



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

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Audit of management of records and archiving processes at the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

Classification of sensitive records was adequate, but the Mechanism needed to improve declassification, preservation of judicial and non-judicial records, and records management and retention

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of management of records and archiving processes at the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT). The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes over the management of IRMCT records and archives. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2024 and included a review of: (a) records classification, handling and access; and (b) records management, retention and disposition.

The audit showed that while the Mechanism had adequately classified sensitive records, it needed to improve declassification, preservation of judicial and non-judicial records, and records management and retention.

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

- Develop and implement procedures for tracking and declassifying non-judicial records and information;
- Improve access removal procedures for staff on When-Actually-Employed contracts and ensure they sign non-disclosure forms when separating from service;
- Develop protocols for managing access keys and combinations to safes containing sensitive records;
- Ensure that all nominated record management focal points attend relevant training;
- Expedite the rollout of the electronic document and records management system for the efficient storage and management of non-judicial records;
- Develop action plans for preparation and transfer of non-judicial records for disposal or preservation in line with the records retention schedules;
- Develop an action plan for preparation and transfer of judicial records for preservation, and organize judicial records in the Unified Judicial Database to facilitate their efficient retrieval;
- Ensure that emergency response and disaster recovery plans are finalized for the Arusha branch and updated for The Hague branch, and tested regularly for effectiveness; and
- Implement backup restore exercises to validate that digital files can be recovered reliably when needed.

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

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I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of management of records and archiving processes at the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT).

2. IRMCT was established in 2010 by the United Nations Security Council as a “small, temporary, and efficient structure” to continue the jurisdiction, rights and obligations, and essential residual functions of the former International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), which operated until 2015 and 2017, respectively. The Mechanism’s Hague branch in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, inherited functions from ICTY, and the Arusha branch in the United Republic of Tanzania, inherited functions from ICTR. The ICTY field office in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina was closed in September 2023, while the ICTR field office in Kigali, Rwanda, was closed in August 2024.

3. Having concluded the last core crimes case during 2023, the Mechanism’s mandate now focuses on implementing continuing residual activities. Security Council resolution 2740 (2024) extended the mandate of IRMCT to June 2026. It also requested the Secretary-General to present by 31 December 2025 an updated report on the administrative and budgetary aspects of the options for possible locations of the archives of the former Tribunals and the Mechanism, along with a report on options for the transfer of the functions of supervision of enforcement of sentences and the pardon or commutation of sentences, and assistance to national jurisdictions on prosecutions.

4. Effective management of archives of the former Tribunals and the Mechanism is one of the key continuing residual functions of IRMCT. Archives constitute records of permanent value to the Organization that need to be effectively preserved for their administrative, financial, legal, historical or informational value, regardless of form or medium. Records are also essential for the continuing residual activities carried out by the Organs of the Mechanism such as review of judgement proceedings and responding to requests for assistance from national jurisdictions, and are beneficial to the public for education, research and memory preservation. The Tribunals’ records exist in various formats, including paper, electronic and audiovisual, and artefacts, and may be divided into three main categories: (a) judicial records related to the cases; (b) records which are generated in connection with the judicial process but are not part of the judicial records in the strict sense; and (c) administrative records.

5. The Mechanism has three organs namely Chambers, Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) and Registry, which are headed by three Principals with responsibility over both branches of the Mechanism. Twelve senior officials (1 D-1 and 11 P-5) oversee the operational activities of the Mechanism and report to their respective Principals of the three Organs. The Registry oversees the Mechanism’s archives and provides records management support to all sections at both branches through the Mechanism Archives and Records Section (MARS) and the Judicial Records Unit (JRU). MARS and JRU had 21 staff members consisting of five P-3, four P-2, four G-6, two G-5, one FS-5, and five FS-4. Two P-3 staff members, one in each branch, oversee the work of MARS supported by 14 staff (8 in Arusha and 6 in The Hague). The P-3 Chief of JRU supervised the work of JRU across the two branches, supported by four staff (one in Arusha and three in The Hague).

6. Since December 2020, IRMCT has gradually reduced its staffing and budget as part of a phased downsizing process. As of December 2024, IRMCT had 273 staff of which 115 (42 per cent) were in continuing posts and 158 (58 per cent) were in general temporary assistance (GTA) positions that fluctuated

depending on the workload and staff attrition. The IRMCT annual budget decreased from \$81.95 million for 2023 to \$65.45 million for 2024.

7. Comments provided by IRMCT are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

8. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes over the management of IRMCT records and archives.

9. This audit was included in the 2024 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the risks associated with preservation of records and archives at IRMCT.

10. OIOS conducted this audit from January to May 2025. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2024. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered risk areas which included: (a) records classification, handling and access; and (b) records management, retention and disposition.

11. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel; (b) review of relevant documentation; (c) assessment of the Mechanism's data management systems; (d) analytical review of data records; (e) sample testing of staff separations data from Umoja using a random sampling approach; (f) survey questionnaire to offices and sections; and (g) physical inspection of offices and repositories.

12. OIOS assessed the reliability of data related to judicial orders, staff separation from service, and records management activities by: (a) reviewing existing information about the data and related systems such as the Unified Judicial Database (UJDB), Umoja, Records Transfer System and Content Manager; and (b) interviewing IRMCT personnel knowledgeable about the data. Based on the assessment, OIOS determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purpose of addressing the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls for the management of IRMCT records and archives.

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

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Records classification, handling and access

Records classification was adequate

14. The Mechanism implemented information security marking on records in line with the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2012/3 and IRMCT Statutes. Principals and their designated senior managers authorized the security classification levels of non-judicial records created or received by their respective Organs. The President or Chambers authorized the security classification levels of judicial records. Non-judicial records were appropriately categorized based on sensitivity of information as either unclassified, confidential or strictly confidential across all three Organs, and judicial records were marked as public, confidential, or confidential and ex parte¹.

¹ Confidential and ex parte refers to judicial records that are restricted to one or more parties to a case by a judicial order.

15. Changes to the classification levels of judicial records were only effected after judicial authorization. OIOS' review of orders related to changing the classification levels of judicial records showed that from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2024, Chambers issued 32 decisions and orders. The Registry processed the filings for all the decisions and orders and made the relevant updates of the reclassified records in the Mechanism's UJDB. It also issued notification of filings to the relevant parties as instructed in the judicial orders. OIOS concluded that controls for the classification of records and the reclassification of judicial records were operating adequately.

Need to develop declassification procedures for non-judicial records and information

16. In February 2024, a plenary of Mechanism Judges removed Rule 155 (Declassification of non-public records of proceedings and evidence) from the Mechanism Rules of Procedure and Evidence. The Rule provided for a systematic review of the records of proceedings by a Judge giving due consideration to any matters relating to the reasons for non-disclosure, before issuing an order for declassification. The Judges considered that confidential material could instead be considered for declassification upon request to facilitate a more prudent approach to allocation of resources at this advanced stage of the Mechanism's lifecycle.

17. However, the Mechanism had not yet started the process of declassifying non-judicial records and information created or acquired 20 or more years ago, because it was yet to develop and implement declassifying procedures. These procedures are required to clarify the process to be followed for declassification of sensitive records and information and ensure that important factors are not overlooked by a potential third-party in the event the archives of the former Tribunals and the Mechanism are transferred. Furthermore, procedures would mitigate the risks of potential harm to protected individuals and possible legal or reputational implications for the Organization that could result from a blanket approach to declassifying sensitive records and information without due consideration of the reasons for non-disclosure.

18. ST/SGB/2012/3 states that non-judicial records are to be reviewed for possible declassification either 20 or 50 years after their creation or acquisition. Clear procedures for tracking and declassifying non-judicial records and information would enable the Mechanism to clear the current backlog of past due records and prevent future delays.

(1) IRMCT should develop and implement procedures for tracking and declassifying non-judicial records and information in line with ST/SGB/2012/3 and the Mechanism's Rules of Procedure and Evidence.

IRMCT accepted recommendation 1 and stated that declassification of records is a labour-intensive and time-consuming process. Staffing resources are constrained across the Mechanism. Developing procedures for the declassification process and making subsequent decisions to declassify information must be done by staff with appropriate knowledge, experience and authority in the offices which created, or which are now responsible for, that information. Defining procedures and taking declassification decisions will become increasingly challenging as the Mechanism continues to downsize and lose experienced staff and institutional knowledge.

Access removal procedures needed to be strengthened

19. The Mechanism's offices and sections implemented adequate access controls with due regard to sensitivity of information and security classification. OIOS' inspection and review of access to network folders, select databases, offices and repositories at both branches of the Mechanism showed that based on authorized instructions from supervisors, the Information Technology Services Section (ITSS) granted staff

access to network folders and databases, and the Safety and Security Section (SSS) enabled or disabled staff physical access to repositories and offices.

20. Removal of access to network folders and offices through the checkout process was generally adequate but needed to be strengthened for staff on When-Actually-Employed (WAE) contracts, which allowed them to be temporarily employed when resources permitted. Human resources data showed that 281 staff separated from service between 1 January 2023 and 31 December 2024 (149 in 2023 and 132 in 2024).

21. The test results for a random sample of 42 staff showed that 30 staff (71 per cent) had checkout forms signed by their supervisors, MARS, ITSS and SSS confirming that they had: (a) returned information technology assets such as laptops and mobile phones; (b) transferred all relevant official physical, digital and electronic records in their possession to their supervisor or filed them in their office's working folders or the Mechanism's official record-keeping system; (c) returned loaned records; (d) deleted all private email messages from their IRMCT email account; and (e) returned their access cards. Also, as part of the checkout process, the 30 staff signed non-disclosure forms acknowledging their continuing obligation to not disclose any information unknown to the public after separation from service.

22. However, there were no checkout forms for the remaining 10 staff (24 per cent). The requirement for them to complete the forms and follow the regular checkout process had been overlooked because they had been placed on WAE contracts. As a result, there were delays initiating access removal, and none of the 10 staff on WAE contracts had signed non-disclosure forms. For instance, the removal of network access for one staff member who separated from service in February 2024 was initiated at the time of audit in April 2025, and the removal of physical access for two staff members separated from service in May and July 2023 was undertaken in January 2024 and December 2023, respectively. MARS, ITSS and SSS were unaware that such staff had separated from service without the checkout forms.

(2) IRMCT should institute procedures to: (a) notify relevant sections to promptly remove access when staff on When-Actually-Employed contracts separate from service; and (b) ensure that staff on When-Actually-Employed contracts sign non-disclosure forms when separating from service.

IRMCT accepted recommendation 2 and stated that for part (b) of the recommendation, it notes that all WAE employees are translators/interpreters, and that United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) establishes and administers these contracts in line with their standard practices for temporary conference support employees. In this light, it is deemed that since the United Nations conferences which UNON supports already include the handling of sensitive information, adequate protection is in place. Nevertheless, in light of the need to protect sensitive judicial information, IRMCT will consult with UNON to include in the offers of appointment to WAE language services staff explicit stipulations on their ongoing requirement to hold all information in confidence.

Need to develop protocols for managing keys to safes in offices

23. Access to the repositories was adequately controlled by MARS, JRU and OTP at both branches of the Mechanism. Keys and combination passwords were only accessible to authorized staff. Visitors signed access registers and were accompanied by authorized staff when accessing the repositories for various purposes, such as cleaning or maintenance.

24. Several offices and sections stored sensitive records such as restricted hand-delivered sensitive filings and strictly confidential witness-related information in safes within their offices. It was common practice for offices and sections to determine their procedures for safeguarding keys or combinations to

their safes. For example, at The Hague branch, OTP and MARS staff retained the keys and combinations for safes in their repositories for storing weapons and ammunitions, while SSS retained the keys to the trigger-locks securing the weapons and stored them in a secure key-cabinet accessible to authorized SSS staff only. For the rest of the safes in offices at both branches, the keys and spare keys were held by individual staff.

25. However, the protocols for managing the keys and combinations to safes in offices were not clear. For instance, it was unclear what procedures were followed by various offices for handing over keys and sharing safe combinations among staff, or whether all offices maintain inventory of records in their safes or how offices track the movement of sensitive records stored in the safes. There was also the risk that keys may not be handed over by staff separating from service, resulting in difficulty accessing records in safes. The Facilities Management Unit confirmed that in the past, some safes were taken to specialist locksmiths because safe keys were lost or not handed over by separating staff. This was not optimal considering the sensitive records stored in safes.

26. As offices and sections remain with fewer staff due to the ongoing downsizing, the Mechanism needs to develop protocols for managing access keys and combinations of safes to safeguard access to sensitive records.

(3) IRMCT should develop protocols for managing access keys and combinations to safes in offices where sensitive records are stored.

IRMCT accepted recommendation 3 and stated that it has already taken steps to establish a full inventory of all safes and the parties responsible for their contents, and has developed a standard operating procedure to ensure that the information is kept current.

Need to ensure that all nominated record management focal points attend relevant training

27. Responsibility for records management was allocated to 29 designated staff (record management focal points) at the Mechanism – 16 at The Hague and 13 in Arusha – representing all offices and sections. Record management focal points were responsible for ensuring that official records of their respective offices and sections are managed to the right standards, are adequately prepared, and effectively transferred to MARS for storage and long-term preservation². The Section Chiefs of the General Services Section (GSS), Witness Support and Protection (WISP) Arusha branch, and the officers-in-charge of the OTP branches were responsible for records management in their respective sections and offices. MARS and JRU did not designate officials for records management due to the nature of their responsibilities.

28. In February 2025, OIOS administered a survey questionnaire to collect information about record-keeping practices of Mechanism offices and sections from both branches. The results showed that the record management focal points from 23 out of 30 (77 per cent) sections and offices attended relevant training provided by MARS. The focal points represented 10 offices and sections in The Hague branch, 10 in the Arusha branch, and three represented unified offices across both branches.

29. However, record management focal points from seven offices and sections had not attended relevant training sessions organized by MARS due to other operational demands. These included record management focal points from the Office of the President, OTP and Chambers in The Hague and Arusha branches, and the Mechanism Information Programme (MIP) for Affected Communities Section in The Hague. Focal points from 12 offices and sections in The Hague, including from the Office of the President,

² Preservation involves implementing measures to maintain the usability, authenticity, reliability and integrity of records over time.

Chambers and MIP, attended the training provided by MARS on 30 April 2025. There was a need to ensure that all nominated record management focal points at both branches prioritize attending relevant training sessions when they are scheduled to facilitate effective handling of records in all offices and sections.

(4) IRMCT should ensure that all record management focal points of its offices and sections attend the relevant training sessions for effective handling of their records.

IRMCT accepted recommendation 4 and stated that it will ensure that MARS delivers training twice a year for records management focal points and, in addition, offer in-person support as required. For 2025, both branches have already delivered one training each on 30 April 2025 in The Hague and 16 June 2025 in Arusha. The second round of training will be in quarter 3 and quarter 4 of 2025.

B. Records management, retention and disposition

Need to expedite the rollout of the electronic documents and records management system

30. During its establishment phase, the Mechanism implemented Content Manager, an electronic document and records management system (EDRMS) for the storage and management of non-judicial digital records based on lessons learned from record-keeping practices in the former tribunals. MARS managed Content Manager which facilitated the centralization of records management for both branches of the Mechanism.

31. However, Content Manager was yet to be fully adopted by all offices and sections. Results of a survey questionnaire indicated that it was implemented in 19 out of 30 (63 per cent) and not implemented in 11 (37 per cent) offices and sections across both branches. Twelve (40 per cent) sections and offices reported fully using Content Manager for storage and management of records, while 7 (23 per cent) reported only limited use. Eighteen (60 per cent) offices and sections used mainly network folders and other databases for storing and managing records.

32. As a result, the Mechanism could not achieve several potential benefits such as efficient searching and sharing of records across branches, and compliance with recordkeeping policies and standards for the storage and management of non-judicial digital records. Also, expediting the adoption of Content Manager by all offices and sections is essential for efficient preparation and transfer of non-judicial records to MARS for preservation, which is a core residual function during the current phase of the Mechanism.

(5) IRMCT should expedite the rollout of the electronic document and records management system for the efficient storage and management of non-judicial records.

IRMCT accepted recommendation 5 and stated that it has been offering support for the wider rollout of the EDRMS since 2014, with various offices already using the system. While timelines and adoption of this system are affected by significant downsizing leading to increased workload, IRMCT will continue its efforts to broaden the rollout of this system.

Need to prioritize preparation and transfer of non-judicial records

33. Effective preservation requires records to be appraised and prepared to specific standards to ensure that they are complete, accurate and reliable before they are transferred for preservation. To effectively manage the preservation of records of permanent value, the Tribunals and the Mechanism prepared records retention schedules (RRS) detailing the required retention and disposition periods for each type of record created or received.

34. The transfer of non-judicial records from the closed field offices in Sarajevo and Kigali was adequate. With guidance from MARS, the field offices completed survey questionnaires regarding their records and appraised documents to identify those eligible for disposal or transfer to MARS for retention based on RRS. Records that were to be retained were transferred to The Hague and Arusha branches respectively, while transient records were destroyed with the supervision of MARS staff. Also, disposal dates were included for records in Content Manager where relevant, based on RRS. MARS obtained authorization from supervisors prior to disposal of records that reached their specified retention period. During the review period, MARS disposed of 86 linear meters of physical records and 391 digital files across both branches.

35. However, not all offices and sections of IRMCT appraised their records using their respective RRS, and even fewer offices and sections transferred records to MARS during the review period. For example:

(a) Although 21 out of 30 (70 per cent) offices and sections reported in the survey questionnaire that they appraised their records, data from MARS reports and the Records Transfer System showed that only 13 out of 30 (43 per cent) offices and sections made transfers. Approximately 363.4 linear meters of physical records and 133,270 digital files were transferred to MARS at both branches of the Mechanism from 1 January 2023 to 30 November 2024.

(b) At least four terabytes of digital records and approximately 24.6 linear meters (74 boxes) of physical records had not been appraised by the External Relations Office (ERO) in The Hague when it was closed in June 2024. As it was not possible for the sole ERO staff member to appraise the records, a MARS staff member was tasked to review the physical documents against the ERO's RRS to identify records eligible for retention in archives.

36. Considerable volumes of non-judicial records inherited from predecessor offices of the former Tribunals were still in active use and yet to be appraised for preservation or disposal in line with RRS. Based on responses received in the survey questionnaire, 17 offices and sections reported that approximately 138 terabytes of digital records and 546 linear meters of physical records were yet to be appraised at the time of the audit.

37. A common misunderstanding identified in discussions with various supervisors was that offices would lose access to records transferred to MARS. However, physical records remained accessible and could be retrieved on loan by the respective offices and sections for ongoing work for up to three months with an option to extend. For example, during the review period, there were 1,830 records retrieved on loan from MARS for various offices and sections (417 in The Hague branch and 1,413 in the Arusha branch). Offices and sections retained read-only access to all their digital records in Content Manager.

38. IRMCT needs to prioritize the development of action plans for preparation and transfer of non-judicial records by all offices and sections to ensure their effective preservation. This is particularly important in view of the Security Council's request for the Secretary-General to present an updated report on the administrative and budgetary aspects of the options for possible locations of the archives.

(6) IRMCT should develop action plans for preparation and transfer of non-judicial records for disposal or preservation in line with the records retention schedules.

IRMCT accepted recommendation 6 and stated that while recognizing that this may be affected by significant downsizing leading to increased workload, it will work on developing the relevant actions plans. Some offices (such as the President's Office) have already developed a policy on the management, retention, and disposition of records, and are in the process of developing an action plan with concrete steps to ensure a timely and efficient review of non-judicial records with the aim of

transferring them to MARS for preservation. Other offices are in the process of developing relevant action plans.

Need to prepare judicial records for preservation

39. The Mechanism implemented UJDB for centralized management, online research, and public access of judicial records of the former Tribunals and the Mechanism. According to RRS, all judicial records are to be retained permanently. UJDB was managed by JRU and enabled registered users from Chambers, OTP and Registry to research the online library of legal documents from the cases heard at the former tribunals and the Mechanism, including decisions, judgments, pleadings, exhibits, transcripts and other filings. It also facilitated public access to judicial records that are not confidential under the access policy for the records held by IRMCT.

40. At the time of the audit, UJDB contained 584,168 judicial records of the former Tribunals and the Mechanism, excluding audiovisual judicial records. Of these, 390,477 (67 per cent) were public and 193,691 (33 per cent) were confidential. During the review period, MARS provided 174 transcripts and processed 1,629 hours of audiovisual footage in response to 243 (74 in Arusha, and 169 in The Hague) requests from the public, including formal requests for assistance from national jurisdictions.

(a) There was progress in preservation of audiovisual judicial records

41. The Mechanism preserved audiovisual recordings of court proceedings of the former Tribunals, which were stored in a variety of locations and devices including EDRMS, databases and removable storage devices. MARS appraised 149,570 analogue audiovisual recordings of ICTY (122,252) and ICTR (27,318) to identify those eligible for digitization. At the time of the audit, 66,145 analogue audiovisual recordings of ICTY (44,837) and ICTR (21,308) had been digitized, including 10,931 which were completed during the audit period. Less than five per cent and approximately 40 per cent of the digitized audiovisual recordings for The Hague and Arusha branches, respectively, were ingested into the Digital Preservation System (DPS) for long-term preservation³.

42. MARS also performed quality control checks of 21,612 (ICTY: 7,331 and ICTR: 14,281) digitized audiovisual recordings. This involved verifying completeness of recordings, reviewing accuracy of underlying data descriptions (metadata), and confirming that relevant portions of footage containing confidential information were effectively redacted. There were 9,513 (public: 8,699 and confidential: 814) quality-checked digitized audiovisual recordings of judicial proceedings uploaded on UJDB.

(b) Need to prepare judicial records for preservation and organize them in UJDB

43. Judicial records could be lost if not prepared and transferred to DPS because UJDB did not meet the required standards for the long-term preservation of digital records to ensure they remain authentic, reliable and usable in the future. Some judicial records were contained in other databases such as e-Court while some physical judicial records of ICTY, ICTR and IRMCT were yet to be prepared and transferred for preservation as they were considered active records.

44. Some registered users and the public found it inefficient to perform routine research and to access some judicial records in UJDB because it took longer than necessary to find some judicial records due to incorrect filing dates, document titles and categories. Also, some judicial records were missing in UJDB

³ The long-term preservation of digital records includes actively monitoring and migrating files comprising the data to ensure their preservation in a technically processable and readable manner, irrespective of technology changes.

searches because they were not transferred to the database. Furthermore, several complaints were received from public users regarding instances of failed attempts at accessing some judicial records in UJDB.

45. Several factors contributed to this situation including: (i) differences in metadata field descriptions between the ICTR judicial records database and the Mechanism's UJDB, which resulted in data migration errors; (ii) some ICTY and ICTR judicial records were created in formats that are currently outdated and inaccessible using modern technology; (iii) incorrect categorization of judicial and non-judicial records; and (iv) multiple copies of the same records in source databases for ICTR, which resulted in some judicial records not being migrated while others were migrated to UJDB, including some duplicate records. Due to limited resources, no appraisal was performed to determine the extent of judicial records affected and to effectively organize them in UJDB. Consequently, issues were resolved on a case-by-case basis as they were identified. In addition, a project to make redacted transcripts public for some ICTR cases was also suspended pending availability of resources.

46. To successfully discharge the mandate for managing the archives and facilitating enduring public access, judicial records need to be effectively prepared for preservation and correctly organized in UJDB.

(7) IRMCT should: (a) develop an action plan for preparation and transfer of judicial records for preservation; and (b) organize judicial records in the Unified Judicial Database to facilitate their efficient retrieval.

IRMCT accepted recommendation 7 and stated that it will work on developing an action plan for the preparation and transfer of judicial records in UJDB to MARS for preservation. It will also continue working on organizing the judicial records in UJDB to facilitate their efficient retrieval, which has been impacted by increased workload and limited resources due to significant downsizing. MARS will continue working on the audiovisual judicial courtroom recordings that are not yet in UJDB to ensure a complete record.

Need to strengthen emergency preparedness for physical storage and preservation facilities

47. There were adequate measures to manage the preservation of records in physical storage facilities across the two branches of the Mechanism. OIOS' walkthroughs at six repositories in The Hague branch (JRU 1, OTP 2, and MARS 3) and two co-located repositories in the Arusha branch (OTP 1 and MARS 1) confirmed the following:

(a) There was systematic and logical storage of records across all repositories. The record reference numbers corresponded with shelves and container numbers in storage locations at all the repositories. Unique number sequences and prefixes were used to easily differentiate records of different formats such as paper, video, and other digital materials.

(b) Physical environmental controls were in place at all the repositories. There were monthly pest control activities, and humidity and temperature readings were monitored daily and analyzed monthly.

48. However, the width of the aisles in the OTP repository in Arusha were on average 750 mm instead of the industry standard of between 1000 mm and 1500 mm for shelving in archival repositories storage. The space was not allocated based on the industry standard as the OTP records were not considered archives. This could restrict effective movement of people and records in the event of an emergency.

49. Emergency response and disaster recovery plans (ERDRP) for physical records repositories were being developed at the Arusha branch. At The Hague branch, ERDRP were in place but were last tested in 2019 and updated in 2022. It is important to ensure that ERDRP for physical records repositories at both

branches are relevant to the current residual phase of the Mechanism. The plans should consider the ongoing changes to operations and staff, availability of resources and supplies, and the need for staff training and external support in disaster preparedness and recovery. Although SSS assessed the risk of a disaster to records stored in the physical records repositories as low, an emergency event could significantly impair records preservation and their enduring access to the public.

- (8) IRMCT should ensure that emergency response and disaster recovery plans are: (a) finalized for the Arusha branch and updated for The Hague branch; and (b) tested regularly for effectiveness.**

IRMCT accepted recommendation 8 and stated that MARS aims to finalize the emergency response and disaster recovery plan for Arusha and update that for The Hague by the end of the first quarter of 2026.

Need to conduct backup restore exercises for digital records

50. The Mechanism's DPS did not have the required secondary storage system. Instead, it used a previously installed system (Apollo) to provide secondary storage for DPS. After Apollo experienced disk failures which resulted in loss and corruption of data, the damaged files were accessed for recovery in July 2024 when ITSS resolved the issue with the vendor. In August 2024, MARS successfully recovered and repaired 232 terabytes (58,000 digital files) of mostly audiovisual files that had been corrupted in Apollo.

51. In the absence of secondary storage, the Mechanism relied on backups created for digital files in DPS by ITSS. ITSS implemented a policy for semi-annual (January and July) backup of files in the DPS. Due to the large volume of digital records, the backup process takes more than a month to complete. During the review period, log reports confirmed successful backup of DPS files in The Hague branch in May 2023 and November 2024, and in the Arusha branch in August 2023 and November 2024. However, no backup-restore exercise was conducted between January 2023 and December 2024. The backup restore exercises are required to validate that the files could be recovered reliably when needed.

52. The semi-annual backup of files was not adequate to address the long-term retention needs of the Mechanism because it was still vulnerable to the significant risk of data loss without recovery. Limited resources precluded the Mechanism from implementing the industry standard 3-2-1 backup strategy which requires creating three copies of the data to be protected and stored on two different types of storage media and an offsite copy. Nevertheless, IRMCT continued to explore options for segmenting backups to create them faster, and for outsourcing support services through the United Nations Global Support Centre.

- (9) IRMCT should implement backup restore exercises to validate that digital files can be recovered reliably when needed.**

IRMCT accepted recommendation 9 and stated that procedures for conducting backup restore exercises have been implemented to validate that digital files can be recovered reliably. The procedures will be run twice a year. For 2025, one backup restore exercise has already been conducted at each branch, on 8 May 2025 in The Hague and 28 May 2025 and 23 June 2025 in Arusha. Documented evidence of these activities has been provided. Based on the test results, digital files can be located on backup tapes and recovered reliably when needed. Next tests will be performed in quarter 3 and quarter 4 of 2025.

Need to address infrastructure challenges related to evidence collection

53. Evidence collection consists of a large volume of records and materials (approximately 27 terabytes of digital files and 3,077 linear meters of physical records) that were created or acquired as part of OTP activities in the former Tribunals and the Mechanism. They continue to be used for servicing requests for assistance from Member States. Digital files are stored and managed in multiple OTP databases that were either internally developed or acquired more than 20 years ago. The databases were not upgraded after completion of court activities as planned due to resource limitations. OTP staff have reported experiencing delays due to recurring system failures when searching for information to service requests for assistance.

54. There was a significant risk that ageing systems could make the digital records of the evidence collection inaccessible. It is necessary to prioritize plans to ensure their continued access and preservation. To address the challenges of ageing technology infrastructure in OTP, a consultant was engaged in September 2024 to undertake a comparative analysis of available options and recommend an optimal solution for transfer of the evidence collection. The consultant's report issued in April 2025 recommended transition to a modern United Nations-approved solution and included proposed costs with implementation timelines. At the time of the audit, IRMCT was considering the consultant's report and related options to address the underlying issue.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

55. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of IRMCT 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 management of records and archiving processes at the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁴ / Important ⁵	C/ O ⁶	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁷
1	IRMCT should develop and implement procedures for tracking and declassifying non-judicial records and information in line with ST/SGB/2012/3 and the Mechanism's Rules of Procedure and Evidence.	Important	O	Receipt of procedures developed for tracking and declassifying non-judicial records and information and evidence of their use.	31 December 2026
2	IRMCT should institute procedures to: (a) notify relevant sections to promptly remove access when staff on When-Actually-Employed contracts separate from service; and (b) ensure that staff on When-Actually-Employed contracts sign non-disclosure forms when separating from service.	Important	O	Receipt of procedures instituted to notify relevant sections when staff on WAE contracts separate from service, and copies of non-disclosure forms signed by separated staff on WAE contracts.	31 December 2025
3	IRMCT should develop protocols for managing access keys and combinations to safes in offices where sensitive records are stored.	Important	O	Receipt of a copy of protocols developed for managing access keys and combination safes in offices where sensitive records are stored.	31 December 2025
4	IRMCT should ensure that all record management focal points of its offices and sections attend the relevant training sessions for effective handling of their records.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that all record management focal points have attended the relevant training sessions.	31 December 2025
5	IRMCT should expedite the rollout of the electronic document and records management system for the efficient storage and management of non-judicial records.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that the roll-out of the electronic document and records management system to all offices has been completed.	30 June 2026
6	IRMCT should develop action plans for preparation and transfer of non-judicial records for disposal or preservation in line with the records retention schedules.	Important	O	Receipt of copies of action plans developed for the preparation and transfer of non-judicial records for their disposal or preservation.	31 December 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 IRMCT in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of management of records and archiving processes at the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

7	IRMCT should: (a) develop an action plan for preparation and transfer of judicial records for preservation; and (b) organize judicial records in the Unified Judicial Database to facilitate their efficient retrieval.	Important	O	Receipt of copy of an action plan developed for preparation and transfer of judicial records for preservation, and evidence that judicial records in UJDB have been organized to facilitate their efficient retrieval.	31 December 2026
8	IRMCT should ensure that emergency response and disaster recovery plans are: (a) finalized for the Arusha branch and updated for The Hague branch; and (b) tested regularly for effectiveness.	Important	O	Receipt of a final copy of the emergency response and disaster recovery plan for Arusha branch and an updated plan for The Hague branch; and receipt of evidence that both plans have been tested.	30 June 2026
9	IRMCT should implement backup restore exercises to validate that digital files can be recovered reliably when needed.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that digital files can be reliably restored from backups.	31 December 2025

APPENDIX I

Management Response

Management Response

Audit of management of records and archiving processes at the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	IRMCT should develop and implement procedures for tracking and declassifying non-judicial records and information in line with ST/SGB/2012/3 and the Mechanism's Rules of Procedure and Evidence.	Important	Yes	Heads of Organs	Q4 2026	<p>As a general comment applicable to all recommendations, IRMCT highlights the potential transfer of the archives by the Security Council following submission of the SGs report by 31 December 2025. The outcome of this process will likely impact the recommendations.</p> <p>IRMCT notes that declassification of records is a labor-intensive and time-consuming process. Staffing resources are constrained across the Mechanism. Developing procedures for the declassification process and making subsequent decisions to declassify information <u>must</u> be done by staff with appropriate knowledge, experience and authority in the offices which created, or which are now responsible for, that information. Defining procedures and taking declassification decisions will become increasingly challenging as the Mechanism continues to downsize and lose experienced staff and institutional knowledge.</p>
2	IRMCT should institute procedures to: (a) notify relevant sections to promptly remove access when staff on When-	Important	Yes	Chief of Human Resources Section	Q4 2025	For part b) of the recommendation, IRMCT management notes that all IRMCT WAE employees are translator/interpreters, and that UNON establishes and administers these

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

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

Management Response

Audit of management of records and archiving processes at the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
	Actually-Employed contracts separate from service; and (b) ensure that staff on When-Actually-Employed contracts sign non-disclosure forms when separating from service.					contracts in line with their standard practices for temporary conference support employees. In this light, it is deemed that since the UN conferences which UNON supports already include the handling of sensitive information, adequate protections are in place. Nevertheless, in light of the need to protect sensitive judicial information, in order to address the recommendation, IRMCT will consult with UNON to include in the offers of appointment to WAE language services staff explicit stipulations in regard to their on-going requirement to hold all information in confidence.
3	IRMCT should develop protocols for managing access keys and combinations to safes in offices where sensitive records are stored.	Important	Yes	Chief of Administration	Q4 2025	This recommendation is fully accepted, and the IRMCT has already taken steps to establish a full inventory of all safes and the parties responsible for their contents, and has developed an SOP to ensure that the information is kept current.
4	IRMCT should ensure that all record management focal points of its offices and sections attend the relevant training sessions for effective handling of their records.	Important	Yes	Heads/ Officers-in-Charge of MARS	Q4 2025	IRMCT will ensure that MARS delivers trainings twice a year for records management focal points and, in addition, offer in-person support as required. For this Year (2025), both branches have already delivered one (1) training each on 30/04/2025 in the Hague and 16/06/2025 in Arusha. The second round of training will be in Q3/Q4.
5	IRMCT should expedite the rollout of the electronic document and records management system for	Important	Yes	Heads/ Officers-in-	Q2 2026	IRMCT has been offering support for the wider rollout of the EDRMS since 2014, with various offices already using the system. While

Management Response

Audit of management of records and archiving processes at the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
	the efficient storage and management of non-judicial records.			Charge of MARS		timelines and adoption of this system are affected by significant downsizing leading to increased workload, IRMCT will continue in its efforts to broaden the rollout of this system.
6	IRMCT should develop action plans for preparation and transfer of non-judicial records for disposal or preservation in line with the records retention schedules.	Important	Yes	Heads of Organs	Q4 2026	<p>As a general comment applicable to all recommendations, IRMCT highlights the potential transfer of the archives by the Security Council following submission of the SGs report by 31 December 2025. The outcome of this process will likely impact the recommendations.</p> <p>While recognizing that this may be affected by significant downsizing leading to increased workload, IRMCT will work on developing the relevant action plans. Some Offices (such as the President's Office) have already developed a policy on the management, retention, and disposition of records, and are in the process of developing an action plan with concrete steps to ensure a timely and efficient review of non-judicial records with the aim of transferring them to MARS for preservation; while other Offices are in the process of developing relevant action plans.</p>
7	IRMCT should: (a) develop an action plan for preparation and transfer of judicial records for preservation; and (b) organize judicial records in the Unified Judicial Database to facilitate their efficient retrieval.	Important	Yes	Head of JRU	Q4 2026	IRMCT will work on developing an action plan for the preparation and transfer of judicial records in UJDB to MARS for preservation. IRMCT will also continue working on organizing the judicial records in UJDB to facilitate their efficient retrieval, which has been impacted by significant downsizing

Management Response

Audit of management of records and archiving processes at the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						leading to increased workload and limited resources. For example, MARS will continue working on the audiovisual judicial courtroom recordings that are not yet in UJDB to ensure a complete record.
8	IRMCT should ensure that emergency response and disaster recovery plans are: (a) finalized for the Arusha branch and updated for The Hague branch; and (b) tested regularly for effectiveness.	Important	Yes	Heads/ Officers-in-Charge of MARS	Q2 2026	MARS aims to finalize the emergency response and disaster recovery plan for Arusha and update that for the Hague by the end of the first quarter of 2026.
9	IRMCT should implement backup restore exercises to validate that digital files can be recovered reliably when needed.	Important	Yes	Chief of ITSS	Q4 2025	Procedures for conducting backup restore exercises have been implemented to validate that digital files can be recovered reliably. The procedures will be run twice a year. For this Year, both branches have already conducted one backup restore exercise each on (08/05/2025 in the Hague and 28/05/2025 & 23/06/2025 in Arusha). Documented evidence of these activities has been provided. Based on the test results, digital files can be located on backup tapes and recovered reliably when needed. Next tests will be performed in Q3/Q4.