INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2018/035

Audit of the issuance of ground passes in the United Nations Secretariat in New York

Procedures for accreditation of media and non-governmental organization and authorization of ground passes and controls over the use of associated information systems needed to be strengthened to ensure that access to United Nations premises is only granted to authorized individuals

1 May 2018
Assignment No. AH2017/500/01

Audit of the issuance of ground passes in the United Nations Secretariat in New York

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the issuance of ground passes in the United Nations Secretariat in New York. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of procedures for issuing ground passes for access to the United Nations Secretariat premises in New York and the controls over the information systems that support the process. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2016 to 31 May 2017 and included review of the accreditation of media and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), authorization and issuance of ground passes, and controls over information and communication technology (ICT). The audit involved the Departments of Safety and Security (DSS), Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), Public Information (DPI), General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM), and the Offices of Human Resources Management (OHRM) and Information and Communications Technology (OICT).

DGACM implemented adequate procedures to authorize the issuance of passes to staff and delegates of permanent and observer missions. However, procedures and controls needed to be strengthened to ensure that access to United Nations premises is only granted to authorized individuals.

OIOS made 11 recommendations, 7 of which were issued to entities other than DSS.

To improve accreditation of media and NGOs and authorization of ground passes to staff and affiliates:

- DPI and DESA needed to establish an information sharing mechanism to ensure barred NGOs are not accredited to the United Nations;

- DPI needed to develop an internal guideline on what constitutes bona fide media organizations to reflect the emergence of new media types; and granting access to persons affiliated with media entities covering non-United Nations events held at New York Headquarters, in consultation with DSS, OCSS, and other relevant offices; and

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To improve ICT controls:

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- DESA needed to develop procedures to ensure its staff have the information and knowledge required to maintain software developed by consultants;

- DESA needed to establish monitoring mechanism to ensure compliance with ICT procedures on software development; and

- OICT needed to identify and implement an enterprise-wide automated solution ███████████ ████████████████ for accreditation and authorization of ground passes.

DESA, DPI, OHRM and OICT accepted the recommendations and have initiated action to implement them.

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I. BACKGROUND

1.   The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the issuance of ground passes in the United Nations Secretariat in New York.

2.   The Pass and Identification Unit (PIDU) of the Department for Safety and Security (DSS) issues ground passes based on requests received from the following departments and offices that accredit/authorize individuals to access United Nations premises:

(i)   The Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) accredits non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Subsequent to such accreditation, DESA requests the issuance of ground passes for up to nine representatives of the NGO;

(ii)   The Department of Public Information (DPI) accredits members of media organizations and NGOs for formal association with it to build partnerships for advocacy, outreach and global communications;

(iii)   The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) authorizes the issuance of ground passes to staff of permanent missions and delegates; and

(iv)   The Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) and various executive offices authorize issuance of ground passes to staff and affiliates including consultants, individual contractors and interns.

3.   The accreditation and authorization processes are guided by the procedures established by respective departments/office. DSS is guided by the headquarters minimum operating security standards (HMOSS), security policy manual, PIDU operations procedures, and related Secretary-General's bulletins and administrative instructions. These processes are enabled by various information technology systems, including the CCURE system used by PIDU. Information and communication technology (ICT) policies and technical procedures guide access control, development and maintenance of these systems. PIDU issued 64,532 ground passes and 504,280 special events tickets to various individuals during the audit period to grant access to 19 buildings of the United Nations Secretariat in New York.

4.   Comments provided by DESA, DPI, DGACM, OHRM and the Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT) are incorporated in italics.

II.   AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

5.   The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the procedures for issuing ground passes for access to the United Nations Secretariat premises in New York and the controls over the information systems that support the process.

6.   This audit was included in the 2017 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the security risks associated with issuance of ground passes for access to the United Nations premises in New York.

7.   OIOS conducted this audit from June to October 2017. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2016 to 31 May 2017. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risk areas which included: accreditation of media and NGOs, authorization and issuance of ground passes, and ICT controls.

8.   The audit methodology included: (a) interviews of key personnel, (b) reviews of relevant documentation, (c) analytical reviews of data, (d) physical observation, and (e) testing of a sample of 105 ground passes issued during the audit period.

9.   Audit results pertaining to the Department of Safety and Security are not included in this report but issued separately.

10.   The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

III.   AUDIT RESULTS

A.   Accreditation of media and NGOs

<u>DPI and DESA needed to create a central database for barred NGOs</u>

11.   HMOSS require all persons to be duly authorized and accredited to gain access to United Nations premises. DESA guidelines specify the requirements to be fulfilled by NGOs to apply for ECOSOC consultative status. DPI guidelines require NGOs requesting formal association to submit prescribed documents evidencing their credentials.

12.   DESA conducted adequate checks to verify the requisite credentials and activities of NGOs prior to recommending them to the ECOSOC for accreditation. These included the charter of the organization and its activities evidencing that they are aligned with the work of ECOSOC. DPI also verified documents submitted by NGOs to confirm their credentials prior to accrediting them and assess their ability to adhere to prescribed standards including outreach activities.

13.   During the audit period, DPI and DESA accredited approximately 1,450 and 4,990 NGOs respectively but did not have a tool to check whether they had previously been barred by other departments/offices or United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. This was because there were no information sharing mechanisms or tools. As a result, there was a risk that DPI and DESA might accredit NGOs that had been barred by other United Nations system entities posing security and reputational risks to the Organization.

> **(1) DPI and DESA should establish an information sharing mechanism with other Secretariat departments/offices and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to ensure that barred non-governmental organizations are not accredited to the United Nations.**
>
> *DPI and DESA accepted recommendation 1. DESA stated that it shared the information on barred NGOs with DPI but acknowledged that the information sharing mechanism needed to be expanded to include a wider group of entities in New York. DPI stated that it would record information on barred NGOs and share it with the focal points of an interagency civil society, as well as United Nations offices in Geneva and Vienna. Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt of evidence of the establishment of the information sharing mechanism on barred NGOs.*

14.   DPI media accreditation guidelines require media accreditation to be strictly reserved for members of the press who represent bona fide media organizations.

15.   The Media Accreditation and Liaison Unit (MALU) of DPI verified documents submitted by members of media organizations to confirm their credentials prior to accrediting them. During the audit period, applications were received from 4,867 individuals representing 99 different categories of media referred to by DPI as media types. In addition to television, radio, news agencies, reporters, journalists and correspondents; media types included charities, clubs, online bloggers, websites, independent film and documentary producers and videographers.

16.   With the emergence of new types of media, applications for media accreditation have grown significantly in recent years - by 112 and 215 per cent in 2015 and 2016 respectively, from 2014. This includes applications by online bloggers, which grew by 28 per cent and 159 per cent. However, MALU had not developed clear criteria on what constitutes bona fide media organizations to reflect the new types of media. In addition, MALU accredited 331 individual photographers/videographers covering non-United Nations events held at New York Headquarters. MALU advised that this was done to fulfill the DSS requirement for anyone entering the United Nations premises with a professional camera to obtain temporary media pass. However, it was unclear what controls were exercised prior to accreditation of these photographers/videographers because a guideline was not established on granting access to persons affiliated with media entities covering non-United Nations events held at New York Headquarters.

17.   Since media ground passes allow individuals to carry professional cameras, granting media accreditation to a large number of media types including individual bloggers and videographers may increase the risk that sensitive locations may be filmed and events covered in a manner unacceptable or derogatory to the image of the Organization.

> **(2) DPI should develop an internal guideline on what constitutes bona fide media organizations to reflect the emergence of new types of media; and granting access to persons affiliated with media entities covering non-United Nations events held at New York Headquarters, in consultation with DSS, OCSS, and other relevant offices.**
>
> *DPI accepted recommendation 2 and stated that it would develop internal guidelines to clarify which organizations are "bona-fide" and therefore entitled to media accreditation. It would consult with DSS, OCSS, the Office of Legal Affairs, and other relevant offices on granting access to media personnel covering non-United Nations events at New York Headquarters.* Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of internal guideline.

B.   Authorization of ground passes

DGACM implemented adequate procedures to register and authorize staff and delegates of permanent/ observer missions for issuance of ground passes

18.   The Protocol Manual of Protocol and Liaison Services (PLS) requires permanent/observer missions to submit prescribed documents with details of their staff and delegates for verification prior to their registration with PLS and authorization for ground passes. PLS verified the completeness of registration forms and ensured that letters addressed to the Secretary-General included the name, diplomatic rank, and functional title of staff and delegates prior to registering and authorizing issuance of ground passes. The

forms and letters were signed by the permanent representative or a designated official with the missions' official seal affixed. PLS relied on the permanent missions for accuracy of the information provided in specified forms and letters.   OIOS reviewed supporting documentation submitted by the permanent/observer missions and concluded that PLS had implemented adequate procedures to register and authorize the staff and delegates of these missions for issuance of ground passes.

RECOMMENDATIONS 4 TO 8 WERE ISSUED TO DSS

C.   Information system controls

DESA needed to establish monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance with ICT procedures

24.   The ICT procedure on software development requires technical documentation of the software solution including source code, system design and architecture. According to the Secretary-General's bulletin on Information and Communications Technology Board (ST/SGB/2003/17), all departments and offices shall establish ICT committees to ensure standard methodologies are consistently used for ICT projects.

25.   The source code, system design and architecture of CSO Net were not adequately documented and archived. This deterred software maintenance and application upgrades. For example, bugs in the system causing intermittent interruption of services and inadequate exception handling in the messaging system could not be fixed. Furthermore, the system could not be customized based on business requirements and suffered from database errors impacting the reliability of information such as inaccurate data on the total number of NGOs accredited on a given date. ███████████████████████████
███
██████ This occurred because DESA did not ensure that the consultant who developed the application shared information and transferred knowledge to staff to enable them to maintain the system and fix bugs. This increased the risk of a system crash impeding the business operations of DESA.

26.   In addition, configuration management procedures including version control were not adequately implemented in CSO Net. As a result, changes made to the source code and problems fixed or enhancements introduced with the changes, could not be tracked. This occurred because DESA did not establish monitoring mechanisms through its ICT committee to ensure that standard methodologies were consistently used for ICT projects.

> **(9) DESA should develop procedures to ensure consultants' contracts for system development include appropriate provisions for information sharing and knowledge transfer to ensure staff have the necessary technical capacity to maintain the relevant systems.**
>
> *DESA accepted recommendation 9 and stated that for future development of database, it would conform to the requirements of OICT and include a requirement for the developers to make source*

codes available as an integral aspect of the assignment. Recommendation 9 remains open pending development of procedures to ensure consultants' contracts for system development include provisions for information sharing and knowledge transfer.

(10) DESA should establish a monitoring mechanism through its information and communications technology (ICT) committee to ensure compliance with ICT procedures on software development.

DESA accepted recommendation 10 and stated that it would engage with other United Nations offices and initiate discussions to avoid use of duplicate systems to minimize security flaws. Recommendation 10 remains open pending receipt of evidence of the established monitoring mechanisms for software development.

<u>OICT needed to identify and implement a common automated solution for accreditation and authorization of individuals cleared to receive ground passes</u>

27.   The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in its report of 1 March 2013 recommended the halting of proliferation of stand-alone systems and implementing an Organization-wide application management policy to consolidate applications. The ICT Strategic guidelines also recommend harmonization and standardization of applications.

28.   OIOS noted that there were nine software applications in use across various departments in the Secretariat for accrediting and issuing ground passes, six of which were department-specific although they performed similar functions. Some of these applications were 8 to 10 years old with inadequate maintenance and limited ability to upgrade the hosting infrastructure.
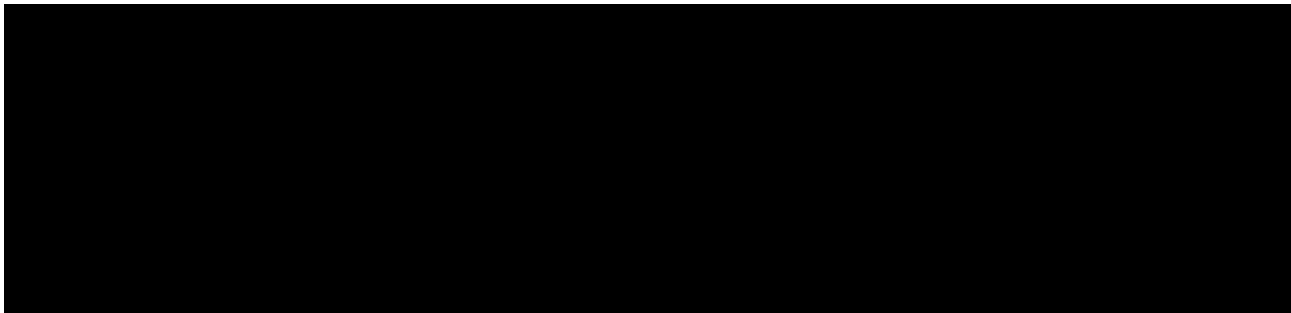
30.   This happened due to inadequate coordination between OICT and accrediting departments across the Secretariat to standardize applications based on the identification of common business needs in the process of accrediting entities and individuals for issuance of ground passes ███████████████████ ██ The use of fragmented older versions of applications and non-standard practices of data transfer among systems may expose the organization to the risk of impending system failure and security breaches.

(11) OICT should, in coordination with DESA, DPI, DGACM and DSS, identify and implement an enterprise-wide automated solution ████████████████████████████ **to support the accreditation and authorization of individuals cleared to receive ground passes.**

OICT accepted recommendation 11 and stated that it would engage with DESA, DPI, DGACM, and DSS to scope the automated solution and determine resource requirements. It further stated that resource availability would be a determining factor in addressing the recommendation. DGACM stated

that Indico had been approved by the OICT Architecture Review Board to be the enterprise wide solution. DGACM is working with DESA, DPI and DSS to re-engineer the processes and deploy Indico as the enterprise solution. Recommendation 11 remains open pending receipt of an action plan for the implementation of the enterprise solution agreed upon by all stakeholders.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

31.   OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of DSS, DPI, DESA, DGACM, OICT and OHRM 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

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Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	C/ O[3]	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date[4]
1	DPI and DESA should establish an information sharing mechanism with other Secretariat departments/offices and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to ensure that barred non-governmental organizations are not accredited to the United Nations.	Important	O	Submission of evidence of the establishment of the information sharing mechanism on barred NGOs.	30 July 2018
2	DPI should develop an internal guideline on what constitutes bona fide media organizations to reflect the emergence of new types of media; and granting access to persons affiliated with media entities covering non-United Nations events held at New York Headquarters, in consultation with DSS, OCSS, and other relevant offices.	Important	O	Submission of internal guideline.	31 December 2018
3	███████████████████████████ ███████████	████	█	██████████████████████████	████████
	RECOMMENDATIONS 4-8 WERE ISSUED TO DSS				
8	██████████████████████████████ ████████████	████	█	████████████████████████ ███████████	███████

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[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, DESA, OHRM, and OICT in response to recommendations.

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Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	C/ O[3]	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date[4]
9	DESA should develop procedures to ensure consultants' contracts for system development include appropriate provisions for information sharing and knowledge transfer to ensure staff have the necessary technical capacity to maintain the relevant systems.	Important	O	Submission of procedures to ensure consultants' contracts for system development include provisions for information sharing and knowledge transfer.	30 June 2019
10	DESA should establish a monitoring mechanism through its information and communications technology (ICT) committee to ensure compliance with ICT procedures on software development	Important	O	Submission of evidence of the established monitoring mechanisms for software development.	30 September 2020
11	OICT should, in coordination with DESA, DPI, DGACM and DSS, identify and implement an enterprise-wide automated solution ████████ ████████████████ to support the accreditation and authorization of individuals cleared to receive ground passes.	Important	O	Submission of an action plan for the implementation of the enterprise solution agreed upon by all stakeholders.	30 September 2020

APPENDIX I

Management Response

Management Response

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Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	DPI and DESA should establish an information sharing mechanism with other Secretariat departments/offices and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to ensure that barred non-governmental organizations are not accredited to the United Nations.	Important Yes		DPI/OD/NGO Relations and Advocacy (Chief)	30 July 2018	DESA will include "Sharing of Information on barred NGOs" as an agenda item at its pre-existing quarterly inter-agency civil society focal points meetings (DESA to report on timing but expected by June 30, 2018). DPI will note and record the information in a password protected excel spreadsheet for review and sharing by that group, which DESA will also share with UNOG and UNOV as part of its coordination responsibilities. DPI will create and share with OIOS an initial spreadsheet by 30 July 2018.
				DESA/OESC	To be determined in coordination with DPI and other actors	DESA currently shares information on a regular basis with DPI, and colleagues in UNOG and Vienna about barred NGOs *and individuals*. Including through its database, which is shared with the same parties. However, DESA acknowledges that this mechanism should be expanded to include a wider group of focal points in UNHQ.
2	DPI should develop an internal guideline on what constitutes bona fide media organizations to reflect the emergence of new types of media; and granting access to persons affiliated with media entities covering	Important	Yes	DPI/NMD/MALU (Chief)	31 Dec. 2018	The guidelines note that "Media accreditation is strictly reserved for members of the press (print, photo, radio, television, film, news agencies and online media) who represent a bona fide media organization." While "bona fide" media is not defined here, the requirements of various categories of media are indicated on the MALU web site (http://www.un.org/en/media/accreditation/request.shtml). DPI will develop internal guidelines to further clarify which organizations are "bona fide" and therefore entitled

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[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.

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Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
	non-United Nations events held at New York Headquarters, in consultation with DSS, OCSS and other relevant offices.					to media accreditation, in light of the prevalence of new media and requests from entities partnering on events with UN offices and Permanent Missions. DPI will consult with DSS, OCSS, OLA and other relevant offices on granting access to such personnel covering non-UN events held at UNHQ (mostly in DDR).
3	██████████	████	██	████ ██	████	████████████
	RECOMMENDATIONS 4 TO 8 WERE ISSUED TO DSS					
8	██████████	████	██	████	████	████████████

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Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
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9	DESA should develop procedures to ensure consultants' contracts for system development include appropriate provisions for information sharing and knowledge transfer to ensure staff have the necessary technical capacity to maintain the relevant systems.	Important	Yes	DESA-(OESC/SPCS)/OICT	Implementation will take place in the context of the elaboration of the replacement of ICSO. A specific date cannot be provided at this stage.	DESA acknowledges the need for better supervision of the development process in the future, whether undertaken by staff or by external consultants. DESA also agrees that future development of a database should start with identifying and procuring new software applications to replace the existing DESA database, after vetting the requirements with OICT. It will also include a requirement for the developers to make source codes available as an integral aspect of the assignment.
10	DESA should establish monitoring mechanisms through its information and communications technology (ICT) committee to ensure compliance with ICT procedures on software development.	Important	Yes	DESA-(OESC/SPCS)	Implementation will take place in the context of the elaboration of the replacement of ICSO. A specific date cannot be provided at this stage.	DESA welcomes this approach which would help to avoid multiple and duplicate systems in use that neither communicate with each other nor share critical information ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉ The Department is ready to engage with other UN offices to initiate discussions.
11	OICT should, in coordination with DESA, DPI, DGACM and DSS, identify and	Important	Yes	Chief of the Enterprise Application Centre-Bangkok	30 September 2020	**OICT comments:** OICT is well positioned to identify and implement the requested enterprise-wide automated solution for accreditation and authorization of grounds passes, ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉ and integration between

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Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
	implement an enterprise-wide automated solution ████████ ████████ to support the accreditation and authorization of individuals cleared to receive ground passes.					relevant devices and other systems. This approach would be in alignment with the ICT ████████ ████████████████████████ In order to pursue this global project, however, resources will need to be identified. In the meantime, OICT will engage with DSS to scope the solution and determine resource requirements. In addition to available budgetary sources a chargeback model will also be examined to secure the necessary resources. While OICT recognizes the merits of the recommendation and possesses the capacity to deliver it, resource availability will be the determining factor in whether this recommendation can be addressed and when. **DGACM comments:** In line with Umoja Extension 2 - Conference and Event Management - Participant Management (UE2 CEM MPM), the accreditation and authorization processes are currently being analyzed and reworked. Indico, an integrated system to manage conferences, registration and badge issuance was approved by the OICT Architecture Review Board on 14 March 2018 to be the enterprise wide system for MPM. Umoja is currently working with the process owners led by DGACM, and in collaboration with DESA, DSS and DPI to re-engineer the processes and to deploy Indico as the enterprise wide solution. Deployments will be phased in from September 2018.

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Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						DESA comments: DESA welcomes this approach which would help to avoid multiple and duplicate systems in use that neither communicate with each other nor share critical information ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. The Department is ready to engage with other UN offices to initiate discussions.