



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2023/038

Audit of United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

The Mission had established a robust mandate implementation strategy, but needed to review its risk management and information management structures and stakeholder coordination strategies

**14 September 2023
Assignment No. AP2022-643-01**

Audit of United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). The objective of the audit was to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of UNOWAS processes and systems in managing its operations and resources to achieve its mandated objectives. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2020 to 30 June 2022 and included a review of UNOWAS' mandate implementation, focusing on: (a) governance mechanisms and structures; (b) work plan development, implementation and monitoring; and (c) operational support and resource management.

UNOWAS' conflict prevention mandate includes ensuring sustainable peace and security in the West Africa and Sahel region spanning 16 countries, plus Chad which the Mission covers within the context of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel (UNISS).

The Mission had generally established the appropriate structures, procedures, and work planning processes to support its mandate implementation, including establishing joint technical-level work plans with regional and sub-regional partners. Areas for improvement were as follows:

- a) The Mission did not have an integrated information management system to support its political analyses;
- b) Its risk management process did not adequately consider mandate implementation risks;
- c) It did not have current partnership agreements to formalize the strategic level working relationship;
- d) It did not have a formal strategy to coordinate, in collaboration with the Regional Development Coordination Office in Dakar, United Nations system activities in the region; and
- e) It was due to conclude agreements for its new office premises in Dakar and Abuja and advance its motor vehicle fleet monitoring procedures.

OIOS made six recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, UNOWAS needed to:

- Implement an information management framework to systematically guide and support the Mission's political and security analysis functions for enhanced situational awareness;
- Utilize the existing internal capacity to enhance the Mission's risk management framework and its risk register;
- Formalize and update its partnership frameworks with regional and sub-regional organizations in coordination with United Nations system entities, and review the sustainability of existing intervention frameworks to promote peace and security in the region;
- Liaise with the sub-regional Development Coordination Office in Dakar to formally map the United Nations system coordination structure for the West Africa and Sahel region to enhance system complementarity;
- Formalize arrangements for office premises in compliance with the respective host country agreements, and establish suitable premises to support its operational capabilities in Abuja; and
- Strengthen procedures to monitor motor vehicle fleet performance and usage to include reconciliation of fuel supplied per CarLog with fuel invoices, and review of the use of Mission vehicles for non-official/liberty travel to recover any associated costs.

UNOWAS accepted the recommendations, implemented one of them and has initiated action to implement the rest. Actions required to close the open recommendations are indicated in Annex I.

CONTENTS

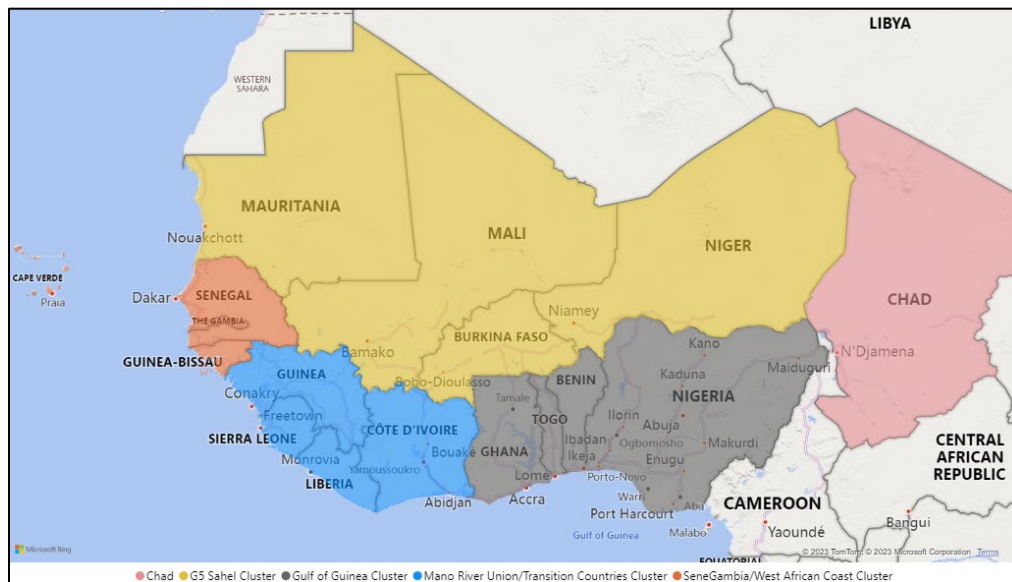
I. BACKGROUND	1-2
II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	2-3
III. AUDIT RESULTS	3-10
A. Governance mechanisms and structures	3-6
B. Work plan development, implementation and monitoring	6-9
C. Operational support and resource management	9-10
IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	11
ANNEX I	Status of audit recommendations
APPENDIX I	Management response

Audit of United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS).
2. UNOWAS was formed as a special political mission following the 28 January 2016 Security Council approved merger of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and the Office of the Special Envoy for the Sahel (OSES). UNOWA was established in January 2002 as a regional conflict prevention and peacebuilding office, while OSES was established in 2012 to address the persistent security and structural challenges that render the Sahel region vulnerable to conflict. UNOWAS operates under a broad regional conflict prevention mandate largely derived from those of UNOWA and OSES and covers 16 countries, as shown in Figure 1 below, excluding Chad which UNOWAS only covers within the context of the Group of 5 for the Sahel (G5 Sahel).

Figure 1: UNOWAS countries by sub-regional clusters



Source: UNOWAS Member States grouped by sub-regional clusters

3. UNOWAS' mandate, which is normally renewed through an exchange of letters between the President of the Security Council and the Secretary-General, was last extended for three years to 31 January 2026. The Mission's conflict prevention mandate has progressively expanded to include the broad objectives listed below.
 - a. Monitor political developments in West Africa and the Sahel and conduct preventive diplomacy, good offices and political mediation to sustain peace and consolidate regional peacebuilding efforts and political stability in partnership with other stakeholders;
 - b. Enhance regional and sub-regional partnership capacities to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security;
 - c. Support implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) through political advocacy and convening and enhancing United Nations system collaboration on international/regional engagements in the Sahel; and

- d. Promoting good governance, respect for the rule of law, human rights and gender mainstreaming in conflict prevention, management and resolution initiatives.

4. UNOWAS is based in Dakar, Senegal, and operates in close consultation and collaboration with various stakeholders comprising United Nations system entities and regional and sub-regional partner organizations. Key stakeholders included the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the G5 Sahel, the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC), the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), and the Mano River Union (MRU).

5. A Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) at the Under-Secretary-General level, heads UNOWAS assisted by a Deputy SRSG at Assistant Secretary-General level. The Mission leadership is supported by 2 D-1, 9 P-5, 14 P-4, 10 P-3, 1 P-2, 6 Field Service and 31 national staff making up the authorized level of 75 posts. The SRSG UNOWAS is also the Chairman of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CNMC) established in November 2002. CNMC’s objective is to facilitate the peaceful implementation of the International Court of Justice’s ruling on 10 October 2002 on the settlement of the land and maritime boundary dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria, a function reflected in the UNOWAS mandate. CNMC is co-located with UNOWAS, which supports its operations.

6. The Mission’s proposed annual budgets for the period 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2022 are as shown in Table 1, plus an additional \$1.8 million of extrabudgetary funding during the period.

Table 1: UNOWAS financial resource requirements

Category	2020 \$'000	2021 \$'000	2022 \$'000
Military and police personnel costs	87	140	146
Civilian personnel costs	7,852	8,517	9,361
Operational costs	4,461	5,293	5,270
Total (net of staff assessment)	12,400	13,950	14,777

Source: A/76/6 (Sect.3)/Add.4 Proposed programme budget for 2022

7. Comments provided by UNOWAS are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

8. The objective of the audit was to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of UNOWAS processes and systems in managing its operations and resources to achieve its mandate objectives.

9. This audit was included in the 2021 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the criticality of UNOWAS’ conflict prevention agenda in supporting peace, security and political stability in the West Africa and Sahel region.

10. OIOS conducted this audit from May 2022 to June 2023. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2020 to 30 June 2022. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risk areas in the mandate implementation, which included: (a) governance mechanisms and structures; (b) work plan development, implementation and monitoring; and (c) operational support and resource management.

11. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel, (b) review of relevant documentation, (c) analytical review of data, and (d) sample testing of mandate implementation activities.

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

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Governance mechanisms and structures

The SRSG's strategic vision and senior manager's compact were aligned to mandate priorities

13. The January 2016 merger of UNOWA and OSES that established UNOWAS consolidated the pre-existing conflict prevention, peacebuilding and Sahel specific mandates of the two special political missions. The new Mission maintained its base in Dakar, Senegal and established a liaison cell in Nouakchott, Mauritania in March 2016 to enhance collaboration with the G5 Sahel as a strategic regional partner to tackle threats to peace and security in the Sahel.

14. In January 2021, the Secretary-General appointed a Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel (SCDS) to strengthen the integration of United Nations engagement in the Sahel region. Additionally, UNOWAS established a liaison cell in Abuja, Nigeria in July 2021 following the recommendations of an independent strategic review of UNOWAS, which was conducted at the request of the Security Council in 2019. These collective changes warranted a new mission concept as a management tool to properly align UNOWAS' mandate implementation strategy to identified prevention priorities.

15. Prior to 2022, the Mission had articulated its mandate implementation strategies, priorities, and resource allocation in the SRSG's strategic vision, annual senior manager's compacts with the Secretary-General and annual work plans. It was only in 2022 that it prepared a new mission concept that was approved by the SRSG in September 2022. The new mission concept addressed expected accomplishments and related activities of the priority objectives, potential challenges, risks and risk mitigation strategies. It also covered collaboration partnerships with regional and external stakeholders, and coordination arrangements with United Nations system entities and structures.

UNOWAS needed to implement an information management framework

16. As part of its mandated objectives, UNOWAS political affairs officers relied on different information sources for updates on country specific and regional political developments and analyses within their respective areas of responsibility. These included United Nations system entities, diplomatic networks, subscription resources and databases from the Dag Hammarskjöld library, and open sources.

17. The ad-hoc use of information from different sources without any overarching protocols limited the Mission's ability to integrate situational awareness that is vital for its prevention mandate and had the potential to hinder the Mission's efficiency in executing its mandate. The updated mission concept included a comprehensive information management strategy including the use of SharePoint, the United Nations Situation Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE) system and other electronic resources. However, UNOWAS was yet to roll out SAGE and structure its information management coordination strategy as envisaged.

<p>(1) UNOWAS should implement an information management framework to systematically guide and support the Mission's political and security analysis functions for enhanced situational awareness.</p>

UNOWAS accepted recommendation 1 and stated that it was working on acquiring human resources capacity with expertise in data science to assist in the development of an information management framework to guide and support the Mission's political and security analysis. The Mission had included a request for such expertise in its submission for supplementary posts in connection with the withdrawal from the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

The risk management process did not adequately address substantive mandate implementation risk

18. UNOWAS conducted risk assessments in 2021 and 2022, but the current risk register only nominally addressed strategic, operational, financial, fraud and corruption risk categories as defined by the United Nations enterprise risk management methodology. It did not include strategic and governance risks such as programme performance measurement, inter-agency coordination, public perception and reputation risk, communications and public relations. Also, the 2022 risk assessment limited its coverage of managerial risks related to achieving political mission mandates to CNMC with no evidence of similar consideration for UNOWAS. Therefore, the risk register did not reflect a comprehensive joint risk analysis for UNOWAS and CNMC, particularly for substantive risk elements.

19. Although UNOWAS had three risk management focal points who had undergone the related training, there was still a need for the Mission to enhance its risk management capacity to establish suitable strategies to minimize the likelihood of occurrence and potential impact of risk events. It is noteworthy that the Chief of Mission Support was previously a Risk Management and Compliance Officer in a regional peacekeeping operation. This presented an invaluable opportunity to strengthen the Mission's risk management structure, processes and capacities.

(2) UNOWAS should utilize the existing internal capacity to enhance the Mission's risk management framework and update the joint UNOWAS-CNMC risk register.

UNOWAS accepted recommendation 2 and stated that it utilizes the UNOWAS-CNMC internal enterprise risk management (ERM) capacities composed of risk management focal points in liaison with risk owners, to identify and mitigate risks under the leadership of the Chief of Staff and with the increased advisory guidance of the Chief of Mission Support, a former ERM manager. Additionally, the Mission's updated risk register was approved by the Senior Leadership Team on 31 July 2023.

There was a need to formalize partnership frameworks with regional and sub-regional partners

20. UNOWAS' mandate emphasized the need to enhance regional and sub-regional partnerships with organizations such as the African Union, ECOWAS, G5 Sahel, MRU, LCBC and African Development Bank to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security. The Mission had established institutional relationships for conducting its good offices engagements with ECOWAS as its primary regional partner, and separately with the G5 Sahel and MRU. UNOWAS participated in annual summits, high-level meetings, and joint technical and working level engagements with these organizations to obtain a common understanding of regional challenges and address cross-border threats to peace and security.

21. The Mission undertook other strategic level engagements through the United Nations - African Union partnership jointly with regional offices and commissions. For example, during the review period, African Union, ECOWAS and UNOWAS conducted tripartite missions to: (a) Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire, which had undergone high profile presidential elections; and (b) Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali, which were in post-coup military transition, to encourage and support their timely return to constitutional order. UNOWAS also engaged with the African Development Bank through United Nations' support to the implementation of the African Union - Lake Chad Basin Regional Stabilization Strategy.

22. UNOWAS mandate covered two LCBC Member States (Niger and Nigeria), while that of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) covered three¹ of the six LCBC Member States and two² of the four observer Member States. Therefore, UNOWAS collaborated with UNOCA to support inter-regional stabilization efforts affecting West and Central Africa, including the LCBC. To this end, UNOWAS and UNOCA prepared joint annual work plans, and the SRSGs periodically issued joint updates to the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) on trends in the activities of Boko Haram, and routinely copied each other on their mission-specific weekly Code Cable situational updates to DPPA. However, the absence of updated agreements impacted UNOWAS cooperation with regional and sub-regional partners.

a. Memorandum of understanding with ECOWAS

23. Although UNOWAS and ECOWAS did not have a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) or cooperation framework, the two organizations conducted joint preventive diplomacy and mediation engagements based on a mutual understanding. UNOWAS and ECOWAS developed joint work plans through annual working level meetings of relevant UNOWAS focal points and their ECOWAS counterparts to assess the sub-regional political situation and implementation status of the joint work plan. The Mission also coordinated with ECOWAS regarding the coups d'état in Mali and Guinea, and an attempted coup in Niger during the review period. However, the SRSG's initiative to formalize a collective agreement with ECOWAS secretariat was pending the then ongoing institutional reforms to strengthen the Community's capacity to address local, regional and global challenges.

24. The absence of an agreement or MOU affected the scheduling of joint meetings to address political developments. Moreover, the technical level engagements were based on a joint annual work plan, which did not adequately integrate complementarity with sub-regional organizations such as the G5 Sahel and MRU. Implementation of the joint UNOWAS-ECOWAS annual work plans was impacted by event notifications or cancellations at short notice that resulted in missed opportunities for partnership level exchanges on sub-regional political developments and emerging issues.

b. Partnership agreement with G5 Sahel

25. UNOWAS established a liaison office in Nouakchott, Mauritania, in March 2016 and issued a note verbale to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation to formalize the related host country agreement on 6 May 2020. However, as this was still outstanding, the legal framework under which UNOWAS personnel operated in the country had not been defined, therefore, the Mission had not established an MOU with the G5 Sahel. This lack of a partnership agreement hindered UNOWAS and G5 Sahel from establishing their joint priorities and capacity building opportunities to address the root causes of conflict and advance their coordination capacities.

26. Three of the five G5 Sahel countries, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali, were in military transition during the review period. Although Chad falls within the purview of UNOCA and Mali has a dedicated peacekeeping mission, the political disruption in several countries within the good offices mandate of UNOWAS presented scope for the Mission to review and enhance its: (a) partnership with the G5 Sahel as a sub-regional security arrangement; and (b) use of existing early warning mechanisms to anticipate, respond to and resolve the political developments per its prevention mandate.

¹ Cameroon, Central African Republic and Chad

² Congo and Democratic Republic of Congo

c. Cooperation framework with Mano River Union

27. UNOWAS mandate included engagement with post-conflict transition countries to support the efforts of the respective countries and United Nations country teams (UNCTs) to consolidate and sustain peace. The MRU Cluster incorporated three of the four transition countries (Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone), while Guinea-Bissau was part of the Senegambia Cluster. The Mission signed an undated strategic framework of cooperation for peace and security with MRU for 2019-2021 and held annual desk-to-desk meetings with the MRU and resident coordinators to define thematic areas for their joint work planning.

28. The joint work plan, in the absence of an updated agreement, limited UNOWAS’ engagement in fully implementing agreed action plans such as organizing meetings of the military and security leadership of MRU countries to address cross-border security threats. For example, UNOWAS did not implement its planned support for the training of trainers for MRU staff on early warning systems due to the non-availability of MRU personnel. Therefore, the Mission was unable to effectively engage in proactive integrated planning due to the limited sharing of information. MRU installed a new Secretary-General on 10 November 2022, which paved the way for UNOWAS to establish a more robust engagement framework.

(3) UNOWAS should formalize and update its partnership frameworks with regional and sub-regional organizations in coordination with United Nations system entities, and review the sustainability of existing intervention frameworks to promote peace and security in the region.

UNOWAS accepted recommendation 3 and stated that considerable progress had been made on the draft framework of cooperation to formalize its existing partnership with the ECOWAS Commission, which was under review by the Commission. Additionally, UNOWAS had commenced discussions with MRU to renew the two-year framework of cooperation that expired in 2021.

B. Work plan development, implementation and monitoring

The Mission had established a robust multi-level work planning process

29. UNOWAS prepared comprehensive entity-level annual work plans aligned with the SRSB’s strategic vision and senior manager’s compact as its basic mandate implementation management tools. The Mission adopted a top-down work planning approach and held annual retreats to discuss and communicate the SRSB’s vision including overarching mandate objectives and implementation priorities as the basis for preparing the annual work plans.

30. The planning process cascaded downwards to section-level work plans and assigned lead responsibility to specific substantive sections and mission components. Section level work plans informed the preparation of unit-level work plans that defined the mandated functions as expected deliverables with specific performance indicators. The lead sections and units harmonized the work plans and implementation activities of their respective teams to the entity-level work plan, and unit level activities ultimately formed the basis for individual staff members’ work plans.

31. The Office of the SRSB (OSRSB) maintained a forward calendar to schedule established strategic level engagements specifying the participating Mission leadership or representatives. The engagements included:

- a. Biannual briefings with the Security Council on the situation in West Africa and the Sahel;
- b. Biannual meetings with the ambassadors of permanent and non-permanent Security Council Member States and ECOWAS Member States based in Dakar;
- c. ECOWAS summits at Heads of State and ministerial levels;
- d. Quarterly briefings with United Nations regional directors;
- e. Regular exchanges and thematic meetings with resident coordinators and UNCTs, CNMC, UNISS Steering Committee and the Lake Chad Basin Governors to discuss regional political and security developments; and
- f. Annual meetings of Heads of United Nations presences in the region, UNOCA, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Missions in Mali and the Central African Republic (MINUSMA and MINUSCA).

32. OSRSG incorporated other non-scheduled good offices engagements on an as needed basis. These were determined by regional electoral calendars, outcomes of joint technical missions, analyses of political developments and security trends including political crises in the Mission's 16 mandate countries, and ongoing activities of regional and sub-regional partner organizations. This strategy gave UNOWAS leadership adequate flexibility to prioritize the Mission's prevention interventions, accommodate ad-hoc short notice engagements such as specific head of state requests and distribute Mission leadership participation for optimal coverage.

33. OIOS concluded that UNOWAS had established a robust work planning process to effectively support its mandate implementation including unpredictable aspects of good offices interactions, such as those that arose on the sidelines of scheduled engagements.

UNOWAS supported implementation of the integrated strategy for the Sahel

34. UNOWAS mandate also included supporting implementation of UNISS through political advocacy and its convening powers, and enhancing United Nations system collaboration and promoting coherence in international and regional response to the root causes and impact of conflict in the Sahel.

35. UNISS is a regional United Nations coordination mechanism to address specific structural challenges that render the Sahel region vulnerable to conflict, and broadly covers the strategic pillars of governance, resilience and security. The Mission co-chaired the pillar/working group on security with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, while other United Nations system counterparts led the governance and resilience pillars. UNOWAS participated in coordination meetings with the regional Ministerial Coordination Platform on Sahel Strategies, and worked in close coordination with the Office of the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel, which helped to map out United Nations intervention during the biannual Steering Committee meetings.

36. The Mission also participated in briefing the Peacebuilding Commission on peacebuilding challenges and opportunities in relation to the integrated strategy for the Sahel, cross-border investments and support for women and the youth within the context of the Women, Peace and Security, and Youth, Peace and Security agendas. Featured recipient countries of the Peacebuilding Fund to support implementation of priority areas of the strategy included Burkina Faso, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Sierra Leone and The Gambia.

37. OIOS concluded that UNOWAS had exercised its convening role to foster collective action by United Nations system entities in supporting the implementation of the UNISS.

There was an opportunity to map the overarching United Nations system coordination strategy in the region

38. Collaboration with UNCTs was key to promoting United Nations system coherence in the implementation of UNOWAS' conflict prevention mandate. The United Nations system in Dakar consisted of an estimated 34 political and regional offices, including UNOWAS. The 16 countries covered by the Mission were each led by a resident coordinator, and there were 13 peace and development advisors³ (PDAs) deployed in the region. Also, in addition to MINUSCA, MINUSMA and UNOCA, the United Nations system had an estimated total presence of 300 field offices of agencies, funds and programmes in the 16 UNOWAS mandate countries. The substantial regional presence of United Nations entities presented significant scope for coordination of the efficient and effective support of regional efforts under the One UN approach.

39. UNOWAS had established a broad regional engagement and consultation platform. Examples of activities conducted during the period included inter-agency coordination meetings and quarterly meetings with UNCTs and regional directors; monthly consultations and desk-to-desk meetings with UNOCA and MINUSMA; coordinated action with MINUSMA within the context of the coup d'état in Mali; and joint research and analyses, workshops and working groups.

40. However, unlike the formalized multidimensional approach of the UNISS regional coordination mechanism that incorporated 8 of the 16 countries under UNOWAS mandate, plus Chad, the overarching regional coordination structure was not formalized. The updated Mission Concept of September 2022 included an overview covering the United Nations system coordination and collaboration through consistent interaction. However, it did not encompass joint planning or detail specific focus areas and collaboration and coordination activities to integrate UNOWAS' regional prevention mandate with the humanitarian and development mandates of other United Nations system entities. The following examples illustrate the potential for gaps and overlaps in the delivery of United Nations support:

- a. UNOWAS coordinated periodic fora to explore ways of strengthening cooperation between the Mission, PDAs, resident coordinator offices and UNCTs, with the last one held in September 2021. The Mission also held biannual meetings with PDAs to share updates on political and security developments, discuss issues of common concern and follow up action points arising from previous meetings. However, although UNOWAS and PDA mandates separately addressed strengthening capacities for conflict prevention and sustaining peace from the regional and national perspectives respectively, the two structures had not established a routine to facilitate timely information sharing and coordinated action.
- b. Although the mainstreaming of gender is well established as part of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, progress on the Youth, Peace and Security agenda has been slow. The Mission partly attributed this to there being no entity dedicated to the youth and the absence of synergies with various United Nations entities that independently organized events addressing youth issues.
- c. The United Nations capacity to effectively use the existing ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network, and the Ouagadougou-based Sahelian Centre for Threat Analysis and Early Warning, which was established with the support of UNOWAS, was not apparent.

³ The United Nations deploys PDAs as part of the joint United Nations Development Programme-DPPA programme on building national capacities for conflict prevention.

- d. UNOWAS sub-regional cluster team leaders could not confirm coordination with other United Nations system entities at their levels, or their awareness of collaboration initiatives in their respective country configurations, and partly attributed this to their disparate political affairs and programme mandates.

41. The coordination gaps due to the lack of clearly delineated roles and responsibilities decreased system-wide complementarity. UNOWAS attributed the gaps to ongoing efforts to better consolidate the diverse United Nations system capacities and resources within the context of the United Nations reform and deliver support to Member States as One UN. In this regard, the system deployed the Deputy Director to the Development Coordination Office (DCO) Regional Office for Africa to Dakar in July 2022 to support the resident coordinator system and UNCTs in West Africa, Central Africa and North Africa.

(4) UNOWAS should liaise with the sub-regional Development Coordination Office in Dakar to formally map the United Nations system coordination structure for the West Africa and Sahel region to enhance system complementarity.

UNOWAS accepted recommendation 4 and stated that it had started to work closely with DCO in Dakar to support United Nations system coordination at the regional and national levels, in addition to its existing role in UNISS. UNOWAS had also established working arrangements with DCO and the relevant resident coordinators of the countries collaborating through the Accra Initiative and would develop joint annual work plans with DCO to enhance regional and country level synergy and complementarity.

C. Operational support and resource management

There was a need to formalize leasing arrangements for all official premises

42. The Government of Senegal undertook a construction project to host all United Nations entities in a fully equipped office complex, the United Nations House in Diamniadio, Senegal, at the Government's expense. The project management team allocated office space to the estimated 34 entities on a proportionate basis, which the Team also used to allocate annual project monitoring costs. The building, with an initial estimated completion date of June 2022, was now close to completion and the relocation of United Nations entities to the new office premises was imminent. However, the Government of Senegal had not yet executed an agreement with the United Nations to legally define their respective responsibilities for the structural and operational maintenance of the UN House and equipment.

43. UNOWAS established a liaison office to ECOWAS in Abuja, Nigeria effective 1 July 2021 and deployed the required staff resources. However, inadequate logistics planning led to delays in formalizing the identification and leasing of suitable office premises, therefore the liaison team adopted extended working from home arrangements. Following the June 2022 cancellation of a lease agreement for the rental of office premises in Abuja due to vendor demands, the Global Procurement Support Section of the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe restarted the procurement process in October 2022, and UNOWAS was in the process of finalizing the lease agreement.

(5) UNOWAS should formalize arrangements for office premises for its operations in Senegal and Abuja.

UNOWAS accepted recommendation 5 and stated that the Mission had, with the full support of the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, opted to waive formal methods of solicitation to rent office

premises and anticipated to conclude a lease agreement for the Abuja office premises by 30 September 2023.

UNOWAS was taking action to enhance aviation safety but needed to further strengthen vehicle management

a. Aviation safety

44. The aviation safety assessment report as of February 2022 indicated that UNOWAS had not implemented recommendations arising from a November 2019 assessment that addressed: (a) the implementation of an aviation risk management process for all flights; (b) inadequate staffing for the combined aviation and surface transport management role; (c) aviation security screening of passengers and luggage; (d) aviation training compliance; (e) coordination with airbase wildlife management programme; and (f) updating the aviation standard operating procedures and ensuring full compliance with daily reporting requirements. Delays in implementing aviation safety recommendations increased the Mission's air operations risk profile.

45. UNOWAS appointed an Aviation Safety focal point in January 2023 to address the aviation safety recommendations and mitigate risks identified in collaboration with the Aviation Safety Section in Headquarters. It had developed mission-specific standard operating procedures for aviation risk management and a Mission Aviation Safety Programme, and continued to follow up outstanding recommendations on the risk management process, security screening of passengers, recruitment of an air operations assistant and aviation training compliance. These efforts had resulted in improved aviation safety indicators.

b. Motor vehicle fleet management

46. The UNOWAS Aviation and Ground Transportation Unit's functions included overseeing the management, operation and maintenance of its 18-vehicle fleet in Dakar, Nouakchott, and Abuja, including outsourced vehicle repairs and maintenance services. During the audit period, the Unit monitored vehicle utilization through trip tickets but did not monitor the fleet performance including fuel consumption patterns to identify any discrepancies. This was because UNOWAS did not have a dedicated Transport Officer, while the Supply and Facilities Management Unit maintained fuel consumption records. UNOWAS procured and installed the CarLog electronic vehicle management system in March 2023 and has started to conduct fleet performance monitoring processes. However, the monitoring processes did not include a reconciliation of CarLog fuel uptake records with fuel station records maintained by the Supply and Facilities Management Unit, or review of the use of UNOWAS vehicles for liberty/personal business travel to recover any associated costs.

(6) UNOWAS should strengthen its procedures to monitor motor vehicle fleet performance and usage to include reconciliation of fuel supplied per CarLog with fuel invoices, and review of the use of Mission vehicles for non-official/liberty travel to recover any associated costs.

UNOWAS accepted recommendation 6 and stated that it would deploy a Transport Assistant to optimize utilization of the Carlog fleet management system in the Mission including the tracking and reconciliation of fuel consumption, and was working to finalize and implement a policy on liberty travel.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁴ / Important ⁵	C/ O ⁶	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁷
1	UNOWAS should implement an information management framework to systematically guide and support the Mission's political and security analysis functions for enhanced situational awareness.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of the implementation of an information management framework to systematically guide and support the Mission's political and security analysis functions.	31 August 2024
2	UNOWAS should utilize the existing internal capacity to enhance the Mission's risk management framework and update the joint UNOWAS-CNMC risk register.	Important	C	Action completed.	31 July 2023
3	UNOWAS should formalize and update its partnership frameworks with regional and sub-regional organizations in coordination with United Nations system entities, and review the sustainability of existing intervention frameworks to promote peace and security in the region.	Important	O	Receipt of the updated partnership agreements with relevant regional and sub-regional organizations.	31 December 2023
4	UNOWAS should liaise with the sub-regional Development Coordination Office in Dakar to formally map the United Nations system coordination structure for the West Africa and Sahel region to enhance system complementarity.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence, in coordination with the sub-regional DCO in Dakar, of an integrated approach to improve coherence and maximize United Nations system complementarity in West Africa.	30 June 2024
5	UNOWAS should formalize arrangements for office premises for its operations in Senegal and Abuja.	Important	O	Receipt of the lease agreement for the provision of office premises for UNOWAS operations in Abuja, and the internal memorandum of understanding from the lead agency specifying organizational responsibility in United Nations House.	31 December 2023

⁴ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

⁵ Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

⁶ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁷ Date provided by UNOWAS in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁴ / Important ⁵	C/ O ⁶	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁷
6	UNOWAS should strengthen its procedures to monitor motor vehicle fleet performance and usage to include reconciliation of fuel supplied per CarLog with fuel invoices, and review of the use of Mission vehicles for non-official/liberty travel to recover any associated costs.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of continual motor vehicle fleet monitoring, including the reconciliation of fuel consumption supplies and implementation of a liberty mileage policy.	31 March 2024

APPENDIX I

Management Response



FACSIMILE

Ref.: UNOWAS/OCMS/022/2023

Date: 29 August 2023

<p>TO: Ms. Muriette Lawrence-Hume, Chief of Service, Audit, New York.</p> <p>ATTN: Mr. Tilchand Acharya, Chief, Peacekeeping Headquarters Audit Section, Internal Audit Division, New York.</p>	<p>FROM: Giovane Biha, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General, UNOWAS, Dakar.</p> <p><i>M. Binadou</i> <small>MDjinadou (Aug 29, 2023 16:51 GMT)</small></p>
<p>Email: unowas-cms@un.org</p>	
<p>SUBJECT: Management responses to the draft report on the audit of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Assignment No: AP2022/643/01.</p>	
<p>Total number of transmitted pages including this page: 6</p>	
<p><i>Reference Memorandum OIOS-2023-01388, dated 11 August 2023.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In reply to the referenced correspondence, please find attached UNOWAS's Management responses to the OIOS findings and recommendations, as per the subject report. 2. For enhanced efficiency and effectiveness of UNOWAS operations, all necessary actions detailed in the action plan shall be implemented within the stated timelines. <p>Best regards.</p>	
<p>Drafted by: <i>El Hadji Sarr</i> El Hadji Sarr, Office of the Chief of Mission Support</p>	<p>Authorized by: <i>Ron M. Kamwendo Jnr</i> <small>Ron M. Kamwendo Jnr (Aug 29, 2023 16:51 GMT)</small> Ron M. Kamwendo Jnr, Chief of Mission Support, Office of the Chief of Mission Support</p>

Management Response

Audit of United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	UNOWAS should implement an information management framework to systematically guide and support the Mission's political and security analysis functions for enhanced situational awareness.	Important	Yes	Director of Political Affairs	31 st August 2024	The mission is working on acquiring human capacity with expertise in data science to assist in development of an information management framework to guide and support the mission's political and security analysis. A request for such expertise has been included in the submission for supplementary posts in connection with MINUSMA withdrawal.
2	UNOWAS should utilize the existing internal capacity to enhance the Mission's risk management framework and update the joint UNOWAS-CNMC risk register.	Important	Yes	Chief of Staff	Implemented	UNOWAS/CNMC utilizes its internal capacities as follows: 1) Three officers from UNOWAS substantive component, UNOWAS administration and CNMC who have received Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) training serve as ERM focal points with responsibility to liaise closely with all risk owners on a continuous basis on the progress made in mitigating risks and on the development of new risks through a consultative process. 2) The Chief of Staff (CoS) provides oversight and leadership of this team and also initiates dedicated discussions on potential new risks, ERM register

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

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

Management Response

Audit of United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						<p>updates and ERM status of implementation reports with the Senior Leadership Team. 3) The Chief of Mission Support (CMS), who is a former ERM manager with strong experience in the field of risk assessment and management, has increased his involvement in support of the ERM process and is providing advice and guidance when needed.</p> <p>The joint ERM register was updated and approved by the SLT on 31 July 2023. It contains 3 strategic, 1 managerial, 1 operational, 2 financial and 1 fraud and corruption risk.</p>
3	UNOWAS should formalize and update its partnership frameworks with regional and sub-regional organizations in coordination with United Nations system entities and review the sustainability of existing intervention frameworks to promote peace and security in the region.	Important	Yes	Head of the Abuja Liaison Office & Team Leader: MANU River Union Cluster	31 st December 2023	UNOWAS is already working on formalizing its partnerships with relevant partners. The draft Framework of Cooperation between UNOWAS and its main partner in the region, the ECOWAS Commission, has made considerable progress and is currently under review by the Commission. Discussions have also recently commenced between UNOWAS and MRU for a renewal of the two-year Framework of Cooperation Agreement between the two organization which expired in 2021.

Management Response

Audit of United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
4	UNOWAS should liaise with the Regional Development Coordination Office in Dakar to formally map the United Nations system coordination structure for the West Africa and Sahel region to enhance system complementarity.	Important	Yes	Deputy Special Representative	30 June 2024	The work is ongoing. UNOWAS has already started to work closely with the Development Coordination Office (DCO) in Dakar to get support when it comes to coordination at the regional and national level, including engagements with the Resident Coordinators (RCs) and UN Country Teams in the region. One standing coordination structure, among others, is the one related to the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel (UNISS). UNOWAS, as the co-chair of the UNISS steering committee and co-lead of the peace and security pillar, is working closely with the Office of the Special Coordinator for development in the Sahel, DCO and UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes, to implement UNISS. UNOWAS has also established working arrangements with DCO and the RCs of countries covering the Accra Initiative. As the next steps, UNOWAS, together with DCO, will develop a joint yearly workplan to ensure an integrated approach to enhance synergy and complementarity at the regional and country level, including jointly organizing thematic webinars for

Management Response

Audit of United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						Regional Directors and Resident Coordinators in the sub-region.
5	UNOWAS should formalize arrangements for office premises for its operations in Senegal and Abuja.	Important	Yes	Chief of Procurement	31 st December 2023	<p>Following the well documented challenges the mission, with full support from the Regional Service Centre at Entebbe (RSCE), has encountered in finding office premises in Abuja, the mission and the RSCE have opted to rent office premises via a waiver. It is expected that a property will be identified, and a lease agreement signed by 30th September 2023.</p> <p>Arrangements for the Senegal office have been shared with the Auditors.</p>
6	UNOWAS should strengthen its procedures to monitor motor vehicle fleet performance and usage to include reconciliation of fuel supplied per CarLog with fuel invoices, and review of the use of Mission vehicles for non-official/liberty travel to recover any associated costs.	Important	Yes	Chief of Aviation and Transport & Chief of Facilities Management	31 st March 2024	<p>UNOWAS is expecting the deployment of an Independent Contractor (Transport Assistant) by the end of August 2023. He will work closely with Management to enhance and optimize the utilization of the Carlog system in the mission including the tracking and reconciliation of fuel consumption for the fleet.</p> <p>UNOWAS will a liberty policy is finalized, discussed, and endorsed by the vehicle establishment committee at its next session, and a recommendation submitted to the</p>

Management Response

Audit of United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical¹/ Important²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						Head of Mission for approval prior to implementation.