



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2016/140

Audit of the management of strategic communications activities in the Department of Public Information

Strategic communications activities needed to be enhanced through regulating use of social media, developing a strategy to optimize synergies among United Nations Information Centres and streamlining administrative support to them

28 November 2016
Assignment No. AN2016/580/01

Audit of the management of strategic communications activities in the Department of Public Information

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes over the strategic communications activities of the Department of Public Information (DPI). The audit covered the period from 1 January 2014 to 31 March 2016, and included a review of work planning and performance reporting, organizational structure, and controls over subprogramme activities of the Strategic Communications Division (SCD) in DPI, and the Division's resources management at Headquarters and in the field.

SCD work planning, monitoring and performance reporting processes were effective. There was also an emergency and crisis management communications policy, issued in 18 July 2016, clarifying DPI's role in providing support and guidance on crisis communications. However, strategic communications activities needed to be enhanced through regulating use of social media, optimizing synergies among United Nations Information Centres (UNICs) and streamlining administrative support to the Centres.

The Office of Internal Oversight Services made nine recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, DPI needed to:

- Finalize corporate social media policies and develop procedures for the governance and control over the creation and content management of social media accounts;
- Strengthen its capacity for managing and optimizing the use of social media;
- Develop a strategy to optimize synergies among UNICs at the regional level through partnerships in substantive areas and apprise the General Assembly of this strategy;
- Review functions undertaken by the Centres Operations Section (COS) and ensure that the reporting line and accountability of COS reside with the Executive Office;
- Fill all vacant posts with priority using a formally established review body for the recruitment of national staff without adversely affecting rights of staff members;
- Review all voluntary cash contributions to established DPI trust funds to ensure that they are received through legally accepted documents or agreements in accordance with United Nations Secretariat policies and procedures;
- Issue instructions to field offices regarding receipt and reporting of voluntary contributions from Member States and ensure that legal documents support all voluntary contributions received for operations of its field offices; and
- Prepare annual procurement plans for UNICs and, in conjunction with the Procurement Division, establish local procurement options most appropriate to field offices.

The Office of Human Resources Management also needed to develop policies covering the recruitment of national staff in field offices in the absence of a dedicated central review body in order to streamline national staff recruitment in the Secretariat.

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Audit of the management of strategic communications activities in the Department of Public Information

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the management of strategic communications activities in the Department of Public Information (DPI).
2. DPI mandate under General Assembly resolution 13 (I) of 13 February 1946, is to increase awareness and understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations among peoples of the world. Its mission is to help fulfil the substantive purposes of the United Nations by strategically communicating the activities and concerns of the Organization to achieve the greatest public impact. While information content is generated by other departments and offices of the Secretariat and entities of the United Nations system, the coordination and refinement of content, as well as its presentation and distribution, are the responsibility of the Department, working in close cooperation with the media, Member States and civil society partners.
3. The Department's programme of work is organized into three subprogrammes: (a) strategic communications services; (b) news and media services; and (c) outreach and knowledge services. This audit covers the activities of the strategic communications services subprogramme.
4. The objective of the subprogramme is to broaden understanding of and support for the work of the United Nations on the priorities given by Member States, including communications support for United Nations events and initiatives decided upon by them. The substantive responsibility for the subprogramme is vested with the Strategic Communications Division (SCD), which consists of the Communications Campaigns Service (CCS), the Information Centres Service (ICS), the network of United Nations Information Centres (UNICs), information components of United Nations offices, and the coordinating function for the United Nations Communications Group.
5. CCS develops communications strategies on the work of the United Nations on key thematic issues and helps promote major United Nations conferences on these issues. ICS provides the link between DPI at Headquarters and its 63 field offices – 52 UNICs, eight information components, and two Information Services in Geneva and Vienna, as well as a United Nations Regional Information Centre in Brussels. Three organizational units in ICS, the Centres Operations Section (COS), the Programme Support Section, and the Information Management Unit, support DPI field offices.
6. The regular budget resources for the subprogramme amounted to \$73 million and \$78 million for the 2014-2015 and 2016-2017 biennia, respectively. In addition, the subprogramme received \$2.5 million in 2014-2015 in extrabudgetary and other assessed resources and \$3.2 million was expected for the period 2016-2017. The SCD staffing table totalled 347 posts worldwide including 46 National Information Officers and 146 General Service posts located at various UNICs.
7. Comments provided by DPI and the Department of Management (DM) 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 strategic communications activities in DPI.

9. The audit was included in the 2016 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to high reputational risks related the management of strategic communications in the United Nations Secretariat and the management of the large network of UNICs.

10. OIOS conducted this audit from March to June 2016. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2014 to 31 March 2016. The scope of the audit covered SCD work planning and performance reporting, organizational structure, and controls over subprogramme activities and resources management at Headquarters and in the field.

11. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews of key personnel; (b) reviews of relevant documentation; and (c) analytical reviews of data.

III. OVERALL CONCLUSION

12. The SCD work planning, monitoring and performance reporting processes were effective. An emergency and crisis management communications policy was issued by the Secretary-General on 18 July 2016 to clarify DPI's role in providing support and guidance on crisis communications issues. However, management of strategic communications activities needed to be enhanced through regulating use of social media, developing a strategy to optimize synergies among UNICs and streamlining administrative support to them.

IV. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Work planning, monitoring and performance reporting

Controls over subprogramme work planning and implementation of substantive activities were adequate

13. Programme planning regulations and rules require programme managers to develop work plans and related processes to implement work programmes for which they are responsible. On the basis of the Secretary-General's communications priorities and the Division's mandated subprogramme activities, SCD developed annual Communications Guidance. The Guidance lists key events within the three United Nations pillars of development, human rights, and peace and security, and provides a snapshot of communications priorities, strategies and activities in collaboration with lead substantive departments and offices.

14. The activities in the Guidance were integrated into SCD work planning processes to implement subprogramme activities, and UNICs developed their work plans in collaboration with lead Services and Sections in DPI Headquarters. In countries where there was a local United Nations Communications Group, the priorities of the United Nations Country Team were integrated in work plans. The work plan events and dates were uploaded in UNIC Centres Information Management System and reported on a regular basis. Services and Sections at Headquarters also undertook activities in line with the Communications Guidance. OIOS observed that there were regular work plan implementation review meetings to monitor progress.

15. Additionally, annual reports of the Secretary-General were prepared in response to General Assembly resolutions to provide highlights of DPI communications campaigns on issues such as sustainable development, Millennium Development Goals, the question of Palestine, disarmament and New Partnership for Africa's Development. DPI, through its Evaluation and Communications Research Unit, conducted regular evaluations of communications activities. OIOS reviewed DPI programme performance reporting and found the controls over its preparation were adequate, and the reporting in the

Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System was effective. For the period 2014-2015, SCD implemented all of its 151 mandated outputs.

16. Accordingly, OIOS assessed controls over the work planning activities of the strategic communications subprogramme as adequate.

Emergency and crisis communications policy was recently promulgated

17. SCD supports DPI in initiating a communications strategy in collaboration with substantive departments and offices under the leadership of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. In this regard, clarity of the role and guidance of DPI was critical in emergency and crisis situations.

18. OIOS noted that collaborations regarding communications in crises were mainly based on field focused guidance at the operational level. Although the United Nations Development Group developed guiding principles for “Communication as One” in a crisis setting, procedures reinforcing DPI roles were not developed to help lead the development and implementation of communications strategies. Therefore, DPI’s effectiveness in crisis situations was impacted due to lack of clarity between the role of DPI to guide substantive departments and offices with a communications strategy that ensures the United Nations was speaking with “one voice” on the one hand, and responsibility of substantive departments and offices in providing substantive responses on the other. This challenge was exemplified during the crises in Haiti and in the Central African Republic. This was because there was no overarching policy defining the roles and responsibilities between DPI and substantive departments.

19. This was addressed in the United Nations Crisis Management Policy issued by the Secretary-General on 18 July 2016. The policy clearly identifies the roles and responsibilities of DPI and all United Nations entities when responding collectively to crisis situations, including the “architecture for decision-making, coordination, information exchange, and communications”. Regarding communications, the policy outlines DPI’s role to: (a) support and guide crisis communications issues; (b) support the production and dissemination of relevant internal and external crisis communications products; and (c) lead the United Nations Communication Group in updating standard operating procedures on crisis communications, including those related to the use and monitoring of social media. As a result of this policy, OIOS concluded that appropriate action had been taken to clarify DPI’s role in emergency and crisis communications.

Use of social media in the United Nations Secretariat had expanded but effective controls were not in place

20. Internet publishing at the United Nations Secretariat is regulated by the provisions of administrative instruction ST/AI/2001/5 (United Nations Internet publishing) that established the governing bodies, including the Publications Board, framework, criteria, and procedures for the creation of Internet sites.

21. SCD managed approximately 219 social media accounts: 20 at DPI Headquarters on behalf of the United Nations Secretariat and 199 at the field level. Social media constituted a unique opportunity for DPI to deliver its mandate of disseminating information to a variety of public audiences in a timely manner. Although DPI and Secretariat departments had in many ways seized the opportunity to do this, the policy framework including governance and procedures lagged behind. In its 2011 audit, OIOS observed that while several departments were using social media sites in the context of their operations, there were no procedures for identifying, assessing, and mitigating potential risks associated with these activities. There were also no guidelines for entering into agreements with social media providers, and

the review of provisions relating to copyright and privacy was inadequate. Implementation of OIOS recommendation in this regard is still outstanding.

22. The use of social media in the Secretariat and SCD faced two main challenges. First, the DPI draft corporate policies relating to United Nations Secretariat institutional and personal use of social media, which had been reviewed by the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) were awaiting review by the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) and approval by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information. SCD also had not developed procedures and controls on creating and administering social media accounts. For example, there was no approval process for organizational units at Headquarters and in the field to create accounts. There was also no policy governing content management. DPI indicated that it had developed and implemented a system to share social media content and planning across the Department and the United Nations system using online tools.

23. The resources to manage the social media function were inadequate. SCD had a team of three staff devoted full time to the management of social media functions, which included: (a) planning, organizing, and implementing its social media presence; (b) providing strategic communications advice on various aspects of the Department's and the Secretariat's presence on social media platforms; and (c) coordinating the Department's social media efforts, including monitoring and analysis of social media trends. In addition, the team managed 12 global United Nations accounts and advised senior management and field offices on social media. The current capacity was established through redeployment of staff members from other SCD organizational units with the possibility of additional redeployments.

24. The challenges in formulating comprehensive social media procedures were largely attributed to the complexity of reaching agreement with social media providers. OLA stated that because the Organization had started using social media platforms without institutional agreements, providers were reluctant to negotiate such agreements with the United Nations since it would require modifying their standard templates. Nevertheless, OLA had succeeded in concluding an institutional agreement with one major social media platform provider.

25. The lack of comprehensive policies and controls on social media could lead to significant reputational risks in messaging, copyright, and accuracy of information. For example, 44 per cent of the existing social media accounts created in the field were linked to personal e-mail addresses. During the audit, DPI updated the inventory of existing accounts but had yet to put in place controls to ensure that social media accounts are created under the Organization's name and ownership, with effective procedures for content management.

(1) DPI should, in collaboration with OHRM and OLA, finalize social media policies and develop procedures for the governance and control over the creation and content management of social media accounts held by the United Nations.

DPI accepted recommendation 1 and stated that development of social media personal and institutional policies was in progress. DM stated that governance and control over the creation and content of social media should come under the Publications Board. Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt of evidence that social media personal and institutional policies have been issued and that the Publications Board or other relevant board is exercising governance and control over the creation and content of social media.

(2) DPI should strengthen its capacity for managing and optimizing the use of social media through redeployment of existing resources.

DPI accepted recommendation 2 stating that the Department's capacity for managing and

optimizing the use of social media would be strengthened through the reorganization of workflows. Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of evidence that workflows have been reorganized to strengthen capacity for managing and optimizing use of social media.

B. Organizational structure

A formal approach was needed to optimize synergies in the substantive operations of UNICs

26. General Assembly resolution 57/300 dated 7 February 2003 noted the need to rationalize the existing network of UNICs around regional hubs, where appropriate, in consultation with concerned Member States to improve the cost-effectiveness of all activities of DPI. Since 2003, subsequent resolutions of the General Assembly have continued to call for rationalizing the network of the UNICs.

27. In January 2004, DPI established a Western European-focused UNIC in Brussels, which was responsible for providing information services to 22 countries. However, according to SCD, DPI efforts to rationalize UNICs in other regions were curtailed because of resistance from Member States which insisted on the continuing presence of UNICs in their respective countries. The strengthening, in 2004, of UNICs in Cairo, Pretoria, and Mexico City with regional responsibilities was later abandoned because of unclear organizational structure and operational accountability, lack of resources, and limited communications means and impact. As an alternative to rationalization, DPI sought to create synergies among UNICs, through partnerships, in some regions, such as in the Middle East, based on language, geographical proximity, or regional interests. Some of the larger UNICs helped smaller ones to develop communications strategies, translate United Nations documents, or share resources if required. The targeted synergies were generally of a substantive nature.

28. Although the latest approach to create synergies among UNICs at the regional level is laudable, no strategy outlining this approach had been developed and submitted to the General Assembly as an alternative to rationalization around regional hubs required by the resolutions. In the absence of a formal strategy, the new approach to the rationalization of UNICs remained ad hoc and not fully effective.

(3) DPI should develop a strategy to optimize synergies among United Nations Information Centres (UNICs) at the regional level through partnerships in substantive areas, and apprise the General Assembly of this strategy in line with resolutions related to rationalization of UNICs adopted by the General Assembly subsequent to resolution 57/300.

DPI accepted recommendation 3 and stated that it would develop a strategy to optimize synergies among UNICs in accordance with relevant resolutions. Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of the strategy developed by DPI to optimize synergies among UNICs.

COS performed administrative functions without adequate oversight from the Executive Office

29. The Secretary-General's bulletin on the organization of the Secretariat of the United Nations (ST/SGB/2015/3) states that the role of an Executive Office in the United Nations Secretariat is to assist the head of the department/office, programme managers, and staff members, in carrying out the financial and human resources management and general administrative responsibilities delegated by the Under-Secretary-General for Management.

30. DPI management established COS over 20 years ago to support its 63 field offices worldwide. Current ICS managers and the Executive Office were unable to substantiate the rationale for the creation

of COS. However, OIOS review showed that the tasks carried out by COS essentially replicated the functions of the Executive Office.

31. COS administered resources related to ICS at Headquarters and in the field totalling \$49 million or about 67 per cent of SCD regular budget for the 2016-2017 biennium. This responsibility covered approximately 250 regular budget posts.

32. COS performed support functions related to staff administration, procurement, property management, and budget and financial management under the supervision of the Chief, ICS and in consultation with the Executive Office, Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts (OPPBA), OHRM, and Office of Central Support Services. However, it was not clear where the accountability of COS resided in carrying out these responsibilities. There was also no definition of roles and division of responsibilities between the Executive Office and COS. Neither was the role of the Executive Office clarified to oversee COS activities.

33. Without defining clear boundaries of responsibility and accountability, COS functions overlapped with those of the Executive Office. The current organizational structure weakened controls and segregation of duties between the administrative and finance support functions and programme management responsibilities, as ICS was responsible for both the substantive and support functions as COS reported to Chief, ICS. It was noted, however, that the implementation of Umoja at Headquarters and its deployment in field offices had initiated the redefinition of roles and responsibilities and related controls over the management of United Nations Secretariat human and financial resources.

(4) DPI should, in conjunction with the Department of Management and taking into consideration the deployment of Umoja, review the functions currently undertaken by the Centres Operations Section (COS) and ensure that the reporting line and accountability of COS reside with the Executive Office.

DPI accepted recommendation 4 and stated that it was preparing to pilot new reporting lines. Based on its experience, the Department would review the functions of COS, ensuring that the reporting line and accountability for administrative processes remain with the Executive Office. DM stated that it supported the clarification of reporting lines and accountability of COS and the Executive Office. Recommendation 4 remains open pending receipt of the results of the review to ensure that COS reporting line and accountability reside with the DPI Executive Office.

C. Resources management

High numbers of long outstanding vacancies diminished DPI's effectiveness in field offices

34. The network of UNICs was vital to the United Nations' ability to reach the people it serves around the world. As such, it is important that UNICs are fully staffed to effectively carry out their mandates. The Director of SCD through the ICS and COS, in collaboration with the DPI Executive Office, was primarily responsible for recruitment in accordance with the United Nations Secretariat policies and procedures.

35. A review of the SCD post incumbency report as of 25 May 2016 showed 42 vacancies of which 15 were national information officers, 18 national/local general service staff posts, and 9 international professional post vacancies including seven leadership posts: three D-1s and four P-5s. Some of the posts had been vacant since 2011. Although SCD management put a monitoring mechanism in place in 2013 to improve effectiveness in recruiting staff against vacant posts, progress has been slow.

36. Vacancies at the professional level were generally due to normal staff turnover as well as delays in reclassifying UNIC director posts. Long outstanding vacancies at the national information officer and local general service staff levels were a result of several factors. First, DPI centralized the recruitment and administration of its field national staff within COS in 2014, but COS had limited capacity to assume this responsibility. Although one additional P-3 was assisting COS, the capacity was still inadequate resulting in high recruitment backlog. Second, the Secretariat had not established a review body for the recruitment of national staff in compliance with United Nations Secretariat human resources management policies. Central review bodies established in the Secretariat Headquarters in New York had no mandate to review recruitment of national staff in field offices. OHRM had not established policy guidelines on the recruitment of national staff in the absence of a dedicated review body.

37. DPI indicated that it had approached OHRM to seek advice on a suitable mechanism for the timely recruitment of national staff. Although there were meetings between DPI and OHRM and a tentative framework was reflected in the minutes of meetings and exchange of emails, the core element of the framework was the establishment of an “unofficial” Departmental Review Body to substitute a formal central review body. The workaround was not in line with United Nations Secretariat policies, and could adversely affect the entitlements of staff and create precedence that would be difficult to resolve.

38. The delay in recruiting staff in small DPI field offices (average six people per office) had a negative impact on their performance as one vacancy generally represented 17 per cent of the total staff in that location. The vacancy of 33 national posts was reported to the General Assembly during the 2016-2017 proposed programme budget submissions. As there was little progress in filling these vacancies, 14 ICS posts were abolished, 13 related to UNICs.

(5) DPI should, in collaboration with OHRM, develop a plan of action to fill all its vacant posts with priority using a formally established review body for the recruitment of national staff without adversely affecting rights of staff members.

DPI accepted recommendation 5 and stated that it would develop an action plan to fill all vacant field positions in collaboration with OHRM. DM stated that it would assist in developing a plan of action if DPI provides it with resources. Recommendation 5 remains open pending receipt of the action plan to fill vacant field positions.

(6) OHRM should develop policies covering the recruitment of national staff in field offices in the absence of a dedicated central review body in order to streamline national staff recruitment in the Secretariat.

DM accepted recommendation 6 and stated that it was developing an administrative instruction on the recruitment of national staff in field offices. Pending its issuance, OHRM had, in coordination with the Department of Field Support (DFS), established guidelines for the selection of locally-recruited staff in the General Service and National Professional Officer categories in United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions and other entities supported by DFS. DPI stated that it would provide OHRM with any relevant information. Recommendation 6 remains open pending receipt of a copy of the administration instruction on the recruitment of national staff in field offices.

Need for legal documents to receive voluntary contributions

39. United Nations Secretariat policies requires that voluntary contributions are supported by legal documents in the form of a memorandum of understanding (MOU), agreement or other document accepted by the Organization.

40. For the operation of its field offices, DPI received cash and in-kind contributions from Member States. Two trust funds were established. The trust fund to finance the dissemination of United Nations public information in Japan was established in 1987, solely funded by the Government of Japan. A special account for ad hoc contributions from Member States was established in 2008. Currently, the special account receives about 15 grants annually or biennially. Expenditures for the biennium 2014-2015 were \$436,543 for the Japanese Government-funded trust fund and \$991,423 for the special account. In addition to cash contributions, host country/Member States provided in-kind contributions such as premises and services free of cost.

41. Legal documents were not available or were incomplete to record the receipt of voluntary cash contributions. COS indicated that many of these relationships dated back to the 1940s when the UNICs were established. Furthermore, there were inadequate controls to ensure that new contributions from Member States are accepted in accordance with the United Nations Secretariat policies and procedures based on appropriate legal documents.

42. Without ensuring that MOUs are consistently signed prior to receiving voluntary contributions, DPI did not have full visibility of all the contributions received for its field offices and could not record them in Umoja. For example, DPI was not able to deposit a cheque of \$18,000 from a donor as there was no MOU supporting the transaction and OLA had advised against receiving this contribution. Prior to Umoja, the UNIC would have been able to cash the cheque without an MOU. Such practice could continue in UNICs where Umoja is not yet deployed without the knowledge of the Executive Office and COS. Some Member States may also be reluctant to provide funding without a legal document, and may request that an MOU be established before they disburse funds.

43. DPI could also not adequately budget on the basis of pledged resources by Member States without establishing funding agreements. For example, there were significant shortfalls between the contributions “projected” by DPI and the cost plans prepared for 2016 and prior years for the trust fund for Member States contributions. There were also significant differences between the cost plans and actual expenditures indicating a limitation in the ability of DPI to properly plan its extrabudgetary resources. The extrabudgetary resources were estimated on the basis of expenditures. Sub-allotments were sometimes made to field offices without receipt of the funds, thus pre-financing cost-plans from the trust fund reserve as some donors contributed irregularly. For example, one donor contributed every three years after DPI had incurred expenditures. As a result, the trust fund reserves were depleted.

(7) DPI should, in conjunction with OPPBA and OLA, review all voluntary cash contributions to the established DPI trust funds to ensure that they are received through legally accepted documents or agreements in accordance with current United Nations Secretariat policies and procedures.

DPI accepted recommendation 7 and stated that it would ensure that all voluntary contributions were received through legally accepted documents or agreements. It would also ensure that the documents are properly archived. Recommendation 7 remains open pending receipt of the results of the review of documentation supporting voluntary contributions.

(8) DPI should, in collaboration with OPPBA: (a) issue instructions to its field offices

regarding receipt and reporting of voluntary contributions from Member States; and (b) ensure that legal documents support all voluntary contributions received for the operations of its field offices.

DPI accepted recommendation 8 and stated that it had drafted and would issue instructions to its field offices regarding receipt and reporting of voluntary contributions from Member States. Recommendation 8 remains open pending issuance of instructions to the field offices regarding receipt and reporting of voluntary contributions.

Procurement planning for UNICs was not effective

44. The Procurement Manual requires departments and offices to develop annual procurement plans to ensure that goods and services are acquired timely and effectively. Where an intended procurement action may exceed the local financial authority threshold, an office or field mission may request a Local Procurement Authority (LPA) if it has the capacity, knowledge and expertise to conduct the procurement exercise locally, or refer the case to Headquarters for appropriate procurement action.

45. The Department of Management delegated procurement authority to UNIC directors for purchases up to \$10,000. However, DPI indicated that the directors only exercised their authority up to \$4,000. Purchases above this amount were to be submitted to Headquarters for approval or procured locally by a service provider.

46. For the biennium 2014-2015, about \$790,000 were allotted for procurement of furniture and equipment including about \$226,000 for vehicles required in DPI field offices. During the last three biennia, 18 vehicles were purchased of which 16 were locally procured. There was, however, no procurement plan developed at the level of UNICs to facilitate the purchase of these requirements. A review of vehicle procurement for the biennium 2014-2015 showed that COS did not request an LPA for vehicles purchased locally from the Procurement Division nor did the financial authorizations to the local service provider indicate specifically that it would undertake the procurement.

47. This was because up to date instructions had not been developed and disseminated to UNICs to ensure they prepared adequate and reasonable procurement plans highlighting what, where, and when procurement activities would take place, and by whom (Procurement Division, the UNIC, or the local service provider). Purchases made in an ad hoc manner did not ensure price competitiveness and delayed the procurement process. There was a lack of visibility of items bought in the field, and missed opportunities to buy some of them through United Nations Secretariat systems contracts.

(9) DPI should prepare annual procurement plans for United Nations Information Centres and, in conjunction with the Procurement Division, establish local procurement options most appropriate to field offices.

DPI accepted recommendation 9 and stated that it would prepare annual procurement plans for UNICs. Recommendation 9 remains open pending receipt of procurement plans for 2017.

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

48. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of DPI for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

(Signed) Eleanor T. Burns
Director, Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the management of strategic communications activities in the Department of Public Information

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	C/ O ³	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁴
1	DPI should, in collaboration with OHRM and OLA, finalize corporate social media policies and develop procedures for the governance and control over the creation and content management of social media accounts held by the United Nations.	Important	O	Issuance of social media personal and institutional policies and submission of evidence that the Publications Board is exercising governance and control over the creation and content of social media.	31 December 2017
2	DPI should strengthen its capacity for managing and optimizing the use of social media through redeployment of existing resources.	Important	O	Submission of evidence that workflows have been reorganized to strengthen capacity for managing and optimizing use of social media.	31 December 2017
3	DPI should develop a strategy to optimize synergies among United Nations Information Centres at the regional level through partnerships in substantive areas and apprise the General Assembly of this strategy in line with resolutions related to rationalization of UNICs adopted by the General Assembly subsequent to resolution 57/300.	Important	O	Submission of the strategy developed by DPI to optimize synergies among UNICs.	30 June 2018
4	DPI should, in conjunction with the Department of Management and taking into consideration the deployment of Umoja, review the functions currently undertaken by the Centres Operations Section (COS) and ensure that the reporting line and accountability of COS remains with the Executive Office.	Important	O	Submission of the results of the review to ensure that COS reporting line and accountability reside with the DPI Executive Office.	31 December 2017
5	DPI should, in collaboration with OHRM, develop a plan of action to fill all its vacant posts with priority using a formally established review body for the recruitment of national staff without adversely affecting rights of staff members.	Important	O	Submission of the action plan to fill vacant field positions.	To be advised

¹ Critical recommendations address critical and/or pervasive deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance cannot be provided with regard to the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

² Important recommendations address important (but not critical or pervasive) deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance may be at risk regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

³ C = closed, O = open

⁴ Date provided by DPI and DM in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the management of strategic communications activities in the Department of Public Information

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	C/ O ³	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁴
6	OHRM should develop policies covering the recruitment of national staff in field offices in the absence of a dedicated central review body in order to streamline national staff recruitment in the Secretariat.	Important	O	Issuance of an administrative instruction on the recruitment of national staff in the field offices.	31 December 2017
7	DPI should, in conjunction with OPPBA and OLA, review all voluntary cash contributions to the established DPI trust funds to ensure that they are received through legally accepted documents or agreements in accordance with current United Nations Secretariat policies and procedures.	Important	O	Submission of results of the review of documentation supporting voluntary contributions.	30 June 2017
8	DPI should: (a) issue instructions to its field offices regarding receipt and reporting of voluntary contributions from Member States; and (b) ensure that legal documents support all voluntary contributions received for the operations of its field offices.	Important	O	Issuance of instructions to the field offices regarding receipt and reporting of voluntary contributions.	31 December 2017
9	DPI should prepare annual procurement plans for the United Nations Information Centres and, in conjunction with the Procurement Division, establish the local procurement options most appropriate to field offices.	Important	O	Submission of procurement plan for UNICs for 2017.	31 December 2017

APPENDIX I

Management Response


TO: Ms. Muriette Lawrence-Hume, Chief, New York Audit Service
A: Internal Audit Division, OIOS

DATE: 25 October 2016

REFERENCE:

THROUGH:

S/C DE:


FROM: Cristina Gallach, Under-Secretary-General
DE: Department of Public Information

SUBJECT: **Assignment No. AN2016/580/01 – Draft report on an audit of the management of
OBJET: strategic communications activities in the Department of Public Information**

1. I write with regard to your memorandum dated 10 October 2016, transmitting the draft report on the above-mentioned audit. I would like to thank OIOS for having taken into account some of the comments and concerns previously raised by the Strategic Communications Division (SCD).
2. In paragraph 23, the report recognizes the role of SCD with regard to the Organization's flagship social media accounts in English. The social media team also works in an integrated fashion with the flagship accounts in the other official languages managed by the News and Media Division, sharing social media content, planning and guidelines. Strengthening social media capacities for managing and optimizing the use of social media will require the reorganization of work flows beyond the Strategic Communications Division.
3. With regards to the need for controls for social media accounts mentioned in paragraph 25, I am pleased to confirm that SCD is already working on their field-based accounts to standardize basic social media procedures. This includes using official un.org addresses for account management, among other important changes to strengthen social media controls.
4. As requested, please find attached the completed Appendix I, including action plans with target dates and titles of the individuals responsible for implementing the recommendations. Please note, with respect to the implementation dates for Recommendations 5 & 6, it is the purview of OHRM to determine the timeline for the establishment of a review body and the development of policies for the recruitment of national staff.
5. Thank you

cc: Ms. Wainaina
Ms. Novicki
Mr. Tisovszky
Mr. Calzada
Ms. Wieser
Mr. Ikiara
Mr. Acharya
Mr. Avena-Castillo

Management Response

Audit of the management of strategic communications activities in the Department of Public Information

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	DPI should, in collaboration with OHRM and OLA, finalize corporate social media policies and develop procedures for the governance and control over the creation and content management of social media accounts.	Important	Yes	Social Media Team Leader	By end of 2017	The development of social media personal and institutional policies is in process.
2	DPI should strengthen its capacity for managing and optimizing the use of social media through redeployment of existing resources.	Important	Yes	Under-Secretary-General	By end of 2017	The Department's capacity for managing and optimizing the use of social media will be strengthened through the reorganization of workflows.
3	DPI should develop a strategy to optimize synergies among United Nations Information Centres at the regional level through partnerships in substantive areas and apprise the General Assembly of this strategy in line with resolutions related to rationalization of UNICs adopted by the General Assembly subsequent to resolution 57/300.	Important	Yes	Chief of Information Centres Service	30 June 2018	DPI will develop a strategy to optimize the synergies among UNICs in accordance with the relevant resolutions. In line with the request from Member States as per the latest report of the Committee on Information (A/71/21), DPI will continue to make specific proposals on rationalizing the network of UNICs, including through redeployment of resources to optimize synergies among the Centres, and will keep the General Assembly informed through its reports to the Committee on Information. DPI notes that as per the

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² Important recommendations address important (but not critical or pervasive) deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance may be at risk regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

Management Response

Audit of the management of strategic communications activities in the Department of Public Information

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						guidance from Member States, rationalization will be carried out on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the concerned Member State in which existing information centres are located, the countries served by those information centres and other interested countries in the region, taking into consideration the distinctive characteristics of each region.
4	DPI should, in conjunction with the Department of Management and taking into consideration the deployment of Umoja, review the functions currently undertaken by the Centres Operations Section (COS) and ensure that the reporting line and accountability of COS remains with the Executive Office	Important	Yes	Chief, Centres Operations Section (ICS/SCD)/ Executive Officer - DPI	31 December 2017	The Department is preparing to pilot new reporting lines. Based on this experience the Department will further review the functions of COS, ensuring that the reporting lines and accountability for administrative processes remain with the Executive Office.

Management Response

Audit of the management of strategic communications activities in the Department of Public Information

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ³ / Important ⁴	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
5	DPI should, in collaboration with OHRM, develop a plan of action to fill all its vacant posts with priority using a formally established review body for the recruitment of national staff without adversely affecting rights of staff members.	Important	Yes	OHRM Chief, Centres Operations Section (ICS/SCD) / Executive Officer - DPI		DPI will establish a plan of action to fill all of the vacant field positions in collaboration with OHRM. Establishment of a review body for recruitment of national staff is under purview of OHRM, as found under recommendation 6.
6	OHRM should develop policies covering the recruitment of national staff in field offices in the absence of a dedicated central review body in order to streamline national staff recruitment in the Secretariat.	Important		OHRM		DPI fully concurs with the recommendation to be implemented by OHRM and will provide OHRM with any relevant information.
7	DPI should, in conjunction with OPPBA and OLA, review all voluntary cash contributions to the established DPI trust funds to ensure that they are received through legally accepted documents or agreements in accordance with the current United Nations Secretariat policies and procedures.	Important	Yes	Chief, Centres Operations Section (ICS/SCD) / Executive Officer - DPI	30 June 2017	The Department will ensure that all voluntary cash contributions are received through legally accepted documents or agreements and will create an archive for storage and reference.
8	DPI should: (a) issue instructions to its field offices regarding receipt and reporting of voluntary contributions from Member States; and (b) ensure that legal	Important	Yes	Chief, Centres Operations Section (ICS/SCD) /	31 December 2017	DPI has drafted and will distribute instructions for its field offices regarding receipt and reporting of voluntary contributions from Member

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Management Response

Audit of the management of strategic communications activities in the Department of Public Information

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	documents support all voluntary contributions received for the operations of its field offices.			Executive Officer - DPI		States. In addition, the Department will create an archiving system to track and store the legal documents.
9	DPI should prepare annual procurement plans for the United Nations Information Centres and, in conjunction with the Procurement Division, establish the local procurement options most appropriate to field offices.	Important	Yes	Chief, Centres Operations Section (ICS/SCD)	31 December 2017	DPI will prepare annual procurement plans for the United Nations Information Centres. Establishment of local procurement regulations is under the purview of the Procurement Division.

TO: Mr. Muriette Lawrence-Hume, Chief, New York Audit Service DATE: 10 November 2016
A: Internal Audit Division, Office of Internal Oversight Services

THROUGH: Christian Saunders, Director
S/C DE: Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management

FROM: Mario Baez, Chief, Policy and Oversight Coordination Service
DE: Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management

SUBJECT: **Draft report on an audit of the management of strategic communications activities in
the Department of Public Information (AN2016/580/01)**
OBJET:

1. We refer to your memorandum dated 10 October 2016 regarding the above-subject draft report and provide you the comments of the Department of Management in the attached Appendix I.
2. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to provide comments on the draft report.

Management Response

Audit of the management of strategic communications activities in the Department of Public Information

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
	DPI should, in collaboration with OHRM and OLA, finalize corporate social media policies and develop procedures for the governance and control over the creation and content management of social media accounts.	Important				OHRM is of the view that the governance and control over the creation and content of any social media should come under the Publications Board as such media is published in the name of the United Nations and standards should be established by this Board.
2	DPI should strengthen its capacity for managing and optimizing the use of social media through redeployment of existing resources.	Important				
3	DPI should develop a strategy to optimize synergies among United Nations Information Centres at the regional level through partnerships in substantive areas and apprise the General Assembly of this strategy in line with resolutions related to rationalization of UNICs adopted by the General Assembly subsequent to resolution 57/300.	Important				
4	DPI should, in conjunction with the Department of Management and taking into consideration the deployment of Umoja, review the functions currently undertaken by the Centres Operations Section (COS) and ensure that the reporting line and	Important				Pursuant to Section 6 of ST/ SGB/ 1999/ 10 (Organization of the Department of Public Information) and Section 7 of ST/SGB/2015/3 (Organization of the Secretariat of the United Nations) the Centres Operations Section (COS) and the Executive

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Management Response

Audit of the management of strategic communications activities in the Department of Public Information

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	accountability of COS remains with the Executive Office					Office (EO) respectively, are vested with overlapping administrative and programme support functions. OHRM supports the proposal that DPI in conjunction with the Department of Management reviews the respective functions of COS and the EO and ensures that reporting lines and accountability are clarified.
5	DPI should, in collaboration with OHRM, develop a plan of action to fill all its vacant posts with priority using a formally established review body for the recruitment of national staff without adversely affecting rights of staff members.	Important				OHRM will assist in developing a plan of action if DPI provides it with resources.
6	OHRM should develop policies covering the recruitment of national staff in field offices in the absence of a dedicated central review body in order to streamline national staff recruitment in the Secretariat.	Important	Yes	Chief, Human Resources Policy Service, OHRM	31 December 2017	OHRM is preparing an Administrative Instruction for the recruitment of national staff in field offices. Pending issuance of the Administrative Instruction, OHRM with the Field Personnel Division of DFS, established guidelines for the selection of locally-recruited staff in the General Service and National Professional Officer categories in United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions and other entities supported by DFS. The guidelines provided to the OIOS are consistent with the basic principles of the Staff Selection System, as contained in the Administrative Instruction (ST/AI/2010/3) and the Secretary-General's Bulletin (ST/SGB/2011/7) on Central Review Bodies.

Management Response

Audit of the management of strategic communications activities in the Department of Public Information

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
7	DPI should, in conjunction with OPPBA and OLA, review all voluntary cash contributions to the established DPI trust funds to ensure that they are received through legally accepted documents or agreements in accordance with the current United Nations Secretariat policies and procedures.	Important				
8	DPI should: (a) issue instructions to its field offices regarding receipt and reporting of voluntary contributions from Member States; and (b) ensure that legal documents support all voluntary contributions received for the operations of its field offices.	Important				OPPBA requests the recommendation to be revised as follows: "DPI should, under the overall guidance of OPPBA : (a) issue instructions to its field offices regarding receipt and reporting of voluntary contributions from Member States; and (b) ensure that legal documents support all voluntary contributions received for the operations of its field offices.
9	DPI should prepare annual procurement plans for the United Nations Information Centres and, in conjunction with the Procurement Division, establish the local procurement options most appropriate to field offices.	Important				