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Programme questions: evaluation

Triennial review of the implementation of recommendations on the programme evaluation of the Office for Disarmament Affairs

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

The present report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), prepared by the Inspection and Evaluation Division, is submitted in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its twenty-second session to review the implementation of OIOS recommendations three years after the Committee had decided to endorse them (see [A/37/38](#), para. 362). The present triennial review determined the extent to which the five recommendations emanating from the programme evaluation of the Office for Disarmament Affairs ([E/AC.51/2019/4](#)) were implemented.

In its evaluation of the Office for Disarmament Affairs in 2019, OIOS addressed various aspects of the Office's relevance and effectiveness in implementing its mandate during the period 2014–2017. At the conclusion of its fifty-ninth session, the Committee recommended that the General Assembly endorse the recommendations contained in the OIOS evaluation report. Based on the review of the information provided by the Office and interviews with select staff members, this triennial review determined that recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 5 had been satisfactorily implemented, while recommendation 4 was partially implemented. Some evidence of immediate results was noted in relation to the implemented recommendations.

In recommendation 1, OIOS addressed the need to undertake an integrated strategic planning process, leading to a strategic plan for the Office for Disarmament Affairs. In response to this recommendation, the Office adopted and implemented its first ever strategic plan for the period 2021–2025. As called for by the recommendation, the strategy was framed around its mandate, the Sustainable Development Goals, the new disarmament agenda and other relevant cross-cutting considerations, such as gender. Considering the evidence gathered, this recommendation was considered fully implemented.

* The dates for the substantive session are tentative.

** [E/AC.51/2022/1](#).



In recommendation 2, OIOS addressed the need for the Office for Disarmament Affairs to undertake a systematic mapping of internal assets and gaps, leading to the creation or reconfiguration of key functions, structural arrangements and/or overarching policies and strategies pursuant to the strategic plan and articulation of workplans for each organizational unit and office. In response to this recommendation, the Office embarked on a consultative transformation process, of which the strategic plan for 2021–2025 was one significant part. Predating the issuance of the strategic plan, in 2018 the Office for Disarmament Affairs commissioned a senior consultant to conduct a report on options for reconfiguration and change management. The report outlined a set of concrete restructuring recommendations, some of which were implemented by the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs in February 2019. In addition, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has made great efforts to align the objectives of its strategic plan with the Secretary-General's compact, the Office's branch, unit and subprogramme level workplans and staff performance plans. Considering the evidence gathered, this recommendation was considered fully implemented.

In recommendation 3, OIOS addressed the need for the Office for Disarmament Affairs to develop and implement a strategy that defines its comparative advantage and role in helping to achieve Sustainable Development Goal target 16.4, as well as other relevant targets. In response to this recommendation, the Office has made great progress in strengthening its role as co-custodian for Sustainable Development Goal target 16.4, through the strengthening of the capacity of Member States on data collection and reporting regarding this indicator. In addition, the Office launched several projects in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Considering the evidence gathered, this recommendation was considered fully implemented.

In recommendation 4, OIOS addressed the need for the Office for Disarmament Affairs to strengthen its monitoring and self-evaluation functions. In response to this recommendation, the Office developed a monitoring and evaluation plan and a results framework rooted in the strategic plan. The purpose of the monitoring and evaluation plan was to track the Office's performance against its strategic plan and to support accountability, institutional learning and evidence-based decision-making. Given its small size, the growing demands and lack of adequate resources, the Office for Disarmament Affairs could not establish a dedicated evaluation unit, nor was it able to adopt an evaluation policy or adopt an evaluation workplan. The Office for Disarmament Affairs is working on addressing those gaps. Considering the evidence gathered, this recommendation was considered partially implemented.

In recommendation 5, OIOS addressed the need for the Office for Disarmament Affairs to put forward proposals to States and High Contracting Parties to improve the sustainability of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects Implementation Support Units. In response to this recommendation, the Office made notable efforts to improve the sustainability of the Biological Weapons Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Implementation Support Units through the adoption of financial measures, the promotion of full and timely payment of contributions by Member States and by improving the transparency of the finances of both Conventions through monthly and annual reporting. Considering the evidence gathered, this recommendation was considered fully implemented.

I. Introduction

1. At its fifty-ninth session in 2019, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), prepared by the Inspection and Evaluation Division on the evaluation of the Office for Disarmament Affairs (E/AC.51/2019/4).

2. The delegations expressed appreciation to OIOS for the report and commended the Office for Disarmament Affairs for its work in support of multilateral disarmament. The delegations expressed concern with the finding that the Office for Disarmament Affairs lacked sufficient mechanisms to collect outcome data and conduct self-evaluations and encouraged the Office to improve in those areas. In paragraph 512 of its report (A/74/16), the Committee recommended that the General Assembly endorse the recommendations contained in paragraphs 64 to 68 of the OIOS evaluation report.

3. The present report was issued pursuant to a triennial review of the recommendations and examines the status of implementation of the five recommendations contained in the evaluation report. The review also assessed whether, and if so, to what extent, implementation of the recommendations contributed to programme changes.

4. The methodology for the triennial review included:

(a) Review and analysis of biennial progress reports on the status of recommendations, which were monitored through the OIOS recommendations database;

(b) Analysis of relevant information, documents and reports obtained from the Office of Disarmament Affairs on various topics related to the recommendations;

(c) Interviews with a purposive sample of the Office of Disarmament Affairs staff from Headquarters.

5. The present report incorporates comments received from the Office for Disarmament Affairs during the drafting process. A final draft was shared with the Office for its final comments, which are contained in the annex. OIOS expresses its appreciation to the Office for Disarmament Affairs for the cooperation it extended in the preparation of the report.

II. Results

6. Based on the results of the evaluation report, OIOS made five recommendations to the Office for Disarmament Affairs: (a) to undertake an integrated strategic planning process; (b) to undertake a systematic mapping of internal assets and gaps and articulation of workplans for each organizational unit; (c) to develop and implement a strategy that defines its comparative advantage and role in helping to achieve relevant Sustainable Development Goal targets; (d) to strengthen its monitoring and self-evaluation function; and (e) to put forward proposals to States and High Contracting Parties to improve the sustainability of the Implementation Support Units for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. In its review and based on the information collected, OIOS determined that four of the five recommendations were implemented (recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 5), while one (recommendation 4) was partially

implemented. There was some evidence of concrete positive outcomes resulting from the implemented recommendations. The implementation status of each of the five recommendations is described below.

Recommendation 1
Strategic planning process

7. Recommendation 1 reads as follows:

The Office for Disarmament Affairs should undertake an integrated strategic planning process, leading to a strategic plan which identifies, at a minimum:

- (a) The overarching vision and broad organizational objectives of the Office, framed around its mandate, the Sustainable Development Goals, the new disarmament agenda and other relevant foundational guidance (including on gender and relevant frontier issues), with due consideration of its strategic framework;
- (b) The role each organizational unit and office will play in helping achieve each prioritized objective;
- (c) How organizational units and offices will work together towards shared objectives, both horizontally (across headquarters units) and vertically (between Headquarters and decentralized offices).

Indicator of achievement: strategic plan adopted and implemented

8. In response to this OIOS recommendation, the Office for Disarmament Affairs adopted and implemented its first ever strategic plan for the period 2021–2025. The strategic plan was designed to provide an overarching vision for how the Office would contribute to the goal of general and complete disarmament while setting out its core priorities over a period of five years. As called for by the recommendation, the strategy was framed around its core mandate, the Sustainable Development Goals, the new disarmament agenda, and other relevant cross-cutting considerations, such as gender and human rights. As part of the strategy design process, the Office engaged its staff through several surveys and informal meetings to gather input on key elements of the strategy and its high-level objectives in a participatory manner. Based on the data collected, the Office mandate, mission, and vision, as well as a thorough contextual analysis, the Office identified five strategic objectives and one management objective to guide its work over the five years between 2021 and 2025, namely:

- (a) Strengthened adherence to and implementation of norms, mechanisms and instruments related to disarmament and the regulation of arms;
- (b) Effective measures to anticipate and address new and evolving developments related to arms and international security;
- (c) Implementation of tailored approaches to enhance regional and subregional security through disarmament and the regulation of arms;
- (d) Increased awareness of, and support for, the value of disarmament and the regulation of arms in international peace and security, conflict prevention and sustainable development;
- (e) Enhanced and diversified partnerships to ensure full and effective participation by a broad range of stakeholders in disarmament and the regulation of arms;
- (f) The Office for Disarmament Affairs has the capacity and capability to deliver its mandate effectively and to respond to emerging challenges and developments related to arms and international security.

9. In March 2021, the Office for Disarmament Affairs issued its strategic plan for the period 2021–2025 and disseminated it internally to its staff, institutional partners, and the general public. Subsequently, branches, units and subprogrammes, as well as Office staff, were charged with aligning their annual workplans and performance workplans with the strategic plan objectives, as well as the relevant intermediate outcomes. Similarly, the senior manager’s compact for the Under-Secretary-General has been linked to the strategic plan’s results and performance metrics. Finally, all project proposals, documents and initiatives were reportedly reviewed by the Office of the Director, to ensure that they were in line with the strategic plan. Those procedures have aided in safeguarding the adoption of the strategic plan across all units and subprogrammes, as well as strengthening the Office’s overall coherence of priorities and results. Starting in 2022, the Office plans to conduct annual reviews of the strategic plan implementation, with the participation of all members of the Office’s senior management team and designated branch focal points, considering data collected through the results framework and qualitative analysis of progress at the branch and unit level, including through lessons learned, peer reviews and self-assessment exercises. Overall, the strategic plan for the period 2021–2025 was reflected in both the 2022 budget and the proposed 2023 budget.

10. At the time of the review, the impact of the strategy implementation on progress toward the high-level objectives could not yet be determined. However, as previously stated, the Office planned to conduct a comprehensive review of the progress of the strategic plan in 2022. At the same time, Office staff interviewees described several impressions of how the strategic plan has impacted their work. For example, interviewees noted that the strategic plan helped to guide decision-making at the management level, especially in identifying and addressing units’ challenges when working towards common priorities. In addition, there have reportedly been two cross-cutting frameworks, one on disability inclusion and one on gender policy, for which the strategic plan has served as a reference for prioritization in support of the Sustainable Development Goals and in relation to those cross-cutting policy areas.

11. Based on the above, OIOS considers this recommendation to be implemented.

Recommendation 2

Strategic plan implementation

12. Recommendation 2 reads as follows:

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

- (a) A systematic mapping of internal assets and gaps, leading to the creation or reconfiguration of key functions, structural arrangements and/or overarching policies and strategies pursuant to the plan;
- (b) Articulation of workplans for each organizational unit and office, rooted in a systematic contextual analysis, which identify the most relevant programmatic activities that will be pursued, in which specific regions and/or subregions and issue areas, and the support, partnerships and resources that will be required for successful implementation.

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

13. In response to the recommendation, specifically its first part, the Office for Disarmament Affairs embarked on a consultative transformation process, of which the strategic plan for the period 2021–2025 was one distinct outcome. Prior to that effort, in 2018 the Office commissioned a senior consultant to conduct a report on options

for reconfiguration and change management. The purpose of the consultancy report was to assess the structure and workflow of the Office and its ability to fulfil its mandates, and to implement the Secretary-General's disarmament agenda, *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. In the report a set of concrete recommendations were outlined for the restructuring of the different Office branches, which initiated a transformation and restructuring process within the Office. There were a number of restructuring recommendations that were implemented in 2019, through a memo issued by the Under-Secretary-General, including: (a) amalgamation of the Regional Disarmament Branch and the Information and Outreach Branch to form the Regional Disarmament, Information and Outreach Branch; (b) transformation of the Strategic Planning Unit into the Science, Technology and International Security Unit; (c) establishment of a Policy Coordination and Change Management Unit; (d) review of all task forces to ensure clear terms of reference and assigned duties; and (e) establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction Unit, reporting to the Director and Deputy to the High Representative. The restructuring changes were welcomed by staff, and they have reportedly contributed to better positioning the Office to deliver on different aspects of its mandate in a more efficient manner. Both documents, the strategic plan and the reconfiguration and change management report, had an aligned mission, namely, to strengthen the Office's capacity to implement its mandate. Consequently, they contributed to the same objectives and can be considered two complementary segments of the transformation process.

14. In response to the second part of the OIOS recommendation, the Office for Disarmament Affairs made great efforts to align the Under-Secretary-General senior manager's compact, the branch, unit and subprogramme level workplans, as well as staff performance plans, with the objectives of the strategic plan. Together with the roll out of the strategic plan, the Office disseminated practical guidance on how to align the workplans to the strategic objectives. The information was circulated by email, as well as at several dedicated events, such as town hall meetings and a brown bag session, which was held in March 2021. In addition, written guidance was disseminated to all staff, units, and branches, including templates to guide the workplan drafting process. Office interviewees stated that all workplans had been aligned with the objectives of the strategic plan and had been reviewed by the Office of the Director's, at the time of the review. This was confirmed by the document review of branch and staff level workplan templates, as well as some submitted sample workplans for the 2021–2022 evaluation period, which suggested a clear alignment of each of the workplans' planned activities with one or more strategic objectives.

15. Based on the above, OIOS considers this recommendation to be implemented.

Recommendation 3

Sustainable Development Goals strategy

16. Recommendation 3 reads as follows:

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

Indicator of achievement: Sustainable Development Goal strategy developed and implemented

17. In response to this OIOS recommendation, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has made great progress in strengthening its role as co-custodian for Sustainable Development Goal target 16.4, which covers a commitment to significantly reduce illicit arms flows by 2030. In June 2018, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) jointly prepared a non-paper aimed at informing Member States of the coordination of efforts within the United Nations Secretariat on reporting, data collection and monitoring for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 16.4.2. The paper outlined how the Office for Disarmament Affairs and UNODC intended to streamline the data collection process, avoid overlap and ensure consistency of published data. UNODC, with its dedicated Global Firearms Programme, its Research and Trend Analysis Branch, and its strong field presence, took the lead in the annual data collection, data processing and submission to the Statistical Commission. The Office for Disarmament Affairs, as co-custodian, enriched that process with complementary biennial data collection under the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Both entities have ensured that data on target 16.4 is reflected in their respective reporting mechanisms, namely the UNODC data from the illicit arms flows questionnaire and the Office for Disarmament Affairs data from Programme of Action national reports, and that there is consistency in statistical validity of data and complementarities in the scope of respective data coverage. Furthermore, in July 2018, in consultation with the Office for Disarmament Affairs, UNODC submitted documentation to the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators to support the reclassification of indicator 16.4.2 from tier 3 to tier 2,¹ including the methodology development narrative and the reference metadata template. In November 2018, the Group approved the request to reclassify the indicator.

18. In addition, the Office for Disarmament Affairs took additional steps to strengthen Member States' capacities to collect data on Sustainable Development Goal target 16.4. For instance, the Office organized two joint training sessions with UNODC in 2021, one in Central Africa (Cameroon) and one in North America (Mexico). Each training session consisted of a three-day curriculum targeting officials in the security services sector from countries in the two regions, who participated in data collection and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The training covered details on how to report on the 16.4 target through the questionnaires.² In addition to those training sessions, the Office also offered in-person and online training sessions to enhance the data collection and reporting skills of Member State officials. For example, in the follow-up to the note verbale sent by the Office for Disarmament Affairs on Programme of Action national reporting for all Member States, the Office contacted 127 national points of contact for the Programme of Action individually, with a view to supporting States' preparation and submission of their national reports. According to staff interviews, a considerable proportion of the focal points responded to that offer and received online guidance sessions. Furthermore, through projects funded by the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation, the Office provided in-person and online training sessions on Programme of Action reporting, focusing on the data collection for the

¹ Definitions: tier 1: indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, and data are regularly produced by countries for at least 50 per cent of countries and of the population in every region where the indicator is relevant; tier 2: indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, but data are not regularly produced by countries; tier 3: no internationally established methodology or standards are yet available for the indicator, but methodology/standards are being (or will be) developed or tested.

² The illicit arms flows questionnaire of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Programme of Action national questionnaire of the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

Economic Community of Central African States (11 States), the Southern African Development Community (16 States), the members of the Economic Community of West African States (15 States) and Mexico.

19. At the time of the review, it was still too early for the Office for Disarmament Affairs focal points to assess and comment on the impact of the measures on the capacity of Member States to report on target 16.4. According to interviewees, the Office will be able to determine if the quality and quantity of data submitted for the questionnaires has improved during the next reporting period, in May 2022.

20. With respect to contributions to other Sustainable Development Goals targets, in July 2018 the Office for Disarmament Affairs developed an internal action plan with the purpose of systematically aligning its work with the Sustainable Development Goals and identifying the Office's contributions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The action plan, which drew upon the Office's Sustainable Development Goals implementation strategy, mapped relationships between existing activities and specific targets.³ The document formed the basis for the development of specific steps and activities pursuant to the implementation plan of the Secretary-General's disarmament agenda, which fully integrated the Office's activities relating to the Sustainable Development Goals, including the initial set of targets mentioned above. Office interviewees described the progress that had been made in support of the action plan. For example, in support of Goal 5 (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), the Office launched a project, funded by the European Union, in 18 countries to mainstream gender in their small arms and light weapons control policies and programmes. Another project, in support of the same Goal, focused on gender and ammunition control, in which the Office trained Member States to observe safety in the storage of ammunition.

21. Based on the above, OIOS considers this recommendation to be implemented.

Recommendation 4 Monitoring and self-evaluation

22. Recommendation 4 reads as follows:

The Office for Disarmament Affairs should strengthen its monitoring and self-evaluation function through the establishment of a dedicated function, as well as the development of:

- (a) An evaluation policy;
- (b) An integrated monitoring and evaluation framework and risk-based evaluation plan, rooted in the strategic plan;
- (c) Revised monitoring and evaluation methodologies, toolkits, templates and tools for off-the-shelf stakeholder feedback and assessment surveys.

Indicators of achievement: function established and documents developed and implemented

23. In response to this OIOS recommendation, the Office developed a monitoring and evaluation plan and a results framework rooted in the strategic plan. Document review confirmed that the monitoring and evaluation plan included a results framework that contained performance indicators for each of the intermediate outcomes outlined in the strategic plan. The purpose of the monitoring and evaluation plan was to track the Office's performance against its strategic plan for the period 2021–2025 and to support accountability, institutional learning, and evidence-based decision-making. In addition, the monitoring and evaluation plan laid out how and at

³ Those included Sustainable Development Goal targets 3d, 4.7, 5.2, 5.5, 8.1, 11.5, 16.1, 16.4, and 16.6.

what intervals the Office would track progress at the office (strategic) and branch (operational) levels and where responsibilities for monitoring, reporting and evaluation lie. The results framework has the potential to support coherent annual work planning across all branches and units within the Office.

24. According to the Office all indicators from the monitoring and evaluation framework have been integrated into branch and unit level workplans, as well as the Under-Secretary-General's annual senior managers' compact. The document review confirmed that all templates for branch and unit level workplans, as well as individual e-Performance workplans for staff members, laid out a structure to ensure that each planned activity served a strategic objective and was measured by relevant performance indicators from the monitoring and evaluation results framework, ultimately ensuring a coherent and clear alignment of these planning and monitoring tools. While the monitoring of branch and unit workplans implementation was the responsibility of each branch or unit, reporting against indicators in the Under-Secretary-General's compact was collected and aggregated by the Office of the Under-Secretary-General. The Office for Disarmament Affairs projects and project proposals were expected to refer to relevant objectives from the strategic plan and integrate related performance indicators into project monitoring frameworks. Indicators in the strategic plan monitoring and evaluation framework were also used to inform performance measures for other strategic documents, including the Office's gender policy and action plan. In addition, the indicators were used to reinforce accountability vis-à-vis organizational frameworks, including the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the women and peace and security framework. All the above measures ensured that the monitoring and evaluation plan would effectively and coherently support the implementation of the strategic plan and the measurement of its progress.

25. Given the lack of reliable baseline data across all areas, as well as the inability to distinguish long-term trends owing to the short period since the roll out, the complete impact of the monitoring and evaluation plan could not be determined at the time of the review. At the same time, some framework indicators were used to review and revise diversity targets for recruitment selection decisions, according to Office interviewees. This data was also included in selection memoranda so that the head of entity could have relevant information to assess the implications and impact of any recruitment decision in relation to targets. Beyond this example, no further evidence could be found on the usage of monitoring and evaluation data for future planning, resource mobilization and other forms of decision-making.

26. Given the small size, growing demands and lack of adequate human and financial resources of the Office, it was unable to establish a dedicated evaluation unit or dedicated human and financial resources specifically earmarked for monitoring and evaluation. The lack of monitoring and evaluation expertise, as well as dedicated capacity was cited as one of the main challenges hampering the implementation of this recommendation. Nonetheless, according to the focal points, the Office has been cognizant of the request of the General Assembly for a strengthened evaluation system and for effective evaluation on a regular basis by all programmes and subprogrammes in accordance with General Assembly resolution [58/269](#), the OIOS recommendations and the recent administrative instruction on evaluation ([ST/AI/2021/3](#)), which calls for the implementation of an evaluation policy and annual evaluation plan, budget allocation for planned evaluations and evaluation of all subprogrammes every six years. The implementation of the requests and recommendations is still a work in progress and the Office for Disarmament Affairs is working with relevant entities within the Secretariat to strengthen its evaluation work. In addition, the roll out of the monitoring and evaluation plan solidified the

Office's progress in implementing the recommendation and contributed to reinforcing a results-based management culture and accountability.

27. With due acknowledgement to the progress made by the Office and based on the above, OIOS considers this recommendation to be partially implemented. OIOS noted that momentum must be maintained to ensure results-based management and self-evaluation are continuously strengthened and that the data is collected and used more consistently to incorporate learning into future planning, resource mobilization, and other forms of decision-making.

Recommendation 5
Sustainability of implementation support units

28. Recommendation 5 reads as follows:

The Office should put forward proposals to States and High Contracting Parties to improve the sustainability of the Biological Weapons Convention and Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Implementation Support Units.

Indicator of achievement: proposals developed and implemented

29. In response to the OIOS recommendation, the Office made notable efforts to improve the sustainability of the Biological Weapons Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Implementation Support Units, through the adoption of financial measures, promotion of full and timely payment of contributions by Member States and by improving the transparency of the finances of both conventions through monthly and annual reporting. It was recognized that the Conventions' financial difficulties stem from three principal sources: non-payment of contributions, delays in receipt of contributions and financial requirements of the United Nations with respect to activities not funded from the Regular Budget of the United Nations.

30. To address these difficulties, the Office for Disarmament Affairs took several measures to improve the sustainability of the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit, notably:

(a) The meeting of States parties in 2018 endorsed a package of measures to encourage timely payment, ensure liquidity and avoid deficit spending and the accumulation of liabilities. It also endorsed other measures dealing with regular reporting and the continued monitoring of the financial situation of the Convention.⁴ One of the major elements of the agreed package was the establishment of a Working Capital Fund as an interim measure to be reviewed at the Ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. The Biological Weapons Convention Working Capital Fund was formally established in May 2019. The total amount received in the Working Capital Fund as at December 2021, was \$668,488.74, which was 88 per cent of the target level set in the letter, dated January 2019, from the Chair of the meeting of States parties in 2018.

(b) In 2019, 2020 and 2021, the Chairs of the Biological Weapons Convention Meetings of States Parties regularly wrote to their counterparts in States parties to the Convention encouraging payment of their contributions and thus avoid further financial difficulties for the Convention, which stem from three principal sources, namely: non-payment of contributions by some States parties, delays in receipt of contributions from other States parties and the financial requirements of the United

⁴ The full package of measures can be found in the final report of the [meeting of States parties in 2018](#), see [BWS/MSP/2018/6](#).

Nations with respect to activities not funded from the regular budget of the United Nations assessed contributions, at the earliest possible date. They have also maintained regular contact with States parties who have significant arrears under the Biological Weapons Convention to encourage them to pay their commitments as soon as possible. Both efforts have seen some success, and efforts continued.

(c) The United Nations Office at Geneva sent invoices for the 2020 and 2021 Biological Weapons Convention budgets in advance of the start of the respective financial periods. This has helped to address liquidity issues, particularly in the early months of each calendar year and, like the Working Capital Fund, has facilitated the extension of staff contracts for longer than had been possible in the past.

(d) While the measures adopted at the meeting of States parties in 2018 effectively addressed liquidity issues and structural problems going forward, there was still a problem related to outstanding contributions from activities prior to 2018. The Chairs of the meetings of States parties have continued to raise this issue with the delegations concerned. The Implementation Support Unit has also raised the issue of outstanding contributions from activities prior to 2018 with the States parties concerned.

31. Regarding the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the Office took the following measures to improve the sustainability of the Implementation Support Unit:

(a) In 2019, a Working Capital Fund was established by decision of the High Contracting Parties,⁵ to be used exclusively to fund the contracts of Implementation Support Unit staff (one P-3 and one P-4). The Office consistently stressed the importance of the Implementation Support Unit and made a call to contribute to the working capital fund during conversations with delegations, including those of the High Representative. At the time of the review, the Working Capital Fund had received contributions from four States for a total of \$165,210.

(b) Furthermore, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Financial Resources Management Service worked closely with the Government of France throughout 2021 for the development of consolidated financial measures. Concretely, the Office participated in four multilateral consultations and five bilateral meetings with France on financial issues, in addition to regular exchanges and liaison with the Financial Resources Management Service, the Office of Legal Affairs and OIOS.

(c) The measures developed and eventually approved by the High Contracting Parties in December 2021 included (i) account closure and credit return based on funded credits; (ii) a five-year budget to allow for greater liquidity and earlier invoicing; and (iii) a 5 per cent contingency added to the cost estimates to provide greater liquidity. These positive impacts would provide continuity to Implementation Support Unit staff at critical times of the year when assessed contributions are not received.

(d) The measures also request the Office for Disarmament Affairs to inform the High Contracting Parties of any relevant findings from the annual audit by the Board of Auditors. Furthermore, the adopted financial rules provide that the High Contracting Parties will call upon the Office for Disarmament Affairs to propose an OIOS audit of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons no later than five years following the introduction of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons financial rules, and, subsequently, every five years. Both references to audits are the result of an effort to enhance High Contracting Parties' trust in the management of the Convention.

⁵ For more information, see [CCW/MSP/2019/9](#).

(e) Furthermore, in 2018, the High Contracting Parties, upon request by the Office, agreed to roll over the funds remaining in the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons account at the end of the calendar year to cover activities for the first seven months of the following year. This decision was re-confirmed with the adoption of consolidated financial measures in 2021.

32. To enhance the transparency of the finances of both Conventions, the Office for Disarmament Affairs took important steps to improve the monthly and annual reporting mechanisms. The financial situation of the Biological Weapons Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons was monitored by the United Nations Office in Geneva, and reports on the status of contributions were provided to Member States on a monthly basis. In addition, the Office for Disarmament Affairs published an interactive online financial dashboard, which improved access for Member State representatives to information on their contributions. According to Office interviewees, the increased transparency of the financial contributions, which clearly identified Member States with outstanding payments, is said to have served as an incentive for many of them to provide the funds.

33. Overall, the adoption of the above-mentioned measures, including the establishment of the Working Capital Funds for both Conventions, have to some extent allowed for more predictability and better planning to take place on a sounder financial footing. The availability of cash in the Working Capital Fund has reportedly facilitated the extension of contracts for Implementation Support Unit staff. Nevertheless, despite the improvements, contribution levels continued to be low. According to interviewees, the negative impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on Member States' economies may have led to lower than typical contribution rates, limiting the impact that the measures might have otherwise had on contributions. At the same time, Office for Disarmament Affairs focal points were optimistic that the measures would help the Conventions' financial sustainability improve significantly in the future.

34. Based on the above, OIOS considers this recommendation to be implemented.

III. Conclusion

35. In the three years since the OIOS evaluation, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has made notable progress towards strengthening its strategic planning process through the implementation of its strategic plan for the period 2021–2025, as well as organizational restructuring efforts, ultimately enhancing its relevance. In addition, the strategic plan, the Action Plan on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the work as co-custodian for indicator 16.4 have enhanced the contributions of the Office to the Sustainable Development Goals and have helped to frame its work more systematically around its mandate and the Sustainable Development Goals which has strengthened the support on their implementation. Although still confronted with a lack of human and financial resources and considering its small size, the Office made some progress towards more robust monitoring and evaluation functions. Nevertheless, OIOS notes that momentum must be maintained regarding recommendation 4, to ensure results-based management and evaluations are continuously strengthened and that the data collected is used more consistently to incorporate learning into future planning, resource mobilization, and other forms of decision-making.

Annex***Comments received from the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs**

Thank you for the memorandum dated 7 March 2022 and the draft report on your Office's triennial evaluation of the Office for Disarmament Affairs' implementation of the OIOS recommendations in the evaluation report of UNODA.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs has reviewed the draft report, as well as the OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division's observations and conclusions. UNODA appreciated the efforts by the OIOS triennial review team to interact with our relevant staff in connection with the recommendations.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs takes careful note and appreciates the observations and conclusions made by OIOS. UNODA is satisfied to see that four out of the five recommendations have been considered as fully implemented. While UNODA may not fully concur with the conclusion regarding recommendation 4, as being partially implemented, the clear reflection of the challenges faced by UNODA due to the lack of sufficient human and funding resources related to monitoring and evaluation activities alleviates some of those concerns. UNODA takes seriously the need to maintain and further strengthen the momentum to ensure its results-based management and self-evaluation efforts.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Mr. Juan Carlos Pena and his colleague, Ms. Nadia Lucia Restrepo Asendorf, for their work during this exercise.

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

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