INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2019/091

Audit of the arrangements for recruitment of international professional staff at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

There was a need to strengthen recruitment processes to ensure fair, consistent and transparent recruitment of staff and implement measures to improve efficiency and effectiveness

18 October 2019
Assignment No. AR2019/162/01

Audit of the arrangements for recruitment of international professional staff at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the arrangements for recruitment of international professional staff at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The objective of the audit was to assess whether UNHCR was recruiting international professional staff in an efficient and cost-effective manner and in accordance with the UNHCR's policy requirements. The audit covered the period from 15 August 2017 to 31 December 2018 and included a review of: the preview, advertisement and receipt of applications; eligibility and screening; shortlisting and interviews; recommendation of candidates; oversight by the Joint Review Board (JRB); diversity and gender parity; and efficiency and effectiveness of the recruitment processes.

The Division of Human Resources had put in place a comprehensive policy framework for the recruitment and assignment of staff. However, the existing arrangements on recruitment of international professional staff required further improvement to fully demonstrate that recruitments were done in a fair, consistent and transparent manner, including in terms of monitoring of efficiency and effectiveness in the recruitment process.

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

- Establish and implement written guidelines to assist in deciding when posts should be advertised internally or both internally and externally; and ensure that sample checks are performed on job openings for non-expert positions to confirm that they incorporate an operational context;
- Strengthen oversight of shortlisting of applicants by managers by ensuring that: (i) the decision to administer written tests is informed by implementation guidelines and taken by managers in a reasonable manner after considering the relevant circumstances; (ii) transparency and fairness are observed during the recruitment process; and (iii) panel members are one rank higher than the position under consideration;
- Develop and implement terms of reference for JRB as per the current recruitment policy to establish a clear delineation of its work and functioning in order to enhance the effectiveness of its oversight of the recruitment process;
- Establish targets to move progressively towards gender parity and geographical diversity goals and strengthen its monitoring of the achievement of these goals; and
- Establish and monitor key performance indicators for the various stages of the recruitment process; address causes of lengthy recruitments; monitor recruitment costs; and undertake the scheduled review of the current recruitment arrangements.

UNHCR accepted the recommendations. It took prompt action to implement one recommendation and has initiated action to implement the remaining four.

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Audit of the arrangements for recruitment of international professional staff at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the arrangements for recruitment of international professional staff at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

2. The UNHCR People Strategy for 2016-2021 envisions that UNHCR can meet global challenges better and serve its persons of concern through a highly qualified and diverse workforce. In August 2017, UNHCR issued its revised Recruitment and Assignments Policy (RAP) which provided the framework for 'appointment' and 'assignment'[1], including for progression to positions at a higher grade and solutions for unassigned staff. The term 'appointment' means a decision taken by the High Commissioner that results in the recruitment or conversion of a candidate into the international professional category. UNHCR also issued (and subsequently amended in November 2017) the related Recruitment and Assignments Administrative Instruction (RAAI) to operationalize the policy to ensure that UNHCR can appoint and assign its workforce in an efficient, fair, consistent and transparent manner, giving due consideration to gender and diversity.

3. For the period from 15 August 2017 to 31 December 2018, UNHCR recruited 271 international professional staff, 154 of which were from Group 2[2] applicants and 117 from amongst external applicants. External applicants included those who did not qualify under Group 2 categories or were external to UNHCR. Of the 117 external applicants selected, 60 were external to UNHCR while 57 worked with UNHCR in different capacities (e.g. Temporary Appointment, General and Field Service staff, International United Nations Volunteers or IUNVs) but did not qualify under Group 2 category.

4. Staff recruitment is a function of the Assignments and Talent Mobilization Service (ATMS), operating under the Director of Division of Human Resources (DHR). ATMS consists of the Assignments Management Section (AMS), Affiliate Partnerships and Recruitment Section (APRS), Compendia Support Unit (CSU), and Emergency and Temporary Staffing Unit. ATMS, inter alia, ensures alignment of workforce to the human resources strategic vision; consults with staff and managers to match applicants to vacant positions; performs secretarial functions for the matching process and the Joint Review Board (JRB). APRS undertakes external recruitment of new workforce and supports operations with the provision of human resources. As at 31 December 2018, ATMS was headed by a Head of Service at the D-1 level and had 62 authorized posts.

5. Comments provided by UNHCR are incorporated in italics.

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[1] A decision taken by the High Commissioner whereby an applicant already serving at UNHCR in the international Professional category on an indefinite or fixed-term appointment is moved to a different position or function.

[2] RAAI categorizes Group 2 applicants as those who met the required number of years of experience working with UNHCR/UN including: (i) current National Professional Officers and General Service Staff; (ii) current Junior Professional Officers; (iii) current IUNVs and International UNOPS staff; (iii) current International Professional staff holding a temporary appointment; (iv) former International staff (within two years of separation for males and five years for females); and (v) current female International Professional staff from other United Nations agencies.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

6. The objective of the audit was to assess whether UNHCR was recruiting international professional staff in an efficient and cost-effective manner and in accordance with UNHCR's policy requirements.

7. This audit was included in the 2019 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the risks associated with the recruitment of international professional staff and to assess whether the new recruitment framework was operating as envisaged.

8. OIOS conducted this audit from February to May 2019. The audit covered recruitment of international professional staff from Group 2 and external applicants for the period 15 August 2017 (effective date of the new RAP) to 31 December 2018. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risk areas related to: (a) preview, advertisement and receipt of applications; (b) eligibility and screening; (c) shortlisting and interviews; (d) recommendation of candidates; (e) oversight by JRB and High Commissioner's decision; (f) diversity and gender parity; and (g) efficiency and effectiveness of the recruitment processes.

9. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews of key personnel, (b) review of relevant recruitment data and documentation from Managing for Systems, Resources and People (MSRP), the UNHCR enterprise resource planning (ERP) system; and (c) sample testing of controls. OIOS reviewed 43 recruitment job openings or 16 per cent of the total population of 271.

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

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Administration of the recruitment processes

There was a need to establish guidelines on advertisement of positions and ensure each job opening has operational context

11. RAAI requires UNHCR to issue a preview of positions prior to their advertisement, which can be done either internally or internally and externally, and the advertisement also stipulates a closing date. All positions advertised should include its operational context (except for expert positions) and the advertisement period is usually two to three weeks. The preview of positions was in accordance with the recruitment policy, and compendia were issued twice a year and there was a dedicated compendium issued for representational and D-1 positions. Of the 271 job openings, 101 positions in emergency operations were advertised internally through fast track vacancies; and 170 were advertised internally and externally, 25 of which were re-advertisements. In addition, rotational positions were advertised internally and externally only when workforce analysis or specific position requirements indicated limited internal capacity.

12. In practice, AMS based its decision to advertise a position simultaneously internally and externally on its analysis of a number of relevant and interlinked factors that would point to a limited internal capacity, i.e., when workforce analysis or specific position requirements indicate limited internal capacity, as provided for in RAAI. The factors included: records of unsuccessful previous internal advertisement of the same position; requirement for a second United Nations language or a language of communication with the host government and/or persons of concern; hardship or non-family status of the duty station; feedback received from APRS regarding the availability and suitability of Talent Pool candidates; consultations with

and feedback received from relevant business partners; or a combination of these factors. The practice was not documented in any written procedures, due to which OIOS assessed that there was an increased risk of inconsistency in the advertisement of posts. For instance, seven positions were advertised internally and externally although the positions were located in a family duty station, i.e., "H" and "B" categories. DHR informed OIOS that they were planning to issue guidelines on advertisement of positions.

13. OIOS noted that 13 (excluding expert positions) of the 43 sampled had no operational context indicated. In the absence of this, managers relied on the generic job description to shortlist applicants, rather than the operational context which contained: (a) the essential and desirable requirements an applicant must have to undertake the duties and responsibilities of the position; and (b) gender and geographical balance, hardship and security related elements of the duty station.

14. Based on the 43 samples reviewed, the number of days the positions were advertised under the regular compendia and other vacancy announcements were between 14 to 25 days (average was 24 days) which were beyond the two- to three-week advertisement period set by DHR. For four positions applications received beyond the closing date for two external and two Group 2 applicants were considered and exceptionally accepted by DHR. Based upon discussions with DHR, OIOS concluded that consideration of applications received belatedly were justified for operational reasons.

15. The inconsistency in the advertisement of posts was related to the absence of procedures, while the non-inclusion of the operational context was due to inadequate management oversight. As a result, DHR did not ensure fairness, consistency and transparency in the advertisement of posts. Furthermore, in the absence of the operational context, applicants lacked additional information that would have helped them decide whether or not to apply for a position and enable them to better target the motivation letter for their application.

(1) The UNHCR Division of Human Resources should: (i) establish and implement written guidelines to assist in deciding when posts should be advertised internally or both internally and externally; and (ii) ensure that sample checks are performed on job openings for non-expert positions to confirm that they incorporate an operational context.

UNHCR accepted recommendation 1 and stated that DHR had: (i) issued guidelines to decide when a job opening should be advertised also externally; and (ii) carried out spot checks on job openings for non-expert positions to confirm that they incorporated an operational context. Based on the action taken by UNHCR, recommendation 1 has been closed.

There was a need to strengthen the shortlisting process to ensure compliance with rules

16. Under RAAI, the manager was required to establish a shortlist of applicants meeting the requirements of the position, subject to the availability of sufficient number of applicants and guided by the UNHCR's commitment to consistency, fairness and transparency in the appointment of staff. Managers are encouraged to administer written tests to assist in obtaining a shortlist of applicants and assess applicant's drafting, analytical, strategic and communication skills. The tests may be eliminatory, and it is expected that the responses to any written test are anonymized. Except for positions advertised under fast track, competency-based interviews are mandatory when the shortlist contains at least one Group 2 or external applicant. All panel members should hold a grade at least one level higher than the position under consideration.

17. The following weaknesses were identified in the shortlisting of candidates as discussed below:

- For 38 positions advertised under the regular compendia and other vacancy announcements, there were no clear criteria on when to administer written tests, since this was left to the manager's discretion. Of the 38 positions, 17 involved written tests while the remaining did not, indicating without adequate explanation, an inconsistent approach towards administering written tests.

- For the 17 positions with written tests, OIOS could not confirm if tests assessed the drafting, analytical, strategic and communication skills of the applicants, or if the tests had been anonymized. This was because the written tests and the related results were generally maintained by the respective managers.

- Some written test questions required specific UNHCR related knowledge. For example, for a certain position, the questions required applicants to describe financial procedures for administering a UNHCR programme intervention in MSRP/ERP system, and to detail the key transaction flows. Of the nine applicants, only three, one internal and two external candidates passed the test. The applicant selected for the position obtained a perfect score and having previously worked with UNHCR, possessed specific knowledge of core MSRP systems and processes. OIOS assessed that in this case the test questions were not free from bias and were too specific and related to the work done by the selected applicant. This offered this candidate an advantage not available to others.

- For a certain position, the interview panel in Gore (Chad) interviewed three applicants while the interview panel in Farchana and Ndjamena interviewed the other three applicants. This was noted by DHR who exceptionally decided not to ask Chad operations to re-interview the applicants because none of the applicants interviewed by Farchana and Ndjamena panel were considered suitable, in order to respond to operational needs of filling the position in time.

- For the position of Representative at D-1 level, one of the panel members was at the same grade of the position under consideration.

18. The above-cited issues occurred because of the absence of an implementation framework that would govern the application of the written test option. This option was provided for by RAP and RAAI, but with insufficient guidance on the conditions and modalities under which it is to be applied, which consequently limits the effectiveness of the oversight. Hence, UNHCR was not fully ensuring that the manager's shortlisting was done in a fair, consistent and transparent manner.

(2) The UNHCR Division of Human Resources should strengthen oversight of shortlisting of applicants by managers by ensuring that: (i) the decision to administer written tests is informed by implementation guidelines and taken by managers in a reasonable manner after considering the relevant circumstances; (ii) transparency and fairness are observed during the recruitment process; and (iii) panel members are one rank higher than the position under consideration.

UNHCR accepted recommendation 2 and stated that DHR: (i) would issue guidelines for written tests by the second quarter of 2020; (ii) had reviewed and provided sample cases to evidence that transparency and fairness were observed during the recruitment process; and (iii) would fine-tune

the Assignments Policy to be published in the last quarter of 2019 including the possibility of one-third panel members at the grade of the position under consideration. Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of: (i) the guidelines issued on the administration of written tests; and (ii) the revised assignments policy addressing the issue of panel membership.

There was a need to establish terms of reference for the Joint Review Board

19. According to RAP and RAAI, JRB is responsible for a thorough and bias free review of the selection processes and independently verifies that the recommending bodies (DHR and Senior Assignments Committee or SAC) have complied with the required procedures. JRB may not substitute its judgment for that of DHR or SAC regarding the merits of applicants.

20. Out of the 43 samples reviewed, only 1 was returned by JRB to DHR and after clarifications given by the Legal Affairs Service, the case was eventually endorsed and approved by the High Commissioner.

21. The JRB's composition was gender diverse in accordance with RAAI, except that OIOS could not determine if the members were geographically represented as discussed in the gender and diversity section of this report. In OIOS's opinion, JRB functioned as the second tier of review and had a significant role in addressing errors in the recruitment process. This was in addition to the DHR's first level review of ensuring appropriate implementation of RAP and RAAI. However, OIOS review of 43 job openings and discussions with current and former members of JRB disclosed that JRB's oversight function was impaired due to the following shortcomings:

- The scope of work and modus operandi of JRB were not included in written guidelines or standard operating procedures. Hence, the risk of unclear delineation of functions and inconsistent modalities of the work of JRB was not mitigated. The composition memorandum for JRB did not indicate specific areas to be reviewed or any specific modus operandi for JRB. The majority of the current members of JRB indicated that they reviewed cases individually for all the cases of recruitment of international professional staff. They reviewed the interview reports, motivation letters and fact sheets for Group 2 and Personal History Profiles for externals, Vacancy Management Unit checklists, the manager's views and functional endorsements, job description and operational context for each position. It was however not clear to the current members of JRB whether DHR had systematically reviewed if the shortlisting criteria were objectively implemented. On the other hand, a former member of JRB stated that their review covered, *inter alia*: (i) gender and geographical diversity; (ii) validity of the supervisor's comments in case of Group 2 applicants; (iii) validity of DHR or SAC comments vis-à-vis the fact sheets of Group 2 applicants; and (iv) reasons for technical exclusions. The current members of JRB indicated that DHR had briefed them on RAP and RAAI including, *inter alia* on inclusion and unconscious bias; how to access job openings and related documentations in MSRP.

- In the joint written response provided by the current members of JRB, they indicated that for representational and D-1 positions SAC makes the recommendation for the most suitable applicants, but the positions are still reviewed by JRB. JRB members can raise queries on why specific applicants have not been shortlisted or matched to specific positions. Some JRB members proposed that SAC recommendations remain under the High Commissioner's purview due to the nature of the positions and should not go through the JRB review.

- A potential conflict of interest was observed when a UNHCR staff (who happened to be a JRB member) who sat in the interview panel also sat in the JRB session during the deliberation of the recruitment of a certain position.

22. These issues occurred because of the absence of terms of reference to establish the scope of work and modus operandi of JRB. Hence, the oversight role of JRB was not adequate for mitigating the risk of errors inherent in the recruitment process.

(3) The UNHCR Division of Human Resources should develop and implement terms of reference for the Joint Review Board as per the current policy (Recruitment and Assignments Policy/Recruitment and Assignments Administrative Instruction) to establish a clear delineation of its work and functioning in order to enhance the effectiveness of its oversight of the recruitment process.

UNHCR accepted recommendation 3 and stated that DHR would develop and implement terms of reference for JRB as per the current policy by the end of 2019. Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of the terms of reference for JRB.

B. Gender and diversity

There was a need to improve monitoring of the application of gender and geographical diversity goals in the recruitment process

23. In line with UNHCR's commitment in achieving gender parity, enhance diversity and preserving the international character of the workforce, the following requirements were embedded in the recruitment process: (a) screening of applicants should consider diversity dimensions and gender parity; (b) shortlist should consider gender parity (at least two-thirds female applicants subject to availability of those who meet the requirement of the position) and diversity goals; (c) preference to female applicant is given if two or more applicants are substantially equally qualified; (d) interview panel should be gender diverse for P-1 to P-4 positions under consideration and must reflect diversity of regions, functions and gender for P-5 and D-1 positions; and (e) JRB membership should reflect functional, gender and geographical diversity. DHR regularly provided managers with the internal dashboards on diversity, indicating a reference to gender and geographical diversity.

24. As at 31 December 2018, females represented 45 per cent of the total 3,413 international staff. However, there was an increasing trend in female representation over the six-year period from 2013-2018, i.e., from 42.7 per cent in 2013 to 45.6 per cent in 2018. Gender parity was achieved for P-1 and P-2 positions but not for P-3 to D-1 posts. The D-1 positions had a significant disparity, with only 39 per cent being female and 61 per cent male. As to regional representation, 36 per cent of international staff were from Europe; 29 per cent from Africa; 14 per cent from Asia and the Pacific; 13 per cent from the Americas; and 8 per cent from Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

25. For the period from 15 August 2017 to 31 December 2018, DHR was able to screen-in 6,547 applicants, 42 per cent of which were female. For the 43 cases reviewed, females represented 42 per cent of the total 2,527 applicants. The shortlists for 25 of 43 cases showed less than two-thirds of female candidates, which was attributed by DHR to the lack of sufficient number of qualified female applicants. Additionally, gender diversity of interview panels was not consistently observed, with all male members in 3 out of 38 positions requiring interviews. There was gender diversity in the 20-member JRB, with 55 per cent of the members being female.

26. DHR noted that the United Nations gender parity goal and that of UNHCR was much broader and could not be addressed through recruitment and assignments policy framework alone. Nevertheless, DHR agreed that the external recruitment aspect of this framework does carry a significant potential for

contribution to the achievement of the gender parity goal, provided there is a clear definition of and support to the effective and realistic implementation modalities. DHR also agreed that the extent of contribution of this intervention to the overall gender parity goal should be established, measured and reported, i.e., set annual targets to move progressively toward gender parity, as well as the establishment of indicators to measure and report on progress being made.

27. In respect of geographical representation, the distribution of 271 recruitments made in audit period was: 35 per cent from Europe, 30 per cent from Africa, 16 per cent from Americas, 11 per cent from Asia and the Pacific, and 8 per cent from MENA. The 170 applicants shortlisted for the 43 cases selected indicated 42 per cent from Europe, 24 per cent from Africa, 17 per cent from the Americas, 11 per cent from Asia and the Pacific, and 6 per cent from MENA. JRB was composed of 20 members, consisting of 6 from Europe, 5 from Africa, and 3 each from the Americas, Asia and MENA (all 3 were of the same nationality in case of MENA). OIOS could not conclude if the geographical diversity goal was achieved during the recruitment exercise in the absence of an established benchmark.

28. According to DHR, there could be no geographical diversity benchmarks as this goal is not declared in the same way as that of gender parity. In OIOS' opinion, geographical diversity and preserving the international character of the workforce always remain a commitment in UNHCR's recruitment policy, the attainment of which needs to be measured to the extent feasible in concrete terms during recruitment.

(4) The UNHCR Division of Human Resources should establish targets to move progressively towards gender parity and geographical diversity goals and strengthen its monitoring of the achievement of these goals.

UNHCR accepted recommendation 4 and stated that although it had already in place an overarching organization-wide target for achieving gender parity, targets for gender parity and geographical diversity would be established in time for the March 2020 Compendium. Recommendation 4 remains open pending receipt of evidence of: the establishment of targets to progressively move towards gender parity and geographical diversity goals; and of strengthened monitoring of the achievement of these goals.

C. Efficiency and effectiveness of the recruitment process

There was a need to establish and monitor key performance indicators on efficiency and effectiveness of the recruitment process

29. A key aim of RAP was to ensure that UNHCR can appoint its workforce in an efficient manner as well as to ensure effective and responsible use of the Organization's capacities and resources. In this regard, the timeliness of recruitment is an important measure of efficiency and recruitment time may be measured from job opening, vacancy posting date or vacancy closing date to the date of final selection decision or the date on which the offer letter is signed or issued.

30. OIOS reviewed the number of days taken for recruitment of international professional staff for the 43 cases selected, which included 35 under regular compendia; 3 under other vacancy announcements; and 5 under fast track. For the 35 under regular compendia, the longest duration from close of application to High Commissioner's decision was 281 days; the quickest was 97 days; and the average was 163 days. Of these 35 cases, in 11 recruitments the process lasted for more than 180 days. For the 3 under other vacancy announcements, the longest was 82 days and the quickest was 76 days, and the average was 78 days. For the 5 under fast track, the longest was 57 days; the quickest was 18 days; and the average was 28 days.

31. However, in the absence of established norms, OIOS could not assess if UNHCR was efficient in its recruitment arrangements. Moreover, even an overall indicator of the total number of days taken for recruitment, does not provide clear and useful information to help monitor and enhance efficiency of the recruitment process. This was because UNHCR had not established a benchmark to review efficiency (time taken) for each of the recruitment sub-processes. DHR commented that timelines and precise dates of the processes could not be set with certainty due to factors beyond control. They also commented that some sub-processes were governed by set deadlines. For instance, advertisement had to close within two to three weeks; eligibility determination and screening had set deadlines but these depended on the size of the exercise and number of advertised positions (e.g., job opening processing turnaround time is 21 days, and Group 2 vetting turnaround time is 10 weeks); routing of applicants to managers had a timeline of one working day. The manager's review had a set deadline, but often was not met; while the DHR review had no set deadlines as this was dependent on the previous steps, i.e., size of the exercise and manager's input. The JRB review was done on a monthly schedule, except for fast track; and High Commissioner's Decision was dependent on his availability. OIOS is of the opinion that establishing timelines need not be definitive but could represent a desirable benchmark. Given that the recruitment process is one of the long-established activities in UNHCR, historical statistics could have helped in establishing the estimated timelines for all stages of the recruitment process, considering all relevant factors.

32. DHR commented that set deadlines were often not met, more often the reason related to competing operational deadlines. DHR further commented, that even though in the long run, the filling of vacant positions was in furtherance of delivering UNHCR's mandate effectively and efficiently, it was difficult for DHR to enforce strict adherence to such deadlines, because this would appear insensitive to the operational circumstances and the workload of managers. OIOS is of the opinion that unless benchmarks are established for recruitment processes, UNHCR could not holistically measure efficiency. DHR did not track recruitment costs and only monitored the expenses against the annual budget on monthly basis but not broken down by activities. The cost effectiveness of the recruitment processes could not therefore be ascertained by OIOS.

33. The shortcomings occurred because of lack of established benchmarks for measuring the efficiency (timeliness) and effectiveness of the recruitment process. Also, this prevented UNHCR from benefiting from the automated MSRP system, to develop a more in-depth analysis on the various stages of the recruitment process, provide valuable internal indicators to monitor the process, help identify and address root causes of lengthy recruitments, and capture and use relevant information for continuous improvement of the recruitment process. Thus, the risk of an inefficient recruitment process was not fully mitigated. Furthermore, although OIOS assessed that the policy framework for recruitment was adequately designed, there were issues in its actual implementation, as confirmed by this audit, that needed to be addressed in the scheduled review which needed to be done by 14 August 2019.

(5) The UNHCR Division of Human Resources should: (i) establish and monitor key performance indicators for the various stages of the recruitment process; (ii) address causes of lengthy recruitments; (iii) monitor recruitment costs; and (iv) undertake the scheduled review of the current recruitment arrangements.

UNHCR accepted recommendation 5 and stated that DHR: (i) had issued key performance indicators for the recruitment process; (ii) would review various stages of the processes and identify the bottlenecks; (iii) would identify, compile and extract from budget direct costs related to international professional recruitments by end of quarter 1 of 2020; and (iv) would undertake the scheduled review of the current recruitment arrangements concurrently with item (ii). Recommendation 5 remains open pending receipt of evidence of the: (i) measures taken to address lengthy recruitments together with the scheduled review of the current recruitment arrangements; and (ii) monitoring of recruitment costs.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

(*Signed*) Eleanor T. Burns
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ANNEX I

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the arrangements for recruitment of international professional staff at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	C/ O[3]	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date[4]
1	The UNHCR Division of Human Resources should: (i) establish and implement written guidelines to assist in deciding when posts should be advertised internally or both internally and externally; and (ii) ensure that sample checks are performed on job openings for non-expert positions to confirm that they incorporate an operational context.	Important	C	Action completed.	Implemented
2	The UNHCR Division of Human Resources should strengthen oversight of shortlisting of applicants by managers by ensuring that (i) the decision to administer written tests is informed by implementation guidelines and taken by managers in a reasonable manner after considering the relevant circumstances; (ii) transparency and fairness are observed during the recruitment process; and (iii) panel members are one rank higher than the position under consideration.	Important	O	Submission to OIOS of: (i) the guidelines issued on the administration of written tests; and (ii) the revised assignments policy addressing the issue of panel membership.	30 June 2020
3	The UNHCR Division of Human Resources should develop and implement terms of reference for the Joint Review Board as per the current policy (Recruitment and Assignments Policy/Recruitment and Assignments Administrative Instruction) to establish a clear delineation of its work and	Important	O	Submission to OIOS of the terms of reference for the Joint Review Board.	31 December 2019

[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 UNHCR in response to recommendations.

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Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	C/ O[3]	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date[4]
	functioning in order to enhance the effectiveness of its oversight of the recruitment process.				
4	The UNHCR Division of Human Resources should establish targets to move progressively towards gender parity and geographical diversity goals and strengthen its monitoring of the achievement of these goals.	Important	O	Submission to OIOS of evidence of the establishment of targets to progressively move towards gender parity and geographical diversity goals; and of strengthened monitoring of the achievement of these goals.	31 December 2019
5	The UNHCR Division of Human Resources should: (i) establish and monitor key performance indicators for the various stages of the recruitment process; (ii) address causes of lengthy recruitments; (iii) monitor recruitment costs; and (iv) undertake the scheduled review of the current recruitment arrangements.	Important	O	Submission to OIOS of evidence of the: (i) measures taken to address lengthy recruitments together with the scheduled review of the current recruitment arrangements; and (ii) monitoring of recruitment costs.	31 December 2020

APPENDIX I

Management Response

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Management Response

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Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	The UNHCR Division of Human Resources should:	Important				
	(i) establish and implement written guidelines to assist in deciding when posts should be advertised internally or both internally and externally; and		Yes	Head of Unit (VMU)	Action taken	DHR has addressed this issue issuing Guidelines used to decide when a JO should be advertised also externally.
	(ii) ensure that sample checks are performed on job openings for non-expert positions to confirm that they incorporate an operational context.		Yes	Head of Unit (VMU)	Action taken	DHR addressed this by carrying out spot checks and running queries namely UFT9400 and UFT 9450.
2	The UNHCR Division of Human Resources should strengthen oversight of shortlisting of applicants by managers by ensuring that:	Important				
	(i) the decision to administer written tests is informed by implementation guidelines and taken by managers in a reasonable manner after considering the relevant circumstances;		Yes	Head of Unit (EIU)	June 2020	Guidelines for written tests: by second quarter of 2020, during revision of present policy

[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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	(ii) transparency and fairness are observed during the recruitment process; and (iii) panel members are one rank higher than the position under consideration.		Yes Yes	Head of Service (ATMS), Head of Unit (EIU)	Action taken by AMS December 2019	DHR addressed this issue and is providing sample cases of transparency and fairness are observed during the recruitment process. (iii) Fine-tuned Assignments Policy to be published in the last quarter of 2019 which will include the possibility of 1/3 panel members at the grade of the position
3	The UNHCR Division of Human Resources should develop and implement terms of reference for the Joint Review Board as per the current policy (Recruitment and Assignments Policy/Recruitment and Assignments Administrative Instruction) to establish a clear delineation of its work and functioning in order to enhance the effectiveness of its oversight of the recruitment process.	Important	Yes	Head of Unit (VMU)	December 2019	AMS will develop and implement terms of reference for the Joint Review Board as per the current policy by the end of 2019.
4	The UNHCR Division of Human Resources should establish targets to move progressively towards gender parity and geographical diversity goals and strengthen its monitoring of the achievement of these goals.	Important	Yes	IDG Senior Advisor and Head of Service (ATMS)	December 2019	Although UNHCR has already in place an overarching organization-wide target for achieving gender parity, targets for Gender parity and geographical diversity to be established in time for the March 2020 Compendium.
5	The UNHCR Division of Human Resources should:					

APPENDIX I

Management Response

Audit of the arrangements for recruitment of international professional staff at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

	(i) establish and monitor key performance indicators for the various stages of the recruitment process;	Important	Yes	Head of Service (ATMS),	Action taken by APRS	(i) DHR addressed by issuing KPIs. for the recruitment process.
	(ii) address causes of lengthy recruitments;		Yes	Head of Service (ATMS), Chief of Sections (AMS & APRS)	December 2020	DHR will review various stages of the processes and identify the bottlenecks.
	(iii) monitor recruitment costs; and		Yes	Head of Service (ATMS), Chief of Sections (AMS & APRS)	March 2020	Identify, compile and extract from budget direct costs related to international professional recruitments by end of Q1 2020.
	(iv) undertake the scheduled review of the current recruitment arrangements.		Yes	Head of Service (ATMS), Chief of Sections (AMS & APRS)	March 2020	(iv) will be undertaken concurrently with item (ii).