



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2023/077

Audit of phasing out human resources during the drawdown period in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

The Mission needed to ensure all erroneous termination indemnity calculations are corrected, continue to provide staff support and prepare a report on lessons learned from the human resources drawdown process

20 December 2023

Assignment No. AP2023-641-08

Audit of phasing out human resources during the drawdown period in the United Nations Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of phasing out human resources during the drawdown period in the United Nations Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The objective of the audit was to assess whether MINUSMA had established and implemented adequate controls to ensure effective phasing out of human resources during the drawdown period. The audit covered the period from 1 July to 31 October 2023 and included human resources functions and activities, namely: (a) human resources drawdown plan and communication strategy; (b) staff comparative review; (c) termination of staff contracts; (d) provision of staff support; and (e) administration of check-out process.

MINUSMA had established and implemented adequate controls to ensure proper phasing out of human resources during the drawdown period, including developing and implementing a human resources drawdown plan and communication strategy; establishing a Staff Management Group and conducting a comparative review process; and providing convenient and effective check out process to departing staff.

However, MINUSMA encountered certain challenges that needed to be documented as lessons learned for future drawdown and closure activities. These included: the absence of clear guidance on reversing a separation process that has already begun; and the limitations of ST/AI/2023/1, which resulted in the non-flagging for priority consideration for the recruitment of 154 of 574 staff members who had adequate years of service, competence, and integrity.

To facilitate the phasing out of human resources, the Mission offered to internationally recruited staff members an agreed termination with enhancement of termination indemnity. However, errors were noted in calculating the enhanced termination indemnity for 52 of 108 staff. If unaddressed, these errors could potentially result in overpayment of termination indemnity and compensation in lieu of notice totalling \$987,486. Further, MINUSMA had not organized job fair sessions to facilitate access of locally recruited staff to potential employers who could offer job opportunities.

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

- Prepare a report on the lessons learned from the human resources drawdown processes.
- Ensure all erroneous calculations of termination indemnity are corrected and memoranda of understanding are revised.
- Implement a national staff capacity building plan and conduct job fair sessions to provide locally recruited staff the opportunity to meet prospective employers and possibly find new jobs.
- Implement a mechanism to monitor the client support inbox to ensure staff members' queries and concerns are adequately addressed.
- Ensure that accountabilities are resolved by the staff who left the Mission without completing the check-out process, and review the completeness of personal information, and time and attendance certification of separated staff.

MINUSMA accepted all recommendations, implemented two of them, and has initiated action to implement the remaining ones. Actions required to close the recommendations are indicated in Annex I.

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Audit of phasing out human resources during the drawdown period in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of phasing out human resources during the drawdown period in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).
2. The Security Council, in its resolution 2690 (2023) of 30 June 2023, requested MINUSMA to immediately cease its operations and start an orderly and safe drawdown and withdrawal of personnel effective 1 July 2023 to complete this process by 31 December 2023. Subsequently, Mission liquidation will start on 1 January 2024.
3. Due to the cessation of operations of MINUSMA, the Office of Human Resources of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance issued revised policy guidelines on 1 August 2023 to guide and facilitate the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Human Resources Section (HRS) in implementing the administrative instruction on downsizing or restructuring resulting in termination of appointments (ST/AI/2023/1). The guidelines cover issues relating to human resources, including appointment renewals, terminations, leave administration, entitlement administration, retirement, and other matters during the drawdown and liquidation phases.
4. As of 28 July 2023, the Mission had 1,807 civilian staff, including 758 international staff, 854 national staff, and 195 national and international United Nations Volunteers. Per resolution 2690 (2023), the full withdrawal of international staff and national staff must be completed by 31 December 2023.
5. MINUSMA established an integrated planning working group composed of seven sub-working groups, including a human resources sub-group, to coordinate and conduct a safe and orderly drawdown. The HRS managed and coordinated the phasing out of civilian personnel. The Section was headed by a Chief at P-5 level, who was supported by 5 international professional staff, 14 field support staff, 20 national staff, and 1 national consultant.
6. Comments provided by MINUSMA are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

7. The objective of the audit was to assess whether MINUSMA had established and implemented adequate controls to ensure effective phasing out human resources during the drawdown period.
8. This audit was included in the 2023 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to risks in the phasing out of human resources following Security Council Resolution 2690 (2023) of 30 June 2023.
9. OIOS conducted this audit from August to October 2023. The audit covered the period from 1 July to 31 October 2023. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risk areas in the phasing out human resources functions and activities, namely: (a) human resources drawdown plan and communication strategy; (b) conduct of staff comparative review; (c) termination of staff contracts; (d) provision of staff support; and (e) administration of check-out process.

10. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel; (b) review of relevant documentation, such as human resources drawdown plan, communication strategy, memoranda of understanding on agreed termination signed by staff members, and records of attendance in capacity building activities; (c) analytical review of data on results of staff comparative review, Umoja records on staff employment details and staff check out information; and (d) using judgmental sampling, a review of 93 staff records to verify the correctness of termination indemnity, grant of additional indemnity, and compensation in lieu of notice.

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

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Human resources drawdown plan and communication strategy

The Mission took action to enhance the drawdown plan with established timelines, key milestones, and regular updates

12. MINUSMA developed a human resources drawdown plan and a communication strategy to keep all staff informed at all stages of the drawdown. A review of the MINUSMA human resources drawdown plan developed in July 2023 indicated that the plan included the main human resources functions as well as detailed activities such as human resources communications, staff management group, staff comparative review, time and attendance, benefits and entitlements, dependency and travel, among others. Each activity had an assigned activity owner.

13. However, there was no monitoring and reporting of the detailed activities status within the set timelines due to the volume and urgency of the drawdown activities. Eight of the 113 detailed tasks did not have established deadlines. In addition, the drawdown plan was incomplete as it did not inform the number of staff who would be reduced during the drawdown phase. This occurred as the list of posts to be abolished and retained and the date when this should take place had not yet been validated by all heads of divisions and sections.

14. As a result of insufficient monitoring and updating of the drawdown plan, critical activities such as review of time and attendance records, staff entitlements, and separation issues could be at risk of being overlooked or delayed, negatively impacting the success of the drawdown process. Given the urgency, on 9 August 2023, OIOS recommended immediate action for enhancing the drawdown plan by including timelines for all required activities, key milestones, and actions reflecting the departure of staff in tranches and establishing mechanisms to monitor its implementation. The Mission accepted the recommendation and implemented it.

MINUSMA developed a communication strategy and implemented its communication campaigns

15. MINUSMA HRS established a communication strategy that provided information and guidance on the drawdown process, administrative issues, and options leading to staff separation and reassignment. Various communication methods were used, including town hall meetings, broadcasts, human resources clinics, technical support for HR clients, and notification communications.

16. Implementing the communication strategy, the Mission launched campaigns to keep staff informed of the drawdown plans and activities. Communication campaigns for the Mission included 6 briefing sessions, 7 town hall meetings and 40 broadcasts. The town hall meetings and the broadcasts informed staff

on the conduct of a comparative review process, the need for validation of staff personal data in Umoja, staff support provided, measures taken by the Department of Operational Support (DOS) to increase the chances of selection of MINUSMA staff affected by the drawdown by other entities, and issues regarding pensions, health insurance, and education grants. OIOS concluded that the Mission had implemented adequate procedures to keep the staff informed about the drawdown process.

B. Staff comparative review process

MINUSMA established a Staff Management Group and conducted a staff comparative review for retention purposes; however, it needs to document lessons learned from the comparative review process

17. The SRSG for MINUSMA established a Staff Management Group (SMG) on 14 August 2023 to conduct a comparative review of staff based on their competence, integrity, and length of service to ensure to: (i) allocate staff into retention groups and subgroups according to ST/AI/2023/1; and (ii) inform staff of their placement in a group and subgroup and their score and ranking within that group. The SMG was composed of 12 members: 6 representatives from Mission management nominated by the SRSG; 3 representatives from the Field Staff Union (FSU); and 3 representatives from the National Staff Union (ASLAM). A member of the Group was selected to serve as chairperson. Additionally, seven representatives from DOS served as the SMG's secretariat, providing technical support.

18. OIOS analysis of the SMG comparative review report indicated that the review was conducted from 21 to 31 August 2023 and covered 574 of 758 international staff on the staffing table as of 28 July 2023. The comparative review excluded 184 staff members, as 33 were on temporary assignment, 97 had opted for agreed termination, 21 had been reassigned, and 33 were returning to their parent entities.

19. A review of comparative review results for 93 of the 574 international staff indicated that placement of staff members in retention groups was based on the criteria of competence, integrity, and continuous service¹ and points given as per the ST/AI/2023/1. SMG also placed staff members within each retention group in sub-groups² corresponding to their type of appointment: permanent, continuing or fixed-term appointment. Ranking within a sub-group was based on performance, completed years of service, nationality, gender, and mobility. The results of the comparative review were communicated to the staff for review and amendment where applicable.

20. However, interviews with SMG members indicated that the comparative process faced challenges:

- The number of staff who opted for agreed termination changed constantly, which delayed the comparative review process as SMG could not establish the exact number of staff to be excluded from the review process. For example, 18 of 115 staff members who expressed interest and received a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for agreed termination changed their minds.

¹ Competence is met when staff member has received an overall rating of “successfully meets performance expectations” or higher in each of the five latest performance evaluation cycles. Integrity is met when the staff member had no disciplinary measure imposed in the five years prior to the establishment of the SMG. Length of service is deemed continuous from the start of initial appointment in the United Nations common system provided staff was not separated from service.

² Retention groups are based on three criteria: competence, integrity and continuous service. Staff members who meet all three criteria fall under Group 1; staff members who meet only the criteria for integrity and continuous service fall under Group 2; staff members who meet only the criteria for competence and continuous service fall under Group 3; and staff members who meet only the criteria for continuous service fall under Group 4. The staff members in each group were sub-grouped according to their types of contracts in the following hierarchy: (1) permanent, (2) continuing, (3) two-year fixed-term, and (4) one-year fixed-term contracts.

- Staff members delayed validating their personal information in Umoja despite repeated reminders from the Mission. This delayed the comparative review process as SMG needed to review and verify the accuracy of the staff personal data.

21. At the time of the audit, the above challenges and other lessons learned were not documented, which would serve as inputs for improving future comparative reviews in other United Nations entities since MINUSMA was the first mission to implement the administrative instruction (ST/AI/2023/1) and policy guidelines on closure of entity. This occurred because SMG had yet to undertake the national staff comparative review in October 2023 before preparing a report on lessons learned.

(1) MINUSMA should prepare a report on the lessons learned, including challenges faced in the process of phasing out human resources during its drawdown period, and share it with the Department of Operational Support for future drawdown and closure activities.

MINUSMA accepted recommendation 1 and stated that the Mission would prepare a comprehensive report on lessons learned from MINUSMA drawdown and liquidation process. This report would include lessons learned from the phasing out of MINUSMA human resources. It needs to be noted that MINUSMA is a pilot Mission for the implementation of ST/AI/2023/1.

C. Termination of staff contracts

There was a need to ensure that erroneously calculated enhanced termination indemnities were corrected

22. The policy guidelines authorize the SRSG to decide whom and whether to pay indemnity enhancement³ in case of agreed termination of the staff members' appointments. It is imperative that the offer of enhancement complies with the principle that the total amount to be paid to the staff members upon termination of their employment, including the notice period, must not exceed the total amount that would have been paid if they had been retained until the end of their appointment.

23. On 9 August 2023, the SRSG, under his delegated authority, offered internationally recruited staff members holding fixed-term, continuing and permanent appointments an option for an agreed termination. The offer came with the enhancement of the amount of termination indemnity by 50 and 25 per cent.

24. OIOS review of the termination offers made by the Mission to the staff members during the drawdown process indicated that 108 staff members opted for agreed termination; 97 opted for the first phase with 50 per cent enhancement (2 with permanent appointments, 54 with continuing appointments, and 41 with fixed-term appointments) and 11 staff members (all with fixed-term appointments) opted for the second phase with 25 per cent enhancement.

25. A further review of the 108 MOUs and testing of the calculation of the termination indemnity identified the following errors:

- In 12 of 108 MOUs reviewed (6 staff members with fixed-term appointments and 6 with continuing appointments), the termination indemnity, enhancement, and compensation in the absence of an adequate termination notice period as indicated in the MOUs were excessive. The errors in calculating the enhanced termination indemnity were mainly due to non-consideration of the proximity of mandatory retirement age for staff members with continuing appointments, errors in staff members' entry on duty (EOD) dates, and erroneous application of the termination indemnity

³ Enhancement means to increase or improve and in this report context it means additional termination indemnity.

schedule. For example, one staff member had five years of completed service based on the EOD date in Umoja, while the MOU indicated 11.5 months of termination indemnity. However, to be eligible for 11.5 months of termination indemnity, 14 years of completed service are required. The errors in MOUs could potentially result in excessive payments of termination indemnity estimated at \$151,402.

- In 40 of the 108 MOUs reviewed for staff members with fixed-term contracts who opted for 50 and 25 per cent enhanced agreed termination, the total amount to be paid to the staff members, including the compensation in lieu of notice, exceeded the total amount that would have been payable had the staff members been retained until the end of their appointments. The offer of enhancement to staff members holding fixed-term contracts, which were close to expiration, did not comply with the principle mentioned in the guideline as each request was not considered individually due to the time pressure to expedite the human resources drawdown process. In all 40 cases, the fixed-term appointments were about to expire within 1 to 3 months. However, contrary to the guideline, the Mission considered the staff members' retirement age to calculate the enhancement. As a result, the Mission signed MOUs with staff members to pay additional indemnity estimated at \$836,084.

26. The above errors in MOUs totaling \$987,486 created false expectations for staff members. OIOS alerted the HRS about the errors in the MOUs and HRS started the process of correcting the errors by informing concerned staff members about the correct amounts of termination indemnity to which they would be entitled and obtaining their signature on a revised MOU. Although some errors could have been avoided by validating the staff data, the excess amount to be paid for fixed-term contract holders' agreed termination could be included in the lessons learned report as suggested in recommendation 1.

(2) MINUSMA should ensure all erroneous calculations are corrected and memoranda of understanding are revised to reflect correct amounts of indemnity.

MINUSMA accepted recommendation 2 and stated that the Mission would take action to correct all erroneous calculations and accordingly revise memoranda of understanding. The Mission will request adjustment to the guidelines to reflect the use of retirement age for the calculation of agreed termination.

It was necessary to provide sufficient notice of termination to staff members holding continuing appointments

27. As per UN Staff Regulations and Rules (ST/SGB/2023/1), the HRS sent notices of termination, signed by the SRSG, to staff members on 1 September 2023, informing them of their close of business (COB) date or effective date of termination. Based on an analysis of the termination dates by OIOS, 25 staff members with continuing appointments were not provided with adequate notice period as their termination dates were within three months after 1 September 2023. HRS used termination dates suggested by Section Chiefs without considering the three-month notice requirement for continuing staff members.

28. As a result, MINUSMA would be obligated to pay compensation to the affected staff members equivalent to three months of salary in lieu of notice. OIOS alerted Human Resources about those staff members who had not received adequate notice periods. HRS obtained approval from the Head of Mission to send revised termination notices with amended termination dates and to place them on special leave with full pay. Based on the action taken by MINUSMA, OIOS did not make a recommendation.

Reversing a separation process that has already begun requires clear policy guidance

29. In the policy guidelines for closure of entities, the termination indemnity is intended to compensate staff for the loss of expectation of continued employment caused by premature separation from service. In cases where the notice period cannot be served, compensation in lieu of notice will be paid.

30. Based on an analytical review of records of 97 staff who opted for agreed termination and an interview conducted by OIOS with HRS staff, OIOS noted that 2 staff members who initiated their retirement and resignation processes before the Mission announced its offer for agreed termination withdrew their approved separation requests to take advantage of the termination indemnity.

31. In one instance, upon reaching the age of the acquired right to normal retirement, a staff member submitted a resignation letter dated 27 February 2023 expressing an intention to retire on 30 June 2023. The HRS initiated a check out memo on 1 April 2023 and completed it on 30 May 2023. The relocation grant was paid in Umoja, and repatriation tickets were issued for 1 July 2023. However, as approved by the relevant supervisors of the staff member and Director of Mission Support, on 29 June 2023, the staff member rescinded the retirement request and revoked the travel arrangements and other separation actions. To facilitate the drawdown process, MINUSMA offered a 50 per cent enhancement (increase) in termination indemnity to staff members opting for agreed termination on or before 15 August 2023. After withdrawing the retirement request, the staff member signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for an agreed termination on 21 August 2023, or 53 days after revoking a previous retirement decision. An estimated \$108,990 of indemnity and three months' compensation in lieu of notice was included in the MOU.

32. In another instance, a staff member resigned on 13 July 2023 to terminate a fixed-term contract. On 10 August 2023, after the checkout process had advanced, the staff member wrote a memorandum withdrawing the resignation letter. On 14 August 2023, or four days after revoking a previous decision to resign, the staff member sent an email to HRS signifying and confirming his interest in agreed termination with 50 per cent enhancement. He signed an MOU on agreed termination on 24 August, which indicated that the staff member's fixed-term appointment was terminated effective 31 August 2023, or two days before 2 September 2023 (the contract expiration date), and the staff member will receive a termination indemnity of an estimated \$61,226 and one-month compensation in lieu of notice.

33. The above instances occurred due to the absence of: (a) a cut-off period within which staff members who started separation procedures may be allowed to rescind a separation decision; and (b) a policy qualifying or disqualifying staff members who revoked a separation decision to opt for an agreed termination immediately after that. This could be perceived as unfair by other staff members. Financial implications, in terms of termination indemnity, enhancement and compensation in lieu of notice, could also have been minimized. This could also be included in the lessons learned report suggested in recommendation 1 for possible policy revisions.

D. Provision of staff support

Need to continue capacity-building activities and hold job fairs for locally recruited staff

34. MINUSMA conducted four career development training sessions at the Integrated Mission Training Center (IMTC) from 1 July to 31 October 2023. Among 854 national staff, 472 participated in 4 training courses on writing personal history profiles and curriculum vitae (PHP/CV), 224 participated in five sessions on competency-based interviews, 77 participated in Basic Awareness of Entrepreneurship Skills, and 35 participated in an international computer driving license course. The Director of Mission

Support approved a comprehensive national staff capacity-building programme, which includes training courses on project management, entrepreneurial skills, and logistics support skills. The programme will be implemented in November 2023.

35. However, MINUSMA has not held a job fair session in Bamako to facilitate access to potential employers who can offer job opportunities to national staff. The HRS did not provide updates on when the Bamako job fair session would be held. The Organization could be exposed to reputational risks if it fails to support locally recruited staff in building their capacities and enhancing their employment opportunities after separation.

(3) MINUSMA should implement its plan to assist locally recruited staff in exploring employment opportunities by implementing its national staff capacity-building plan and conducting job fair sessions to provide locally recruited staff with the opportunity to meet prospective employers and possibly find new jobs.

MINUSMA accepted recommendation 3 and stated that The Mission Human Resources Section would spearhead the conduct of job fair sessions with the assistance of other sections and in cooperation with Malian Transition Government; and the Integrated Mission Training Center would implement the approved national staff capacity building plan.

Staff support was provided by MINUSMA and the Department of Operational Support, but the timing of recruitment support to international staff needs to be re-examined

36. As required by the Human Resources operational guide for entity closures, when Security Council Resolution 2690 (2023) instructed MINUSMA to cease operations and begin a drawdown process on 1 July 2023, the Mission started broadcasting job openings in other UN agencies, funds and programmes. Broadcasts were intended to assist internationally recruited staff losing their MINUSMA posts in looking for jobs. This was a reasonable and good-faith effort to find alternative placements for downsized MINUSMA staff on vacant positions across the Secretariat.

37. In addition, to support international staff affected by MINUSMA's drawdown and liquidation, the Under-Secretary-General (USG) for DOS, in a memorandum dated 19 July 2023, requested all heads of entities at the United Nations Secretariat to take the following actions to increase selection chances for MINUSMA staff: (i) advertise all vacant positions subject to international recruitment immediately by 15 August 2023; (ii) advertise all positions subject to international recruitment occupied by staff who will reach the mandatory age of separation on or before 31 December 2023 no later than 15 August 2023; and (iii) advertise immediately no later than 29 September 2023 any positions subject to international recruitment occupied by staff members projected to exhaust all their sick leave with full pay by 31 December 2023. All heads of entities were reminded in the same letter that they had an organizational responsibility to implement the downsizing policy, to review any downsized candidates flagged for priority consideration in Inspira before any other candidates and to select them if suitable.

38. MINUSMA SMG completed the staff comparative review on 31 August 2023, and staff members were flagged for priority consideration in Inspira, effective 1 September 2023. As the Secretariat entities started advertising job openings immediately after 19 July 2023, when MINUSMA international civilian staff members were not yet flagged for priority consideration in Inspira, it was possible that MINUSMA staff did not receive priority consideration for job openings that expired prior to 1 September 2023. MINUSMA tracked the absorption rate of MINUSMA staff by various United Nations entities, which showed that 164 of 574 (28 per cent) had been selected as of 3 November 2023. The Mission could incorporate the importance of timing of recruitment support to international staff in the lessons learned report.

There was a need to revisit priority consideration for flagging of staff members with fixed-term appointments

39. In accordance with the ST/AI/2023/1, the Mission flagged⁴ 420 of 574 staff members in Inspira for priority consideration for selection by other United Nations entities. These consisted of 154 staff members holding continuing appointments, 2 staff members having permanent appointments, and 264 staff members on fixed-term appointments whose appointments were terminated before the expiration. The staff members holding continuing and permanent appointments were flagged for three months, whereas those with fixed-term appointments were flagged for one-month, effective 1 September 2023.

40. Although the decision to flag the 420 staff members complied with ST/AI/2023/1, it did not consider staff member's length of service, competence, and integrity, which were essential to retain highly experienced staff. The criteria for flagging solely regarded staff member's contract expiration and termination dates. As a result, 154 staff members were not flagged for priority consideration, including 111 who had more than five years of experience. In contrast, 74 of 420 staff members who had been flagged for prioritization had less than five years of experience. Concerned staff members had seriously contested this during town hall meetings since it excluded them from being flagged for priority consideration.

41. Providing priority consideration to the 154 staff with fixed-term appointments would have aligned with the Organization's principle of fair treatment for its workforce. Furthermore, flagging for priority consideration would not entail any additional cost to the Organization. Moreover, the Organization could lose experienced, dedicated, and long-serving staff members who were not prioritized.

42. The documentation of the lessons learned should include the impacts of the non-flagging decision on staff with non-renewable fixed-term appointments to minimize staff dissatisfaction and prioritize the retention of highly experienced staff.

Monitoring and managing the client support inbox was necessary

43. As part of its role, the HRS provides guidance, advice, and responses to queries and complaints. For such purposes, the HRS has a Client Support Unit (CSU) that provides staff support. The Regional Service Center in Entebbe (RSCE) provided support as the Mission expected increased queries from affected staff. The Unit had a dedicated client support email account to address Mission staff's queries and complaints. The Mission advised staff with human resources questions to contact the Human Resources Team in MINUSMA at this email address, which can be accessed by three HRS staff who had other primary responsibilities.

44. OIOS review of the HRS client support email inbox on 9 November 2023 indicated that there were 2,286 email-queries received from MINUSMA staff, of which 541 emails still needed to be read. No mechanism was established to ensure that the emails opened were responded to as the Unit did not have a dedicated staff member to monitor the client support inbox. In addition to their other human resource duties, CSU staff were made jointly responsible for the inbox, leaving them little time to read the emails received from clients. According to the HRS, the queries from staff members mainly included clarifications about agreed termination, pension fund, and all types of leaves. Therefore, there was an unmitigated risk that staff members' queries were not timely addressed.

⁴ Flagging means to mark a staff member in Inspira for priority consideration by other United Nations entities recruiters.

- (4) MINUSMA Human Resources Section should implement a mechanism to monitor the client support inbox to ensure staff members' queries and concerns are adequately addressed.**

MINUSMA accepted recommendation 4 and stated that the Mission had implemented a mechanism to monitor the client support inbox. A dedicated client support team lead by a staff at P4 level had been assigned to monitor the client support inbox. The team provides oversight of the client support inbox and offers additional in-person resolution of clients' issues. The presence of a dedicated team leader has boosted capacity of the team and has provided for a timely response to clients.

E. Administration of check-out process

Check-out procedures were not properly completed by staff before they left the Mission

45. As part of the check-out process, staff members were required to return all equipment and property issued to them to the appropriate authorization group. Staff members are responsible for reporting lost, damaged, or accident-related items to Security and obtaining a security incident report before checking out. In addition, the HRS should ensure that the attendance record of the staff member is complete to allow any leave more than the staff's annual or sick leave entitlement to be reflected in their final pay.

46. MINUSMA established a one-stop check-out center where departing Mission staff could complete their check-out process with a checklist to guide them through the check-out process. OIOS review of a report extracted by HRS from the Field Support Suite indicated that the Section initiated the check-out process for 294 international staff from 1 June to 2 October 2023 and noted that 61 had pending issues and were not completely cleared from accountabilities. Twenty-nine of the 61 staff with pending issues had left the Mission area of operations despite not having settled their pending accountabilities. HRS informed that the accountabilities consisted of non-return of MINUSMA assets which were issued to staff.

47. A review of Umoja records for 93 of the 233 staff members who were approved for check-out indicated that all provided bank details; however, 18 staff members did not provide their telephone numbers, four staff members did not provide their addresses, and 25 staff did not certify their timesheets in Umoja completely.

48. The above occurred because HRS did not ensure that staff members checking out completely provided the required personal information and completely certified their time and attendance records in Umoja. Thus, there was a risk that final payments to these staff could be delayed.

- (5) MINUSMA Human Resources Section should: (a) review the nature of accountability that prevented clearance from being granted to staff members who left the Mission without completing the check-out process and ensure that accountabilities are resolved by the staff concerned; and (b) review Umoja records of staff who have been separated and ensure completeness of their personal information, time and attendance certificates.**

MINUSMA accepted recommendation 5 and stated that MINUSMA Human Resources Section has strengthened controls over the checkout process and timely addressed deficiencies noted. A staff at FS-5 level had been assigned to monitor the check-out process and take step to resolve incomplete check out cases.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

49. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of MINUSMA 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 phasing out human resources during the drawdown period in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁵ / Important ⁶	C/ O ⁷	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁸
1	MINUSMA should prepare a report on the lessons learned, including challenges faced in the process of phasing out human resources during its drawdown period, and share it with the Department of Operational Support for future drawdown and closure activities.	Important	O	Report on lessons learned from the Mission's drawdown and liquidation process.	28 February 2024
2	MINUSMA should ensure all erroneous calculations are corrected and memoranda of understanding are revised to reflect correct amounts of indemnity.	Important	O	Evidence of the revision of memoranda of understanding to reflect correct amounts of termination indemnity	31 December 2023
3	MINUSMA should implement its plan to assist locally recruited staff in exploring employment opportunities by implementing its national staff capacity-building plan and conducting job fair sessions to provide locally recruited staff with the opportunity to meet prospective employers and possibly find new jobs.	Important	O	Evidence of the conduct of job fair sessions and implementation of the national staff capacity-building plan	31 December 2023
4	MINUSMA Human Resources Section should implement a mechanism to monitor the client support inbox to ensure staff members' queries and concerns are adequately addressed.	Important	C	Action completed	Implemented
5	MINUSMA Human Resources Section should: (a) review the nature of accountability that prevented clearance from being granted to staff members who left the Mission without completing the check-out process and ensure that accountabilities are resolved by the staff concerned; and (b) review Umoja records of staff who have been separated and ensure completeness of their personal information, time and attendance certificates.	Important	C	Action completed	Implemented

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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.

⁷ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁸ Date provided by MINUSMA in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I



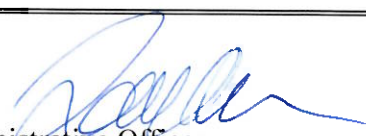
Management Response



FACSIMILE

15 December 2023

Reference: MINUSMA/ODMS/2023/303

TO: Mr. Byung-Kun, Director Peace keeping audit service. Internal Audit Division, OIOS	FROM: Anton Antchev Director of Mission Support
ATTN: Mr. Seydou Sirpe Chief Resident Auditor Bamako	
FAX #: TEL #:	FAX #: Email: MINUSMA-mars@un.org TEL #:
SUBJECT: MINUSMA response to a draft report on an audit of phasing out human resources during the drawdown period in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (Assignment No. AP2023-641-08)	
Total number of transmitted pages including this page: 3	
<p><i>Reference Facsimile, IAD-23/641/08, dated 4th December 2023 and, Peacekeeping Audit Service, OIOS, memorandum of 4th December 2023 OIOS-2023-012196</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. In reply to the referenced correspondence, please find attached MINUSMA's Management Response to the OIOS findings and recommendations, as presented in the subject report.2. Note has been taken of the areas warranting the Mission's attention, and an action plan for implementing the recommendations issued is attached. <p>Best regards.</p>	
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Management Response

Audit of phasing out human resources during drawdown period in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (AP2023-641-08)

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	MINUSMA should prepare a report on the lessons learned, including challenges faced in the process of phasing out human resources during its drawdown period, and share it with the Department of Operational Support for future drawdown and closure activities.	Important	Yes	Chief Human Resources Section	28 February 2024	The Mission will prepare a comprehensive report on lessons learnt from MINUSMA drawdown and liquidation process. The report will include lessons learned from the phasing out of MINUSMA human resources. It is to be noted that MINUSMA is a pilot Mission for the implementation of ST/AI/2023/1
2	MINUSMA should ensure all erroneous calculations are corrected and memoranda of understanding are revised to reflect correct amounts of indemnity.	Important	Yes	Chief Human Resources Section	31 December 2023	The Mission will take action to correct any erroneous calculations and accordingly revise memoranda of understanding. The Mission will request adjustment to the guidelines to reflect the use of retirement age for the calculation of agreed termination.
3	MINUSMA should implement its plan to assist locally recruited staff in exploring employment opportunities by implementing its national staff capacity-building plan and conducting job fair sessions to provide locally recruited staff with the opportunity to meet prospective employers and possibly find new jobs.	Important	Yes	Chief Human Resources Section	31 December 2023	The Mission Human Resources Section will spearhead the conduct of job fair sessions with the assistance of other Sections and in cooperation with Malian Transition Government, and the Integrated Mission Training Center will implement the approved national staff capacity building plan.
4	MINUSMA Human Resources Section should implement a mechanism to monitor the client support inbox to ensure staff	Important	Yes	Chief Human Resources Section	Implemented	The client support inbox is monitored by a dedicated client support team lead by a staff at P4 level. The team

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.

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Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
	members' queries and concerns are adequately addressed.					provides oversight of the client support inbox and offers additional in-person resolution of clients' issues. The presence of a dedicated team leader has boosted capacity of the team/unit and has provided for a timely response to clients.
5	MINUSMA Human Resources Section should: (a) review the nature of accountability that prevented clearance from being granted to staff members who left the Mission without completing the check-out process and ensure that accountabilities are resolved by the staff concerned; and (b) review Umoja records of staff who have been separated and ensure completeness of their personal information, time and attendance certificates.	Important	Yes	Chief Human Resources Section	Implemented	MINUSMA Human Resources Section has strengthened controls over the checkout process to address timely the deficiencies noted. A staff at FS-5 level had been assigned to monitor the check-out process and take steps to resolve incomplete check out cases.