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Programme questions: evaluation

Evaluation of the Office for Disarmament Affairs

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

The goal of disarmament efforts is general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. The Office for Disarmament Affairs supports and facilitates action by Member States in pursuit of this goal and enhances disarmament and non-proliferation measures by promoting, strengthening and consolidating multilaterally negotiated principles and norms and their implementation. It does this through its three functional pillars, namely: (a) normative work, by facilitating the process of multilateral negotiation and deliberation of the intergovernmental disarmament machinery; (b) technical assistance, through the provision of specialized capacity-building and advisory services; and (c) information and outreach efforts.

During the period evaluated, the work programme of the Office was consistent with its mandate and largely responsive to stakeholder needs, and the Office was considered a key impartial broker and technical partner on disarmament issues. Nonetheless, and despite the broad relevance of its work, the Office lacked a deliberate, systematic and holistic approach to strategic planning, which hindered its potential maximum relevance. The Office successfully delivered most outputs of its work programme; however, the results of this work were only partly known, owing in part to a long-standing lack of systematic outcome-level monitoring, self-evaluation and reporting.

While the Office implemented its workplan against the backdrop of a challenging operating context, a broad mandate and unstable resources, it did not fully harness its considerable internal assets, structures and functions, or its external partnerships, to achieve maximum results within its existing capacity. The Office made some limited contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals but did not systematically frame

* The dates for the substantive session are tentative.

** E/AC.51/2019/1.



its work to concretely support their implementation; nor did it embrace a clear and coordinated approach to discussions on relevant frontier issues.

The Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services made five important recommendations, namely that the Office for Disarmament Affairs:

- Strengthen its strategic planning process
- Map its internal assets and gaps and reconfigure its structural arrangements, policies and strategies as necessary
- Define its comparative advantage and roles on all relevant Sustainable Development Goals and targets, especially target 16.4
- Strengthen its monitoring and self-evaluation
- Put forward proposals to improve the sustainability of the implementation support units.

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I. Introduction and objective

1. The Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) identified the Office for Disarmament Affairs for evaluation based on a risk assessment to identify Secretariat evaluation priorities for 2017–2019. The Committee for Programme and Coordination selected the Office as one of the programmes for consideration at its fifty-ninth session, to be held in June 2019 (see [A/72/16](#)). The General Assembly endorsed the selection in its resolution [72/9](#).

2. The general frame of reference for OIOS is in General Assembly resolutions [48/218 B](#), [54/244](#) and [59/272](#) and in [ST/SGB/273](#), which authorize OIOS to initiate, carry out and report on any action it considers necessary to fulfil its responsibilities. OIOS evaluation is provided for in 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](#), regulation 7.1).

3. The present evaluation's overall objective was to determine, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the Office for Disarmament Affairs during the period 2014–2017. The decision to undertake a full-programme evaluation emerged from a risk assessment described in the evaluation inception paper produced at the outset of the evaluation (IED-17-005 of 15 June 2017). The evaluation was conducted in conformity with norms and standards for evaluation in the United Nations system issued by the United Nations Evaluation Group in 2016.

4. Management comments on the draft report were sought from the Office and considered in the final report. The response from the Office is contained in the annex to the present report.

II. Background

Mandate, role and stakeholders

5. Disarmament is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations,¹ and thus constitutes a key pillar of the Organization.² The mandate of the Office for Disarmament Affairs is derived from resolution [S-10/2](#) adopted at the tenth special session of the General Assembly, which is also known as the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. In addition to other disarmament-related General Assembly resolutions and decisions,³ the Office is guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.⁴

6. The aim of disarmament efforts is general and complete disarmament⁵ under strict and effective international control. Whereas Member States bear the ultimate responsibility for this goal, the Office is responsible for supporting the Member States in their efforts towards its achievement. The Office facilitates and encourages disarmament and non-proliferation measures in all aspects and at all levels by assisting Member States in the promotion, strengthening and consolidation of multilaterally negotiated principles and norms and in their implementation.

¹ See the Charter of the United Nations, inter alia, the preamble and Articles 11, 26 and 47.

² General Assembly resolutions [71/274](#), para. 9; [69/264](#), para. 9; [67/248](#), para. 12; [65/262](#), para. 13; [63/266](#), para. 17; [61/254](#), para. 9; [59/278](#), para. 8; [57/280](#), para. 13; [55/233](#), para. 11; [53/206](#), para. 13; and [51/220](#), para. 8.

³ [A/71/6/Rev.1](#), legislative mandates under programme 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 3.2.

⁵ *Rethinking General and Complete Disarmament in the Twenty-first Century*, UNODA Occasional Papers, No. 28 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.16.IX.8).

7. The Office seeks to achieve this objective through its three functional pillars, namely:

(a) **Normative work**, by facilitating multilateral deliberation and negotiation processes through the provision of organizational and substantive support and advice to the disarmament intergovernmental machinery (i.e. the First Committee; the Disarmament Commission; the Conference on Disarmament, which is the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community; and review conferences and other meetings of parties to multilateral disarmament agreements, as requested by States parties and expert groups mandated by the General Assembly), and by supporting and servicing relevant meetings of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), a subsidiary body of the Security Council created to monitor and ensure the implementation of Council resolution 1540 (2004);

(b) **Technical assistance**, through the provision of specialized capacity-building and advisory services;

(c) **Information and outreach**, through publications, dissemination campaigns and other activities.

8. In addition, the Office provides:

(a) **Advice and assistance to the Secretary-General** in discharging his disarmament responsibilities and related security matters;

(b) **Identification and analysis of emerging issues and challenges** and their implications for the role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security;

(c) **Assistance to regional disarmament efforts**, as requested by Member States, to promote regional disarmament and non-proliferation approaches and to support regional and international peace and security;

(d) **Disarmament expertise** in conflict-prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding efforts, including support for practical disarmament measures, promotion of greater expertise in all areas of multilateral disarmament and promotion of openness and transparency in military matters through verification and confidence-building measures (ST/SGB/2008/8, para. 2.1).

Structure, management and governance

9. The Office is guided by its strategic framework and programme budget.⁶

10. Table 1 summarizes its five subprogrammes and their corresponding objectives.

Table 1

Office for Disarmament Affairs subprogramme objectives

<i>Subprogramme</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
1. Multilateral negotiations and deliberations on disarmament and arms limitation	Support multilateral negotiations and deliberations on disarmament, arms limitation and non-proliferation in all its aspects
2. Weapons of mass destruction	Promote and support disarmament and non-proliferation, including existing treaties and mandates related to weapons of mass destruction

⁶ A/69/6/Rev.1, programme 3, and A/70/6 (Sect. 4).

<i>Subprogramme</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
3. Conventional arms (including practical disarmament measures)	Promote greater mutual confidence and the regulation and limitation of conventional arms
4. Information and outreach	Increase understanding and knowledge of Member States and the public on disarmament issues
5. Regional disarmament	Promote and support regional disarmament efforts

11. The Office is headed by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs at the Under-Secretary-General level, who is assisted by a Deputy and is accountable to the Secretary-General.⁷ The structure of the Office consists of the Office of the High Representative, which includes the Strategic Planning Unit; an Executive Office; and five branches: the Conference on Disarmament Secretariat and Conference Support Branch, which includes the implementation support units; the Weapons of Mass Destruction Branch; the Conventional Arms Branch; the Information and Outreach Branch; and the Regional Disarmament Branch. The Regional Disarmament Branch comprises the headquarters-based Regional Activities Unit; the office of the Office for Disarmament Affairs in Vienna; the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa in Lomé; the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific in Kathmandu; and the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean in Lima.

12. Member States exercise governance over the Office for Disarmament Affairs through the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, where they review and approve the strategic framework and programme budget. The Office also reports to the First Committee of the General Assembly on various components of its work.

Resources

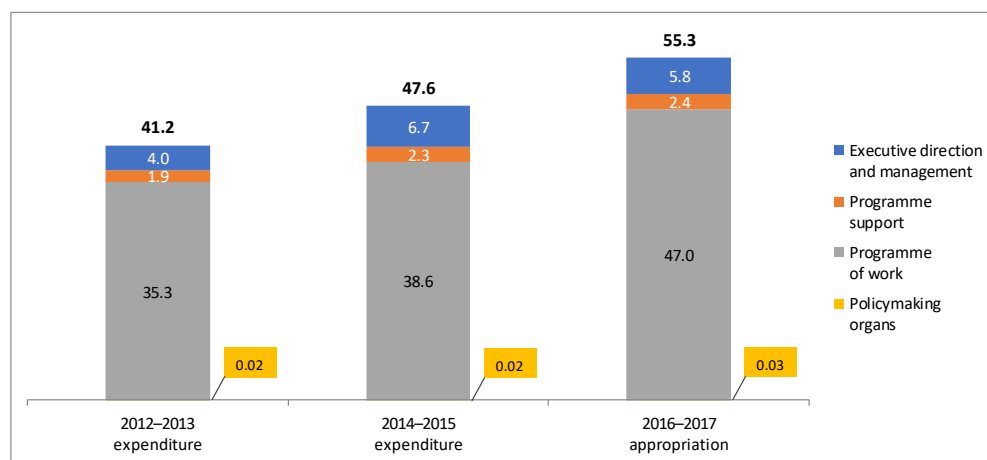
13. The budget of the Office has four components, corresponding to the areas described in figure I. The total 2016–2017 budget appropriations were \$55.3 million, that is 34.3 per cent larger than 2012–2013 expenditures and 16.2 per cent larger than 2014–2015 expenditures. This growth was mostly attributable to increasing levels of extrabudgetary resources, which in 2016–2017 were 90.1 per cent larger than the 2012–2013 expenditures. Figure II illustrates the growth of extrabudgetary resources, which by 2016–2017 represented a higher proportion of the financial resources of the Office than regular budget resources. Regular budget appropriations to the Office in the period 2012–2017 were, on average, 1.78 per cent of the regular budget resources allocated to political affairs, and represented 0.45 per cent of the total regular budget of the United Nations Secretariat.⁸

⁷ A/68/6 (Sect. 4), para. 4.30, and A/70/6 (Sect. 4), annex I.

⁸ See A/68/6/Add.1 and A/70/6/Add.1.

Figure I
Financial resources of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, by component, 2012–2017

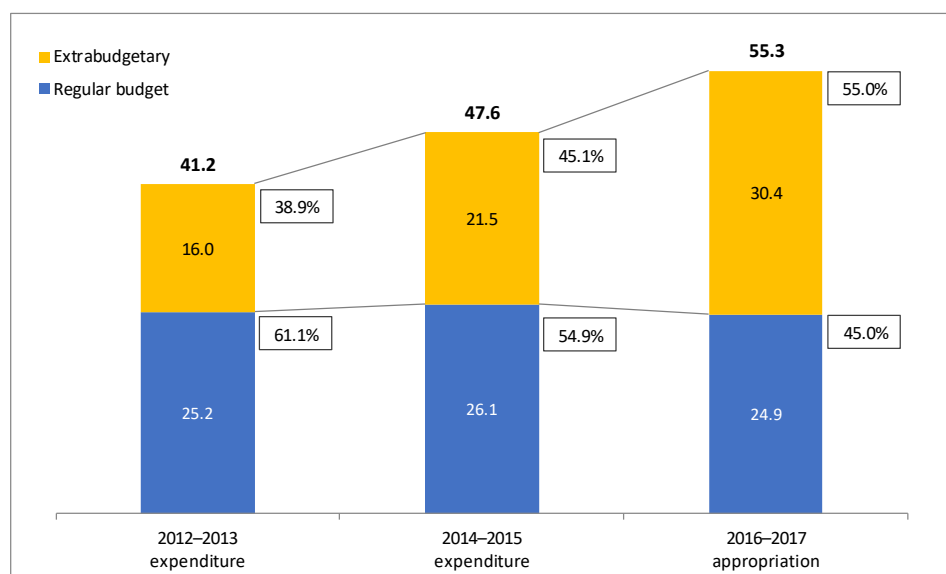
(Millions of United States dollars)



Source: OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division synthesis of A/70/6 (Sect. 4), A/72/6 (Sect. 4) and A/72/6 (Sect. 4)/Corr.1.

Figure II
Financial resources of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, by source (regular budget and extrabudgetary), 2012–2017

(Millions of United States dollars and percentage)



Source: OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division synthesis of A/70/6 (Sect. 4), A/72/6 (Sect. 4) and A/72/6 (Sect. 4)/Corr.1.

14. At the time of the evaluation, the Office maintained 60 established regular budget posts and four extrabudgetary posts. Table 2 provides an overview of the Office's posts from 2012–2013 to 2018–2019. In 2012–2017, established regular budget posts for the Office were, on average, 8.16 per cent of those for political affairs and 0.60 cent of those for the United Nations Secretariat.⁹

⁹ A/68/6/Add.1 and A/70/6/Add.1.

Table 2
Distribution of Office for Disarmament Affairs posts, 2012–2019

Budget component	2012–2013		2014–2015		2016–2017		2018–2019	
	Regular budget	Extrabudgetary	Regular budget	Extrabudgetary	Regular budget	Extrabudgetary	Regular budget	Extrabudgetary
Executive direction and management	8	–	12	–	12	–	11	–
Programme of work								
Subprogramme 1, multilateral negotiations	8	–	7	–	7	–	7	2
Subprogramme 2, weapons of mass destruction	8	–	9	–	7	–	7	–
Subprogramme 3, conventional arms	10	–	7	–	7	–	7	1
Subprogramme 4, information and outreach	8	–	9	–	9	–	9	–
Subprogramme 5, regional disarmament								
Regional Activities Unit	7	–	3	–	5	–	5	–
Vienna Office	–	1	–	2	–	2	1	1
UNREC	4	–	3	–	4	–	4	–
UNRCPD	3	–	3	–	3	–	3	–
UNLIREC	3	–	3	–	3	–	3	–
Programme support	3	–	4	–	4	–	3	–
Subtotal	62	1	60	2	61	2	60	4
Total	63		62		63		64	

Source: OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division synthesis of A/66/6 (Sect. 4), A/68/6 (Sect. 4), A/68/6 (Sect. 4)/Corr.1, A/70/6 (Sect. 4), A/72/6 (Sect. 4) and A/72/6 (Sect. 4)/Corr.1.

Abbreviations: UNREC, Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa; UNRCPD, Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific; UNLIREC, Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Operating context

15. The Office operates in a highly volatile political and security environment.¹⁰ Armed conflicts peaked in 2015–2016, with an average of roughly 50 conflicts per year.¹¹ Continued pursuit of nuclear technologies and weapons of mass destruction continued to create tensions at the political and technical levels, and to flout disarmament norms. At the same time, military expenditures increased by 0.4 per cent from 2015 to 2016. Overall, military expenditures amounted to roughly \$1,686 billion in 2016,¹² while illicit trade in small arms and ammunition continued to pose serious threats to international security and hamper the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, the rapid development – and weaponization – of new technologies constitute a pressing challenge to the disarmament mandate and international peace and stability.

Scope and purpose

16. Owing to the extended period since the last OIOS evaluation of the Office for Disarmament Affairs,¹³ the present evaluation was a full-programme evaluation, covering all areas of the work of the Office from 2014 to 2017.

III. Methodology

17. The evaluation employed a mixed-method approach featuring the following data sources:

(a) **Structured document review**, for example of statements of the High Representative and Member State representatives, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the First Committee¹⁴ and the Conference on Disarmament; relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions; and numerous publications and reports of the Office;

(b) **Secondary analysis of the Office's databases, programme performance and budgetary data**, such as the Register of Conventional Arms, the report on military expenditures and the disarmament treaties database; the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System; programme budgets; reports on the status of contributions to disarmament conventions; and relevant reports of the Secretary-General;

(c) **Web-based survey** of 123 Office staff representing all operational units;¹⁵

(d) **Semi-structured interviews** with 60 staff, representing all units of the Office; 45 Member State representatives and government officials; and 35 external partners;

(e) **Direct observations** of 13 multilateral negotiations and technical assistance activities¹⁶ led or supported by the Office, including by its regional centres, and encompassing all thematic areas (weapons of mass destruction, conventional arms and information and outreach).

¹⁰ Review of speeches of the High Representative.

¹¹ *Stockholm International Peace and Research Institute Yearbook 2017: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security, Summary* (Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, page 12.

¹³ E/AC.51/1999/2; see also E/AC.51/2002/6.

¹⁴ General Assembly, seventy-first and seventy-second sessions.

¹⁵ For a 52.0 per cent response rate.

¹⁶ Observation of seven multilateral negotiation events.

18. The evaluation faced two main limitations: (a) low staff survey response rate in one operational unit;¹⁷ and (b) few opportunities for extended interviews with participants of technical assistance activities. The evaluation addressed the first challenge by conducting interviews with staff from the low-response unit so as to triangulate and corroborate the survey results.¹⁸ The second challenge was addressed by reviewing Office participant feedback through post-technical assistance surveys.

IV. Evaluation results

A. The programme of work of the Office was consistent with its mandate and largely responsive to stakeholder needs, and its role as a trusted, impartial broker was recognized as its key comparative advantage

Programme of work broadly consistent with mandate and responsive to stakeholder needs

19. Considering its volatile operating context, the Office remained highly relevant at the broadest programmatic level. Beyond this level, the document review verified that all outputs and activities undertaken by the Office across its three pillars were also consistent with its mandate.

20. Evidence suggested that the Office was highly responsive to stakeholder needs and expectations. Interviewed delegates to the Conference on Disarmament and the First Committee, for example, reported that the Office had provided the required technical support and advice to enable their discussions and deliberations. Similarly, interviewed and surveyed participants in technical assistance interventions by the Office reported that these were relevant to their needs and in line with requests for assistance. All normative, technical assistance and information activities observed and reviewed were in line with the mandate of the Office and, where applicable, with stakeholders' expressed requirements. First Committee resolutions confirmed the importance and significance of the work of the Office under each pillar and the relevance of this work in helping delegates to deliberate, negotiate and implement disarmament mandates.¹⁹ Surveyed staff mirrored this sentiment: out of 40 respondents, 22 agreed strongly and 17 agreed somewhat that the Office had responded to all requests from Member States; out of 46 respondents, 15 considered technical assistance by the Office to have always supported its mandate, and 27 considered it to be so most of the time.

21. As one indicative measure of the alignment between the work of the Office and the priorities of Member State, a review of statements in the First Committee indicated that the seven most frequently mentioned issues discussed by Member States directly corresponded with those falling within the remit of the Office.

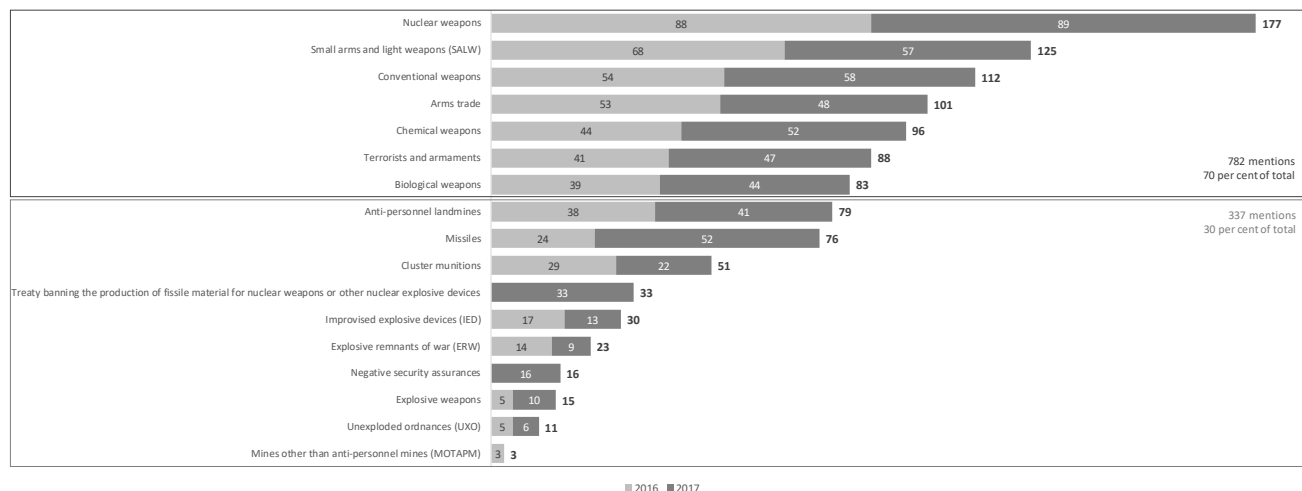
22. Figure III underlines this alignment.

¹⁷ Three out of 22 staff (13.6 per cent).

¹⁸ Nineteen out of 22 staff (86.4 per cent) interviewed.

¹⁹ General Assembly resolutions [71/74](#) to [71/77](#).

Figure III
Number of thematic mentions in the debates of the First Committee, 2016–2017



Source: OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division, review of General Assembly records, seventy-first and seventy second sessions.

Impartial broker role viewed as key comparative advantage

23. The United Nations has historically embodied a clear normative agenda on disarmament-related issues. Stakeholder interviewees overwhelmingly agreed that, in implementing its mandate within this broad normative framework, the Office had earned a reputation for impartiality, thus affording it a key comparative advantage as a trusted, credible partner. Specific ways in which the Office brought this impartial perspective to bear included: (a) its secretariat support for facilitating the deliberations on disarmament; (b) its provision of historical perspective and institutional memory; and (c) its provision of technical support, knowledge and capacity-building. Staff of the Office surveyed likewise assessed themselves as being impartial in the delivery of their mandate.

B. Despite the broad relevance of its overall programme of work, the Office lacked a deliberate, systematic and holistic approach to strategic planning, hindering its potential for maximum relevance

24. The Office has implemented a far-reaching mandate in a complex and volatile peace and security arena. In its normative pillar, it has supported multilateral discussions, facilitated agreements and supported the capacities of countries to better negotiate and implement global agreements in a diverse array of operating contexts, from facilitating meetings of the First Committee in New York to supporting the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. In its technical assistance pillar, it has built capacity through its education, dissemination and fellowship programmes on numerous issues and in widely divergent contexts, from supporting regions of largely growing middle-income economies where there is very little conflict yet security issues and conventional arms are key challenges (e.g. Latin America), to regions where diverse economies, conflict and post-conflict issues, humanitarian crises and development dynamics increasingly affect the response and priorities (e.g. Africa) and regions where diversity in terms of the population, economics and language and rising inequality prevails (e.g. Asia).

25. Further adding to this complexity is the broad stakeholder landscape within which the Office has implemented its work programme. In its normative and technical

assistance work, it has supported individual Member States with widely divergent agendas and thematic needs and it did so with a relatively meagre budget. The Office has also operated alongside a growing number of NGOs and civil society organizations working on similar areas of work as the Office, each with its own goals and often with overlap and in mutual competition with one another and with the Office for the attention of decision makers. In addition, the Office is called upon to coordinate its work with other international and regional organizations and with United Nations specialized agencies and entities in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation, including through the Inter-Agency Security Sector Reform Task Force, the Standing Committee on Women, Peace and Security, the armed violence prevention and reduction multi-agency programme and the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force.

26. This multi-subprogramme, multi-thematic, multi-function and multi-location nature of the Office illustrates the complexity of its operating environment and the challenges it faces in delivering its mandate. Against this backdrop, it has produced a work programme with a wide range of relevant outputs, within its niche of impartiality and specialized technical remit (see result A). At the same time, the Office has lacked a deliberate, systematic, holistic and detailed approach to strategic planning; one that, in view of these complexities, would help its work programme to not merely be consistent with its mandate, but rather to be critical to fulfilling the Office's mandate and most likely to contribute meaningfully to disarmament efforts, given its comparative advantage, limited resources and global needs and issues. Like all Secretariat programmes, the Office followed the formal strategic framework and programme budget processes. Unlike other Secretariat programmes, however, it did not undertake this detailed level of strategic planning work to help it more concretely articulate how it would deliver its work programme (what it would and would not prioritize moving forward and how it would achieve targeted results) in the most effective, efficient and relevant ways in the face of its multifaceted contexts, complexities, challenges, niche, assets and opportunities and relevant trends. Its Strategic Planning Unit, embedded within the Office of the High Representative, was not leading this type of strategic planning process; rather, it was mainly focused on analysis of emerging issues.

27. Given this strategic planning gap at the broad institutional level, at the subprogramme level individual organizational units' workplans were likewise lacking a systematic, strategic approach to planning. All offices and operational units possessed workplans of some type, but these varied in quality and detail. The workplans of the regional centres were largely output-oriented, with very little reference to systematic analysis of needs and priorities or a results-oriented approach, including implementation strategies or resource mobilization needs. Out of the three regional centres, the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean had developed the most comprehensive strategic plan for the last two cycles, although even this plan lacked specificity related to needs, complementarities and synergies. In this same vein, branch workplans and functional areas lacked clarity on synergies and complementarities. In interviews, staff acknowledged that some cross-branch complementarity and collaboration occurred; however, examples of specific, regular and ongoing synergies were not forthcoming. Workplan reviews confirmed that functions and branches lacked precision in how they supported and complemented each other's work, and specifically how they aligned to the programme vision, strategy and disarmament priorities.

28. Furthermore, while the activities and outputs delivered in each of the Office's locations were relevant to its mandate and stakeholder needs, they were frequently undertaken in a dispersed, siloed and, in some cases, narrowly conceived manner, without deliberate attempts at cross-referencing with other corners of the Office, or linkage to a broad vision or set of objectives of the Office, with a view to achieving maximum institutional relevance or maximum institutional results. For example, the

Vienna office was focused almost entirely on the women in disarmament initiative, with very little cross-fertilization with regional centres that were undertaking similar initiatives. Similarly, the focus of the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean on arms control and illicit trafficking of arms was undertaken with no real cross-referencing with activities of the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa on small arms and light weapons. While the Office anecdotally noted progress in collaboration between substantive branches and the Regional Disarmament Branch, including coordination of joint projects for specific topics, there were individual instances where the relevance of the Office was suboptimal when thematic subprogrammes focused more on logistical or travel arrangements for delegates to meetings than on substantive analysis to support the meetings. As a result, the disparate corners of the Office missed opportunities not only to align themselves around a shared vision and set of targeted results, but also to do so in an organizationally coherent, well-coordinated way, such as by maximizing the distinct assets, strategic partnerships and comparative advantage of each organizational unit, to achieve a sum greater than its parts.

29. In October 2017, the senior management of the Office undertook a visioning exercise to critically assess the Office's roles and functions. This initiative signalled the office of the High Representative's willingness to chart a clearer, nimbler strategic course. Although no physical output emerged from this meeting to indicate what concrete follow-on steps would take place to translate its key takeaways into concrete action, in early 2018 the Secretary-General launched a new disarmament agenda with the active involvement of the High Representative. This initiative represented a milestone which could ensure that this critical aspect of the Charter remains a visible component of the Secretary-General's agenda moving forward, and a potential remedial step to counter disarmament's absence from the restructuring of the peace and security pillar of the United Nations (see [A/72/525](#)). This broader organizational initiative presented a potential opportunity for the Office to follow suit and revisit its work through more systematic and creative strategic planning, framed around the new disarmament agenda and other key normative frameworks, as well as its strategic framework.

C. The Office successfully delivered on most of the outputs of its programme of work; however, the results of this work were only partly known, owing in part to a long-standing lack of systematic outcome-level monitoring, self-evaluation and reporting

30. A review of data from the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System suggested that the Office delivered its programme of work at consistently high implementation rates (89.0 per cent of 1,930 programmed outputs in 2014–2015 and 87.0 per cent of 1,876 outputs in 2016–2017) with the remaining 11.0 and 13.0 per cent, respectively, having been postponed or terminated for legislative reasons. Examples of its many outputs in each of its three functional areas showed that the Office:

- Facilitated 1,120 outputs/sessions of the disarmament machinery, including the provision of 1,593 parliamentary documents to the Conference on Disarmament, First Committee and Disarmament Commission, among others;
- Delivered at least 105 technical assistance outputs from 2014–2017, including 55 activities promoting dialogue and 36 awareness-raising events;
- Provided 194 information and outreach outputs, for example disarmament campaigns, exhibitions and events and distribution of publications.

31. Although the Office delivered its work programme in all thematic areas and functions, evidence of immediate, medium or long-term outcomes was not systematically or consistently available. This gap was in part due to the inherently unpredictable and frequently tumultuous international security climate in which the Office operates, where progress in the disarmament arena lies far outside its control. Within the normative pillar, all interviewed delegations highlighted the difficulty of reaching agreements or making any measurable disarmament progress, given that national security considerations take precedence over any well-intentioned efforts at reaching consensus on disarmament. Within the technical assistance pillar, interviewees acknowledged that no multilateral agreement could be successful unless norms are effectively implemented and enforced. In this vein, while some capacity might have been built in the short term, longer-term institutional capacity-building was viewed as requiring stronger institutional arrangements and sustained support. Finally, within the information and outreach pillar, awareness-raising and attitudinal changes were seen as requiring robust, sustained, multi-pronged efforts, and even then, these effects are not guaranteed because attitudes are often resistant to change. All told, therefore, measurement of the effectiveness of the Office was elusive.

32. Despite these inherent challenges, there is some evidence that the Office made noteworthy contributions in each of its three functional areas, as described below.

Normative contributions to decisions and resolutions of intergovernmental bodies

33. The Office helped to facilitate adoption of 230 resolutions and 13 decisions under the deliberations of the First Committee from 2014 to 2017. In this respect, the Office supported 2,315 action points as part of these resolutions and decisions: 677 calling for Member State action, 253 calling for action by the Secretary-General, 188 calling for general action, 66 calling for action by the Conference on Disarmament or the Disarmament Commission, 500 noting progress on results, 359 acknowledging issues, and 272 noting other disarmament action. Figure IV illustrates the number of First Committee resolutions and decisions adopted with facilitation by the Office by year and figure V shows them by thematic area.

Figure IV

Total number of First Committee resolutions and decisions adopted with facilitation by the Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2014–2017

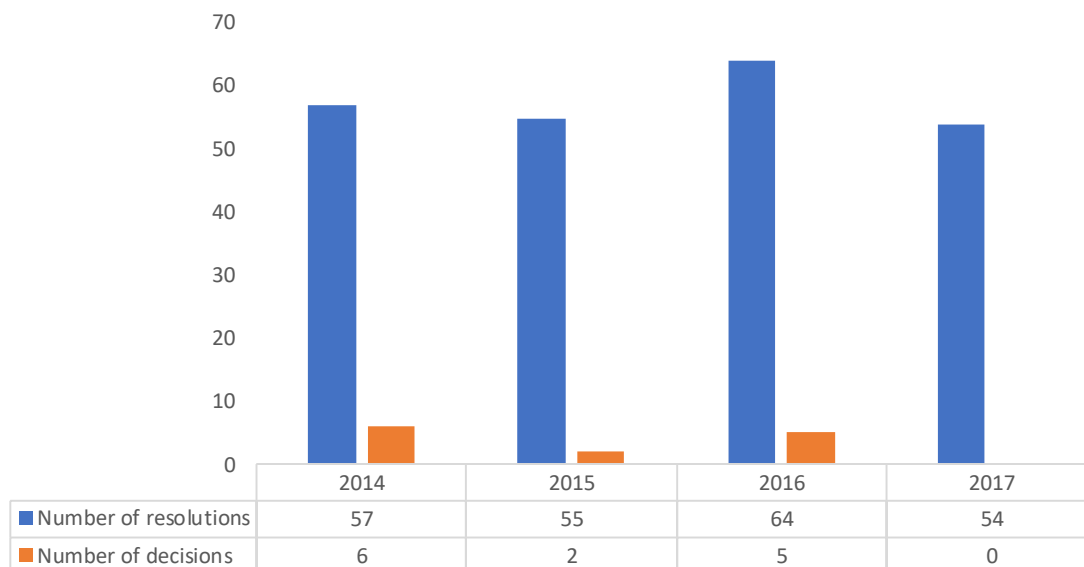
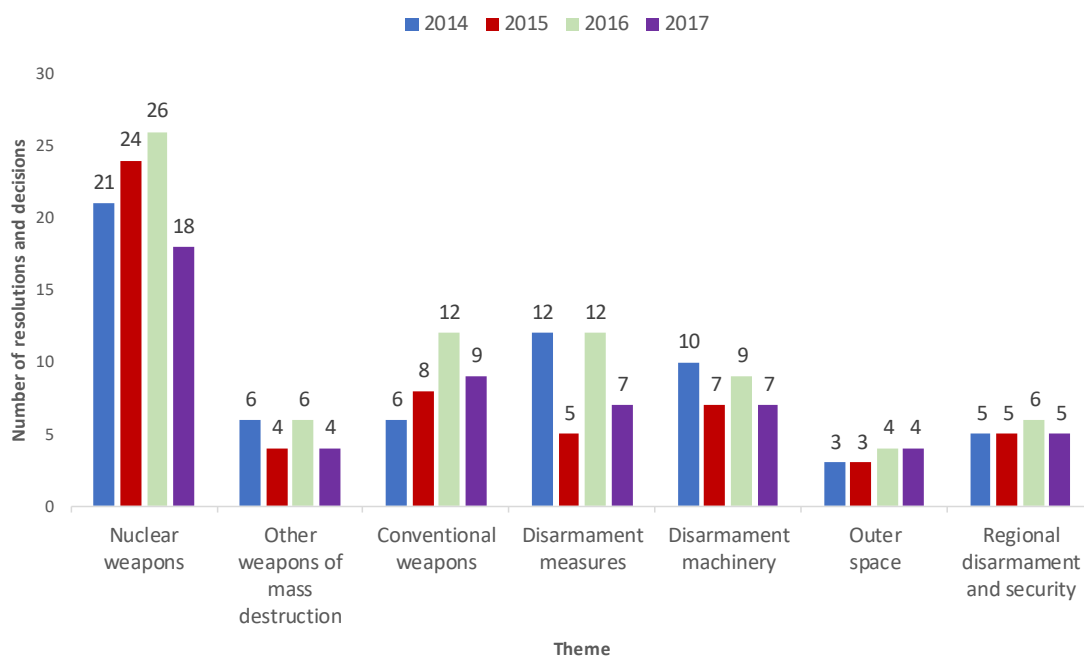


Figure V
First Committee resolutions and decisions adopted with facilitation by the Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2014–2016



Source: Review of deliberations of the First Committee at its sixty-ninth to seventy-first sessions.

34. With respect to global norms, the Office has facilitated discussion and agreement of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. In this area, while Member States acknowledged that the Conference on Disarmament was locked in a stalemate for decades, they noted that the disarmament machinery was not intended to be a “treaty factory”, but rather a “beacon for disarmament” with inestimable value. They noted the importance of the leadership of the High Representative and the Secretary-General in revitalizing the disarmament debate, helping to connect disparate disarmament forums and promoting dialogue and conversation through connection and dissemination. Within this context, they acknowledged the role of the Office as an impartial facilitator and expressed appreciation for its support promoting dialogue and discussion in the Conference on Disarmament and other forums.

Technical assistance contributions to capacity

35. Interviews at workshops observed by OIOS suggested that a majority of participants considered these events to be useful. Regional centres’ own survey data showed that 78 per cent of surveyed workshop participants expressed satisfaction with the quality and usefulness of their capacity-building interventions. Document reviews suggested that at least 42 countries had reported strengthening their institutional capacities and that at least 830 government officials’ technical skills were reportedly strengthened by capacity-building in areas such as arms control, forensic ballistics, private security and weapons of mass destruction, including on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). Advisory services on private security protocols, Council resolution 1540 (2004) and arms control reportedly informed drafts of national legislation as well.

36. On marking, tracing, stockpile management and destruction of small arms, the Office facilitated the integration and implementation of 17 standard operating

procedures into national systems, including improvements in the working conditions of firearm examiners. It claimed that its training of 1,450 government officials and assistance to relevant authorities in five countries contributed to the destruction of at least 62,000 small arms and more than 62 tons of ammunition, and marking of 1,400 small arms and secondary marking of more than 500. In line with Sustainable Development Goal 16, in one country the Office reportedly raised awareness among 800 adolescents about the dangers of firearms and provided assistance for a peace and disarmament education project which was incorporated into school curriculums reaching around 500,000 school children, half of them girls. Under the fellowship programme, the Office trained diplomats and delegations from some 100 developing nations, presumably enhancing their institutional and negotiation capacities.

Information and outreach contributions to knowledge and awareness

37. Document reviews suggested that outreach interventions possibly contributed to awareness of and interest in disarmament. Website traffic totalled an average of 47,000 visits per month. Overall, topics garnering the most attention were the arms trade, the use of chemical weapons and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Press and media covered at least 74 disarmament-related stories. Increasing requests for distribution of the disarmament digest by disarmament practitioners further suggested increased interest and awareness.

Insufficient outcome-level monitoring, self-evaluation and reporting

38. Beyond these anecdotal assessments of the work of the Office, tangible outcome-level evidence of the results of its work was not forthcoming. Such evidence would have included that action by the Office directly influenced agreements, resolutions and policies and their implementation and that such implementation resulted in concrete disarmament gains; that its technical assistance built institutional capacity in the medium and long term; or that its information and outreach actually enhanced awareness and knowledge among key decision makers (and those who seek to influence them) in any way. While the Office had some instruments in place to collect performance data, including outcome indicators and reports, many of these did not report on outcomes or fell short of providing a comprehensive picture of what the Office was and was not achieving (and why) across its work programme. Specific gaps included the following:

- Available project reports were mostly descriptive and provided reflections on the expectation that certain outcomes would be achieved, but seldom mentioned results achieved, let alone evidence to support results claims
- Regional centres lacked logical frameworks and associated results indicators to assess their performance, and their annual reports were output-oriented with minimal reference to results
- Subprogrammes had logical frameworks and results indicators, but these were likewise largely output-oriented and had limited results data
- Follow-up with fellowship programme participants to assess long-term effects was sporadic, selective and not systematic
- Workshop participants, like fellowship programme participants, were not systematically traced to assess skills development and use
- There was no user survey data on the publication work done by the Office, including on the disarmament information programme
- Social media use and data were not leveraged to their full potential.

39. In addition to not having the mechanisms to collect outcome data, self-evaluation practices to systematically assess programme performance by the Office were absent. There were nominal self-evaluation efforts beyond the formal compliance and mandatory self-reporting. At the subprogramme level, there were basic outcome assessment instruments to assess and discuss areas for improvement. This was also the case at the regional level. According to the OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division biennial monitoring and evaluation dashboard, while the Office had recently adopted an evaluation policy it had not been implemented. There was no evaluation plan and no evaluation function and the Office's monitoring and evaluation budget was marginal (0.015 per cent of the Office's budget) and even so, no evaluation outputs were documented. Despite the programme's reliance on extrabudgetary resources, donor-funded evaluations were limited as well. Given the capacity constraints faced by the Office, these gaps are not surprising; they nonetheless render the Office a negative outlier in the Secretariat evaluation landscape, a status further brought into relief by the Secretary-General's management reform effort, with its calls for strengthened self-evaluation focused on results and accountability and as a tool to strengthen management, learning and performance assessment for improved effectiveness ([A/72/492](#), paras. 103–105).

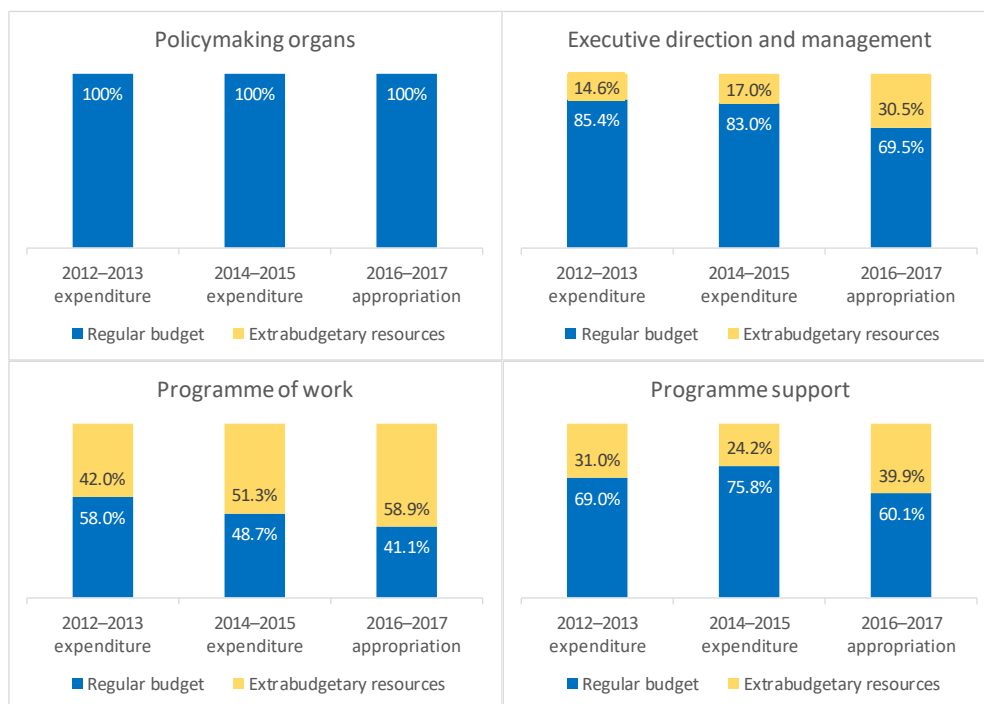
D. The Office implemented its workplan against the backdrop of a broad mandate coupled with unstable resources; however, it did not fully harness its considerable internal assets, structures and functions, or its external partnerships, to achieve maximum results within its existing resources

Work programme delivered with comparatively small budget; growing reliance on extrabudgetary funds and short-term contracts created resource instability

40. Budgetary resources at the disposal of the Office were small in comparison with most Secretariat programmes, yet the Office delivered 3,350 outputs between 2014 and 2017. As figures VI and VII illustrate, the Office accomplished a considerable portion of its core programme of work with increasing dependence on extrabudgetary resources, most notably for the weapons of mass destruction and regional disarmament subprogrammes. The inherently uncertain delivery of these resources created instability in the delivery of these subprogrammes and thus for the Office more broadly. Annual variations in voluntary contributions to the trust funds for the regional centres reinforced this volatility at the regional level. Figure VI speaks to this trend.

Figure VI
Funding of programme components of the Office for Disarmament Affairs by regular budget and extrabudgetary resources, 2012–2017

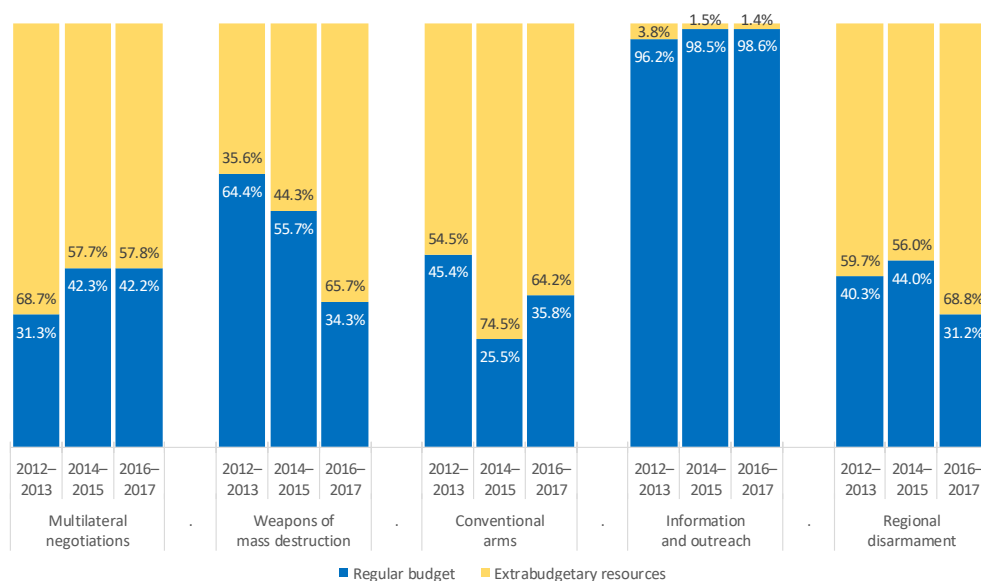
(Percentage)



Source: OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division synthesis of A/70/6 (Sect. 4), A/72/6 (Sect. 4) and A/72/6 (Sect. 4)/Corr.1.

Figure VII
Funding of subprogrammes of the Office for Disarmament Affairs by regular budget and extrabudgetary resources, 2012–2017 appropriation

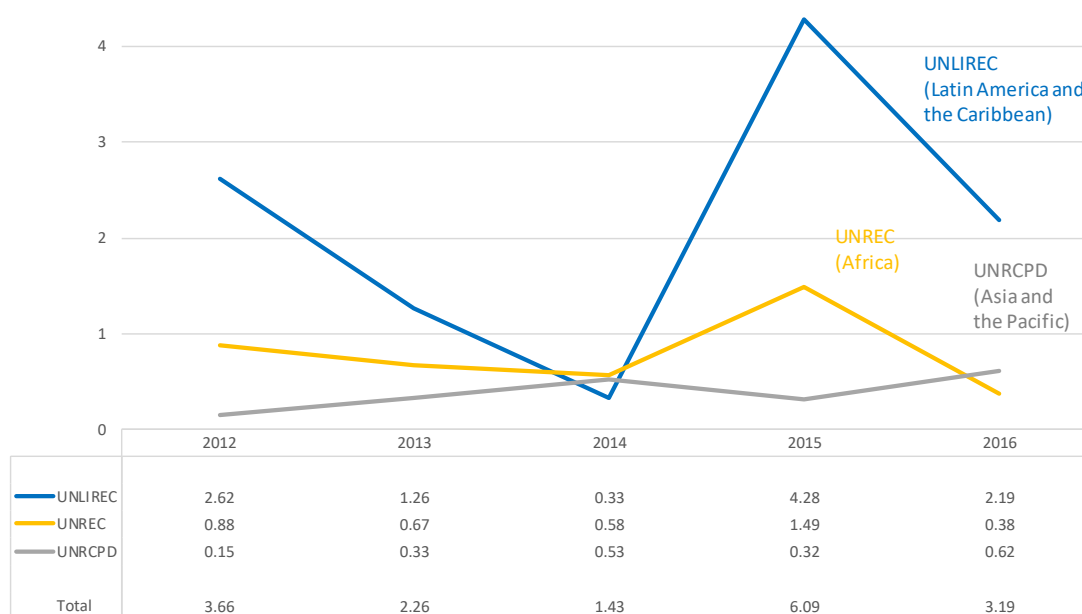
(Percentage)



Source: OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division synthesis of A/68/6 (Sect. 4), A/68/6 (Sect. 4)/Corr.1, A/70/6 (Sect. 4), A/72/6 (Sect. 4) and A/72/6 (Sect.4)/Corr.1.

Figure VIII
Voluntary contributions to regional centre trust funds, 2012–2016

(Millions of United States dollars)



Source: OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division synthesis of the reports of the Secretary-General on the regional centres.

Abbreviations: UNREC, Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa; UNRCPD, Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific; UNLIREC, Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

41. Interviews conducted at the three regional centres and in Vienna confirmed that extrabudgetary resources were critical for the delivery of these offices' core workplans. Little could have been achieved solely with posts funded from the regular budget, which were no more than four per location (see table 2). A large proportion of voluntary contributions supported non-post human resources (consultants and individual contractors), varying from four individuals at the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific to 19 at the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (see [A/70/6 \(Sect. 4\)](#)). These individuals mostly provided technical assistance and advisory services to Member States in the regions and were responsible for the disarmament education programme in Vienna.

42. Despite the importance of these individuals for the delivery of the work programme of the Office, their contracts were often short in duration (as short as three months) and their renewal was highly unstable and not always secure. This scenario was also characteristic of projects, which intrinsically took longer to be well designed and effectively delivered, as well as for thematic programmes, which often demanded a long-term approach in order to harvest results. Staff and external stakeholders emphasized the toll this situation exacted on output delivery, the corresponding risk to achievement of results and the impact on contractors' personal lives.

43. At the Geneva branch, a similar situation was aggravated in part by delays in the payment of extrabudgetary contributions. Arrears from Member States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional

Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (see table 3) jeopardized these bodies' mandates and the very existence of their implementation support units, particularly that of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. This problem lingered for years, but only surfaced officially after the adoption of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards and Umoja. Specifically, the high contracting parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons took measures to circumvent the result of the untimely payments, for example by suspending translation and interpretation services and cancelling one year's meetings outright to prioritize staff contracts over the meetings of the States parties. However, the risk of stalled functioning only increased: in late 2017, the contracts of the two Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons implementation support unit staff could not be renewed, and the unit would henceforth function only if other parts of the Office subsidized its operation by ceding staff, a solution which ran contrary to the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations. Document reviews and interviews suggested that this situation generated financial and reputational liabilities for the secretariat of the conventions and ultimately for the Office.²⁰

Table 3

Arrears of States party contributions to implementation support units

(United States dollars)

	<i>Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons</i>	<i>Biological Weapons Convention</i>	<i>Total</i>
Arrears up to 2016 (a)	48 005.92	82 354.28	130 360.20
Arrears in 2017 (b)	19 002.55	62 650.33	81 652.88
Total arrears up to 2017 (c = a plus b)	67 008.47	145 004.61	212 013.08
Overpayments (d)	3 673.04	568 812.45	572 485.49
Net cash (D minus C)	(63 335.43)	423 807.84	360 472.41
Increase in arrears in 2017 (b divided by a, percentage)	40	76	63
Arrears compensated with overpayments (d divided by c, percentage)	5	392	270

Source: OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division synthesis of Financial Resources Management Service of the United Nations Office at Geneva.

With no centralized fundraising support, offices away from Headquarters frequently left to ensure their own work programmes' continuation

44. Fundraising efforts by the regional centres, a function that is built into their mandates,²¹ were diverse, and produced mixed results during the period evaluated. Firstly, resource mobilization strategies varied from non-existent in some cases to well-developed, clear and concise in others, with larger regional centres being able to devote capacity to resource mobilization in the first instance, and thus able to raise more resources. (That said, divergent geopolitical contexts and donors' foreign policy influenced offices' resource mobilization success as well.) Secondly, resources did not always accrue based on pre-identified, evidence-based needs or on potential impact assessments, but rather on opportunity. In interviews and direct observations, no activities funded by these resources were deemed irrelevant outright. However,

²⁰ OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division report 2014/109.

²¹ General Assembly resolutions 40/151 G, 41/60 J and 42/39 D.

this situation reflected a donor-led, ad hoc approach to the activities of the Office, rather than a systematic analysis of the various security situations and scenarios directing technical assistance design and its associated resource mobilization. Thirdly, as shown in figure VIII, voluntary contributions did not flow equally to the three centres or in proportion to any variable such as population or geographic area covered.

45. A small donor base exacerbated the vulnerability of the regional centres. In the period 2014–2016, 21 countries and 7 international organizations donated to the regional centre trust funds, out of which only 11 countries and 1 international organization did so more than once. Three countries provided 69.3 per cent of these voluntary contributions. Alongside two international organizations, they supplied 81.8 per cent of these resources. The steep declines seen in figure VIII, such as for the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2014 and 2016 and for the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa in 2016, were the result of reduced or discontinued contributions from these five top donors.

46. Thus, while autonomous fundraising worked well in some instances, in others staff indicated that centres and other structures dependent on extrabudgetary resources such as the implementation support units could have benefited from Headquarters support. Potential areas of assistance they cited included needs assessment, costing of activities, formulation and presentation of proposals to donors (including in a joint manner to the same donor), systematization of donor reporting and strategies to broaden the sources of voluntary contributions (e.g. by organizing donor conferences). Some staff reported that the Office had experimented with fully centralized fundraising in the past, with disappointing results. There was no evidence, however, that the Office had systematically reviewed, assessed or evaluated this experiment with a view to fine-tuning it for greater utility.

Internal collaboration and cooperation not institutionalized

47. Document reviews and interviews indicated that the Office had not taken full advantage of its decentralized, multifaceted structure. There was evidence of horizontal and vertical collaboration across units, although it was not always formalized or institutionalized. Interviewees reported the use of regular meetings and teleconferences, but frequently indicated that they were not always sufficient or relevant for aligning workplans or activity delivery. Interaction between headquarters and other units was sometimes described as having been of low added value.

48. In staff interviews, collaboration was recurrently described in personal terms, instead of in relation to organizational structures or specific mandates of each unit. Whereas this type of interaction is common in small, collegial offices, it can become problematic when staff change posts or leave, or when individuals' personal relations do not lend themselves naturally to collaboration. Staff movements were frequent: out of 49 core staff at beginning of 2014, 14 had changed units by November 2017, and 20 had moved out of UNODA.²²

49. On a more fundamental level, there was not full clarity on how the Office harnessed its existing intangible assets, such as staff skills, knowledge and experience, and the complementarity of its functional areas to more effectively respond to its mandate.

50. Figure IX illustrates how staff do not see work division and collaboration as favourably as work prioritization. As noted in result B, although there could be “handover” from facilitation of multilateral negotiations and their implementation,

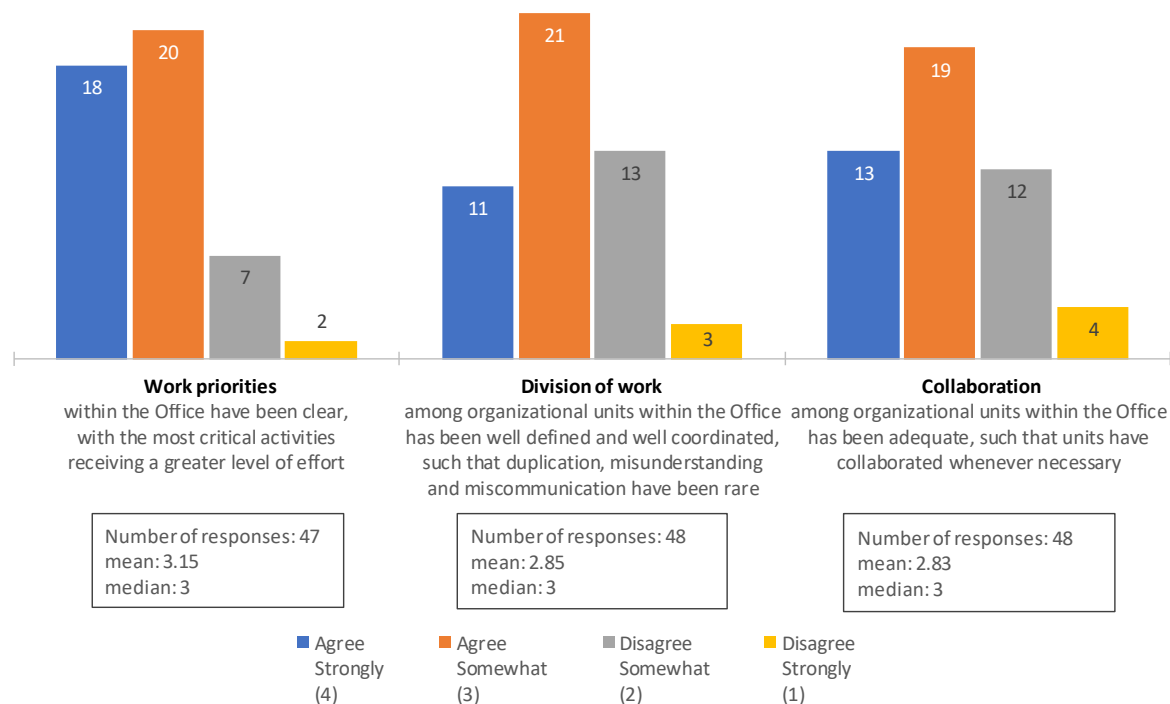
²² [ST/ADM/R.68](#) and staff list of the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

there was little to no evidence of coordination in practice, which possibly limited more effective responses to the needs of Member States and other stakeholders.

Figure IX

Perspective of staff of the Office for Disarmament Affairs on organization of work

How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the organization of work in the Office for the period 2014–2017?



Source: Staff survey.

Partnership opportunities missed

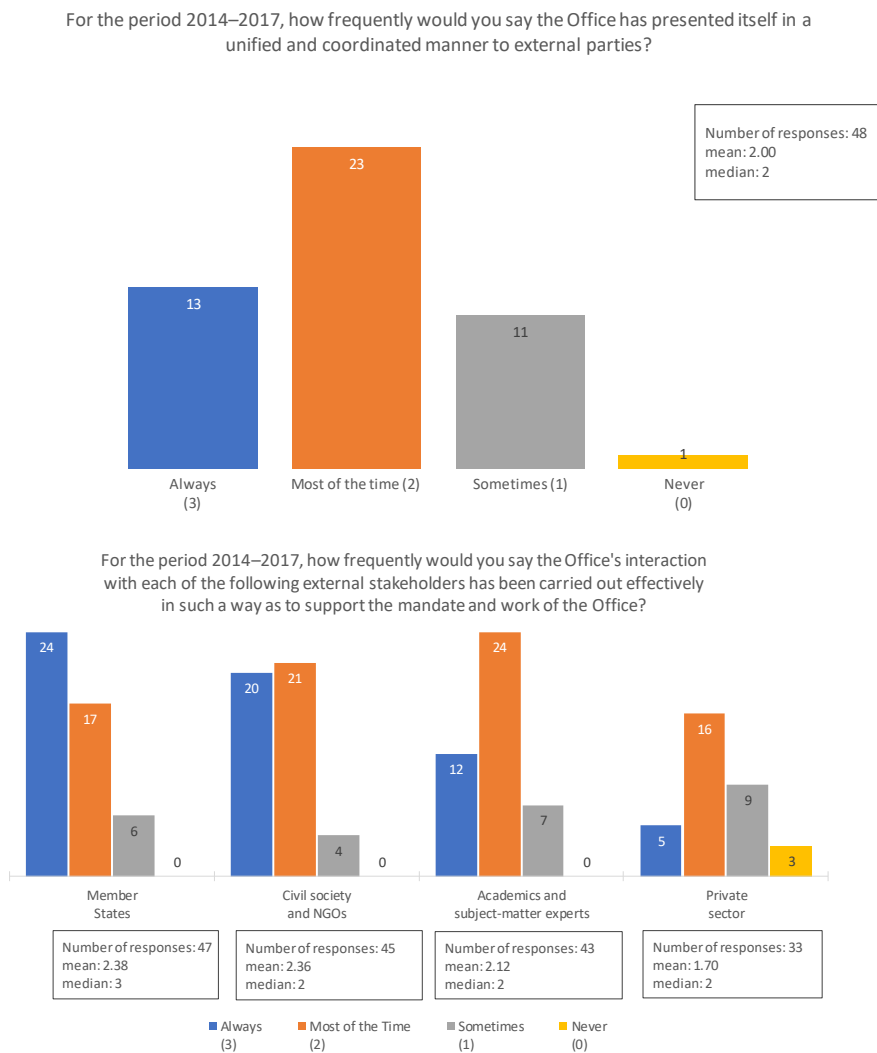
51. As with internal cooperation, collaboration by the Office with external entities within and outside the United Nations was intermittent. For example, the Office was part of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, led by the Mine Action Service, and the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean contributed to the United Nations Mission in Colombia, but little else was undertaken with other United Nations peace and security entities. The Office collaborated with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate on joint reports and presentations. With the Department of Political Affairs (including its special political missions), there was no evidence of joint work in analysis, monitoring or evaluation. The Office claimed to have collaborated with various United Nations entities and external stakeholders through the work of the Geneva branch and through inter-agency coordination mechanisms, including chairing the Coordination Action on Small Arms mechanism. However, the Office was absent from the United Nations peace and security pillar reform discussions altogether (see [A/72/525](#)), which was a missed opportunity to promote a collaborative disarmament agenda rooted in global security concerns.

52. Similarly, despite potential for joint work in analysis and technical assistance, both on weapons of mass destruction and conventional arms, joint interventions with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime were localized and sporadic.

Relationships with United Nations country teams and United Nations Development Programme country offices were frequently described as limited to logistical matters, although there were individual overtures to assist in the design of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and to seek linkages with global regional directors teams and regional coordination mechanisms.

53. By contrast, the Office for Disarmament Affairs interacted extensively with NGOs and other research institutions at both headquarters and regional levels, contributing to debates surrounding normative work and collaborating formally in the delivery of technical assistance and advisory services. Most staff rated these interactions positively (see figure X) and NGO representatives interviewed concurred with this assessment. Nonetheless, joint work with academia and private businesses was incipient. Interviewees suggested that enhanced external partnerships could help the Office to define its unique roles in a crowded field of disarmament actors and help to deliver its mandate in partnership with others in resource-constrained conditions.

Figure X
Perspective of staff of the Office for Disarmament Affairs on interaction with external stakeholders



Source: Staff survey.

E. While the Office made some limited contributions to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, it did not systematically frame its work in such a way as to concretely support their implementation; nor did it embrace a clear, explicit and value added role in contributing to discussions on relevant frontier issues

Some strides in defining its Sustainable Development Goal 16 contributions, and in engaging with others towards their realization, but gaps in embracing co-custodian role and in assisting Member State reporting

54. As mentioned in various working documents and recognized by external stakeholders and staff, the Office occupies a clear role in supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16 and especially target 16.4: By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime. Specifically, the Office was designated as a co-custodian, together with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, of indicator 16.4.2: Proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced or established by a competent authority in line with international instruments.²³

55. In this vein, the Office for Disarmament Affairs started to engage with other United Nations entities, Member States, regional organizations, NGOs and academia to define actions for Goal 16 and target 16.4 and to clarify concepts surrounding the indicator, as there was no unequivocal interpretation of it. It was likewise unclear whether and how the Office would facilitate national target-setting and whether and how it would redirect or reorganize its technical assistance. With regard to the indicator associated with Goal 16, its role as guardian of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the Register of Conventional Arms provided the Office with some of the know-how, tools and stakeholder relationships that can support reporting. However, as a precondition, many national entities expressed the need for capacity-building on data collection and treatment, a need the Office was still unable to fulfil. Initiatives by the regional centres on this front were either non-existent or exclusively community-based, an approach that might help with local engagement and with broader linkages to development but is not designed for statistical definition or data collection for national reporting. These initiatives interact with a larger comprehension of the Sustainable Development Goals, but neglect the national reporting aspect. To make progress on reporting, the Office for Disarmament Affairs partnered only with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime at the headquarters level and not at the regional level and there was no evidence of partnership with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (i.e. the programme tasked with capacity-building for sustainable development policy implementation).

Isolated activities on gender which, though relevant, not articulated in gender action plan

56. Somewhat less directly, the Office for Disarmament Affairs also has a role in supporting Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, which in turn is an extension of existing United Nations initiatives on gender mainstreaming.²⁴ Document reviews and direct observation suggested that the gender component of disarmament was tangential to the normative work of the Office, but somewhat more present in technical assistance and outreach activities. On the normative pillar, Member States or civil society generally led the

²³ General Assembly resolution [71/313](#) and Statistics Division workplans for tier III indicators.

²⁴ [E/2017/57](#) and Economic and Social Council resolution [2017/9](#).

few initiatives that took place. In the other two pillars, the Office usually dealt with gender in either stand-alone events and through projects where the gender components were integrated. There was great geographical imbalance in the volume of gender-related activity, with the Vienna office and the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean taking the lead. In the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship, Training and Advisory Services Programme, 54 of the 100 participants in the period 2014–2017 were women, the consequences of which might take time to appear.

57. Although the Office has had a gender mainstreaming action plan since 2003 (updated in 2016), none of the initiatives in 2014–2017 was explicitly linked to it. In addition, the Office recently clarified where the gender focal point structure resides within the Office.

Contribution to other Sustainable Development Goals not fully explored; approach to frontier issues unclear

58. As with Sustainable Development Goal 5, disarmament work can indirectly support other parts of the 2030 Agenda.²⁵ The High Representative publicly stressed the importance of the Office fully embracing the Goals in its work.²⁶ Beyond this broad pronouncement, however, document reviews and interviews revealed that the Office had not systematically explored its potential contributions to the achievement of the Goals other than Goal 16. Accordingly, alongside its absence of systematic strategic planning, the Office did not explicitly frame its work around the Goals.²⁷ Some stakeholders indicated that the Goals could help disarmament be better understood in contexts beyond conflict, such as in matters of crime and law enforcement, human rights or public health.

59. Beyond the Sustainable Development Goals, the Office did not define its position in relation to frontier issues in disarmament.²⁸ Though strongly debated within and outside the United Nations, these issues were only marginally explored in the Office and in a disconnected fashion, despite being one of its core functions. The somewhat unclear leadership role on this task fell to the Strategic Planning Unit; beyond this level, the role and involvement of substantive branches and offices away from Headquarters was variable and, in some cases, unclear. Interviewees suggested that the Office and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research enjoyed a positive professional rapport, for example, but there was no clear shared research agenda between the two entities. Partnerships with other United Nations institutes (such as the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute or the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development) were limited.

60. In the First Committee, Member States and NGOs expressed interest in emerging topics as varied as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, lethal autonomous weapons systems and threats originating from unlawful non-state actors. Despite the salience of these topics, it was not evident that the Office played an active role in issues such as preventive diplomacy among States, only a reactive one. The Office had a more active role on confidence-building issues. Staff emphasized the need for, and importance of, impartiality; however, many internal and external interviewees expressed that, although the Office is not to determine the disarmament agenda (this being the prerogative of Member States), it could, with no sacrifice to its impartiality or mandate, perform a stronger role in bringing together actors performing cutting-edge disarmament research. They also indicated that the Office could be a “brain

²⁵ General Assembly resolution [70/1](#), para. 35.

²⁶ Speech by the High Representative to the Conference on Disarmament on 26 February 2018.

²⁷ In document [A/71/6/Rev.1](#), programme 3, there was scant reference to the 2030 Agenda.

²⁸ General Assembly resolution [S-10/2](#), para. 123.

trust” or “thought leader”. This would go beyond providing administrative support to groups of governmental experts, as the Office currently does, and would imply a well-defined position in stimulating and shaping the disarmament arena.

V. Conclusion

61. Disarmament is a key pillar of the Organization, enshrined in the Charter. Since the last OIOS evaluation of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the disarmament arena has been marked by a heightened degree of complexity and volatility. Against this backdrop, the Office delivered a relevant programme of work during the period evaluated, one that showed some indications of effectiveness despite a comparatively small budget and unstable resources.

62. The period evaluated also witnessed a range of developments, from the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals to peace and security reform to an array of frontier issues that collectively shaped the future direction of disarmament. However, the Office had no strategic planning process in place to ensure that its programme of work is not merely consistent with its mandate, but rather is maximally relevant in light of these developments, its comparative advantage and its resources. It also lacked a robust monitoring and evaluation function to help ensure that, moving forward, the Office is not merely potentially effective, but rather also able to strive towards being maximally effective in achieving its targeted objectives; and that it is incorporating learning into future planning, resource mobilization and other forms of decision-making.

VI. Recommendations

63. The OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division made five important recommendations, which the Office accepted.

Recommendation 1 (results A–C and E)

64. The Office should undertake an integrated strategic planning process, leading to a strategic plan which identifies, at a minimum:

(a) The overarching vision and broad organizational objectives of the Office, framed around its mandate, the Sustainable Development Goals, the new disarmament agenda and other relevant foundational guidance (including on gender and relevant frontier issues), with due consideration of its strategic framework;

(b) The role each organizational unit and office will play in helping achieve each prioritized objective;

(c) How organizational units and offices will work together towards shared objectives, both horizontally (across headquarters units) and vertically (between Headquarters and decentralized offices).

Indicators: Strategic plan adopted and implemented.

Recommendation 2 (results A–C and E)

65. Based on the strategic plan, the Office should undertake the following actions, in order to ensure the plan’s successful implementation:

(a) A systematic mapping of internal assets and gaps, leading to the creation or reconfiguration of key functions, structural arrangements and/or overarching policies and strategies pursuant to the plan;

(b) Articulation of workplans for each organizational unit and office, rooted in a systematic contextual analysis, which identify the most relevant programmatic activities that will be pursued, in which specific regions and/or subregions and issue areas, and the support, partnerships and resources that will be required for successful implementation.

Indicators: Assets/gaps map produced, functions created or reconfigured and workplans produced, all in explicit alignment with the strategic plan

Recommendation 3 (results A–E)

66. The Office for Disarmament Affairs should develop and implement a strategy that defines its comparative advantage and role in helping to achieve Sustainable Development Goal target 16.4, as well as other relevant targets beyond that target, systematically maps its potential contribution to other relevant Goals and identifies how it will partner with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and others to ensure it adequately exercises its co-stewardship role over target 16.4 and brings its expertise to bear on any other Goals.

Indicators: Sustainable Development Goal strategy developed and implemented

Recommendation 4 (results C–E)

67. The Office for Disarmament Affairs should strengthen its monitoring and self-evaluation function through the establishment of a dedicated function, as well as the development of: (a) an evaluation policy; (b) an integrated monitoring and evaluation framework and risk-based evaluation plan, rooted in the strategic plan; and (c) revised monitoring and evaluation methodologies, toolkits, templates and tools for off-the-shelf stakeholder feedback and assessment surveys.

Indicators: Function established, and documents developed and implemented

Recommendation 5 (results C and D)

68. The Office should put forward proposals to States and high contracting parties to improve the sustainability of the Biological Weapons Convention and Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons implementation support units.

Indicators: Proposals developed and implemented

(Signed) Heidi **Mendoza**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services
March 2019

Annex*

Management response from the Office for Disarmament Affairs

Comments of the Office for Disarmament Affairs on the evaluation of the Office

Thank you for your memorandum dated 21 March 2018 and the draft report on your Office's evaluation of the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs has reviewed the draft report, as well as the OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division's reply to our extensive informal comments to the draft report that were provided earlier in March. The Office certainly appreciates the efforts by the OIOS evaluation team to meet and interview many of our senior managers and staff members of the five branches, three regional centres and our office in Vienna. For its part, the Office believes that it has extended its full cooperation to OIOS throughout the evaluation period.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs takes careful note and appreciates the observations, conclusions and recommendations made by OIOS. The Office, however, cannot fully subscribe to some of the observations and conclusions included in the draft report. The Office believes that a number of those observations and recommendations were inaccurately reflected or misinterpreted and require reframing. At the early stage of the evaluation, the Office had also requested advice from OIOS on how to enhance the monitoring and self-evaluation capacity of the Office given its small size, growing demands and lack of adequate human and financial resources. We are disappointed that this has not been included among the recommendations.

It should also be noted that some of the relevant recommendations provided in the draft report are already in progress or will likely be implemented by the time of the fifty-ninth session of the Committee for Programme and Coordination in June 2019 or by the triennial review of the Office's implementation of the recommendations in 2021.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Mr. Robert McCouch and his colleagues, Mr. Juan Carlos Pena and Mr. Thiago Sousa Neto, for their hard work during the past several months in evaluating the mandate and activities of the Office.

We look forward to receiving a copy of the final report.

* In the present annex, the Office of Internal Oversight Services sets out the full text of comments received from the Office for Disarmament Affairs. The practice has been instituted in line with General Assembly resolution [64/263](#), following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee. The comments have been reproduced as received.

Further comments on the evaluation of the Office for Disarmament Affairs

Further to the memorandum of the Office for Disarmament Affairs dated 29 March 2018 in response to the draft report on the OIOS evaluation of the Office, please find attached the Office's recommendations action plan.**

As mentioned in our previous memorandum, the Office for Disarmament Affairs does not fully agree with some of the observations and conclusions included in the draft report. Nonetheless, the Office has decided to accept all the five recommendations made in the draft evaluation report with the understanding that some minor adjustments will be reflected in some of the recommendations.

In addition, the Office would like to reiterate that while it strongly agrees with the recommendation to strengthen the Office's monitoring and self-evaluation capacity, this would seriously require additional human and funding requirements given the Office's small size and lack of sufficient resources.

Your keen attention to the above comments would be much appreciated.

** On file with the Office of Internal Oversight Services.