



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2025/052

Audit of crisis management audit of crisis management and business continuity planning in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

UNIFIL adequately implemented the crisis management and business continuity plan during the 2023-2024 crisis; however, the Mission needed to conduct a psycho-social risk assessment and actively engage in a United Nations Country Team programme criticality assessment

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Assignment No. AP2024-672-07

Audit of crisis management and business continuity planning in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of crisis management and business continuity planning in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy of crisis management and business continuity planning to ensure UNIFIL effectively responds to serious disruptive events. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 January 2025 and included a review of: (a) Mission response during the regional crisis; (b) governance on crisis management and business continuity plan; (c) crisis management and business continuity planning; and (d) testing and maintenance of plans.

UNIFIL promptly activated its crisis management and business continuity plan during the 2023-2024 regional crisis and maintained delivery of its essential services and time-critical business services. Governance structures were in place through the Crisis Management Team and Crisis Management Working Group, with clear roles and responsibilities; and the Mission effectively maintained situational awareness. UNIFIL also regularly tested and updated its crisis and business continuity plans, completing the required exercises and implementing lessons learned from after-action reviews.

However, OIOS noted that UNIFIL did not conduct a comprehensive psycho-social risk assessment to inform a structured action plan for supporting staff mental health. Although UNIFIL conducted a rapid needs assessment, it lacked sufficient detail to guide effective interventions. Also, UNIFIL had limited participation in the United Nations Country Team programme criticality assessment.

OIOS made two recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, UNIFIL needed to:

- Conduct a psycho-social risk assessment and develop a corresponding action plan to promote and protect the mental health of personnel both under normal and crisis situations.
- Actively engage in the United Nations Country Team programme criticality assessment and ensure that the Mission brings its operational context, experiences and lessons learned in the next assessment.

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

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Audit of crisis management and business continuity planning in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of crisis management and business continuity planning in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).
2. Crisis management and business continuity are core elements of the Organizational Resilience Management System (ORMS), the emergency management framework of the United Nations. The ORMS framework was approved by the General Assembly in June 2013 (A/RES/67/254) and became effective on 1 December 2014. The framework aims to build the Organization's resilience and ability to deal with crises in a comprehensive, coherent and coordinated manner to protect United Nations personnel and assets better, and to enable it to continue delivering its mandates.
3. Crisis management is the process of decision-making that supports the identification, prioritization, coordination and execution of crisis response activities. Business continuity is the capability of the Mission to continue delivery of essential and time-critical services at acceptable pre-defined levels during and/or following a disruptive event. Minutes after a critical event has occurred, the United Nations implements its crisis management plan, known as the crisis response phase. After a few hours, the recovery phase is initiated, and the business continuity plan (BCP) is initiated.
4. UNIFIL experienced a crisis and disruption to its normal operations in October 2023 due to exchanges of fire across the Blue Line. In September 2024, the security situation in the south of the Litani River deteriorated and spilled over to Beirut and other parts of northern Lebanon. On 1 November 2024, the Mission, following a recommendation of United Nations Department of Safety and Security, advised non-programme critical staff to depart Lebanon. On 27 November 2024, a ceasefire understanding was reached between Israel and Lebanon mandating a 60-day halt to hostilities. Despite this agreement, UNIFIL advised that the situation in South Lebanon remained dangerous, including the risk of unexploded ordnance contamination in many areas. Hostilities resumed in March 2025.
5. The Head of Mission and Force Commander (HoM/FC) is accountable for the implementation of ORMS with the Principal Coordination Officer (PCO) delegated the authority for the administration of the ORMS policy. Reporting to the PCO, a dedicated ORMS focal point: (a) coordinates the ORMS operations; (b) is responsible for various ORMS core elements across the mission components; and (c) ensures the key performance indicators for ORMS implementation were fully met. The Chief of the Joint Operations Centre (JOC), who is a military officer, was the owner of the crisis management standard operating procedures, while the PCO was responsible for the BCP.
6. UNIFIL used the Situation Awareness Tool – Incident Management System (SAT-IMS) during crisis management. SAT-IMS is a web-based platform used to: (a) collect, process, analyze and visualize information on incidents; and (b) monitor and manage crisis situations through sharing information on incidents, activities and responses.
7. Comments provided by UNIFIL are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

8. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy of crisis management and business continuity planning to ensure UNIFIL effectively responds to serious disruptive events.
9. This audit was included in the 2024 OIOS risk-based work plan due to operational risks related to the regional security situation that disrupted the Mission's ability to conduct normal operations.
10. OIOS conducted this audit from February to June 2025. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 January 2025 and included a review of: (a) Mission response during the regional crisis; (b) governance on crisis management and business continuity plan; (c) crisis management and business continuity planning; and (d) testing and maintenance of plans.
11. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key staff involved in crisis management and business continuity planning; (b) analytical review of relevant training and situational data; and (c) review of relevant documentation, including seven ORMS plans to assess their completeness, harmonization, and compliance with policies, and 70 after-action reports, including 5 during the regional crisis, to determine if lessons learned were identified and applied to continuously improve policies and procedures.
12. To assess the reliability of data pertaining to SAT-IMS, OIOS reviewed existing information about the data and interviewed UNIFIL personnel knowledgeable about the data. In addition, OIOS traced a random sample of: (a) data in SAT-IMS to UNIFIL broadcasts to confirm the actual occurrence of incidents in the database; and (b) incidents broadcasted by the Mission to verify completeness of incidents recorded in SAT-IMS. Based on the review, OIOS concluded that the SAT-IMS data was sufficiently reliable for addressing the audit objectives.
13. The audit was conducted in accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Mission response during the regional crisis

UNIFIL monitored the crisis-related incidents and timely activated its crisis response to the regional crisis

14. The UNIFIL crisis management SOP required JOC, Joint Mission Analysis Centre, Military Information Unit and Security Information and Operations Centre to maintain situational awareness through continuous monitoring and analysis of information on incidents and evolving situations.

15. 

16. Starting 8 October 2023, the exchanges of fire across the Blue Line resulted in a serious deterioration of the situation in the UNIFIL area of responsibility. This prompted the HoM/FC to activate

the crisis management framework on 16 October 2023 in accordance with the crisis management SOP. Consequently, all other elements of the Mission's ORMS were activated as well.

UNIFIL crisis management governance structure carried out its responsibilities, but could enhance tracking of decisions and action points

17. The Crisis Management Team (CMT) secretariat was required to maintain a log of CMT decisions and action points and ensure that every task is accounted for and completed on time. OIOS review of 324 CMT meeting documents from 1 January 2023 to 31 January 2025 noted satisfactory meeting attendance by CMT members with an average of 8 out of 9 CMT members attending the meetings. The CMT secretariat recorded action points for all CMT meetings in daily action points matrices. The daily matrix included information on the date of the meeting, key issue areas, action points, section responsible for the action, and action status.

18. From 16 October to 31 December 2023, the CMT implemented a monthly action point task tracker, which included all the daily action points with updated status which were: (a) permanent; (b) completed; (c) ongoing; (d) to start; or (e) updated/included in a new task. Effective January 2024, CMT ceased preparing the monthly tracker. In lieu thereof, the Crisis Management Working Group (CMWG) prepared year-end task trackers. While the monthly and yearly task trackers were intended to serve as tools for monitoring action points from daily matrices, the task tracker as of December 2024 only showed four action points, three of which were with "permanent" status and one with "to start" status. OIOS review of 60 CMT meeting documentation showed that 30 action points in 2023 monthly task trackers, and 112 action points in 2024 daily action points matrices with "ongoing" status were excluded from the year-end task trackers. There was no record available showing when and whether all the action points were completed.

19. The Mission commented that given the nature of the crisis which required fast-paced actions and decisions, daily logging and tracking of all action points were not possible. UNIFIL agreed to maintain a complete log of all Crisis Management Team action points replete with information on the status, target completion and actual completion dates in subsequent crisis scenarios.

UNIFIL adequately maintained essential and time-critical business services during the 2023-2024 crisis

20. UNIFIL was expected to continue the delivery of essential and time-critical business services (ETBS) at acceptable predefined levels during and/or following a disruptive incident. OIOS review of documents, records and reports showed that UNIFIL continued to implement its mandate and carried out all of its 10 ETBS in the BCP within the established maximum period of disruption (MTPD)¹. Examples of three ETBS are shown in table 1.

¹ MTPD is the time period senior management considers acceptable to operate without the specified service.

Table 1: Essential and time-critical business services and maximum tolerable period of disruption

Essential and time-critical business services	Maximum tolerable period of disruption	OIOS observations
Fulfill mandate in relation to protection of civilians	30 minutes	Through contingents giving shelter, UNIFIL provided physical protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence. The Mission also used deconfliction channels to support: (a) civilian movements; (b) safe access for humanitarian actors; (c) delivery of essential supplies; and (d) evacuation of civilians from high-risk areas.
Carry out mandate in relation to observing peace and stability in the area of operation	30 minutes	UNIFIL maintained its observation posts and continued to conduct patrols. The Mission reported: (a) 100 per cent achievement of its targeted observation posts person/days; and (b) 93 per cent achievement of targeted independent mobile patrols for 2023/24.
Provide support to the Lebanese Armed Forces in SLR	30 minutes	UNIFIL supported LAF in mine action activities. UNIFIL conducted liaison meetings with the Lebanon Mine Action Centre to determine priority areas for UNIFIL landmine clearance and to provide technical advice and support on risk education to affected communities.

Sources: Broadcasts, SAT-IMS, minutes of CMT/CMWG/SMT meetings, budget performance report, and other reports

21. Further, OIOS analysis of operational logs, process documentation, performance data and related correspondence showed that the Mission continued to deliver business support processes and activities within the Recovery Time Objective (RTOs).² For example, in line with the zero-minute RTO for informing the HoM/FC of security incidents, JOC immediately reported without delay the first ground strike on 8 October 2023 through secure and instant messaging. Throughout the crisis, critical staff lists were maintained in real time on SharePoint, compliant with the 30-minute RTO for advising HoM/FC on the required presence of staff in Naquora. The reliable power supply in UNIFIL, supported by generators and solar farms, ensured compliance with the 15-minute RTO for maintaining electrical supply to servers and communication rooms. Consequently, no power interruptions were reported throughout the crisis.

UNIFIL maintained effective communication and coordination between civilian and military personnel

22. Crisis communications is a strategic approach to disseminating information and messages during a disruptive event directed both to internal and external audiences. Between July 2023 to January 2025, UNIFIL issued 19,824 early warnings and real-time alerts and updates on incidents and developing news on the prevailing situation in the UNIFIL area of operations. At the start of the crisis, a broadcast was released after every incident; however, this was no longer feasible as the number of incidents increased significantly. Accordingly, the Mission started enumerating the incidents in the Daily Security Information Report.

23. The Mission drafted its crisis communication plan when the crisis began; it was approved and adopted in January 2024. The communication plan outlined approaches to issuing statements and messages that would protect and maintain the Mission messages. The plan was executed and implemented during the crisis, generally achieving its intended objectives. Using both digital and traditional media channels, UNIFIL issued messages to correct misleading narratives. For example, the Mission emphasized that it remained fully operational and committed to the implementation of its mandate to negate allegations that UNIFIL was withdrawing from Naquora.

² RTO is the allowable downtime for a system or service following a disruption before it must be restored to normal operations to avoid significant negative impact.

24. The crisis management necessitated close coordination and collaboration between the military and civilian components. For example, the military component provided armed escort support to staff of substantive offices who continued to work and engage with interlocutors in crisis-affected areas, an arrangement that does not occur under normal conditions.

UNIFIL undertook after-action reviews during the crisis

25. The United Nations Crisis Management Policy and Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning Policy required UNIFIL to organize after-action reviews (AARs) to allow the Mission to reflect on: (a) what went well; (b) areas of improvement; and (c) concrete recommendations for follow-up to enhance similar actions going forward.

26. UNIFIL completed five AARs, as presented in table 2, during the Mission's response to the 2023-2024 crisis which identified several challenges, lessons learned and at least 60 recommendations.

Table 2: **After-action reviews during the 2023-2024 regional crisis**

Responsible office	Title of after-action review	Period covered	Date of AAR
Strategic Communication and Public Information	AAR on exchanges of fire across the Blue Line	8 October 2023 to 30 April 2024	3 May 2024
Mission Support Division	AAR on Mission support measures during crisis	October 2023 to April 2024	17 April 2024
Principal Coordination Office	AAR on protracted crisis	8 October 2023 to 8 April 2024	26 April 2024
Principal Coordination Office	AAR on managing business continuity during a protracted crisis	8 October 2023 to 30 September 2024	31 December 2024
Principal Coordination Office	AAR on crisis management	21 November 2024 to 12 April 2025	5 May 2025

27. The Mission reviewed the relevance, importance and actionability of recommendations emanating from AARs and identified a total of 39 actionable recommendations as of 31 December 2024, which informed a detailed matrix of recommended concrete actions, with identified responsible office and expected implementation dates. The HoM/FC issued an inter-office memoranda to inform assigned task owners of the needed actions.

UNIFIL did not conduct a psycho-social risk assessment

28. The 2023-2024 crisis had a psychological impact on personnel as indicated by an increasing trend in mental health-related cases among Mission personnel: 254, 302 and 353 for 2022, 2023 and 2024, respectively. In town hall meetings, OIOS also noted programme-critical staff members' request for welfare activities to promote their well-being. Furthermore, OIOS review of an AAR highlighted that the Mission had limited measures to improve and/or address psychological well-being among UNIFIL personnel. To address this challenge, the AAR recommended: (a) training on stress management techniques; (b) broader preventive access to mental health professionals; (c) informing staff of the availability of counselling services; and (d) facilitating peer support networks.

29. To address mental health concerns during the crisis, the Staff Counsellor undertook a rapid psycho-social needs assessment in October 2023 shortly after the onset of the hostilities in Southern Lebanon, but the rapid psycho-social needs assessment report did not highlight support gaps and resource constraints. Consequently, the enumerated actions may not have been realistically achievable. Also, the Mission had not developed an action plan, informed by a psycho-social risk assessment, as recommended by the United

Nations System Mental Health and Well-being Strategy, with concrete measures to provide the appropriate psycho-social support to personnel in times of crisis. As a result, the psycho-social support to personnel was mainly through staff counselling sessions (815 and 892 in 2023 and 2024, respectively). While counseling is an important part of mental health care, it is not always sufficient on its own, thus a comprehensive assessment is necessary to provide more effective support.

30. According to the Staff Counsellor, the psycho-social risk assessment was initially planned for 2022 but was deferred due to events that precipitated the regional crisis. The Staff Counselor planned to undertake the assessment in September 2025.

(1) UNIFIL should conduct a psycho-social risk assessment to determine and enhance mitigating measures and develop a corresponding action plan to promote and protect the mental health of personnel both under normal and crisis situations.

UNIFIL accepted recommendation 1 and stated that the Critical Incident Stress Management Section in the Department of Safety and Security would launch a comprehensive psycho-social risk assessment in October 2025. Based thereon, the Section would point out mental health risks and tailored actions which would be presented to UNIFIL management.

B. Governance on crisis management and business continuity plan

UNIFIL had adequate Organizational Resilience Management System governance structures

31. The Secretary-General's Report on ORMS (A/67/266) specifies that a two-tiered governance structure should be adopted in field entities: (a) high-level body responsible for policy decisions on emergency management; and (b) operational level team that is responsible for implementing policy decisions prior to and during crisis situations.

32. OIOS review of relevant documents, such as standard operating procedures on crisis management, terms of reference of the ORMS chair and focal point, and interviews of key Mission personnel, indicated that UNIFIL adopted a two-tiered governance structure for organizational resilience management.

- Crisis Management Team (CMT) – It was headed by HoM/FC as the crisis manager, and composed of all members of the Mission Leadership Team and other selected members. The CMT was the Mission's critical decision-making, coordination and liaison body responsible for ensuring coordinated decision-making during a crisis.
- Crisis Management Working Group (CMWG) – It was a cross-component body comprising 10 members, responsible for supporting the crisis coordinator in all relevant tasks, such as: (a) day-to-day crisis response activities; (b) making policy recommendations; and (c) ensuring common messaging. CMWG was dual-led by the Force Deputy Chief of Staff – Operations and the Senior Coordination Officer.

UNIFIL adequately identified roles and responsibilities for crisis management and business continuity

33. Roles and responsibilities for tasks required to implement and maintain the business continuity management programme should be assigned and allocated to specific and competent individuals. OIOS analyzed the roles, responsibilities, reporting lines and day-to-day operational decisions as outlined in UNIFIL inter-office-memoranda and contingency plans and noted the following key roles and responsibilities.

- The HoM/FC had overall responsibility and accountability for business continuity. The HoM/FC was responsible for activating the BCP. In the absence of the HoM/FC from the UNIFIL area of operation, the Deputy Head of Mission may activate the BCP.
- The PCO had the overall responsibility for ensuring implementation of the ORMS and ensuring the coherence of all contingency plans. The Deputy Head of Mission, Director of Mission Support and Force Chief of Staff (COS) were responsible for the implementation of the BCP.
- Either the PCO or the Force COS may be designated as the crisis coordinator depending on the type of crisis. The crisis coordinator served as the link between the crisis manager and CMT.
- JOC was to support the crisis manager and crisis coordinator by serving as the integrated information center. It was to ensure timely, accurate and relevant information to the Mission, United Nations Operations and Crisis Centre, and Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs – Department of Peace Operations. JOC was also responsible for providing secretarial services to the CMT.

34. Also, the Mission's crisis management standard operating procedures documented responsibility for other emergency plans within the ORMS to designated owners as follows: (a) crisis management to JOC; (b) safety and security of personnel, premises and assets to the Security Section; (c) crisis communication to the Strategic Communication and Public Information Section; (d) information and communication technology resilience to the Field Technology Section; (e) emergency medical support to the Medical Section; and (f) support for United Nations personnel and eligible family members to the Human Resources Section. Mission personnel were informed of their business continuity roles and responsibilities through inter-office memoranda. Their respective roles and responsibilities were included in their individual work plans and performance documents.

35. The clear assignment and communication of roles and responsibilities facilitated effective management of the crisis, ensuring timely decision-making, coordinated operational responses, and continuity of critical business processes noted in Section A.

The Mission could encourage completion of crisis management and business continuity training

36. The memorandum issued by the Head of Mission on 16 June 2020 stated that UNIFIL should ensure that all managers and staff are aware of emergency plans and procedures.

37. Interviews with the ORMS focal point indicated that, to promote personnel awareness of crisis management and business continuity processes among UNIFIL personnel, the Mission utilized the following platforms: (a) Mission's intranet which provided information on UNIFIL ORMS; (b) ORMS Teams channel for the ORMS implementation team consisting of 64 mission personnel; and (c) exercises to test emergency plans.

38. The Mission sent four staff members to attend the ORMS and Field Mission Crisis Management Leadership training courses offered by the Global Service Center in Brindisi, Italy every year from 2022 to 2024. However, the attendees did not organize sessions to share knowledge gained from the courses with the crisis management structure and the rest of UNIFIL personnel. Analysis of data on completion by UNIFIL personnel of ORMS training showed that 1 of the 9 CMT members (or 11 per cent) and 3 of the 12 CMWG members (or 25 per cent) attended the course. OIOS confirmed that, from 2021 to 2025, no UNIFIL staff had taken the online course on fundamentals of business continuity management offered by the Capacity Development and Operational Training Service.

39. UNIFIL noted that the completion of exercises to test the emergency plans was a sufficient form of training. However, OIOS notes that other forms of training could further enhance staff awareness. While testing exercises are meant to apply and reinforce theoretical knowledge, formal training opportunities could provide the framework, explanation and understanding necessary to guide actions. To enhance staff awareness of ORMS, UNIFIL could: (a) organize sessions for sharing knowledge gained from crisis management courses attended by Mission staff; and (b) encourage and monitor completion by Mission personnel of the online course offered by the Capacity Development and Operational Training Service.

C. Crisis management and business continuity planning

UNIFIL developed a comprehensive crisis management and business continuity plan

40. UNIFIL is required to develop a BCP that: (a) takes account of risks and helps to mitigate the impact of emergencies on staff, premises, assets and operations; and (b) increases the Mission's resilience and capacity to maintain and restore critical operations during crisis. The system-wide guidance for the completion of the business continuity plan requires the identification of: (a) ETBS; and (b) supporting business processes, along with the respective: (a) MTPD; and (b) RPO.

41. OIOS review of the Mission's business continuity planning documentation, including BCPs dated 5 July 2022 and 17 July 2023, indicated that the Mission maintained a BCP that was reviewed and updated yearly. OIOS noted the PCO, with the support of the ORMS focal point, facilitated the process of identifying ETBS and supporting business processes among senior managers for the 2023 BCP. OIOS review of the BCP indicated that UNIFIL identified 10 ETBS each with a MTPD and 22 supporting business processes with a RPO, along with identified responsible units.

42. OIOS comparison of the identified UNIFIL ETBS and supporting business processes with those of other peacekeeping missions indicated that the Mission identified a comparable number of critical business services and processes. OIOS also noted that the MTPDs and RPOs established by the Mission were comparable with those established by other peacekeeping missions. The final list of ETBS and support business processes were subsequently endorsed and approved by the HoM/FC on 17 July 2023.

43. OIOS review also indicated that the Mission included in its BCP: (a) list of vital records, equipment and materials to be protected; (b) list of staff and vendors holding critical functions; and (c) departmental strategies to support each of the business processes. The BCPs of July 2022 and July 2023 highlighted: (a) possible scenarios including loss of premises, loss of ICT system and applications, loss of key suppliers, and catastrophic events combining all and consequences of disruptions to the Mission's operations; and (b) business continuity strategies of the functional areas of the Mission. The Mission had also designated responsibilities for the activation of the BCP and implementation of the various business services in the event of a crisis. The list of critical staff was regularly updated, and the Mission updated the critical staff list 12 times from October 2023 to December 2024 in response to the October 2023 crisis.

44. Even though the PCO was responsible for developing the BCP, the Mission ensured every component had a role in developing it. UNIFIL circulated the plan among all stakeholders of the Mission, including sector commanders and all the sections, whose inputs were sought and included. The draft was then circulated numerous times among Mission stakeholders and the ORM Unit in Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs - Department of Peace Operations prior to finalization. The final BCPs were reviewed and approved by the HoM/FC and shared with the ORMS core group through the ORMS Microsoft Teams website.

UNIFIL had limited participation in the United Nations Country Team programme criticality assessment

45. UNIFIL was expected to actively participate in the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) programme-criticality assessment for Lebanon, which aimed at ensuring the continuation of mandate-related activities during crises is balanced against the related security risks. The assessment requires the identification of activities that: (a) can proceed without need of additional risk mitigating measures; or (b) need the implementation of additional risk mitigating measures to lower the risks to United Nations personnel and property. However, UNIFIL did not effectively participate in the UNCT programme-criticality assessment in December 2023.

46. UNIFIL stated that its participation and contribution to the UNCT assessment was sufficient and aligned to the programme criticality framework. However, OIOS noted that the UNIFIL representative was present only on the last day of the three-day assessment led by the UNCT. OIOS review of the UNCT criticality assessment report also showed that the listed programme criticality outputs did not adequately capture mandate-related activities and the operational footprint of UNIFIL.

47. This was a loss of opportunity to contribute to the UNCT country business continuity plan and how the UNCT and UNIFIL can adequately coordinate and deal with the implications of UNIFIL critical activities when a crisis occurs at the country level.

(2) UNIFIL should actively engage in the United Nations Country Team programme criticality assessment and ensure that the Mission brings its operational context, experiences and lessons learned in the next assessment.

UNIFIL accepted recommendation 2 and stated that the Mission would participate in the next programme criticality assessment of the United Nations Country Team and fully utilize its experiences and lessons learned.

D. Testing and maintenance of plans

UNIFIL adequately tested plans and implemented recommendations for continuous improvement

48. UNIFIL was required to implement formal maintenance, exercise and review (ME&R) programme, where the Mission's ORMS is exercised and subject to constant improvement.

49. OIOS review of the ME&Rs indicated that the Mission developed annual schedules of training and exercises of plans related to business continuity, crisis management and communication, ICT resilience, staff support, emergency medical support and security. From July 2021 to September 2023, the period before the October 2023 crisis, the Mission had scheduled 93 planned exercises. However, OIOS review of schedules of planned exercises completed and AARs indicated that only 54 (or 58 percent) of the planned exercises were completed, as shown in table 3.

Table 3: Status of completion of ORMS planned exercises for period from July 2021 to September 2023

Responsible department	ORMS plans	Planned exercises	Completed exercises
Principal Coordination Office	Business Continuity Plan	3	1
Strategic Communication and Public Information	Crisis Communication Plan	1	1
Joint Operations Centre	Crisis Management SOP	26	17
Field Technology Section	ICT Resilience Plan	15	6
Human Resources Management Section	Staff Support Plan	2	2
Medical Section	Emergency Medical Support Plan	19	16
Security Section	Security Emergency Plan	27	11
		93	54

50. Although UNIFIL did not complete all planned ME&R exercises, the Mission complied with the policy requirement to test, revise and update each plan annually. UNIFIL explained that the plan owners were encouraged to tentatively plan exercises in advance on a range of identified capabilities with the understanding that actual exercises would be carried out based on requirements for a specific capability. As UNIFIL met the policy requirement and conducted more than one required exercise for many of the plans, OIOS did not make a recommendation.

51. OIOS review of documentation indicated that UNIFIL completed 65 AARs for the period from July 2021 to September 2023. Of the 65 completed AARs, 54 were related to ORMS testing exercises and 11 were related to actual events. OIOS review indicated that all AARs followed the guidance provided by stating the: (a) business owner; (b) purpose of the exercise; (c) what went right/wrong and/or strengths, weaknesses and challenges identified during drills; (d) list of lessons learned; and (e) recommended corrective actions. OIOS review also indicated that UNIFIL took actions to implement the recommendations from AARs. OIOS review indicated that: (a) some recommendations were implemented; (b) some recommendations were incorporated into standard operating processes; and (c) others were considered as part of more strategic review processes.

UNIFIL could review documentation supporting key performance indicator assessments

52. UNIFIL was obliged to: (a) self-assess compliance with five components of ORMS: policy, governance, maintenance, exercise and review, risk management and planning; and (b) self-report to Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance on a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) specific to ORMS implementation.

53. The self-assessed KPI reports during the audit period asserted that the Mission was fully compliant in all five components of ORMS. However, OIOS review of documentary evidence supporting the self-assessments revealed that the Mission was fully compliant in only four of the five components. It was not fully compliant in terms of maintenance, exercise and review component, which included a KPI of 100 per cent attendance in ORMS training by members of the crisis management structure. As discussed in paragraphs 36 to 39 of this report, this KPI was not attained.

54. The exception in self-assessment occurred because the Mission's annual reports on self-assessment against ORMS KPIs compiled by the ORMS focal point were not adequately reviewed against relevant supporting documentation to ensure they were truly reflective of the Mission's degree of compliance. Erroneous reports denied Mission leadership an opportunity to identify opportunities for improvement and

make informed decisions. UNIFIL agreed to enhance its compilation and review process of documents supporting the ORMS KPI self-assessment.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

55. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNIFIL 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 crisis management and business continuity planning in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ³ / Important ⁴	C/ O ⁵	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁶
1	UNIFIL should conduct a psycho-social risk assessment to determine and enhance mitigating measures and develop a corresponding action plan to promote the mental health of personnel both under normal and crisis situations.	Important	O	Evidence of the conduct of the psycho-social risk assessment and development of an action plan.	30 June 2026
2	UNIFIL should actively engage in the United Nations Country Team programme criticality assessment and ensure that the Mission brings its operational context, experiences and lessons learned in the next assessment.	Important	O	Evidence of active participation in the conduct of programme criticality assessment led by the United Nations Country Team.	31 October 2026*

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁶ Date provided by UNIFIL in response to recommendations (except those* provided by OIOS).

APPENDIX I

Management Response

Management Response

Audit of crisis management and business continuity planning in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	UNIFIL should conduct a psycho-social risk assessment to determine and enhance mitigating measures and develop a corresponding action plan to promote the mental health of personnel both under normal and crisis situations.	Important	Yes Partially	Staff Counsellor	30 June 2026	The RPNA/RPRA conducted by UNIFIL in October 2023 was the appropriate and correct approach as per CISMS guidelines: Psychosocial needs/Risks Assessment Approach in the UN Context (document attached). Additionally, when the psychosocial landscape of the mission changed (such as relocation of the staff and their eligible dependents, evacuation of the staff etc.) this assessment was reconducted as to “quickly determine emerging needs, impact and available resources”. As per the same CISMS guidelines a CPNA/CPRA is not recommended during a period of crisis due to an alternation of psychological functioning of the people affected by the critical incident/crisis. UNIFIL previewws CPNA in the first part of October 2025 and now the CPNA will be launched, conducted, and statistically

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 crisis management and business continuity planning in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						elaborated by the CISMS. The CPNA, the first step in the MH score card as a multi-axial approach toward holistic health, will point out mental health risks allowing tailored actions to be taken. The results obtained and proposed actions will be presented to UNIFIL Management
2	UNIFIL should actively engage in the United Nations Country Team programme criticality assessment and ensure that the Mission brings its operational context, experiences and lessons learned in the next assessment.	Important	Yes	PCO	Target date: following completion of the next UNCT programme criticality assessment.	UNIFIL will participate in the next UNCT programme criticality assessment fully utilising its experiences and lessons learned.