is updated upon completion of each recruitment exercise and annually through notes verbales requests to Member States. As of December 2017, the roster contained 620 experts comprising 204 females and 416 males. Of the 62 experts serving as of that date, 49 were males (79 per cent) and 13 females (21 per cent). DPA management attributed the gender disparity mainly to inadequate conditions of service (discussed in paragraphs 31 and 32).

13. DPA developed, in consultation with the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM), standard operating procedures (SOP) on Recruitment of Sanctions Experts along with forms and templates, which were disseminated to all staff involved in experts' recruitment. OIOS reviewed case files of a sample of 10 experts recruited during 2016 and 2017 and observed that SCSOB developed clear timelines for each recruitment exercise, prepared terms of reference (TOR) detailing the mandated tasks and evaluation criteria, and conducted competency-based interviews to assess and select the candidates, as per SOP.

14. Administrative instruction on consultants and individual contractors (ST/AI/2013/4) stipulates that when the services of a consultant are needed for more than six months, an opening shall be posted in the electronic platform provided for this purpose for a minimum of seven working days. Although experts' contracts are normally for one year, in none of the reviewed recruitment cases were the expert positions advertised in Inspira. DPA was of the view that Inspira did not allow sufficient flexibility as expert recruitment process differs from staff recruitment. Nevertheless, this additional measure of soliciting suitable candidates using Inspira would have enabled a broader outreach to attract more qualified candidates from a wider geographical and gender base.

¹ OIOS surveyed 78 experts engaged by DPA during 2016 and 2017 and received 36 responses (46 per cent response rate). Results of the survey were used to draw and support audit conclusions and are discussed in the relevant sections of this report.

(1) DPA should publish vacant positions for sanctions experts in Inspira, the current electronic platform that is provided to enable broader outreach to prospective consultants and individual contractors.

DPA accepted recommendation 1 and stated that it would coordinate with OHRM and the Office of Information and Communication Technology (OICT) to explore the possibility of publishing vacant positions for sanctions experts in Inspira. Recommendation 1 remains open pending notification of the outcome of consultations with OHRM and OICT.

The use of a generic Political Affairs Officer job opening for recruitment of a monitoring and reporting team did not enable targeted outreach

15. On 16 January 2016, the Security Council adopted resolution 2231 and requested DPA to support the implementation of the resolution. To carry out the mandated tasks, DPA established an SPM within cluster II with 11 staff members, including a dedicated four-member monitoring and reporting team to gather, examine, and analyze information, and to prepare regular updates and reports on alleged inconsistent actions. In this regard, DPA was expected to recruit qualified staff with the necessary expertise to carry out the unique mandated tasks.

16. DPA recruited four P-4 level staff of the team through a generic Political Affairs Officer job opening in Inspira. Because of the generic nature of the job opening, education and work experience requirements did not clearly identify the specific areas of expertise included in the resolution. In addition, although the job opening included a language requirement as one of the desirable selection criteria, none of the selected candidates had a working knowledge of the language.

17. As explained by DPA, the generic job opening was used due to the time sensitivity of the recruitment as well as the demanding political aspect of the work. DPA explained that the team members had sufficient expertise gained through prior extensive on-the-job training in the related areas, and as such the team produced four reports mandated by the Security Council in the period from July 2016 to December 2017. DPA further stated that to compensate for the inadequate language requirement among the team members, colleagues in DPA's regional desks and SPMs assisted in translating documents/videos. However, in the opinion of OIOS, more effort was required to further strengthen the technical expertise of the team.

(2) DPA should take action to further strengthen the technical expertise of the monitoring and reporting team of the Implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) special political mission.

DPA accepted recommendation 2 and stated that it had taken various actions to strengthen the technical expertise of the monitoring and reporting team, including regular consultations with subject matter experts and participation in relevant technical and on-the-job training. DPA would also further strengthen the team through future recruitment. Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of evidence of an assessment of the impact of actions taken to strengthen the team.

DPA was strengthening the induction process

18. As stipulated in its 2016 and 2017 work programmes, SCSOB is responsible for providing induction and work plan development seminars to enable the experts to fulfill their mandates effectively.

19. During 2016 and 2017, the Branch organized approximately 15 induction and mandate planning sessions in New York for experts at the beginning of their mandate. The induction programmes varied

from five to seven days and included presentations by DPA on work standards and methodology, evidentiary standards, cooperation within the team and the Secretariat and briefing sessions with the Executive Office and other relevant departments and offices of the United Nations Secretariat, such as the Office of Legal Affairs and Department of Safety and Security (DSS).

20. However, there was no guidance on minimum or core contents of the programmes to ensure experts were equipped with sufficient information and material to begin their mandate. Respective committee secretaries used past practices and experience to develop the agenda for the induction programme for each expert group. As a result, DPA could not ensure consistent quality and content of inductions, and 36 per cent of surveyed experts (13 experts) indicated that the induction programme did not enable them to understand the regulations and rules pertaining to the work of experts. In addition, three Coordinators of expert groups interviewed by OIOS were of the view that more time should be devoted to familiarizing experts with the functioning of the United Nations sanctions system and relations between the Security Council and sanctions committees in the induction programme. Additionally, the Handbook for Members of Panels of Experts and Monitoring Groups/Mechanisms established by the Security Council (the Handbook), which was to serve as a tool to facilitate their work and answer frequently asked questions was not disseminated to experts recruited in 2016 and 2017 because it had not been updated due to a lack of resources. Hence, experts did not have access to comprehensive guidance and reference material at the commencement of their mandate.

21. Subsequent to audit fieldwork, DPA confirmed that the template for an induction package was being developed, and provided a copy of the latest draft version of the Handbook to OIOS. Therefore, OIOS did not make a recommendation in this regard.

DPA provided adequate and effective substantive advice, guidance and report drafting support

22. The primary role of expert groups is to document sanctions violations and provide accurate and timely technical reports to the Security Council through the sanctions committees. SCSOB is mandated to support the work of experts by providing guidance and advice on an as needed basis throughout their Security Council mandate. In this regard, OIOS concluded that DPA provided adequate and effective support to experts to perform their role, as detailed below:

- At the beginning of the mandate, SCSOB issued adequate guidance notes to each expert group to assist them in preparing and submitting interim and final reports. OIOS ascertained that the expert groups all met their reporting deadlines. Coordinators of expert groups interviewed also acknowledged the usefulness of the guidance provided.
- SCSOB provided advice regarding evolving practices, procedures and working methods of the Security Council and its subsidiary organs.
- SCSOB also assisted with arranging and facilitating substantive meetings between experts and Member States and other parties. More than 89 per cent of surveyed experts (32 experts) agreed that DPA staff had facilitated required meetings with delegations and sanctions committees and other organizations of the United Nations system when appropriate.
- In biennium 2016-2017, SCSOB conducted two annual inter-panel workshops for all sanctions experts in New York, aimed at enhancing coordination and information sharing and exchange among experts.

23. Overall, more than 69 per cent of surveyed experts (25 experts) agreed that when substantive support was needed, DPA staff provided such support.

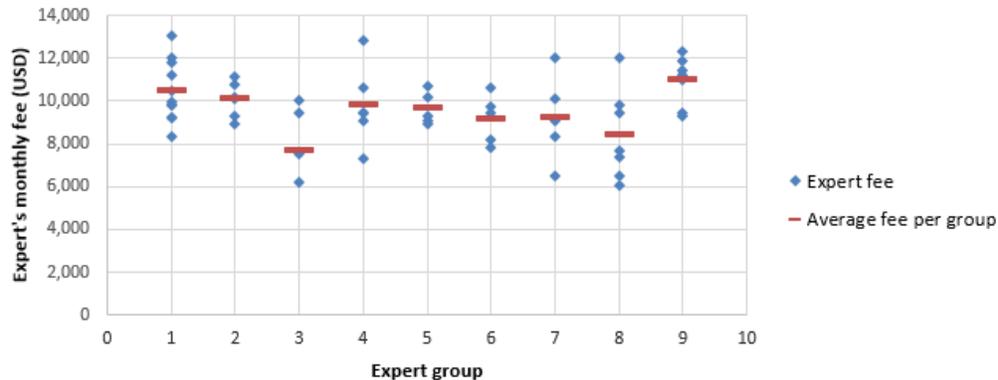
B. Administrative support

There was a need to enhance the methodology for determining monthly experts' fees

24. In accordance with the administrative instruction on consultants and individual contractors (ST/AI/2013/4), individual fees for experts should be determined based on the complexity of the assignment and the degree of specialization, knowledge, qualifications, experience and skills required using the fee ranges established in Annex III. During biennium 2016-2017, the Consultants and Individual Contractors (CIC) Service Desk in the Department of Management determined the monthly expert fees based on information provided by SCSOB in the TOR, the personal history profile of candidates and internal guidance developed by OHRM.

25. During 2016 and 2017, experts' fees amounted to \$10 million and \$9.8 million, respectively. OIOS reviewed calculation and disbursement of monthly fees for a sample of 10 experts and determined that the monthly fees were calculated accurately and processed in a timely manner. However, OIOS noted wide disparities in the determination of the monthly fees. As shown in Figure 1, within the same panel or group of experts, individual monthly fees ranged from \$6,000 to \$12,000 while minimum requirements for education, qualification, degree of specialization knowledge and work experience stipulated in the TOR were comparable. In addition, the monthly fees of four experts were not within the ranges prescribed in Annex III of the administrative instruction. Three Coordinators of expert groups voluntarily shared their concern regarding the fee disparity as well.

Figure 1: Distribution of monthly expert fees as of December 2017



26. While certain disparity is expected based on different qualifications and background of each expert, DPA could not provide satisfactory explanation on the extent of the fee disparity because the fees had been established by the CIC Service Desk, which was dissolved in January 2018. The DPA Executive Office has since assumed the function of determining the monthly expert fees and administering experts' contracts, and there was a need to develop a methodology to ensure fees are established in accordance with the administrative instruction on consultants and individual contractors and adequate documentation maintained to support the amounts established.

27. There was also inadequate documentation to support the payment of the cost of living allowance (COLA) for experts based at designated duty stations. COLA is payable upon submission of lease agreement and proof of payment of the first month's rent. However, out of a sample of 10, 4 experts based in New York who were receiving COLA amounting to \$66,000 annually had not submitted all of the required documentation. The landlord's signature was missing on two lease agreements, and first month's cheque was provided without a lease agreement in another case. Therefore, eligibility for the allowance could not be confirmed. This happened because focal points responsible for processing COLA

did not receive sufficient communication and training on the requirements for granting the allowance, and because responsibilities for monitoring compliance with the supporting documentation required for COLA were not clearly defined.

(3) DPA should, in consultation with OHRM, establish a methodology and process to ensure monthly fees of sanctions experts are determined in line with the requirements in the administrative instruction on consultants and individual contractors and adequate documentation is maintained to support the determination.

DPA accepted recommendation 3 and stated that the differences arose due to a transition to new TORs with changes in the work experience requirement. By April 2018, all expert groups' TOR had been updated, with a few exceptions because of specialization and continuity of expertise within the group or panel. Based on action taken by DPA, recommendation 3 has been closed.

(4) DPA should: (i) provide training to staff on the documents required to support payment of the cost of living allowance to sanctions experts; and (ii) ensure all experts in receipt of the allowance have provided the appropriate documents.

DPA accepted recommendation 4 and stated that it had conducted a briefing to remind staff of the COLA requirements, providing guidance documentation. Recommendation 4 remains open pending confirmation that all experts in receipt of COLA have provided appropriate documentation.

Experts' travel requests were processed effectively but expense reports needed to be processed timely

28. DPA is responsible for administering travel requests and claims on behalf of experts and making all necessary travel arrangements including obtaining security clearances, notifying field missions about the visits and assisting with travel documents. The administrative instruction on official travel (ST/AI/2013/3) requires submission of travel claims within two weeks of completion of travel.

29. DPA processed 714 travel requests for experts in 2016 and 736 in 2017, which amounted to \$2.4 million and \$2.3 million, respectively. OIOS reviewed a sample of 10 travel requests processed in the period, and noted no exceptions. They were all duly approved by the Chief of the Branch, and subsequently by the Director of SCAD. Mission security clearance requests were obtained from DSS for travel to locations determined as higher security risks.

30. However, a review of all experts' travel claims approved during 2016 and 2017 showed that the expense reports relating to experts' travel were submitted in Umoja on average 35 days after end of travel. This resulted in recovery of certain travel advances from experts. Travel expense reports were entered on behalf of experts by a dedicated focal point in SCSOB as the experts did not have access to Umoja. OIOS reviewed 23 recoveries and in 10 cases (43 per cent) delays were due to late submission of expense reports by experts, in 8 cases (35 per cent) SCSOB delayed processing of the expense reports, while in 5 cases (22 per cent) delays were attributable to both experts and DPA. Nine out of 36 surveyed experts identified travel administration as the least effective support area, and three of them raised concerns regarding the timely processing of travel claims.

(5) DPA should implement procedures to improve the timeliness of processing travel expense reports for the sanctions experts.

DPA accepted recommendation 5 and provided evidence that it had established a tracking system whereby committee secretaries, on a weekly basis, tracked the expense reports of their experts. Based on action taken by DPA, recommendation 5 has been closed.

Conditions of service of experts were being reviewed

31. Experts are recruited in their individual capacity through consultancy contracts. Due to the nature of their work and the unique status of the Security Council mandated experts, OHRM has authorized certain exclusions from the administrative instruction for experts on mission, namely, a longer duration of contract, payment of COLA, as well as authorized breaks for experts based in the duty station. Nevertheless, experts are not eligible for medical insurance and pension benefits, which are reserved for staff. The experts are required to obtain private medical insurance, including medical evacuation coverage that is normally costly given the hardship locations to which they are required to travel. In addition, experts are only authorized to travel in economy class regardless of the length of their trips as decided by the General Assembly.

32. The current conditions of service may impact on the ability of DPA to attract the very best professionals and may negatively impact on the achievement of gender parity among the experts. More than 47 per cent (17 experts) of respondents surveyed indicated that, given their current conditions of service, they would not recommend others to serve as sanctions experts. In addition, four Coordinators expressed unsolicited concern regarding the lack of health insurance, medical evacuation benefit as well as the class of travel. DPA management explained that conditions of service were bound by the overall contractual status of experts, which could only be determined by the General Assembly. Nevertheless, DPA, in coordination with OHRM was in the process of analyzing different options for the contractual status of experts with respective financial implications. This analysis will be presented to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the General Assembly for their consideration. Based on actions by DPA, OIOS did not make a recommendation on this subject.

Budget preparation for cluster II SPMs was timely but DPA needed a methodology for determining support capacity

33. DPA is responsible for requesting the initial resource requirements of newly established expert groups and preparing the annual budget proposal for each SPM.

34. One new panel of experts was established pursuant to a Security Council resolution during the audit period. The request to the Controller for the initial resource requirements was finalized within three working days of the adoption of the resolution, as prescribed by the SOP on Startup of New Security Council Sanctions Regime.

35. The methodology for formulating annual budget proposals was based on experience and past practice, and guided by the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts. Nevertheless, as shown in Table 2, there were disparities between the ratio of number of experts on the panel to the number of dedicated DPA support staff in the SPM budget, despite comparable number of experts and nature of the mandate of half of the entities. The ACABQ had also noted a few discrepancies in estimates used in budgeting for official travel and some of the cost-shared services. DPA explained that while SCAD had an overall approach to determine the ratio of experts to support staff, other factors such as its absorptive capacity to take on new responsibilities, mandates and political decisions by legislative bodies affected

the level of support required for cluster II SPMs. In the opinion of OIOS, the methodology and approach for determining the support capacity should be documented and applied consistently.

Table 2: Number of support staff and experts of special political missions under thematic cluster II

Expert group	P-5	P-4	P-3	P-2	General Service	Field Service	Local level	Total staff	Experts	Home-based
Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea	–	–	1	–	1	–	5	7	8	No
Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	1	6	Yes
Panel of Experts on the Sudan	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	1	5	Yes
Panel of Experts on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea	–	1	2	–	3	–	–	6	8	No
Panel of Experts on Libya	–	–	1	–	1	–	–	2	6	Yes
Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic	–	–	1	–	1	–	–	2	5	Yes
Panel of Experts on Yemen	–	–	1	–	–	5	2	8	5	Yes
Panel of Experts on South Sudan	–	–	1	–	2	–	–	3	5	Yes
Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities; and the Office of the Ombudsperson established pursuant to resolution 1904 (2009)	1	5	6	–	9	–	–	21	11	No
Implementation of Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015) ²	1	5	2	–	3	–	–	11	–	No
Panel of Experts on Mali	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	1	4	Yes
Total	2	11	18	–	20	5	7	63	63	

(6) DPA should document the methodology for determining the support capacity for cluster II special political missions and apply it consistently in the preparation of budget proposals.

DPA accepted recommendation 6 and provided the documented methodology for determining support capacity for cluster II SPMs. Based on action taken by DPA, recommendation 6 has been closed.

Master data for experts were not updated regularly in Umoja

36. In accordance with the Umoja job aid on administration of consultants and individual contractors, human resources master data must be updated to reflect all contract extensions and renewals, and any other changes in the personal profile of experts. Except for experts who served only one mandate, the master data of approximately 71 per cent of experts were not updated in Umoja. As a result, it was not possible to produce accurate consolidated reports on the overall time experts had served with the Organization or to trace the experts’ employment history with the United Nations Secretariat.

(7) DPA should take action to ensure that master records of sanctions experts in Umoja are updated on a regular basis.

DPA accepted recommendation 7 and provided evidence that the master records of sanctions experts had been updated in Umoja. Based on action taken by DPA, recommendation 7 has been closed.

² Following General Assembly Resolution 72/262 to reclassify two P-4 posts in the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 2231, the number of P-4s was reduced from five to three, and the number of P-3s increased from two to four.

C. Work planning, implementation and monitoring of support activities

Comprehensive annual work programmes were prepared but DPA needed to measure performance against indicators

37. The regulations and rules governing programme planning, the programme aspects of the budget, the monitoring of implementation and the methods of evaluation (ST/SGB/2016/6) require the head of office to establish internal procedures to monitor implementation of the programme of work.

38. SCSOB prepared comprehensive work programmes for 2016 and 2017, which were aligned with the strategic objectives established in the 2016-2019 DPA strategic plan and disseminated to staff. The annual work programmes included SCSOB support activities and established performance indicators. The work programme was monitored through weekly management team meetings and secretaries' meetings twice a week. To ensure coherence and to coordinate information sharing and exchange across expert groups, summary notes from the weekly meetings were circulated to committee secretaries and the Director of SCAD regularly. However, there was no measurement or assessment of the extent of achievement of all performance indicators. There were also no periodic surveys of experts to measure overall satisfaction with the quality of support provided. Also, experts' comments in end of assignment reports were not systematically collated and reviewed. This was due to competing activities and deadlines, and stretched management capacity.

(8) DPA should develop and implement procedures to periodically measure the performance of activities in support of cluster II special political missions against established indicators.

DPA accepted recommendation 8 and stated that SCAD would coordinate with the Executive Office on relevant administrative issues to measure performance of activities, and implement an annual survey of all experts commencing in December 2018. Recommendation 8 remains open pending receipt of the first report on the assessment of DPA activities in support of cluster II SPMs against established performance indicators.

Roles and responsibilities of senior committee secretaries needed to be clarified

39. The roles and responsibilities of staff involved in supporting cluster II experts are prescribed in the SOP on Roles and Responsibilities of a Political Affairs Officer in SCSOB updated on 30 April 2015.

40. A sample of 15 SPM staff members interviewed acknowledged a clear understanding of their respective functions related to supporting expert groups and the sanctions committees. Approximately 74 per cent of surveyed experts and all coordinators of expert groups interviewed by OIOS agreed that DPA had provided their teams with a clearly identified focal point who liaised with them effectively. However, based on interviews with SCSOB staff and Coordinators of expert groups, there was a need to clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of committee secretaries and senior committee secretaries. The latter was a new role introduced in the second half of 2017 because of restructuring to enhance performance and to address a recommendation of the United Nations Security Management Board of Inquiry (S/2017/713) to review, evaluate and adjust the support arrangements for expert groups. According to SCSOB management, the SOP on roles and responsibilities of committee secretaries was being drafted, which will address this matter. Since management has initiated action, OIOS did not make a recommendation in this regard.

Needs and expectations of experts were identified systematically but not centrally monitored

41. Experts' needs and expectations evolve over time based on the unique nature of their work as mandated by relevant Security Council resolutions and as specified in the respective TOR. Therefore, it is important for DPA to systematically identify those needs, and take them into consideration when planning.

42. Throughout the mandate period of expert groups, the Branch identified experts' needs and expectations through various means including: (i) the annual inter-panel workshop meetings; (ii) mid-term evaluations of experts' work; and (iii) end of assignment reports where feedback was sought from all experts. In addition, SCSOB surveyed experts on their specific needs for subscriptions, databases and other technology requirements in 2016. Also, dedicated committee secretaries were responsible for identifying and addressing the requests of experts. However, there was no mechanism for centrally recording and monitoring experts' needs, which prevented management from having an overall view of requests and issues raised by expert groups and the status of their resolution.

(9) DPA should establish a mechanism for centrally recording and monitoring the status of identified experts' needs and following up long outstanding requests.

DPA accepted recommendation 9 and provided evidence that it had established a centralized system to record and monitor experts' needs and requests. Based on action taken by DPA, recommendation 9 has been closed.

D. Safety and security arrangements for experts on mission

DPA developed a comprehensive action plan for implementing accepted Board of Inquiry recommendations and provided periodic updates to DSS

43. Following a critical security incident that resulted in the deaths of two experts from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security convened a United Nations Security Management Board of Inquiry (BOI) on 24 April 2017 to establish the facts relating to the incident. Besides fact finding, the BOI was also tasked with evaluating the United Nations' response to the incident, reviewing the application and adequacy of relevant security risk management procedures, regulations and rules, and providing recommendations on actions that should be taken to avoid such incidents in the future. The BOI issued its report in August 2017, which contained a number of recommendations, most which were within DPA responsibility.

44. In September 2017, DPA submitted to DSS a comprehensive action plan, including target dates and required and proposed actions to implement accepted recommendations. DSS concurred with the rationale provided by DPA for not accepting certain recommendations.

45. As of March 2018, DPA had submitted two status updates to DSS in which approximately one third of accepted recommendations were indicated to have been implemented. DPA explained that the originally established target date of 31 March 2018 for implementation of the remaining recommendations was not met because of the financial implications. However, OIOS did not make any recommendation in this regard, as DPA management confirmed that funding from voluntary contributions had been secured and the recommendations were expected to be implemented by 30 June 2018.

Implementation of security risk assessments results needed to be centrally monitored

46. In accordance with the United Nations Security Management System (UNSMS) Security Policy Manual and the SOP on roles and responsibilities with respect to the safety and security of experts on sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels, DSS carried out assessments of security risks facing expert groups based at duty stations. However, DPA did not centrally monitor timely implementation of the recommendations. Implementation of three out of eight recommendations was still pending from the February 2016 risk assessment of the physical security of one of the expert groups.

47. The OIOS survey also indicated that experts had concerns about the adequacy of security briefings at certain field missions, availability of transportation in high-risk regions, and arrangements for office space and information security while on mission travel. One female expert was particularly concerned about travelling alone in high-risk areas and the lack of personal protective equipment. DPA was in the process of implementing the BOI's recommendations on these issues.

(10) DPA should implement procedures for centrally monitoring the status of recommendations of security risk assessments of cluster II special political missions.

DPA accepted recommendation 10 and provided evidence of an established centralized system for monitoring and updating the status of recommendations of security risk assessments. Based on action taken by DPA, recommendation 10 has been closed.

Completion of mandatory safety and security training needed to be centrally monitored

48. The United Nations Security Policy Manual promulgated by UNSMS requires all United Nations personnel to complete mandatory basic security learning programme, and those on official travel to any field location must successfully complete the advanced security learning programme, and renew their certification every three years. In addition, as part of the Security Risk Management process, all United Nations personnel travelling to the areas with the highest levels of security risks are required to undergo Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environment (SSAFE) training.

49. All experts engaged in 2016 and 2017 completed both Basic and Advanced Security in the Field Training (online) and submitted their certificates. However, completion certificates of five experts had expired at the time of audit but they nevertheless undertook official travel, including to areas identified as having the highest levels of security risks. Furthermore, criteria for undertaking SSAFE training was inconsistently applied within expert groups. For example, only one expert on the Central African Republic panel completed the training although all members of the panel travelled to the locations deemed as having elevated security risk. In addition, all members of the DRC team frequently travelled to various parts of the DRC in 2016 and 2017 where they conducted investigations but completed the SSAFE training only in September 2017. This was because DPA did not monitor completion of mandatory training including the SSAFE requirement.

(11) DPA should centrally monitor completion of mandatory safety and security training by sanctions experts and ensure their certificates are valid at the time of travel.

DPA accepted recommendation 11 and provided evidence of the established centralized mechanism to monitor experts' completion of mandatory safety and security training. Additionally, all current experts now have up to date certificates. Based on action taken by DPA, recommendation 11 has been closed.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

50. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of DPA 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 support provided to cluster II special political missions by the Department of Political Affairs

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ³ / Important ⁴	C/ O ⁵	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁶
1	DPA should publish vacant positions for sanctions experts in Inspira, the current electronic platform that is provided to enable broader outreach to prospective consultants and individual contractors.	Important	O	Notification of the outcome of consultations with OHRM and OICT.	30 September 2018
2	DPA should take action to further strengthen the technical expertise of the monitoring and reporting team of the Implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) special political mission.	Important	O	Submission of evidence of an assessment of the impact of actions taken to strengthen the team.	30 June 2019
3	DPA should, in consultation with OHRM, establish a methodology and process to ensure monthly fees of sanctions experts are determined in line with the requirements in the administrative instruction on consultants and individual contractors and adequate documentation is maintained to support the determination.	Important	C	Action taken	Implemented
4	DPA should: (i) provide training to staff on the documents required to support payment of the cost of living allowance to sanctions experts; and (ii) ensure all experts in receipt of the allowance have provided the appropriate documents.	Important	O	Confirmation that all experts in receipt of COLA have provided appropriate documentation.	30 September 2018
5	DPA should implement procedures to improve the timeliness of processing travel expense reports for the sanctions experts.	Important	C	Action taken	Implemented
6	DPA should document the methodology for determining the support capacity for cluster II special political missions and apply it consistently	Important	C	Action taken	Implemented

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ C = closed, O = open

⁶ Date provided by DPA in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of support provided to cluster II special political missions by the Department of Political Affairs

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ³ / Important ⁴	C/ O ⁵	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁶
	in the preparation of budget proposals.				
7	DPA should take action to ensure that master records of sanctions experts in Umoja are updated on a regular basis.	Important	C	Action taken	Implemented
8	DPA should develop and implement procedures to periodically measure the performance of activities in support of cluster II special political missions against established indicators.	Important	O	Provision of the first report on the assessment of DPA activities in support of cluster II SPMs.	31 March 2019
9	DPA should establish a mechanism for centrally recording and monitoring the status of identified experts' needs and following up long outstanding requests.	Important	C	Action taken	Implemented
10	DPA should implement procedures for centrally monitoring the status of recommendations of security risk assessments of cluster II special political missions.	Important	C	Action taken	Implemented
11	DPA should centrally monitor completion of mandatory safety and security training by sanctions experts and ensure their certificates are valid at the time of travel.	Important	C	Action taken	Implemented

APPENDIX I

Management Response

TO Ms. Muriette Lawrence-Hume, Chief, New York Audit Service,
A Internal Audit Division, OIOS

DATE 23 July 2018

REFERENCE

THROUGH
S/C DE

FROM Rosemary A. DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General
DE for Political Affairs

Rosemary A. DiCarlo

SUBJECT **Draft report on an audit of support provided to cluster II special political missions by**
OBJET **the Department of Political Affairs (Assignment No. AP2017/560/02)**

1. I refer to your memorandum, dated 7 June 2018, regarding the above-mentioned audit. Please find attached Appendix I including revised and updated comments.
2. As indicated in Appendix I, DPA considers as implemented 7 of the 11 recommendations.
3. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft report. We stand ready to provide any further clarification that may be required

cc: Ms Cynthia Avena-Castillo, Professional Practices Section, IAD, OIOS.
Mr Byung-Kun Min, Chief, Peacekeeping Headquarters Audit Section, IAD, OIOS.

Management Response

Audit of support provided to cluster II special political missions by the Department of Political Affairs

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	DPA should publish vacant positions for sanctions experts in Inspira, the current electronic platform that is provided to enable broader outreach to prospective consultants and individual contractors	Important	Y	Chief, Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch, DPA	30 September 2018	DPA will coordinate with OHRM and the Office of Information and Communication Technology to explore the possibility of publishing vacant positions for sanctions experts in Inspira
2	DPA should take action to further strengthen the technical expertise of the monitoring and reporting team of the Implementation of resolution 2231 special political mission	Important	Y	Chief, Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch, DPA	30 June 2019	DPA has explored strengthening the technical expertise of the monitoring and reporting team through the following actions 1) regular consultations with Panel of Experts having relevant expertise, 2) close and regular consultations with OLA and ODA on technical issues, 3) consultations with technical governmental and non-governmental experts on missile and arms-related issues, 4) increased use and expansion of its network of non-governmental technical experts, 5) participation in technical training relevant to the work of the team, 6) on-the-job training under the supervision of the Chief of Branch and the Team Leader, and 7) future recruitment
3	DPA should, in consultation with OHRM, establish a methodology and process to	Important	Y	Executive Officer,	Implemented	The terms of reference for experts was changed starting May 2017 to

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

Management Response

Audit of support provided to cluster II special political missions by the Department of Political Affairs

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical/ Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
	ensure monthly fees of sanctions experts are determined in line with the requirements in the administrative instruction on consultants and individual contractors and adequate documentation is maintained to support the determination			Executive Office, DPA		require 10 years of experience with at least 3 years in the field The change was applied as expert groups and panels renewed their mandates At the end of 31 Dec 2017, there were still some groups whose mandates were not renewed between May and December and had TORs of 5 or 7 years depending on area of specialization, resulting in the wide range in fees even within and between panels and groups By April 2018, all expert groups had updated terms of reference Based on an assessment of fees in April 2018, experts' fees are within the relevant range determined by OHRM, confirming the methodology followed by DPA is in line with the guidelines and tools provided by OHRM, but that the variance in fees is a result of differences in TOR and years of experience and qualification of the candidates
4	DPA should (i) provide training to staff on the documents required to support payment of the cost of living allowance to sanctions experts, and (ii) ensure all experts in receipt of the allowance have provided the appropriate documents	Important	Y	Executive Officer, Executive Office, DPA	30 September 2018	DPA conducted a briefing session to staff members on requirements for payment of cost of living allowance and provided guidance documentation.

Management Response

Audit of support provided to cluster II special political missions by the Department of Political Affairs

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
5	DPA should implement procedures to improve the timeliness of processing travel expense reports for the sanctions experts	Important	Y	Chief, Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch, DPA	Implemented	DPA has established a tracking system whereby Committee Secretaries, on a weekly basis, track the expense reports of their Experts Please refer to Annex II for a sample
6	DPA should document the methodology for determining the support capacity for cluster II special political missions and apply it consistently in the preparation of budget proposals	Important	Y	Chief, Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch, DPA	Implemented	DPA has documented the methodology for determining its support capacity for Cluster II SPM budgets
7	DPA should take action to ensure that master records of sanctions experts in Umoja are updated on a regular basis	Important	Y	Executive Officer, Executive Office, DPA	Implemented	Master data for all current sanctions experts has been updated in Umoja
8	DPA should develop and implement procedures to periodically measure the performance of activities in support of cluster II special political missions against established indicators	Important	Y	Chief, Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch, DPA	31 March 2019	SCAD will coordinate with EO on relevant administrative issues and will implement an annual survey for all experts, commencing in December 2018, to measure the performance of activities in support of Cluster II SPMs against established performance indicators
9	DPA should establish a mechanism for centrally recording and monitoring the status of identified experts' needs and following up long outstanding requests	Important	Y	Chief, Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch, DPA	Implemented	DPA has established a centralized system to record and monitor experts' needs and requests and will ask experts to complete an annual survey at the Inter-Panel Workshop (commencing in December 2018) to record, and follow up on, experts' needs and requests

Management Response

Audit of support provided to cluster II special political missions by the Department of Political Affairs

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
10	DPA should implement procedures for centrally monitoring the status of recommendations of security risk assessments of cluster II special political missions	Important	Y	Chief, Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch, DPA	Implemented	DPA has established a system whereby each committee secretary uploads the recommendations from their respective security risk assessments on the shared drive, which is then reviewed weekly in the Branch Management/Coordination Team meeting with senior committee secretaries who are responsible for monitoring and updating the status of recommendations
11	DPA should centrally monitor completion of mandatory safety and security training by sanctions experts and ensure their certificates are valid at the time of travel	Important	Y	Chief, Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch, DPA	Implemented	DPA has established a centralized mechanism to monitor by panel or group, the Experts' completion of mandatory safety and security training. Certificates are now all saved in Unitedocs All current experts have completed Basic and Advanced security in the field training Where necessary, some experts have completed SSAFE training when required for their travel