



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2025/026

Audit of the recruitment of international staff and the hiring of consultants in the United Nations Interim Security Force in Abyei

There were important gaps that needed to be addressed in the recruitment of international staff and hiring of consultants, particularly in the areas of workforce planning, documentation and justification of selection decisions, and monitoring of the recruitment process

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Assignment No. AP2024-635-02

Audit of the recruitment of international staff and the hiring of consultants in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the recruitment of international staff and the hiring of consultants in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). The objective of the audit was to assess whether UNISFA recruited international staff and hired consultants fairly, transparently, and in compliance with organizational policies and regulations. The audit covered the period from January 2022 to June 2024 and included: (a) control environment; (b) workforce planning; (c) recruitment and hiring processes; (d) consultant performance evaluation and contract administration; and (e) workforce diversity.

Overall, the control environment in UNISFA for the recruitment of international staff and the hiring of consultants was weak, which was mainly attributed to inadequate oversight, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. The weak control environment resulted in inconsistent selection practices, insufficient documentation and justification to support recruitment decisions, and inadequate management of potential conflicts of interest in the recruitment process. Additionally, inadequate documentation of consultant reference checks led to further non-compliance with established policies.

OIOS made nine recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, UNISFA needed to:

- Enhance its workforce planning through a thorough assessment of resourcing needs considering historical data and different workforce categories, to align with the budget and delivery of the Mission's mandate.
- Strengthen the international staff and consultant selection processes by developing mechanisms to: (a) maintain and retain complete recruitment and hiring documents; and (b) enhance monitoring of the selection process to promote greater transparency and fairness.
- Take measures to enforce the requirement that all interview panel members complete the required competency-based interview training before participating in interview panels.
- Mitigate the risk of bias in recruitment by adding a selection process review for the recruitment cases handled by a single person.
- Conduct and document comprehensive reference checks for all consultants.
- Take action to adhere to recruitment timelines and facilitate regular follow-ups on delays to support hiring managers.
- Require hiring managers to establish clear, specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound deliverables in terms of reference and conduct thorough performance evaluations; and develop measures to enhance the monitoring of completed performance evaluations.
- Enforce the requirement to process consultant daily subsistence allowance payments through Umoja and develop mechanisms to enforce consultant contract durations, determination of consultant remuneration levels and rates, and role assignments.
- Establish incremental targets to progressively advance gender parity and geographical diversity objectives and develop a monitoring mechanism to track progress toward these goals.

UNISFA accepted five recommendations and has initiated action to implement them. Actions required to close the recommendations are indicated in Annex I.

However, UNISFA did not accept the four recommendations related to workforce planning, conflict of interest, performance evaluation of consultants, and gender parity and geographical diversity, respectively. In consideration of the response by UNISFA, OIOS has clarified these four recommendations, and will keep them open until its next follow-up on implementation of recommendations since their non-acceptance by UNISFA was based on considerations other than the risks they are meant to mitigate.

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Audit of the recruitment of international staff and the hiring of consultants in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the recruitment of international staff and the hiring of consultants in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA).

2. UNISFA was established through Security Council Resolution 1990 (June 2011) to fulfil a mandate focusing on five strategic priorities, including monitoring and verifying the demilitarization of the Abyei area and protecting civilians under imminent threat of physical violence. UNISFA's total apportionment for international staff from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2023 was \$126.6 million against an actual expenditure of \$118.8 million. The average vacancy rate for international staff from July 2020 to June 2023 was 11.5 per cent, as shown in table 1.

Table 1: International staff budget and staff incumbency from July 2020 to June 2023

Financial year	Approved budget (million \$)	Actual expenditure (million \$)	Approved positions	Actual occupied positions	Vacancy rate
2020/21	38.7	37.9	174	154	11.5%
2021/22	44.2	39.6	174	155	10.9%
2022/23	43.7	41.3	183	161	12.0%
Total	126.6	118.8			11.5%

Source: UNISFA budget documents and Umoja

3. The approved apportionment for consultants from July 2020 to June 2023 totaled \$3.8 million against a budget of \$1.6 million. The overutilization was partly due to additional specialized technical consultants supporting projects in the Facilities and Environmental Management Unit.

4. As shown in table 2, UNISFA had 201 job openings from January 2020 to June 2024 through three recruitment types: recruit-from-rosters (RfRs), position-specific job openings (PSJOs), and temporary job openings (TJOs).

Table 2: Recruitment activities for international staff from January 2020 to June 2024

Recruitment activity	RfR	PSJO	TJO	Total
Recruitment completed	74	9	67	150
Recruitment ongoing	9	10	8	27
Recruitment cancelled/suspended	11	6	7	24
Total job openings	94	25	82	201

Source: Job openings extracted from Inspira

5. The recruitment process in the United Nations is designed to be transparent, fair, and merit-based, ensuring the most qualified and competent personnel are selected. The recruitment process should adhere to the rules, regulations and procedures outlined in: (a) ST/AI/2010/3 governing staff selection; (b) ST/AI/2010/4/Rev.1 on the use and administration of temporary assignments; (c) ST/AI/2013/4 which applies to consultants and individual contractors; and (d) ST/AI/2020/5 on temporary special measures for the achievement of gender parity.

6. Pursuant to ST/SGB/2019/2, the Secretary-General has delegated authority to UNISFA's Acting Head of Mission and Force Commander (Ag. HoM/FC) to select staff up to and including the D-1 level. The Human Resources Unit (HRU) in UNISFA supports the recruitment process, including monitoring vacancies, providing support and guidance to hiring managers on the staff selection process, and supporting the hiring and administration of consultants. HRU is headed by a Chief Human Resources Officer at the P-4 level and comprises two professional staff, two field support staff, two national staff and one United Nations Volunteer.

7. The recruitment of international staff and the hiring of consultants are managed through the talent management system, Inspira. This enterprise platform supports the recruitment cycle, which includes job posting, screening of applications, preliminary evaluations, substantive assessments, compliance reviews and final selection. Umoja also supports the management and administration of contracts for consultants.

8. Comments provided by UNISFA are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

9. The objective of the audit was to assess whether UNISFA recruited international staff and hired consultants fairly, transparently, and in compliance with organizational policies and regulations.

10. This audit was included in OIOS' 2024 risk-based work plan due to the financial and operational risks associated with workforce planning, recruitment of international staff, and hiring of consultants, which are critical for ensuring the continuity of the Mission's operations.

11. OIOS conducted this audit from August to December 2024 and covered the period from January 2022 to June 2024. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium-risk areas in the recruitment of international staff and hiring of consultants, which included: (a) control environment; (b) workforce planning; (c) recruitment and hiring processes; (d) consultant performance evaluation and contract administration; and (e) workforce diversity.

12. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews of key personnel, such as hiring managers and human resource personnel; (b) review of relevant supporting documents; (c) assessment of the client's data management systems and analytical review of Inspira recruitment data and Umoja consultant attendance data; (d) review of a sample of 46 cases for international staff recruitment and 34 consultants hiring to assess compliance with rules, regulations and procedures; and (e) verification of consultant performance evaluations and fees for a sample of 34 cases.

13. OIOS assessed the reliability of data related to the recruitment of international staff and the hiring of consultants by: (a) vouching and tracing a random sample of data against source documents to verify data accuracy and completeness; and (b) interviewing UNISFA personnel knowledgeable about the data. Based on the assessment, OIOS determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purpose of addressing the audit objective.

14. The audit was conducted in accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Control environment

Need to improve the control environment

15. A robust control environment is the foundation on which an effective internal control system is built and operated to achieve strategic and business objectives. Mission senior management is responsible for proactively identifying and managing risks associated with the recruitment of international staff and the hiring of consultants.

16. Overall, the control environment in UNISFA needed improvement including attitude about non-compliance, accountability, effective monitoring and importance of internal controls. The audit identified inconsistent selection practices, insufficient documentation and justification for recruitment decisions, and potential conflicts of interest in the recruitment process. Consultant reference checks were also not documented. These weaknesses had a negative impact on effectiveness, transparency and accountability in UNISFA's recruitment of international staff and the hiring of consultants. The OIOS recommendations in this report address the root causes of issues identified by the audit.

B. Workforce planning

Need to enhance workforce planning

17. The workforce planning guide defines workforce planning as a process to ensure the right number of people with the right skills are employed in the right place at the right time to deliver an organization's short- and long-term objectives. Reviewing the workforce regularly should be integral to the entity's planning process. A typical workforce planning exercise usually starts near the end of an organization's strategic planning process and is completed before the start of the budget process for staffing changes to be reflected in the upcoming budget cycle.

18. The Mission explained that planning for international staff and consultants was done during the budgeting process, during which UNISFA submits the resources and budget required to achieve the Mission's mandate for each financial year. However, OIOS found that the issues below resulted from the fact that the budgeting process was not adequately guided by a workforce plan:

- As of August 2024, 26 unoccupied positions existed, of which 11 had never been filled since their establishment. A P-3 political affairs position was vacant since its establishment in 2020. In 2019, UNISFA established the Facilities and Environment Management Unit as a temporary measure to deliver camp management services. The Environmental Affairs Officer at the P-4 level was appointed to lead the unit; however, substantive recruitment activity had not been completed as of the audit date, nor were terms of reference provided to clarify the position's responsibilities. Also, a related position for a Facilities Management Officer at the P-4 level had been vacant for over two years since its establishment in 2022. This situation raises questions about the continued necessity of posts remaining vacant for years after their establishment.
- On the other hand, the budgets for consultants were consistently overspent, averaging \$720,000 over the 2020/21 and 2022/23 financial years. Some funding centres had not budgeted for consultants despite continuously utilizing them. The Mission attributed the over-expenditure of the consultant budget to some units, such as the Facilities and Environmental Management Unit, which

lacked vital expertise. However, there was no evidence that these units had requested to establish posts for such specialized roles in the budget submissions.

19. Furthermore, the Mission utilized vendor contracts to address resourcing gaps during the three financial periods between June 2020 and June 2023, which were not accounted for in the resource planning and budgeting process and did not involve HRU. Consequently, this led to unstructured workforce planning and recruitment as outlined below:

- Vendor 1 contract was established in 2017 to provide camp management services. From an anticipated 25 managerial-level international personnel, the contract had grown to 91 such personnel by June 2024, including 36 personnel named “Dream Teams” who were assigned to support the implementation of the SMART Camp project¹. OIOS noted that the then CMS approved the formation of the Dream Teams only through email communication. The OIOS audit of procurement and contract management² in 2023 identified that UNISFA incurred an additional \$4.4 million related to the increased use of third-party contractors through this vendor.
- Vendor 2 and Vendor 3 global system contracts were established for information and communications technology (ICT) services. However, as of December 2023, 28 non-ICT personnel costing \$1.7 million under Vendor 2 contract were working in units outside the Mission’s Field Technology Services Unit. UNISFA continued this practice and authorized the use of 15 non-ICT contractors under Vendor 3 contract. Additionally, 10 contractors were transferred from Vendor 2 to Vendor 1, effectively continuing the use of contracts to meet the Mission’s workforce needs. This violated a DOS directive in 2024 to all field missions, restricting the use of ICT contracts for non-ICT services.
- In August 2023, the Supply Chain Management Section established an inventory management and replenishment cell within the Centralized Warehouse Unit, separating its responsibilities from those of the Warehouse Unit and Acquisition Management Unit. UNISFA provided the cell with human resources by directly recruiting a consultant and acquiring five senior warehouse contractors through Vendor 3 and Vendor 1. There was no indication that HRU was involved in establishing this cell.

20. While UNISFA explained that it incorporates staffing needs into budget proposals, the current workforce planning process showed gaps. Effective workforce planning requires a forward-looking, integrated assessment of resourcing needs to inform data-driven decisions. The lack of robust workforce planning contributed to uncoordinated recruitment, unexpected costs, underutilized staff, insufficient capacity-building, and reduced accountability in personnel decisions.

(1) UNISFA should enhance its workforce planning through a thorough assessment of resourcing needs considering historical data and different workforce categories, to align with the budget and delivery of the Mission’s mandate.

UNISFA did not accept recommendation 4 and stated that it conducted workforce planning in the context of required staffing resources and identified gaps that were included in the budget proposals. Based on its observations, OIOS has identified the need for UNISFA to conduct a thorough assessment of its resourcing needs for the different workforce categories to mitigate risks to efficiency, economy, effectiveness, transparency and accountability in recruitment of international

¹ The SMART Camp project utilizes the Internet of Things to optimize the efficiency of camp operations and services and enhance safety, security, and situational awareness.

² OIOS report 2023/055

staff and hiring of consultants. The non-acceptance by UNISFA of this recommendation thus appears to be based on considerations other than the risks it is meant to mitigate, and OIOS will keep it open until its next follow-up on implementation of recommendations.

C. Recruitment and hiring processes

Need to enhance the documentation of selection decisions for international staff and consultants

21. According to administrative instructions ST/AI/2010/3 on the staff selection system, ST/AI/2010/4 on temporary appointments, and ST/AI/2013/4 on consultants, the selection of candidates should be through a competitive process that determines whether they meet the technical requirements and competencies of the job opening. The assessment process may include a competency-based interview and other evaluation mechanisms.

22. OIOS reviewed 6 cases of PSJOs, 17 RfRs and 24 TJOs recruitment, and the hiring of 31 consultants during the audit period and noted that justification for the recruitment and hiring decisions was not adequately documented, as summarized below.

- In one PSJO case, a staff member from a downsizing mission was selected despite five other candidates from downsized missions having received equal interview ratings and demonstrating stronger performance on the technical test. The selection memo cited the successful candidate's mother language as a consideration, though this was not listed as a criterion in the job opening. In another PSJO case, a female candidate had assessment results equal to those of the selected male candidate. The hiring manager justified the decision during the audit by citing the male candidate's longer experience in peacekeeping missions. However, peacekeeping experience was also not included as a criterion in the job opening.
- From a sample of 17 recruitments through RfRs, the justification for the final selection was unclear in 10 cases, where recommended candidates had identical or similar ratings in the comparative analysis report (CAR). Additionally, in seven job openings, only one or two candidates of the screened applicants had been shortlisted for analysis on the CAR.
- The Mission primarily relied on desk reviews and informal interviews to evaluate and shortlist candidates for TJOs, which is allowed. However, in a sample of 24 TJOs, there was inadequate justification for the selection of successful candidates in 14 cases, as the other recommended candidates received identical or similar ratings in the CAR. Additionally, in eight cases, only one or two candidates, representing just 2 per cent of the screened applicants, were shortlisted and included in the CAR without an appropriate explanation, despite other applicants also meeting the required experience and skills criteria.
- OIOS review of the hiring process for 31 consultants contracted noted that evidence of a competitive selection process was lacking in 13 cases, specifically since justification for the hiring decision was limited to selection memos, with no supporting documents such as technical assessments or interview reports. For two cases, hiring supporting documents such as terms of reference, PHPs, technical evaluation reports and selection memos were not provided, while 12 cases did not have technical evaluation reports.
- In two cases related to the hiring of consultants, UNISFA used consultants to lead and conduct the assessment and interview without the participation of a UNISFA staff, which the manager attributed to limited in-house expertise. In one of these instances, a candidate was disqualified for the position

initially advertised six months prior for lacking essential competencies in professionalism, teamwork, and knowledge of necessary tools. However, when the position was re-advertised six months later, the same candidate who also worked as a third-party contractor for UNISFA was selected without proof of any change in his/her qualifications.

- Additionally, an individual who had previously served as an international individual contractor for UNISFA, last selected in 2020, had his/her contract converted to a consultant position without undergoing a competitive recruitment process in 2022.

23. The selection issues above stemmed from lapses by hiring managers in following due process and insufficient monitoring by HRU to ensure adherence to policy instructions. The latter required verifying proper documentation and justification of hiring decisions - areas the Mission acknowledged needed improvement. The above contributed to inconsistencies in applying recruitment standards, inadequate documentation of selection processes, and lapses in evaluating candidates against defined criteria, which impacted on the integrity and effectiveness of the process.

(2) UNISFA should strengthen the international staff and consultant selection processes by developing mechanisms to: (a) maintain and retain complete recruitment and hiring documents; and (b) enhance monitoring of the selection process to promote greater transparency and fairness.

UNISFA accepted recommendation 2 and stated that the Mission maintains complete recruitment documents in Inspira and has issued a circular to all Hiring Managers outlining approval procedures for initiating staff and consultant recruitment. The circular also specifies the required information for selection memos to enhance transparency in the recruitment and selection process. The Mission is currently working with the Department of Operational Support's Non-Staff Capacity Unit to join the Affiliated Personnel Repository/Digital Documentation System.

The interview panel members needed to complete the required competency-based interview training

24. Interview panels should be composed of normally at least three staff members, among which at least one person from outside the work unit where the job opening is located. Hiring managers should ensure that each panel member completes the competency-based interview training. OIOS noted that the assessment panels for PSJOs were found to be well-constituted; however, there was no proof that 10 (or 67 per cent) of the 15 panel members in the sampled PSJO had completed the competency-based interviewing training, as required by policy.

25. Without the requisite training, panel members may risk inconsistent evaluations, bias, or non-compliance with established recruitment standards. This gap resulted from the inconsistent implementation of the recruitment policy on interview panels, coupled with inadequate oversight and monitoring by HRU.

(3) UNISFA should take measures to enforce the requirement that all interview panel members complete the required competency-based interview training before participating in interview panels.

UNISFA accepted recommendation 3 and indicated that they would request evidence of CBI training for all panel members. A broadcast will be sent to all Mission personnel to inform them of this mandatory requirement for panel members.

Need to mitigate potential conflicts of interest in the recruitment process

26. Proactive identification and mitigation of potential conflicts of interest promote transparency, accountability and ethical conduct within an organization. Failure to address these risks in the recruitment process may compromise decision-making and expose the organization to reputational and legal liability.

27. OIOS reviewed a sample of 24 out of 46 TJOs and a population of 31 consultants contracted for periods exceeding six months and onboarded during the audit period. The review identified cases of potential conflicts of interest, as highlighted below. Although the audit did not establish that actual conflicts of interest had materialized, the examples demonstrate a risk of perception of bias in recruitment that warrants mitigation measures.

- In five TJOs and six consultant positions, the selected candidates worked as non-staff personnel (i.e., consultant, United Nations Volunteer, or third-party contractor personnel) in the Mission, reporting to the hiring manager or having listed the hiring manager in the references. The selection process primarily relied on desk reviews conducted by the hiring manager. Notably, in one of the consultant positions, the recruitment process was finalized just two days after the job posting closed.
- A job opening for a senior staff position revealed that the hiring manager had previously supervised the candidate in two separate missions, where the candidate had served as a consultant. Similarly, another selected candidate's background did not align with the job's criteria, and the candidate had listed the hiring manager as a reference.
- In another TJO, the hiring manager recruited a candidate, whom the hiring manager had hired and supervised as a consultant in his/her previous two consecutive roles, the former role of which was in another mission.

28. The risk of perception of bias occurred because the Mission did not establish appropriate measures to demonstrate impartiality in TJO and consultant selection, since the audit found that review of applications and selection processes were conducted by the same person and without additional reviews. The absence of compensatory measures to identify, disclose and address any potential conflicts of interest reduces assurance over the fairness and transparency of the selection process.

(4) UNISFA should mitigate the risk of bias in recruitment by adding a selection process review for the recruitment cases handled by a single person.

UNISFA did not accept recommendation 4 and stated that the recommendation was not feasible for implementation in its current form. OIOS has clarified its recommendation, and since the non-acceptance by UNISFA of this recommendation appears to be based on considerations other than the risk it is meant to mitigate, OIOS will keep it open until its next follow-up on implementation of recommendations.

Need to enhance reference checks for temporary job openings and consultants

29. ST/AI/2020/4 on temporary appointments and ST/AI/2013/4 on consultant administration require appropriate reference checks of candidates' credentials before the issuance of a contract. OIOS review noted the following gaps:

- The administrative instruction provides that prior to the issuance of a contract, the processing department, office or mission shall verify the academic and professional credentials of the candidate recommended for selection by conducting appropriate reference checks. Reference checks for consultants were not formalized and adequately documented. Only 1 of the 31 consultant hirings reviewed had a documented reference check. Hiring managers explained that checks were conducted informally, often via phone, as many of the individuals hired had previously worked within the organization in some capacity.
- Two candidates on temporary appointments from a sample of 22 received negative reference checks; the Regional Service Centre Entebbe escalated the negative reference checks to the Mission for action. Although HRU escalated the matter to senior management for resolution in one case, no documented course of action was identified, leaving both issues unresolved. The staff members have since left the organization. OIOS notes that the reference checks for the remaining 20 cases were adequately completed and suggests that UNISFA could ensure that negative reference checks are promptly resolved.

30. This arose due to the lack of a standardized process and oversight mechanism to ensure consistent documentation of consultant reference checks.

(5) UNISFA should conduct and document comprehensive reference checks for all consultants.

UNISFA accepted recommendation 5 and indicated that they would implement the recommendation after the commencement of the recruitment process, which is currently on hold due to ongoing liquidity constraints.

Need to address delays in the recruitment process

31. The Mission is accountable for completing the recruitment process from the date the job opening closes until the date the selection is approved in Inspira. The target timeline for PSJOs is 120 days, while the system generates a suggested timeline of 50 days for RfRs.

32. Four of the six PSJOs completed during the audit period took an average of 270 days, ranging from 236 to 321 days. RfRs were also not completed within the stipulated timeframe as 40 job openings (or 66 per cent) out of 60 RfRs were completed on average 112 days, ranging from 54 to 358 days. In addition, 24 (or 47 per cent) out of 51 TJOs exceeded 60 days, taking an average of 127 days, ranging from 61 to 311 days. This is illustrated on table 3.

Table 3: Recruitment timelines

Recruitment type	Number of recruitments	Within KPI	Exceeding KPI	Exception percentage	Exception average in days
PSJO	6	2	4	67%	270
RFR	60	20	40	67%	112
TJO	51	27	24	47%	127

Source: Inspira data

33. There was no evidence that HRU consistently followed up or provided support for prolonged recruitment processes, nor were hiring managers regularly reminded of pending actions or deadlines for prompt action. This lack of proactive engagement contributed to delays.

(6) UNISFA should take action to adhere to recruitment timelines and facilitate regular follow-ups on delays to support hiring managers.

UNISFA accepted recommendation 6 and indicated that the ongoing liquidity constraints compel the Mission to put recruitment completions on hold, making implementation challenging.

D. Consultant performance evaluation and contract administration

Consultant performance evaluations were not effectively carried out

34. Missions are responsible for ensuring that detailed terms of reference describing the work to be performed by a consultant forms part of the individual contract. The terms of reference shall include the output to be delivered and the functions to be performed, which should be specific, measurable, attainable, results-based and time-bound (SMART). Performance evaluation is mandatory after six months of service and upon completion of the assignment, regardless of duration.

35. OIOS reviewed a sample of 30 consultants serving longer than six months and noted the following gaps:

- The terms of reference described the results of services that were ongoing and lacked clear, tangible and measurable deliverables. Additionally, the expected results were not aligned with or limited by the duration of the contract.
- Although the performance evaluation template required a detailed assessment of the consultant's quality of work, results achieved and skills, the sampled evaluations were brief and generalized, consisting of only a few sentences summarizing the consultants' overall performance.
- There was no evidence that UNISFA conducted performance evaluations for 7 consultants, interim evaluations for 12 consultants, and final evaluations for 4 consultants. Additionally, final evaluations for four consultants were completed more than five months after their contracts had ended.
- Where interim evaluations were provided, consultant contracts were extended even though interim performance evaluations indicated that all goals and deadlines outlined in the terms of reference had been achieved. Since the terms of reference deliverables were not SMART, it was difficult to ascertain the adequacy of the evaluation conducted. Further, there were no new deliverables or targets established for the extension period, raising questions about the need to extend the contract.

36. This gap led to reliance on generic, subjective, or non-specific performance evaluations, which did not provide meaningful feedback to consultants and hindered informed decision-making regarding contract renewals or project assignments. The above issues arose due to inadequate competencies among the hiring managers in translating the terms of reference responsibilities into SMART deliverables. Additionally, there was inadequate monitoring to ensure that supervisors conducted detailed and meaningful evaluations before approving contract extensions and after contract fulfilment.

(7) UNISFA should: (a) require hiring managers to establish clear, specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound deliverables in terms of references and conduct thorough performance evaluations; and (b) develop measures to enhance the monitoring of completed performance evaluations.

UNISFA did not accept recommendation 7 and stated that performance management is not part of the recruitment policy. Additionally, the Organization's Terms of Reference (TOR) format does not align with the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) criteria as suggested. The existing TOR framework follows established organizational guidelines, and any modifications would require a broader policy review beyond UNISFA's mandate. OIOS notes that section 3 of the administrative instruction of consultants and individual contractors (ST/AI/2013/4) clearly states that "the terms of reference shall include the outputs to be delivered and the functions to be performed. The outputs and functions shall be specific, measurable, attainable, results-based and time-bound." The recommendation is therefore based on the relevant policy. It is immediately actionable by UNISFA and would increase the value added by consultants and individual contractors while minimizing the risk of wastage of resources. OIOS therefore reiterates the recommendation and will keep it open until its next follow-up on implementation of recommendations.

Need to enhance the administration of consultants

37. The OIOS review identified the following areas for improvement in the administration and management of consultants.

(i) Daily subsistence allowance

38. ST/AI/2013/4 provides that the payment of the daily subsistence allowance for consultants shall be made on the same basis as for staff members. ST/AI/2014/2 on daily subsistence allowance states that after 120 days, the rate for duty stations other than New York, Geneva and Vienna shall normally be 60 per cent of the "first 60-day" rate established by the International Civil Service Commission for the specific duty station.

39. UNISFA did not apply the reduced daily subsistence allowance rate paid to its consultants, resulting in an overpayment of \$57,301 from a sample of 27 cases. This occurred because the daily subsistence allowance was included in the contract rate paid through a purchase order, rather than being processed as official business in Umoja, which has built-in processing controls to apply the appropriate rate.

(ii) Contract length and consultant fee

40. To limit the repeated use of the same consultant to perform different tasks within the work plan or a series of tasks within the same project, no consultant shall provide services for more than 24 months in a 36-month period, whether continuous or not, and irrespective of the cumulative months of actual work. However, OIOS identified two cases where consultants exceeded the 24-month limit by 4 months and 19 months, respectively, without documented justification or an approved exception, thereby violating policy guidelines.

41. In particular, the consultant who exceeded the allowable limit by 19 months - nearly twice the policy term limit - was paid at the maximum level D monthly rate of \$13,040. This rate is intended for individuals with highly specialized expertise, extensive relevant experience, and the ability to provide functional leadership and expert advice equivalent to the D-2 professional staff level. OIOS questioned the justification for level D³, as the consultant had 11 years of experience in business process re-engineering and held a Black Belt certification in Six Sigma, which is not the highest designation in Six Sigma. While these qualifications are notable, they may not align with the level of expertise and experience required for such a high remuneration, equivalent to a D-2 professional staff level. This consultant was later recruited as an international staff member at the P-3 level. Furthermore, from a sample of 31 consultants contracted

³ International consultants can be paid at a rate level from level A to E, with level E being the highest rate level.

during the audit period, this consultant received the highest rate, despite other consultants having greater levels of experience.

42. Additionally, due in part to the contract's extended duration, the consultant was paid a total of \$559,054 from April 2018 to October 2021. This amount accounted for 30 per cent of the Mission's total consultant expenditure during the financial periods from July 2018 to June 2021. Despite the substantial fees paid to the consultant, UNISFA did not provide performance evaluations to assess the consultant's contribution and overall value to the Mission.

(iii) Role assignment

43. Consultants may not be engaged where certifying and approving authority and/or supervisory responsibility would be required. They may not be involved in decisions affecting United Nations staff members' status, rights and entitlements. A review of consultant terms of reference revealed that eight consultants had duties involving supervision and performance monitoring of United Nations staff members, which the hiring manager attributed to errors in preparing the terms of reference. In addition, three consultants had been allocated Umoja roles for periods exceeding one year to handle functions such as inventory management, supply chain coordination, performance monitoring, facilities planning, and requisitioning.

44. On 28 May 2024, the then CMS formally requested the Department of Operational Support to assign Umoja roles to non-UN staff personnel in UNISFA, citing the need for individual contractors, service contractors and consultants to address staffing gaps in warehousing, inventory, material replenishment and property management. The Department of Operational Support denied this request in July 2024 and stated that non-staff personnel cannot hold Umoja roles. The Assistant Secretary-General of the Office of Human Resources further directed that any existing roles assigned to non-staff be removed promptly and transitioned to staff members. The roles have since been transitioned as of the audit report date.

45. The issues arose due to a lack of compliance with the policy governing the administration of consultants and a lack of proactive guidance from the HRU to address lapses in control measures. Clear guidance and regular reviews should be established to strengthen accountability and adherence to policy.

(8) UNISFA should: (a) enforce the requirement to process consultant daily subsistence allowance payments through Umoja; and (b) develop mechanisms to enforce consultant contract durations, determination of consultant remuneration levels and rates, and role assignments.

UNISFA accepted the recommendation and indicated that, with effect from January 2025, the daily subsistence allowance has been removed from the purchase order and will be processed through the Umoja travel module. An internal tracking tool has already been developed to allow Human Resources and recruiting units to easily track contract durations. A memorandum had been issued to all units advising of the limitations on role assignments for consultants. Internal guidance would be provided to UNISFA units on the process of recruitment of consultants, including the determination of remuneration rates. A briefing would also be conducted annually on the recruitment of consultants.

E. Workforce diversity

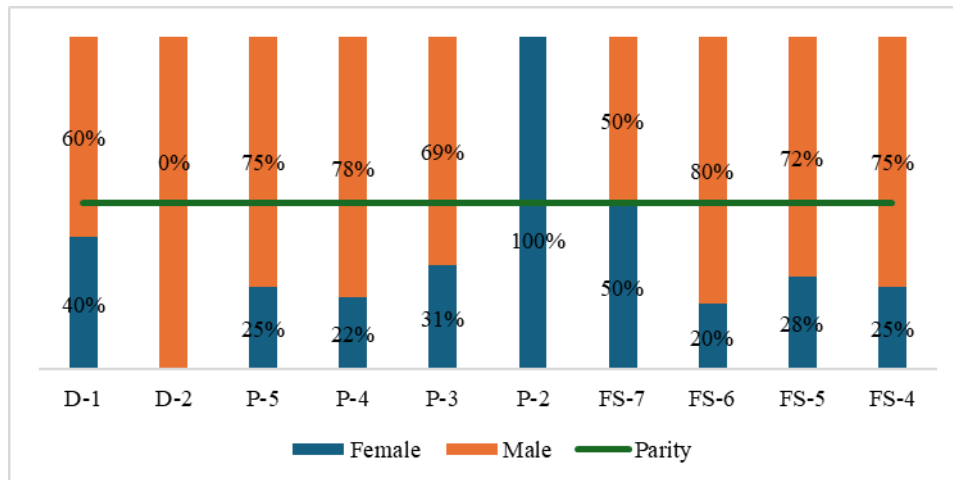
Need to enhance monitoring of gender parity and geographical diversity performance measures

46. ST/AI/2020/5 provides temporary special measures for achieving gender parity that are to be applied in selections and appointments in every entity and at each level where parity has not been reached. Parity is reached when the entity is within the 47 to 53 per cent gender representation for each staff level. The temporary measures provide that female candidate with qualifications equal to or better than their male counterparts be prioritized for vacancies.

(i) *Limited progress to achieve gender parity*

47. The female representation of international staff in UNISFA had increased slightly from 23 per cent in June 2020 to 27 per cent by June 2024. As of October 2024, gender parity had only been reached in the FS-7 category, while the P-2 category had one female staff as the only staff member, as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1: UNISFA gender distribution of international staff by category



Source: UNISFA staffing table as of October 2024

48. The 2017 United Nations system-wide strategy on gender parity noted that mission support roles tend to be traditionally male-dominated. As per recruitments from January 2021 to June 2024 in UNISFA, addressing gender disparities in traditionally male-dominated areas like logistics, security, ICT, and engineering is essential to meeting gender parity goals. From a review of the recruiting trend in a population of 117 completed job openings from January 2021 to June 2024, female candidates were selected in 42 (or 36 per cent) of the cases. In 46 of the selected 117 job openings, there was an opportunity for UNISFA to better leverage the temporary special measures to achieve gender parity, as noted below:

- Female candidates comprised 19 per cent of total applicants. TJOs attracted the highest average percentage of female applicants at 27 per cent, followed by RfRs at 18 per cent, and PSJOs at 13 per cent. The low number of women applicants is one contributing factor to the slow progress towards gender parity.
- Female candidates should be proactively identified for anticipated vacancies, such as those resulting from retirements. Of the 16 retirement-related vacancies filled, 6 (or 38 per cent) were replaced by female staff members.

- When selecting internal candidates for temporary job openings, attention should be given to expanding career development opportunities for women. Female candidates were selected in 18 (or 39 per cent) of the 46 TJOs with accepted offers.
- When the head of entity selects an internal candidate for a temporary job opening, HRU shall document the review process for eligible internal female candidates. In a sample of 22 TJOs, male candidates were selected in 11 cases. In four of the 11 cases, there was no documented evaluation of the screened female candidates.

(ii) *Disproportionate representation of staff by regional groups*

49. Article 101 of the United Nations Charter provides that due regard should be paid to recruiting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible. A review of international staff recruited between January 2021 and June 2024 showed that most candidates had been recruited from over-represented regional groups and fewer candidates from under-represented groups, as shown in table 3.

Table 3: **Regional group representation status**

Representation status	No. of staff	Percentage of total
Over-represented	33	36%
Under-represented	8	9%
Within range above midpoint	31	34%
Within range below midpoint	20	22%

Source: *INSPIRA recruitments from January 2021 to June 2024*

50. The above issues arose because the Mission lacked incremental internal gender parity and geographical diversity targets and measures to achieve commonly set goals, and an oversight mechanism to monitor progress to create an enabling environment.

(9) UNISFA should establish incremental targets to progressively advance gender parity and geographical diversity objectives and develop a monitoring mechanism to track progress toward these goals.

UNISFA did not accept recommendation 9 and noted that gender parity and geographical diversity are addressed under the Secretary-General's initiative and General Assembly requirement, rather than within the ST/AI on staff selection policy. While recruitment and selection contribute to achieving these targets, the audit's scope focused specifically on recruitment policy. Each mission develops its strategy to meet gender parity targets, and as such, UNISFA suggested that the recommendation be revisited and addressed through the appropriate policy framework. OIOS notes that administrative instruction for the temporary special measures for the achievement of gender parity (ST/AI/2020/5) applies to selection and appointment at each level at which gender parity has not been reached. The audit observations and ensuing recommendation are therefore within the audit scope and based on the relevant policy. The recommendation is also immediately actionable by UNISFA and would contribute to increasing UNISFA workforce diversity. OIOS therefore reiterates the recommendation and will keep it open until its next follow-up on implementation of recommendations.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

51. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNISFA 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 the recruitment of international staff and the hiring of consultants in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁴ / Important ⁵	C/ O ⁶	Actions needed to close the recommendation	Implementation date ⁷
1.	UNISFA should enhance its workforce planning through a thorough assessment of resourcing needs considering historical data and different workforce categories, to align with the budget and delivery of the Mission's mandate.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of a workforce needs assessment.	30 June 2026*
2.	UNISFA should strengthen the international staff and consultant selection processes by developing mechanisms to: (a) maintain and retain complete recruitment and hiring documents; and (b) enhance monitoring of the selection process to promote greater transparency and fairness.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hiring managers are adhering to the guidelines set out in the administrative circular on recruitment initiation and selection procedures. There is enhanced monitoring of the selection process. 	30 June 2026*
3.	UNISFA should take measures to enforce the requirement that all interview panel members complete the required competency-based interview training before participating in interview panels.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reminders issued to hiring managers regarding the requirement for interview panel members to complete competency-based interview training, with compliance monitored by the Human Resources Unit. Interview panel members have completed the mandatory competency-based training. 	31 December 2025
4.	UNISFA should mitigate the risk of bias in recruitment by adding a selection process review for the recruitment cases handled by a single person.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of protocols for reviewing the recruitment process.	30 June 2026*

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

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

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

⁷ Date provided by UNISFA in response to recommendations (except those* provided by OIOS).

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the recruitment of international staff and the hiring of consultants in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁴ / Important ⁵	C/ O ⁶	Actions needed to close the recommendation	Implementation date ⁷
5.	UNISFA should conduct and document comprehensive reference checks for all consultants.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence demonstrating that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervisors have been re-oriented on conducting and documenting comprehensive reference checks for all consultants. The completion of comprehensive reference checks is monitored. 	31 December 2025
6.	UNISFA should take action to adhere to recruitment timelines and facilitate regular follow-ups on delays to support hiring managers.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence confirming that recruitment delays were actively followed up and that appropriate support was provided to hiring managers to facilitate timely recruitment.	31 December 2025
7.	UNISFA should: (a) require hiring managers to establish clear, specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound deliverables in terms of references and conduct thorough performance evaluations; and (b) develop measures to enhance the monitoring of completed performance evaluations.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence demonstrating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultant terms of reference with clearly articulate deliverables. Regular conduct of performance evaluations for consultants at the required intervals. Regular monitoring to confirm completion of comprehensive evaluations. 	30 June 2026*
8.	UNISFA should: (a) enforce the requirement to process consultant daily subsistence allowance payments through Umoja; and (b) develop mechanisms to enforce consultant contract durations, determination of consultant remuneration levels and rates, and role assignments.	Important	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action completed for part (a) of the recommendation. Receipt of evidence of reinforcement of the consultant policy guidelines on contract durations, role assignments and determination of remuneration. 	31 July 2025
9.	UNISFA should establish incremental targets to progressively advance gender parity and geographical diversity objectives and develop a monitoring mechanism to track progress toward these goals.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence demonstrating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of incremental gender parity and geographical diversity targets. Regular monitoring of gender parity and geographical diversity measures and targets. 	30 June 2026*

APPENDIX I

Management Response

INTER OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Date: 19 May 2025

Ref.: UNISFA/MHQ/IOM/HOM/016/2025

To: Byung-Kun Min
Director
Internal Audit Division, OIOS

From: Major General Robert Yaw Affram
Acting Head of Mission/Force Commander
UNISFA



Subject: Draft report on an audit of the recruitment of international staff and hiring of consultants in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (Assignment No. AP2024-635-02)

1. Your interoffice memorandum of 7 May 2025 on the above subject matter is acknowledged with thanks.
2. UNISFA is pleased to submit management comments in the attached annex.
3. Thank you and best regards.

cc: Ms. Uchenna Odenigbo, Chief of Mission Support
Mr. Salim Chehab, OIC Chief of Operations and Resource Management Section, UNISFA
Ms. Ifeoma Moraa, Chief, Human Resources, UNISFA
Mr. Josphat Kariuki, Chief, Audit Response Unit, UNISFA
Mr. Hoa Khuu, Section Chief, Internal Audit Division, OIOS

Management Response

Audit of the recruitment of international staff and hiring of consultants in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	UNISFA should conduct a thorough assessment of resourcing needs, considering historical data and different workforce categories, to align with the budget and delivery of the Mission's mandate.	Important	No	NA	NA	UNISFA does conduct workforce planning in the context of required staffing resources and identified gaps are included in the budget proposals. However, UNISFA recommends defining the scope of the referenced workforce planning to guide any necessary remedial actions. As it currently stands, workforce planning extends beyond recruitment-related considerations.
2	UNISFA should strengthen the international staff and consultant selection process by developing mechanisms to: (a) maintain and retain complete recruitment and hiring documents; and (b) enhance monitoring of the selection process to promote greater transparency and fairness.	Important	Yes	Chief Human Resources Officer	Implemented 4 December 2024	UNISFA maintains complete recruitment documents in Inspira and has issued a circular to all Hiring Managers outlining approval procedures for initiating staff and consultant recruitment. The circular also specifies the required information for selection memos to enhance transparency in the recruitment and selection process. Please find attached an Administrative Circular CMS/2024/OM/01605 of 4 December 2024, and the request for the recruitment form to be completed by the hiring manager for reference. In addition, UNISFA is working currently with <i>DOS Non-Staff Capacity Unit</i> to join the

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.

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical/ Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						Affiliated Personnel Repository/Digital Documentation System.
3	UNISFA should take measures to enforce the requirement that all interview panel members complete the required competency-based interview training before participating in the interview panel.	Important	Yes	Chief Human Resources Officer	31 December 2025	UNISFA accepts the recommendation and will request evidence of CBI training for all panel members. The training is available in Inspira and is self-paced training. A broadcast will be sent to all Mission personnel to inform them of this mandatory requirement for panel members.
4	UNISFA should require the timely assessment and declaration of potential conflicts of interest by individuals involved in the recruitment process to enhance transparency in the process.	Important	No	NA	NA	UNISFA considers this recommendation not feasible for implementation in its current form. We suggest that the recommendation be reviewed and clarified to ensure a practical approach that allows for appropriate remedial action if necessary.
5	UNISFA should conduct and document comprehensive reference checks for all consultants.	Important	Yes	Chief Human Resources Officer	31 December 2025	The mission will implement the recommendation after the commencement of the recruitment process, which is currently on hold due to ongoing liquidity constraints.
6	UNISFA should take action to adhere to recruitment timelines and facilitate regular follow-ups on delays to support hiring managers.	Important	Yes	Chief Human Resources Officer	31 December 2025	While UNISFA accepts the recommendation, ongoing liquidity constraints compel the Mission to put recruitment completions on hold, making implementation challenging.
7	UNISFA should: (a) require hiring managers to establish clear, specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound deliverables in terms of references and conduct thorough performance evaluations; and (b) develop measures to enhance the monitoring of completed performance evaluations.	Important	No	NA	NA	UNISFA does not agree with this recommendation, as performance management is not part of the recruitment policy. Additionally, the organization's Terms of Reference (TOR) format does not align with the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) criteria as suggested. The existing TOR framework follows established organizational guidelines, and any modifications would require a broader policy review beyond UNISFA's mandate.
8	UNISFA should: (a) enforce the requirement to process consultant daily subsistence allowance payments through Umoja; and (b) develop	Important	Yes	Chief Human Resources Officer	31 July 2025	UNISFA accepts the recommendation. With effect from January 2025, the daily subsistence allowance has been removed from the purchase order and will be processed through the Umoja

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical/ Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
	mechanisms to enforce consultant contract durations, determination of consultant remuneration levels and rates, and role assignments.					travel module. An internal tracking tool has already been developed to allow Human Resources and recruiting units to easily track contract durations. A memorandum has been issued to all units advising of the limitations on role assignments for consultants. Internal guidance will be provided to UNISFA units on the recruitment process of consultants, including the determination of remuneration rates.
9	UNISFA should establish incremental targets to progressively advance gender parity and geographical diversity objectives and develop a monitoring mechanism to track progress toward these goals.	Important	No	NA	NA	<p>A briefing will also be conducted annually for Hiring Managers on the recruitment process of consultants.</p> <p>We note that gender parity and geographical diversity are addressed under the SG initiative and GA requirement, rather than within the ST/AI on staff selection policy. While recruitment and selection contribute to achieving these targets, the audit's scope focuses specifically on recruitment policy. Each mission develops its own strategy to meet gender parity targets, and as such, we respectfully suggest that this recommendation be revisited and addressed through the appropriate policy framework.</p>



UNISFA - REQUEST FOR RECRUITMENT

Part I. To be completed by the Hiring Manager:

To: [Acting Head of Mission / Chief of Mission Support]

Through: [Programme Manager]

From: [Hiring Manager]

The below recruitment is requested:

Post No:	Position Title:	Level:	Unit:	Location:
Justification for Recruitment:				

The recruitment is requested to be conducted through:

- ☐ **Recruit-from-Roster (RFR)** ☐ **Temporary Job Opening (TJO)**
- ☐ **Position Specific Job Opening (PSJO)**

Justifications for Publication of TJO or PSJO:

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This is to acknowledge that the request for recruitment of the above position is reviewed by the Programme Manager.

Name of the Programme Manager

Signature

Date

Part III.

To: [Hiring Manager]

From: [Acting Head of Mission / Chief of Mission Support]

This is to confirm that the subject request for recruitment has been approved.

Signature

Date

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

UNISFA

United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

قوة الأمم المتحدة المؤقتة في أبيي

ADMINISTRATIVE CIRCULAR

Date: 4 December 2024

Ref: CMS/2024/OM/01605

To: All UNISFA Programme/Section/Unit Chiefs
(see distribution list below)

From: Uchenna Odenigbo
Chief of Mission Support

Subject: **Recruitment Procedures – Initiation and Selection**

1. I am writing to provide you with the procedures to guide the initiation of recruitments in the mission including the selection decisions.
2. In accordance with best practices, requests to initiate recruitments should be made by the Hiring Manager through the Programme Manager to the designated official with delegated recruitment and selection authority.
3. The request must be submitted using the attached template, Annex 1 – UNISFA Request for Recruitment. The completed recruitment request form should include the draft Job Opening for the relevant position(s).
4. The review and clearance of the terms of reference/JO is to be carried out with the Programme Manager. Human Resources will review the JOs and clear the TOR to ensure any changes made are within the applicable rules prior to its publications.
5. The Hiring Managers will be responsible for uploading the HR cleared Job Openings in INSPIRA and submit it the Human Resources for publication.

Selection

6. On completion of the recruitment exercise, the recommendation/selection memorandum shall be sent to the official delegated with the authority for selection decisions for the positions.

The recommendation/selection memos shall be from the Hiring Manager through the Programme Manager and/or from the Programme Manager to the delegated official.

7. The recommendation should provide names of at least three recommended candidates for decision making. PHPs, assessment and evaluation information should be included in the memorandum.
8. For any additional clarification, or further assistance, please feel free to contact me or Human Resources.

Best regards.

Distribution List

Maj. Gen. Robert Yaw Affram, Acting Head of Mission/Force Commander
Brig. Gen. Ameer Muhammad Umrani, Deputy Force Commander
Brig. Gen. Vincent Moyo, Chief JBVM
Ms. Violet Lusala, Police Commissioner
Ms. Monique Etta Ntoh-Kem, Special Assistant
Mr. Alexander Stephane Gerard Rose, Chief of Staff
Mr. Boris-Ephrem Tchoumavi, Chief Community Liaison Office
Mr. Galbadrakh Togoo, Chief Supply Chain Management
Mr. Salim Chehab, OIC Operations and Resources Management / Chief Field Technology Unit
Mr. Julio Rivera, OIC Service Delivery Section / Chief Aviation Unit
Mr. Luis De Sousa Leal, Chief Security Officer
Mr. Jean-Luc Raoelina, Administrative Officer
Mr. Dal Bahadur Chhetri, Chief Engineer
Mr. Kingsley Urum, Chief FEMU
Dr. Djibo Hamidou, Chief Medical Officer
Mr. Ram Bhagat, OIC Life Support Unit
Mr. Jamil Ahmad, Chief Transport Officer
Mr. Mikhail Fadeev, Chief Mission Support Centre
Mr. Omar Pina, Aviation Safety Officer
Mr. Joshat Kariuki Njau, Auditor
Ms. Marine Ter-Hovsepyan, Chief Acquisition Management Unit
Ms. Divine Bijurenda, Chief Movement Control Unit
Mr. Robert Lujan Cevero, Chief Centralized Warehousing Unit
Mr. Robert Sekabembe, Chief Procurement Unit
Mr. Stefano Liturri, Chief Supply Chain Performance Management Unit
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Ms. Ifeoma Morah, OIC Human Resources Unit
Mr. Roberto Banta, OIC Finance and Budget Unit
Mr. Jes Lockett, Chief Mine Action Service