



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
13 March 2019

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination

Fifty-ninth session

Organizational session, 18 April 2019

Substantive session, 3–28 June 2019*

Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda**

Programme questions: evaluation

Evaluation of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management provides the “physical and deliberative framework”^a for the numerous meetings of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and their committees and subsidiary organs, as well as a number of ad hoc intergovernmental bodies, special conferences, expert bodies and meetings of Member States, at United Nations Headquarters in New York and at the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna. The Department is headquartered at United Nations Headquarters, with conference-servicing entities at the three United Nations Offices. It also supports meetings away from headquarters.

The present evaluation focused on the Department’s planning system for implementing its programme of work from 2014 to 2017. The evaluation questions covered the following areas:

- Relevance: the extent to which the planning system was aligned with client needs
- Effectiveness: the extent to which the planning system facilitated the timely, effective and efficient delivery of the Department’s work
- Efficiency: the extent to which the Department successfully harnessed its financial, human and material resources devoted to planning
- Cross-cutting issues: the extent to which the Department managed key factors affecting its planning system, as well as cross-cutting issues of gender and the Sustainable Development Goals

* The dates for the substantive session are tentative.

** E/AC.51/2019/1.



During the period under evaluation, the Department experienced growing demand for conference services and declining budgets, a trend that reinforced the need for a robust planning system. Its planning system in effect consisted of multiple systems employed to meet the distinct needs of its various work streams and locations. Harmonization of those systems was inadequate, however, both within and across duty stations, particularly in the information technology applications supporting documentation management.

Despite a suboptimal level of harmonization, coupled with declining resources and increasing demands, each duty station delivered its programme of work effectively. If budget and demand trends persist in line with historical trends, however, the Department will likely face a service delivery risk in the next two bienniums.

Since the previous evaluation of the Department by the Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, (OIOS) in 2009, the Department has been working to address the external, as well as internal, factors affecting the successful implementation of its programme of work. Planning improvements constituted a critical aspect of the Department's efforts. Effective management of external factors was elusive, however, as resolution of the most significant and persistent challenges required Member State guidance.

The Department made progress on cross-cutting issues, implementing a strong gender policy and taking action to support the Sustainable Development Goals. However, it has not yet identified its departmental approach to the Goals or how it will measure its contribution to them.

The Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS made four important recommendations, namely that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management:

- Enhance and harmonize its information technology applications
- Strengthen its monitoring and evaluation
- Address external factors affecting its ability to plan, along with proposed solutions, for consideration by the Committee on Conferences
- Formulate and implement a plan for actively and concretely supporting the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

^a See www.un.org/depts/DGACM/functions.shtml.

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction and objective	4
II. Background	4
III. Methodology	12
IV. Evaluation results	13
A. Growing demand for conference management services, coupled with declining budgets, reinforced the need for robust planning within the Department	13
B. The Department possesses multiple planning systems in order to meet the distinct needs of its various work streams and locations; however, not all of those systems were adequately harmonized, preventing the generation and use of globally comparable data for Department-wide strategic decision-making.	17
C. Despite inadequate harmonization of planning systems, each duty station delivered on its programme of work effectively; however, there were signs of strain on their ability to continue doing so	19
D. While the Department put measures in place to ensure timely and efficient service, external factors influenced its effectiveness, and its ability to mitigate them was limited	29
E. The Department developed and was implementing a strong gender policy and was supporting the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in both direct and indirect ways, but it had not yet systematically identified its departmental approach to the Goals or how it would measure its contribution to them	31
V. Conclusion	32
VI. Recommendations	32
Annex	
Comments received from the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.	34

I. Introduction and objective

1. The Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) identified the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management for evaluation on the basis of a risk assessment to identify Secretariat programme evaluation priorities for 2017–2018. The Committee for Programme and Coordination selected the evaluation of the Department for consideration at its fifty-ninth session, to be held in June 2019. The General Assembly endorsed the selection in its resolution 72/9.

2. The general frame of reference for OIOS is set out in General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B, 54/244 and 59/272, as well as Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/273, by which OIOS is authorized to initiate, carry out and report on any action that it considers necessary to fulfil its responsibilities. OIOS evaluation is provided for in the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.¹

3. The overall objective of the evaluation was to determine, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the Department's planning system for implementing its programme of work from 2014 to 2017. The evaluation topic emerged from a programme-level risk assessment described in the evaluation inception paper produced at the outset of the evaluation.² The evaluation was conducted in conformity with norms and standards for evaluation in the United Nations system.³

4. Comments on the draft report were sought from the management of the Department and taken into account in the final report. The Department's response is included in the annex.

II. Background

Mandate, role and stakeholders

5. The Department provides the “physical and deliberative framework”⁴ for the numerous meetings held by the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and their committees and subsidiary organs, a number of ad hoc intergovernmental bodies, special conferences, expert bodies and meetings of Member States at United Nations Headquarters in New York and at the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi. The Department is headquartered at United Nations Headquarters and maintains additional conference-servicing entities at the three United Nations Offices.⁵ It also supports meetings held away from headquarters (i.e. away from those four duty stations) that are mandated by the General Assembly.

¹ ST/SGB/2016/6, regulation 7.1.

² OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division, inception paper: evaluation of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, 14 June 2017 (IED-17-004).

³ United Nations Evaluation Group, 2005.

⁴ See www.un.org/depts/DGACM/functions.shtml for further information.

⁵ In accordance with paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 57/283 B, the Department is responsible for the implementation of policy, the formulation of standards and guidelines, overseeing and coordinating United Nations conference services and the overall management of resources under the relevant budget section, while the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi remain responsible and accountable for day-to-day operational activities.

6. The Department's stated purpose is "to facilitate and enhance dialogue and cooperation among Member States and, by doing so, to contribute to the realization of the objectives of the United Nations and the Sustainable Development Goals".⁶ Mandates for its programme of work are contained in the rules of procedure of the principal organs of the United Nations.⁷ Other mandates are stipulated in resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, in particular those regarding the revitalization of the Assembly, the strengthening of the Council, integrated global management,⁸ the pattern of conferences and multilingualism.⁹

7. Overall intergovernmental direction concerning the organization and servicing of meetings is provided by the General Assembly on the advice of its Committee on Conferences, in accordance with its resolution 43/222 B.¹⁰ The Committee meets annually, and the Department provides an annual report on the pattern of conferences for consideration at the Committee's session and seeks the Committee's guidance and direction.

8. The Department's strategy is set out in the strategic framework for 2018–2019 (A/71/6/Rev.1). The Department encompasses four subprogrammes, the objectives of which are summarized in table 1.

Table 1
Subprogramme objectives and focus of work of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management

<i>Duty station</i>	<i>Subprogramme</i>	<i>Focus of work</i>
Headquarters only	Subprogramme 1, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs	Provide substantive conference management support to intergovernmental bodies to ensure procedurally correct meetings as well as substantive analytical support and advice
Headquarters and United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi	Subprogramme 2, Planning and coordination of conference services	Overall planning and coordination role of conference services in coordination with subprogrammes 3 and 4 based on the implementation of integrated global management across duty stations and an analysis of conference service needs to optimize resources
	Subprogramme 3, Documentation services	Delivery of high-quality documents in a timely and cost-effective manner as mandated by the General Assembly
	Subprogramme 4, Meetings and publishing services	Provision of interpretation, desktop publishing, printing and distribution and meeting services

Source: OIOS summary of A/71/6 (Prog. 1).

⁶ See www.un.org/depts/DGACM/index.shtml.

⁷ A/71/6 (Prog. 1), para. 1.2.

⁸ An integrated and global approach to the management of conference services across the duty stations, focusing on streamlining and optimizing operations, sharing resources and workload, and economies of scale.

⁹ See e.g. General Assembly resolutions 61/16 and 68/1, 57/283 B and 69/324.

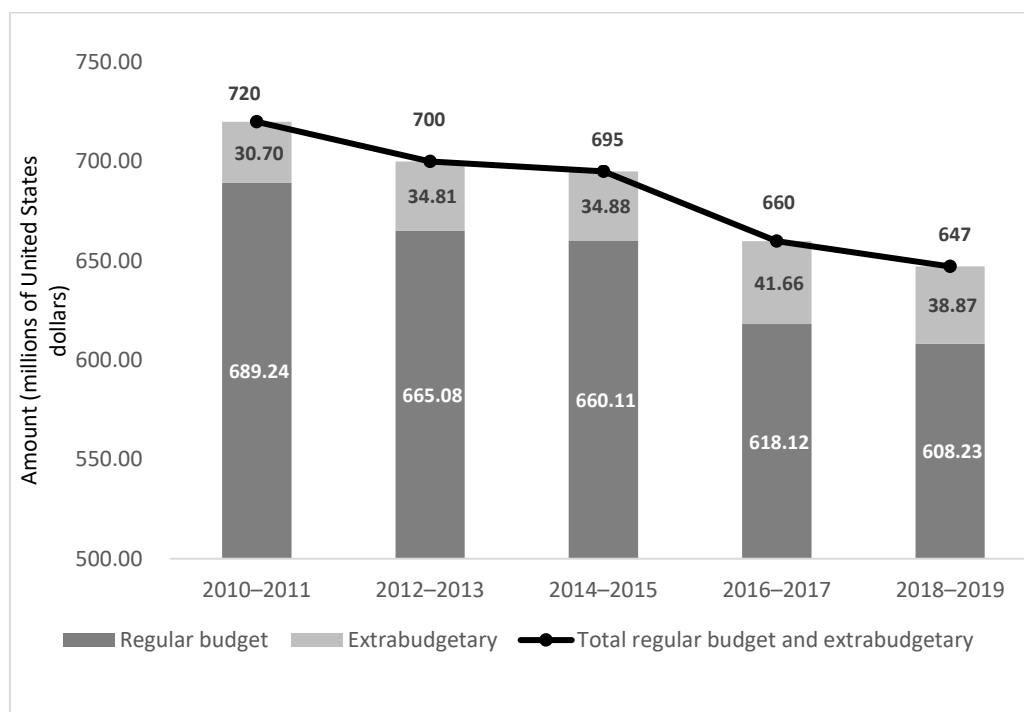
¹⁰ See <http://coc.dgacm.org/>.

Resources and workload

9. The Department's budget is subsumed under part I, Overall policymaking, direction and coordination, of the Secretariat programme budget. The Department received 13.8 per cent of the regular budget of the Secretariat.¹¹ The majority of the Department's budget (i.e. 94.1 per cent in 2018–2019) was funded from the regular budget. The Department's budget appropriations from 2010 to 2019 are presented in figure I. As shown in the figure, there has been a steady reduction in the Department's biennial budget appropriations, with decreases of 3.6 per cent in 2012–2013, 4.1 per cent in 2014–2015, 10.4 per cent in 2016–2017 and 1.7 per cent in 2018–2019.¹²

Figure I

Regular and extrabudgetary resources of the Department, bienniums 2010–2011 to 2018–2019



Source: OIOS compilation of Department data.

Note: 2018–2019 figures are approved estimates, 2016–2017 figures are initial appropriations, and earlier figures are actual expenditures.

10. The United Nations Headquarters and United Nations Office at Geneva operations are the largest, together representing approximately 84.1 per cent of the Department's budget appropriation. The United Nations Offices at Vienna and Nairobi constitute 7.0 and 3.1 per cent of the budget, respectively.¹³ Table 2 provides an overview of post resources at each duty station from 2010 to 2019.

¹¹ A/72/6 (Introduction) and A/72/6 (Introduction)/Corr.1, table 2, presents resource estimates by budget part.

¹² See also A/72/116, figure II.

¹³ A/72/6 (Sect. 2), table 2.5; 4.7 per cent of the Department's budget is for programme support costs.

Table 2
Distribution of the Department's post resources, 2010–2019

(Number of posts)

Duty station	2010–2011		2012–2013		2014–2015		2016–2017		2018–2019	
	RB	XB	RB	XB	RB	XB	RB	XB	RB	XB
Headquarters	1 147	11	1 106	11	1 008	11	968	11	939	11
Geneva	679	6	625	5	625	2	603	–	589	–
Vienna ^a	176		174		175		170		177	
Nairobi	67	69	67	79	67	79	66	73	64	76
Total	2 155		2 067		1 967		1 891		1 856	

Source: OIOS compilation of information in [A/62/6 \(Sect. 2\)](#), [A/64/6 \(Sect. 2\)](#), [A/66/6 \(Sect. 2\)](#), [A/68/6 \(Sect. 2\)](#), [A/70/6 \(Sect. 2\)](#) and [A/72/6 \(Sect. 2\)](#).

Abbreviations: RB, regular budget; XB, extrabudgetary.

^a Figures for the United Nations Office at Vienna represent the gross budget, including reimbursements from Vienna-based clients. Budget fascicles do not provide information on regular budget/extrabudgetary-resourced posts.

Leadership

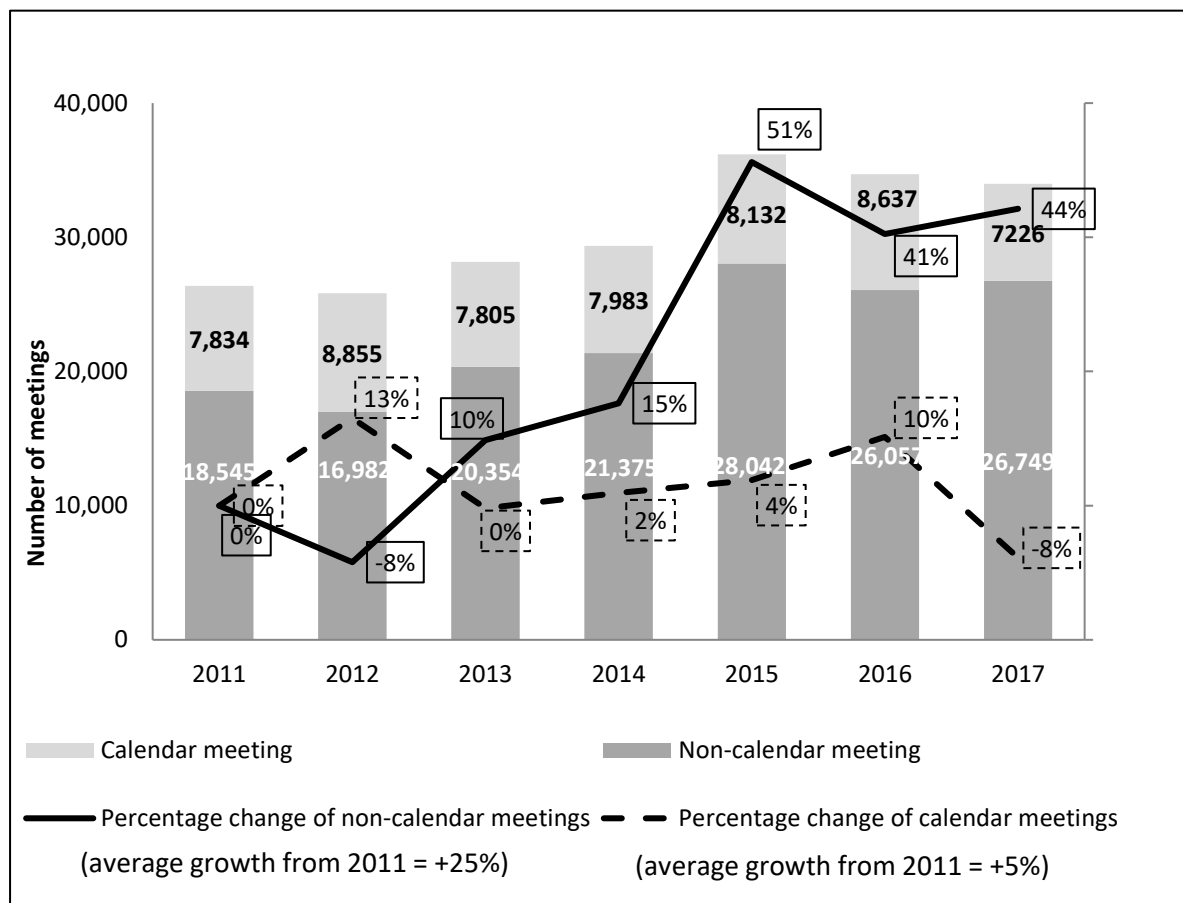
11. The Under-Secretary-General and the Assistant Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management are based at Headquarters. Conference-servicing entities at the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi are accountable to their respective Directors-General for the implementation of policies and standards established by the Under-Secretary-General.¹⁴

Operating context

12. Whereas the Department's budget has declined (see figure I), demand for the Department's services grew from 2011 to 2016. Figure II illustrates this trend.

¹⁴ See the Secretary-General's bulletins on the organization of the United Nations Offices at Geneva ([ST/SGB/2000/4](#)), Vienna ([ST/SGB/2004/5](#)) and Nairobi ([ST/SGB/2009/3](#)) and the aide-memoire between the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Directors-General of the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna, September 2017.

Figure II
Number of meetings (calendar and non-calendar), including year-on-year changes, 2011–2017



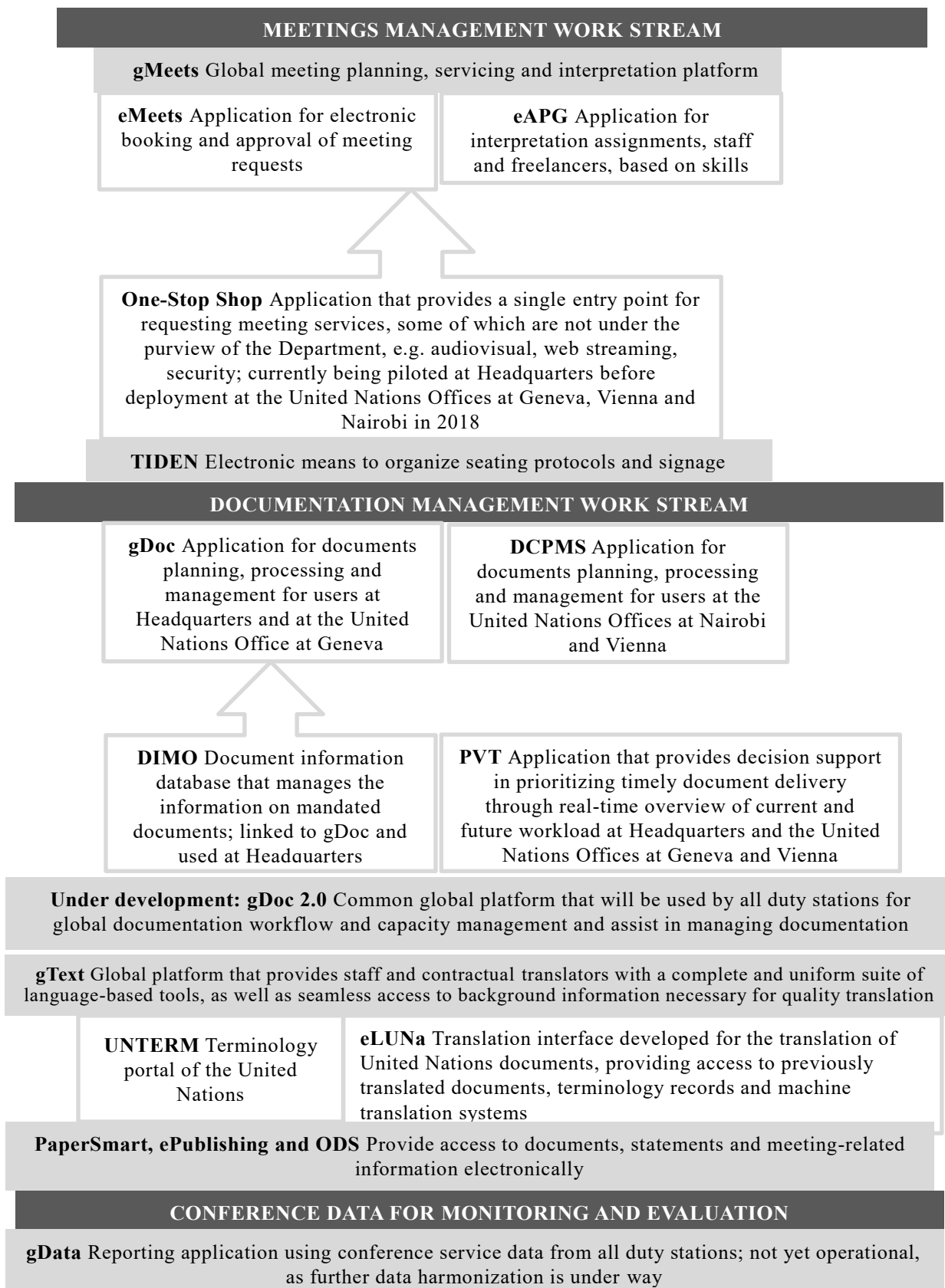
Source: Conference management report for 2016 and data from the Department for 2017.

13. Since the previous evaluation of the Department by the Inspection and Evaluation Division in 2009,¹⁵ the Department has focused on enhancing its integrated global management efforts and adapting information technology applications to improve efficiency and effectiveness. In 2015, the Department established a steering group, chaired by the Assistant Secretary-General, to improve implementation of integrated global management in three areas: leveraging information technology tools, developing comparable indicators across duty stations and streamlining and improving interpretation use.¹⁶ Those efforts continued in 2017 with the Special Coordination Meeting of the United Nations Conference Managers, held in New York on 13 and 14 September 2017, resulting in further consensus on the roles of the Department and the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, key performance indicators, information technology tools and self-evaluation. The Department also developed information technology applications to address various aspects of conference services. Some are global platforms, while others are used at one or two duty stations. Figure III provides a summary of most of the key information technology applications and their purpose.

¹⁵ See the report of OIOS on the evaluation of the integrated global management initiative of the Department (A/64/166).

¹⁶ See the Coordination Committee meeting reports for 2015 (para. 20) and 2016 (para. 142).

Figure III
Information technology applications of the Department's conference services, by work stream



Planning system

14. The Department's planning system refers to documentation, processes and information technology applications that together help the Department to: (a) manage its planned programme of work; and (b) respond to and manage any unforeseen contingencies, whether they arise through unplanned demands (e.g. meetings, documents), changes in overall resources or changes in operating assumptions about specific workflows and resources (e.g. assumptions with regard to individual staff/space availability, late submission of documents). The ultimate purpose of the system is to help the Department to implement its programme of work in the most timely, effective and efficient way possible.

15. Using that definition, OIOS mapped the elements of the Department's planning system. Figure IV depicts, in simplified and abbreviated form,¹⁷ OIOS understanding of the Department's work streams, the numerous planning elements that influence those work streams and the end results that those work streams aim to accomplish with the aid of planning.¹⁸ The two overarching work streams are:

(a) Meetings management services (WS1), which comprise outputs and activities related to meeting space allocation and interpretation services associated with the servicing of meetings;

(b) Documentation management services (WS2), which comprise outputs and activities associated with the production of documents before and during those meetings, both in the source language (e.g. editing, formatting) and any destination languages (e.g. translation, revision).

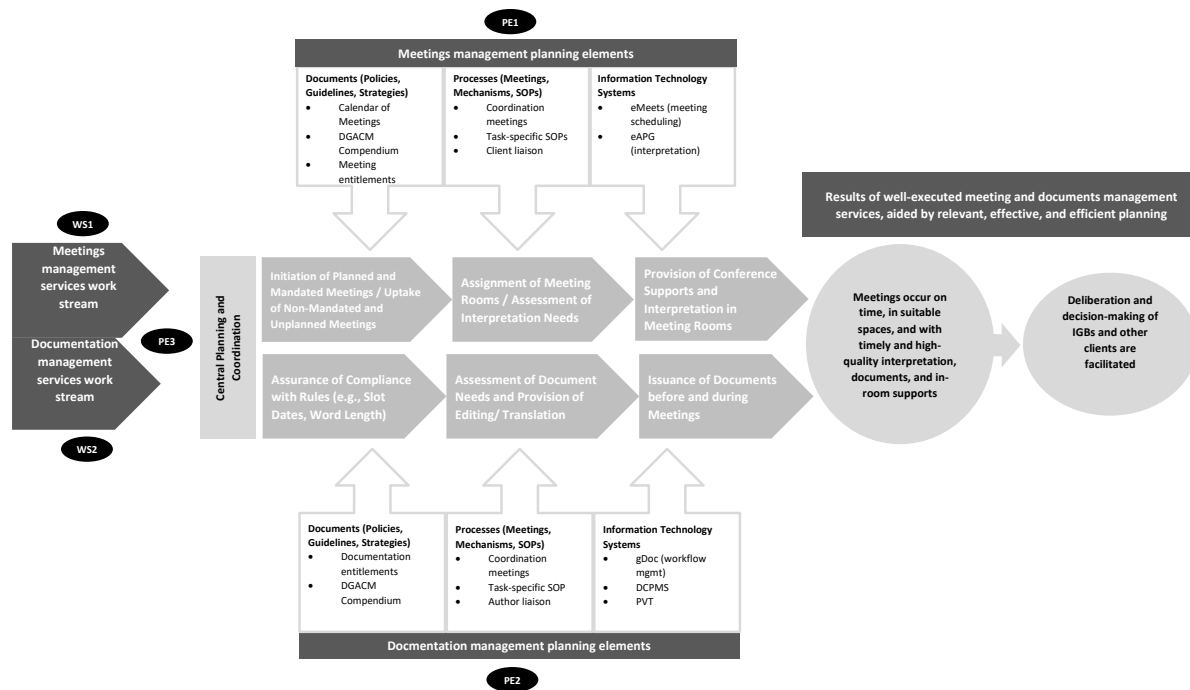
16. The broad milestones within those work streams are illustrated by the two horizontal bands of activities proceeding from left to right in the centre of the diagram,¹⁹ culminating at the far right in the end results jointly targeted by both work streams. The planning elements intended to help to effectively and efficiently deliver the two work streams at various phases are depicted by the two clusters of boxes emanating vertically from the top and bottom (PE1 and PE2, respectively). Those two sources of influence include the various documents, processes and information technology systems described in paragraph 14. A third planning element, central planning and coordination (PE3), facilitates ongoing interaction between the two work streams within duty stations and work sharing across the duty stations.

¹⁷ For readability and brevity, OIOS collapsed subprogrammes 2 and 4 into the conference management services work stream in figure IV and reconfigured subprogramme 3 as the documentation management work stream for greater parity of terms. Similarly, subprogramme 1, as a client- and location-specific subprogramme, is subsumed under both work streams, as its outputs and activities are the same as those in the other two subprogrammes.

¹⁸ Planning constitutes one source of influence on results. Other sources of influence include external factors (e.g. clients' late submission of documents and last-minute and unexpected meeting cancellations) and internal factors (e.g. overall performance management by the Department).

¹⁹ The milestones are depicted sequentially, although it is understood that they are not always chronological in nature but rather simultaneous or overlapping.

Figure IV
Planning elements contributing to the Department's work streams and targeted results



17. Against that backdrop, the evaluation answered the following overarching questions:

(a) **Relevance.** How well aligned with client needs, and with each other, were the various elements of the planning system for ensuring timely, effective and efficient delivery of the Department's programme of work?

(b) **Effectiveness.** To what extent did the planning system facilitate the timely, effective and efficient delivery of the programme of work?

(c) **Efficiency.** How successfully did the Department harness its financial, human and material resources to plan?

(d) **Cross-cutting issues.** How effectively did the Department manage (i) key factors affecting its planning and (ii) cross-cutting issues of gender and the Sustainable Development Goals?

18. Although 2014–2017 constituted the period under evaluation, OIOS also reviewed data from prior years, as applicable.

19. Key terms discussed in the present report include the following:²⁰

(a) "Calendar meetings", planned meetings of bodies that are required to meet and are part of the official biennial calendar of meetings approved by the General Assembly;

²⁰ Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, compendium of administrative policies, practices and procedures of technical secretariat services, protocol and liaison services and conference services, 19 May 2017 (available upon request to the Office of the Under-Secretary-General).

(b) “Non-calendar meetings”, meetings that are either planned or unplanned, but are not part of the required meetings found in the General Assembly-approved calendar;

(c) “Document processing and issuance statistics”, the proportion of documents received by the Department at mandated time frames, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/202 and referred to as “slotted documents”, that are processed and issued within the mandated time frames;

(d) “Document waivers”, Department-approved exceptions to document delivery time frames and word limits;

(e) “Entitlements”, predetermined mandates for conference services, as approved by the intergovernmental body at hand, in the length of time of meeting, languages of translation of official documents and of interpretation, and the provision, type or language of the meeting record;

(f) “If available”, scenarios in which interpretation services are provided to a meeting only if an already scheduled meeting entitled to interpretation services is cancelled, thus freeing up a team of interpreters for the “if available” time or if in-house capacity is idle at that date and time;

(g) “Meeting away from headquarters”, session of an intergovernmental body or a special conference held away from its established headquarters location, usually upon the invitation of a Member State offering to host the meeting in that country (and the approval of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council or the Conference of Parties);

(h) “Options”, early commitment from the Department to offer a contract to an interpreter, which can be processed (or not) within a week’s notice, normally after a planning meeting the week before the meeting;

(i) “Planned meeting”, meeting included in the original plan and calendar of a duty station;

(j) “Unplanned meeting” (or “added meeting”), meeting not originally included in the projected meetings plan but added to the weekly and/or daily programme of meetings;

(k) “Utilization factor”, percentage of entitled conference meeting resources used by organs.

III. Methodology

20. The evaluation employed a mixed-method approach featuring the following data sources:

(a) Document reviews: policies, compendium of practices, reports on the pattern of conferences and other documents;

(b) Structured review and analysis: conference service data, resource data, information technology tools;

(c) Summative inventory, analysis and mapping of planning systems of the various planning elements globally and at each duty station;

(d) Case studies: review of 64 randomly selected calendar and non-calendar meetings and related conference-servicing data;

(e) Direct observation of internal planning meetings (20) and selected meetings serviced (8);

(f) Interviews and focus group discussions: 152 semi-structured interviews of staff and management and 51 interviews with the top substantive/technical secretariat clients at the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, based on the volume of conference services used (as recorded in eMeets);

(g) Surveys: web-based surveys of a random sample of Department staff²¹ and the 20 top clients at each duty station.²²

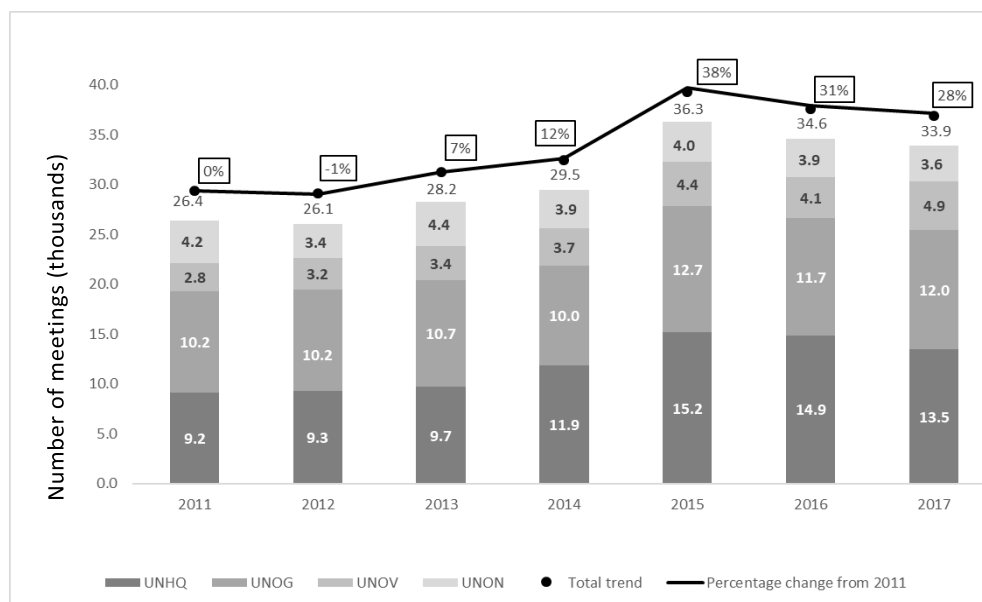
21. The evaluation faced one limitation, namely the low rate of response to the staff survey. OIOS addressed that limitation by triangulating survey data with other sources of evidence and conducting non-respondent analysis to ensure that the respondent profile was representative of the population.

IV. Evaluation results

A. Growing demand for conference management services, coupled with declining budgets, reinforced the need for robust planning within the Department

22. From 2011 to 2015, the global volume of meetings serviced by the Department (including those with interpretation) increased annually, as did the number of words translated, with a slight decrease on those indicators in 2016 and 2017, although still above 2011 levels. Those trends are depicted in figures V to VII. Many clients acknowledged the increased demand and the additional work volume that it placed on the Department.

Figure V
Total number of meetings serviced, 2011–2017



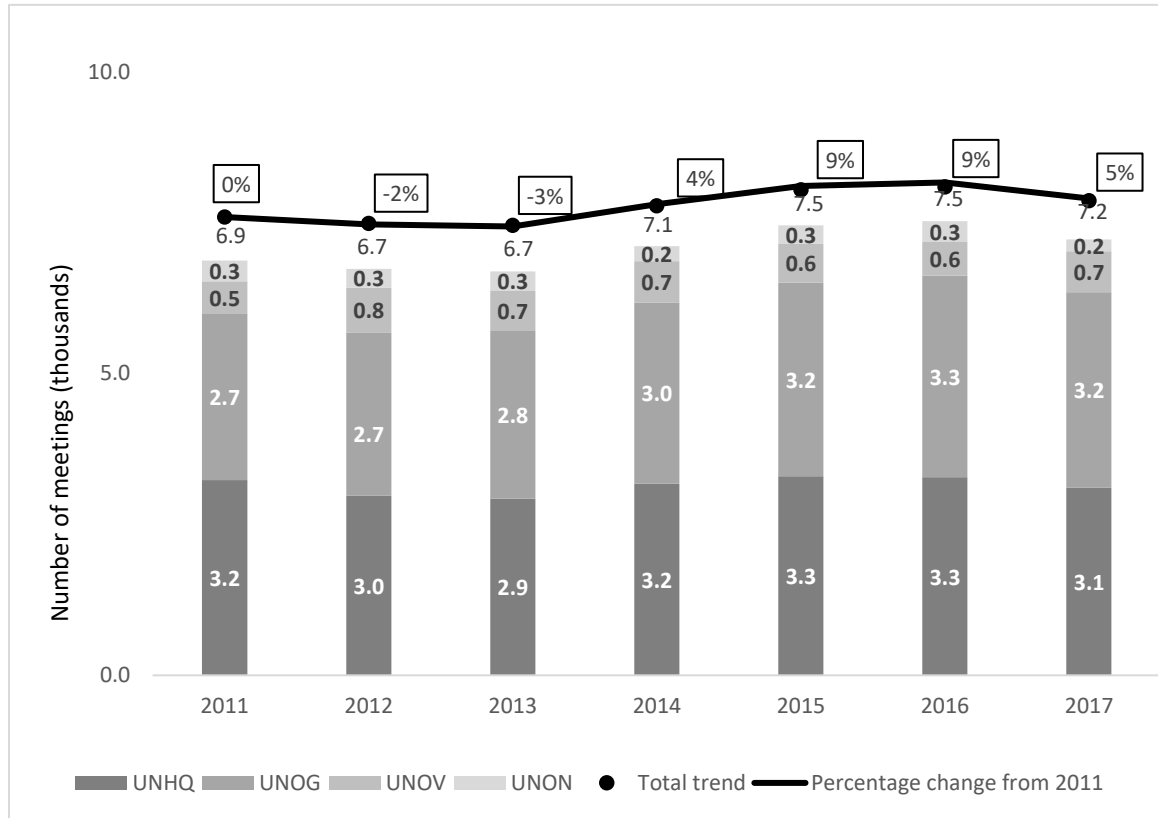
Source: OIOS compilation of data from the conference management report for 2016 and data from the Department for 2017.

Abbreviations: UNHQ, United Nations Headquarters; UNOG, United Nations Office at Geneva; UNON, United Nations Office at Nairobi; UNOV, United Nations Office at Vienna.

²¹ 17 per cent response rate.

²² 69 per cent response rate.

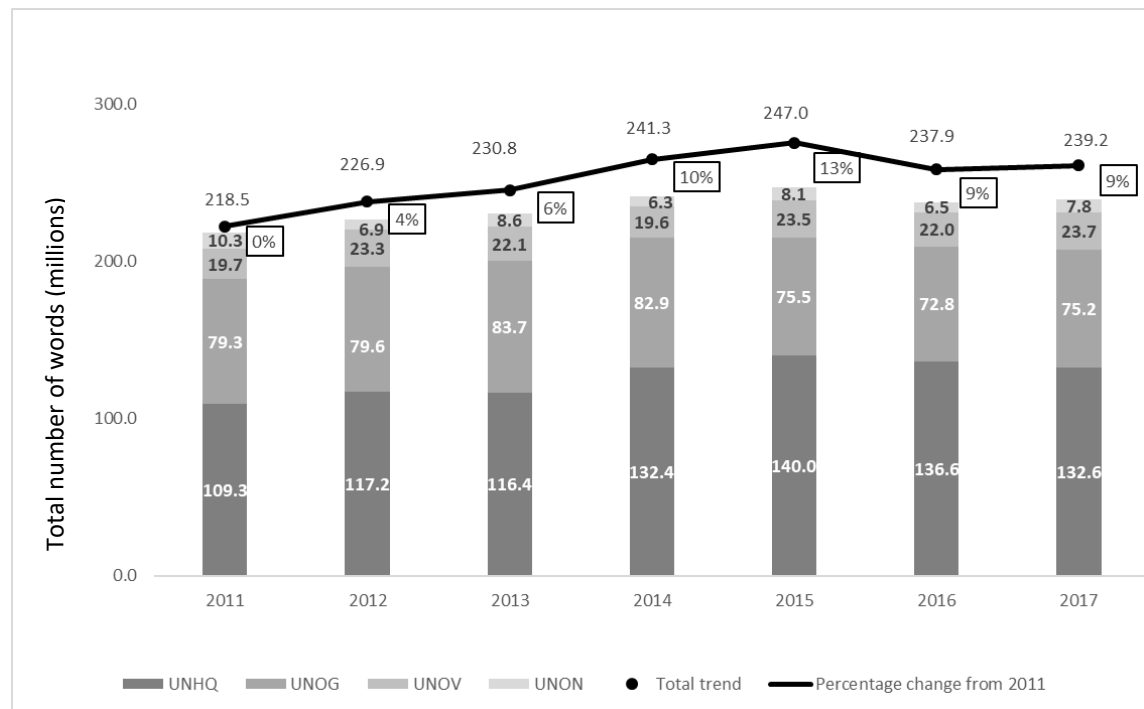
Figure VI
Number of meetings serviced with interpretation, 2011–2017



Source: OIOS compilation of data from the conference management report for 2016 and data from the Department for 2017.

Abbreviations: UNHQ, United Nations Headquarters; UNOG, United Nations Office at Geneva; UNON, United Nations Office at Nairobi; UNOV, United Nations Office at Vienna.

Figure VII
Number of words received for translation, 2011–2017



Source: OIOS compilation of data from the conference management report for 2016 and data from the Department for 2017.

Abbreviations: UNHQ, United Nations Headquarters; UNOG, United Nations Office at Geneva; UNON, United Nations Office at Nairobi; UNOV, United Nations Office at Vienna.

23. As figure II illustrates, the total number of non-calendar meetings grew significantly in all duty stations from 2011 to 2017, as did their proportion against the total number of meetings. This included increased demand for unplanned meetings. Examples include:

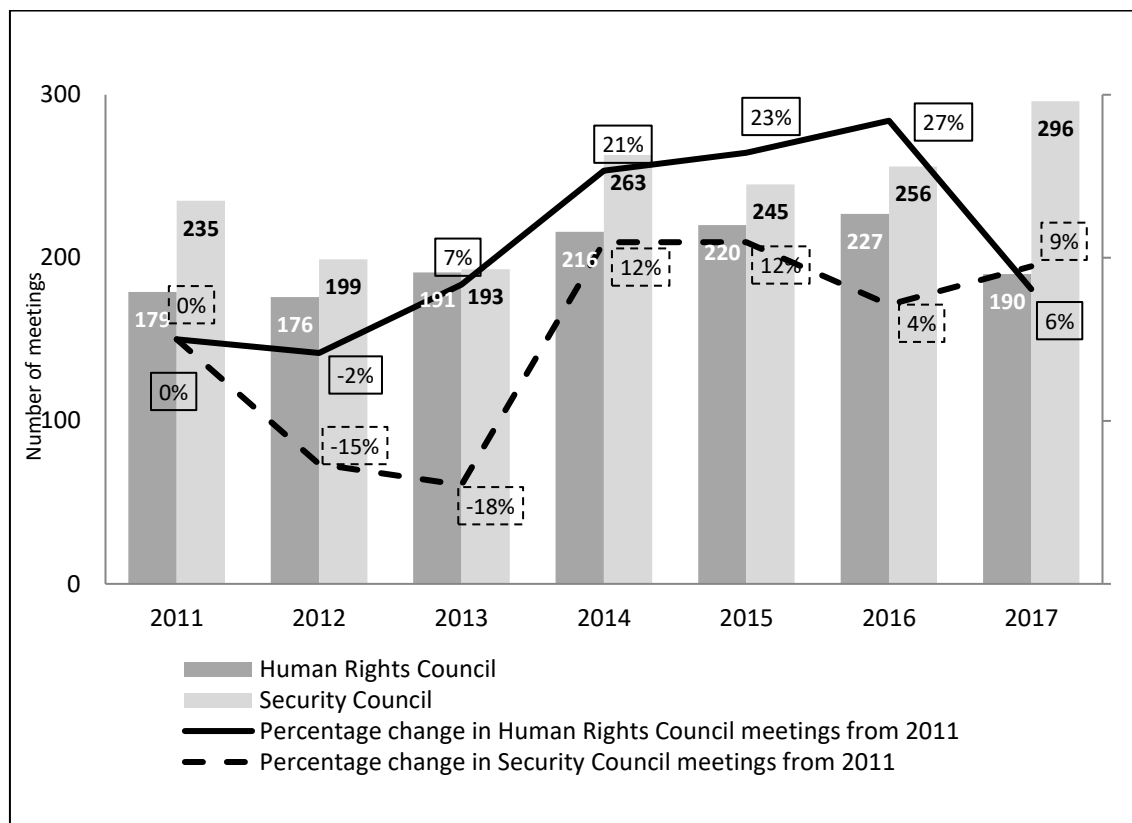
- Syrian talks at the United Nations Office at Geneva, where 560 meetings had been programmed but 853 meetings were held (January 2014–June 2017)²³
- Special events on United Nations premises: for instance, at United Nations Headquarters the total number of hours for such events surged from 71 (2014) to 202 (2015) and 555 (2016)²⁴
- Mandated calendar meetings of the Security Council and the Human Rights Council, whose meetings and documentation entitlements are unrestricted, making planning particularly difficult (see figure VIII)²⁵

²³ eMeets report on meeting statistics of United Nations organs for calendar and non-calendar meetings.

²⁴ Conference management report, 2016, para. 12.

²⁵ See e.g. rule 1 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council (S/96/Rev.7).

Figure VIII
Meetings of the Security Council and the Human Rights Council, 2011–2017



Source: OIOS compilation of data from the Security Council Affairs Division and from the Division of Conference Management of the United Nations Office at Geneva.

24. Growth in the number of non-calendar events was absorbed by the Department largely within existing resources, according to documentary evidence²⁶ and staff interviews.

25. Amid the trend of growing demand and declining resources, the complexities of conference management also increased, primarily in three ways:

(a) Growth in the number of “minutes lost” as a result of mandated body meetings being cancelled, from 105,395 (2013) to 125,084 (2016).²⁷ According to interviewees, meetings were often cancelled at the last minute, which resulted in unutilized meeting facilities and interpretation teams, thus wasting resources, or high transaction costs from having to reassign facilities and interpreters to avoid such waste;

(b) Increased number of meetings entailing politically sensitive material, such as those of the Human Rights Council and the Security Council (see figure VIII), with a corresponding need to build those bodies’ specific needs into planning processes (e.g. by developing a cadre of staff conversant with those bodies’ needs and having standby capacity for sessions called on short notice);

²⁶ Conference management report, 2016, para. 3.

²⁷ Supplementary information to [A/72/116](#), table 2.

(c) Acceleration of delegates' pace of speech,²⁸ with negative ramifications on interpreters' ability to function effectively under such conditions, and a corresponding need to plan for the rotation of interpreters assigned to some sessions.

26. The Department's documents highlight its strategy of "strengthening advance planning".²⁹ Nearly all client and staff interviewees observed that the Department's commitment to planning was essential to its ability to manage its work in the face of the aforementioned challenges (see result C).

B. The Department possesses multiple planning systems in order to meet the distinct needs of its various work streams and locations; however, not all of those systems were adequately harmonized, preventing the generation and use of globally comparable data for Department-wide strategic decision-making

27. Although the Department is uniform in its objectives across all duty stations, a mapping of its planning elements (see paras. 14–16) revealed that it does not in fact possess a single, unified planning system, but rather separate and distinct systems in its four duty stations. In some cases, such variability was rooted in the distinct operational context of each location (e.g. client needs, types of work, funding sources). In other cases, however, potential areas of harmonization were unexploited. In the present section, organized according to the work streams identified in figure IV, that variable degree of harmonization is examined.

1. Central planning and coordination

28. As illustrated in figure IV, the Department's main conference management work streams, namely meetings management and documentation management, come together in the central planning and coordination of conference services³⁰ at each duty station. The service works across subprogrammes at the duty station level to help to plan and manage the work for documentation and meetings, as observed at weekly planning meetings. However, there were no clear examples at either the local or global levels of how the two work streams were being coordinated strategically to help to manage the document and meeting workload. Planning interaction across the function at that level occurred mostly through annual coordination meetings, global senior management meetings, use of eMeets, compilation of the calendar of conferences and assessment of programme budget implications. Documentation management was the least harmonized function globally, owing to two distinct information technology systems being employed at the duty stations (see para. 32).

2. Meetings management

29. The four duty stations scheduled meetings in eMeets, prioritizing calendar meetings and provisionally forecasting non-calendar meetings on the basis of previous years' trends. Universal use of eMeets technically standardized that aspect of the meetings management work stream. Globally, eMeets lacked an interface with the information technology applications of the documentation service, described in figure III. Comprehensive information on document entitlements for each meeting, therefore, could not be viewed in eMeets, preventing a transparent, comprehensive overview of clients' entitlements. Throughout the Department, that lack of an

²⁸ The Department's analysis of Security Council verbatim records revealed that the number of words spoken per hour increased from 4,249 in 2005 to 5,874 in 2010 and 6,721 in 2016.

²⁹ A/72/116, para. 4.

³⁰ A/71/6 (Prog. 1), subprogramme 2.

interface hindered the ability to plan for both documentation and meetings. Another challenge in eMeets was the lack of an interface with Umoja, which caused inefficiencies in cost recoveries by creating additional steps to the many manual ones involved in billing for extrabudgetary services; staff interviewees at the United Nations Offices at Vienna and Nairobi added that the gap delayed invoicing for meetings and documentation services. There were plans for an interface between eMeets and Umoja through Umoja Extension 2.

30. With eAPG, interpretation planning was likewise harmonized across duty stations, but it was not used consistently or to its full potential. Its features include interpreter staffing forecasts and planned work assignments, collection of utilization statistics, interpreter productivity data and management of the recruitment of freelance interpreters. Not all of those features were used in all duty stations, however, which limited the ability to have a global roster of freelance interpreters, facilitate interpreter loans and work sharing and improve the collection of utilization statistics. Greater harmonization of eAPG usage across locations would enable the Department to manage interpretation services globally, for example when managing meetings away from headquarters, if all were using eAPG in a harmonized manner. The Department acknowledged the issues identified, indicating that enhancements to eAPG were planned.

3. Documentation management

31. Documentation management constituted the least harmonized function³¹ within the Department, owing to two distinct systems being employed: DCPMS at the United Nations Offices at Vienna and Nairobi, and gDoc at Headquarters and the United Nations Office at Geneva. A lack of harmonization in the following areas made it challenging to plan globally, hindered work sharing and limited the ability to collect document statistics efficiently for accurate global reporting:

(a) **Forecasting.** Methodologies for documentation forecasting³² varied, with duty stations using their respective information technology applications (e.g. the gDoc and DCPMS planning modules) to create forecasts, in addition to using an array of supplementary information created manually to reorganize the data (e.g. spreadsheets, running task lists). Staff interviewees noted concerns about the accuracy of the forecast client submission dates and word count totals, which hindered planning. The Department undertook efforts to ensure that forecasts were as accurate as possible, but many submissions could not be fully predicted, especially those from outside the Secretariat, for example Member States;

(b) **Prioritization.** Differences in documentation demands were the main reason for duty stations having their own approaches to documents prioritization,³³ making a harmonized approach to planning more challenging. Each duty station had a unique set of clients and thus based documents prioritization on those clients' specific mandated entitlements. In addition, documentation volumes varied across locations, with higher demand at Headquarters and the United Nations Office at Geneva. The latter addressed prioritization through a prioritization key for coding all incoming documents, with the PVT application being used as a tool for managing the coded documents pipeline. Headquarters planned for slotted documents, followed by unplanned urgent requests. Lack of documents prioritization standards thus resulted

³¹ The aim of documentation management was to increase harmonization with the roll-out of gDoc 2.0, to be implemented at all duty stations and globally standardized.

³² Documentation forecasting refers to the prediction of the volume, content and timing of the Department's documentation workload for editing, translation production and delivery.

³³ Documents prioritization refers to the method for establishing the importance of and delivery time frame for incoming documentation.

in bottlenecks, making it more difficult for staff to meet rushed demands both on time and at the desired level of quality. Prioritization standards would provide documentation management with a clear process by which to add documents to the workload and make the additions less ad hoc in nature, lessening strain and allowing for documents to be added at optimal periods. The Department had taken steps to harmonize documentation business practices as part of the preparation of gDoc 2.0, including addressing documents prioritization.³⁴

32. As the foregoing gaps attest, however, the Department has not fully exploited opportunities for systems harmonization in key areas, with implications for its ability to plan and, thus, achieve maximum effectiveness and efficiency both within and across duty stations and work streams. At a broader level, the lack of linkage in information technology systems limited the Department's ability to monitor and evaluate its own work and to feed that information back into planning processes and improve them, and to manage overall departmental performance. Harmonized planning processes would improve coherence within the documentation management work stream, allow for the global management of interpretation resources and provide the Department with the comparable data needed to globally manage meetings.

33. While the Department made progress in its monitoring and evaluation practice in recent years with an evaluation policy and workplan, as well as a monitoring plan to guide those two functions across duty stations, it had not created a deliberate global monitoring and evaluation framework for helping it to use global performance data to examine its achievement across duty stations and for senior managers to make evidence-based decisions on risks affecting the Department as a whole (see para. 46). The only tool enabling global analysis of performance data was gData, which provided the main repository of conference service data and was not yet operational, as further harmonization of data was under way. However, the data were not harmonized in accordance with Steering Group-approved methodologies in real time, nor were they linked to the information technology applications, rendering their utility limited. The tool was being migrated to a new platform, SAP HANA, which was intended to improve the linkages to other applications and make data reporting more stable.

C. Despite inadequate harmonization of planning systems, each duty station delivered on its programme of work effectively; however, there were signs of strain on their ability to continue doing so

34. Data from the Department indicated that each duty station delivered on its programme of work and met its mandated performance targets, as presented in the strategic framework and provided to the Committee on Conferences annually. The data showed a trajectory of positive performance for all conference services (meetings management, including interpretation, and documentation). The most recent data on the Department's key performance indicators, set out in the strategic framework, indicated that the Department had achieved a 98 per cent implementation rate on 1,630 mandated outputs in 2014–2015.³⁵

35. As reported annually to the Committee on Conferences, the Department met client needs for mandated meetings. This included 100 per cent of those programmed with interpretation since 2014. The Department also demonstrated a positive trajectory on delivering translations of pre-session documents submitted by clients on time and within word limits. Delivery on time was highest at Headquarters, followed

³⁴ gDoc outcome document, October 2017.

³⁵ See A/68/6 (Sect. 2) for approved expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement.

by the United Nations Office at Geneva, which improved dramatically owing to reforms in prioritizing work (see para. 31). Analysis of the Department's reports, confirmed by case study data, showed that lower issuance compliance at the United Nations Offices at Nairobi and Vienna was due mainly to the resources needed to respond to high-priority documents, including those not submitted within word limits or on time. Late issuance of affected documents was negotiated with clients. Performance data for 2014–2017 are presented in table 3.

Table 3
Key performance data, 2014–2017

(Percentage)

<i>Performance indicators</i>	<i>Overall</i>				<i>Headquarters</i>				<i>United Nations Office at Geneva</i>				<i>United Nations Office at Vienna</i>				<i>United Nations Office at Nairobi</i>			
	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>
Meetings management indicators																				
Total meetings planned and held	95	99	95	96	96	95	92	88	99	100	100	100	81	100	94	94	100	100	96	100
With interpretation services	100	100	100	99	100	100	100	98	97	99	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	66	100
Without interpretation services	94	98	94	96	93	93	89	85	100	100	100	100	77	100	92	93	100	100	100	100
Documentation timeliness indicators																				
Pre-session documents issued within mandated time frame	55	73	85	92	75	93	95	95	39	53	77	91	88	91	87	81	59	65	76	63
Pre-session documents submitted to the Department by authors on time and within word limits	90	89	92	90	92	91	92	91	88	88	93	90	73	79	86	81	73	65	84	70

Source: OIOS compilation of supplementary information to document [A/73/93](#) and data provided by the Department.

36. In line with General Assembly resolutions 47/202, 59/265 and 61/129, the Department reported on its ability to issue on time documents submitted by the planned deadlines and within the established word limits.³⁶ However, that figure does not account for challenges caused by unplanned documentation that had not been prioritized with an agreed submission date (i.e. slot date) with the documentation management units. The Department's performance reports,³⁷ confirmed by staff interviews, observations and case studies of randomly selected meetings (see table 4), suggested that those documents were numerous and were prioritized on a reactive basis, often requiring a diversion of resources initially committed to planned documents. The Department worked with clients to improve the timeliness of document delivery, but staff interviewed also indicated that more accurate forecasting was needed from clients on the documents issued from those bodies. Clients reported that such precision was not likely to be forthcoming, as the bodies were not always bound by the same procedural rules as others (e.g. Member States, special rapporteurs and bodies such as the Security Council, the Fifth Committee and the Human Rights Council).

Table 4
Aggregated documents-processing results for case studies, 2014–2017

<i>Duty station</i>	<i>Pre-session documents</i>	<i>In-session documents</i>	<i>Post-session documents</i>	<i>Documents with a slot date</i>	<i>Documents slotted by client on time</i>	<i>Documents processed by the Department on time</i>	<i>Average documents issuing compliance rate (percentage)</i>
Headquarters (n=6)	253	13	5	248	243 (97%)	234 (94%)	91
United Nations Office at Geneva (n=8)	300	125	32	93	87 (94%)	54 (62%)	75
United Nations Office at Vienna (n=9)	127	143	8	62	39 (62%)	21 (54%)	79
United Nations Office at Nairobi (n=4)	178	223	41	106	58 (55%)	42 (72%)	91

Source: OIOS analysis of Department data.

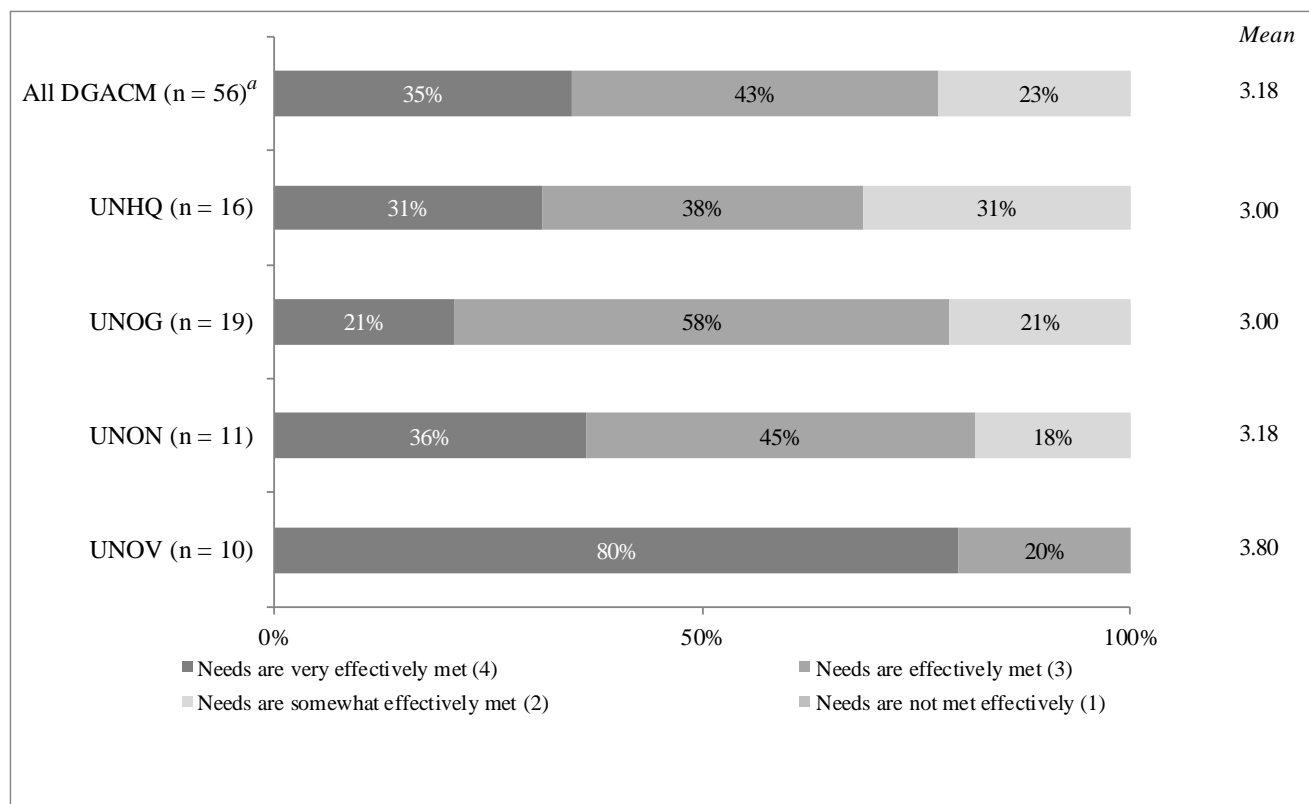
Note: 2017 data as at 2 June; the sample is randomly selected meetings with documentation.

37. The Department also delivered mostly high-quality results in meetings management, interpretation and documentation, with very few reported instances of low-quality delivery. With respect to meetings management, client survey data conveyed that meetings management needs were largely met (figures IX and X), a positive assessment corroborated in interviews. Clients at the United Nations Office at Vienna provided the strongest positive assessments in this area. OIOS meeting observations confirmed the largely smooth running of meetings management and the high quality of support from meeting services staff. Case studies of calendar and non-calendar meetings showed that services were delivered as planned in all instances, including last-minute additions. Some clients, mostly at the United Nations Office at Geneva, raised concerns that meeting services staff were not fully accessible, as they were assigned to multiple meetings simultaneously. Some clients in each duty station were also dissatisfied with meeting rooms that were not always modern or customizable enough for their needs

³⁶ Department Steering Group workflow improvement process meeting minutes, 1 March 2016.

³⁷ Programme performance report of the United Nations for 2016.

Figure IX
Client perceptions of the Department's effectiveness in meetings management

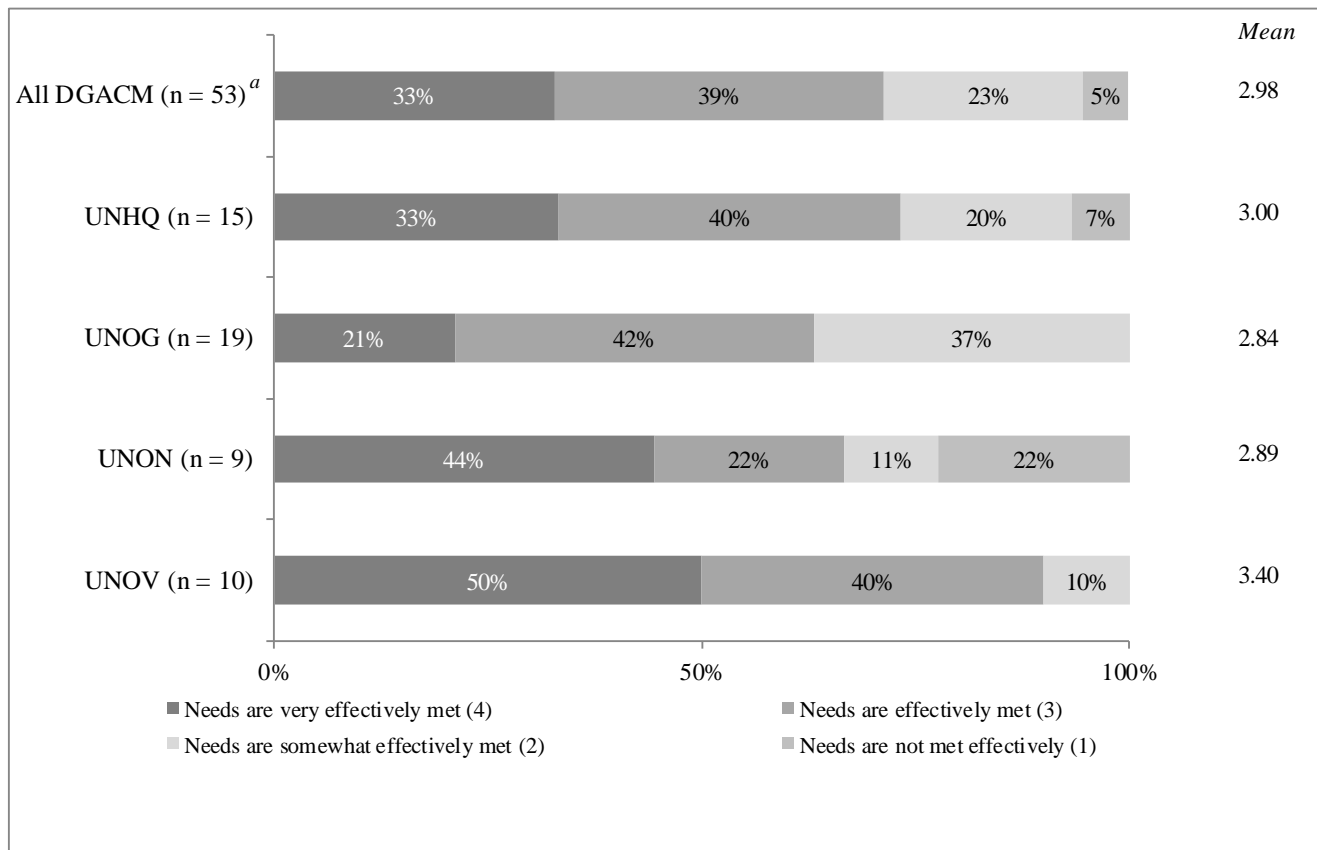


Source: OIOS survey of the Department's clients.

Abbreviations: DGACM, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management; UNOG, United Nations Office at Geneva; UNON, United Nations Office at Nairobi; UNOV, United Nations Office at Vienna.

^a "All DGACM" weighted by proportion of meetings held in each duty station; disaggregated data presented unweighted. "No basis for judgment" excluded.

Figure X
Client perceptions of degree to which meeting room needs were met



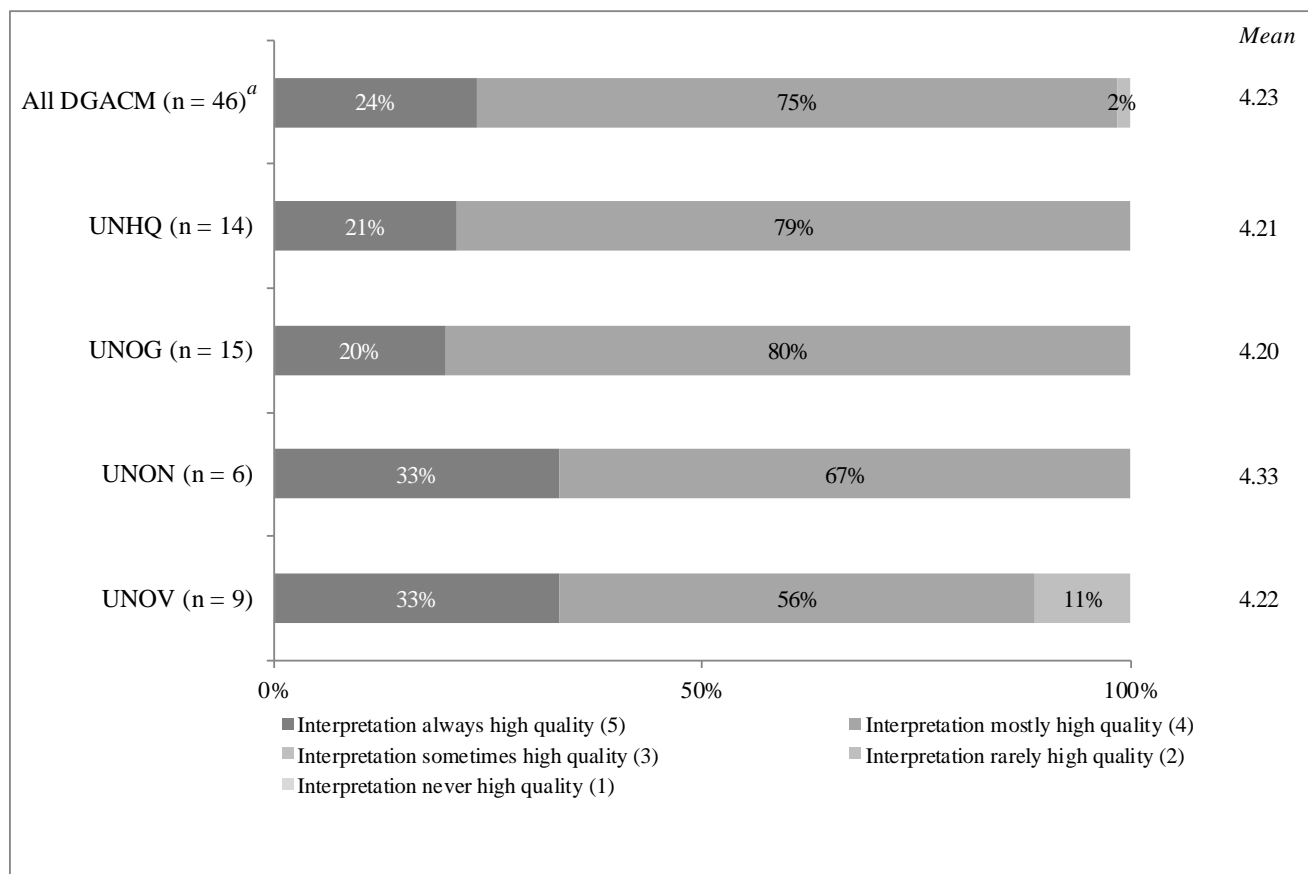
Source: OIOS survey of the Department's clients.

Abbreviations: DGACM, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management; UNOG, United Nations Office at Geneva; UNON, United Nations Office at Nairobi; UNOV, United Nations Office at Vienna.

^a "All DGACM" weighted by proportion of meetings held in each duty station; disaggregated data presented unweighted. "No basis for judgment" excluded.

38. Clients reported receiving high-quality interpretation services as well, as illustrated by the survey data reported in figure XI. Moreover, formal feedback from Member States to the Department on interpretation services was uniformly complimentary. The very few client interviewees who had reported dissatisfaction with quality also noted that the Department was highly responsive to feedback.

Figure XI
Client perceptions on quality of interpretation services received



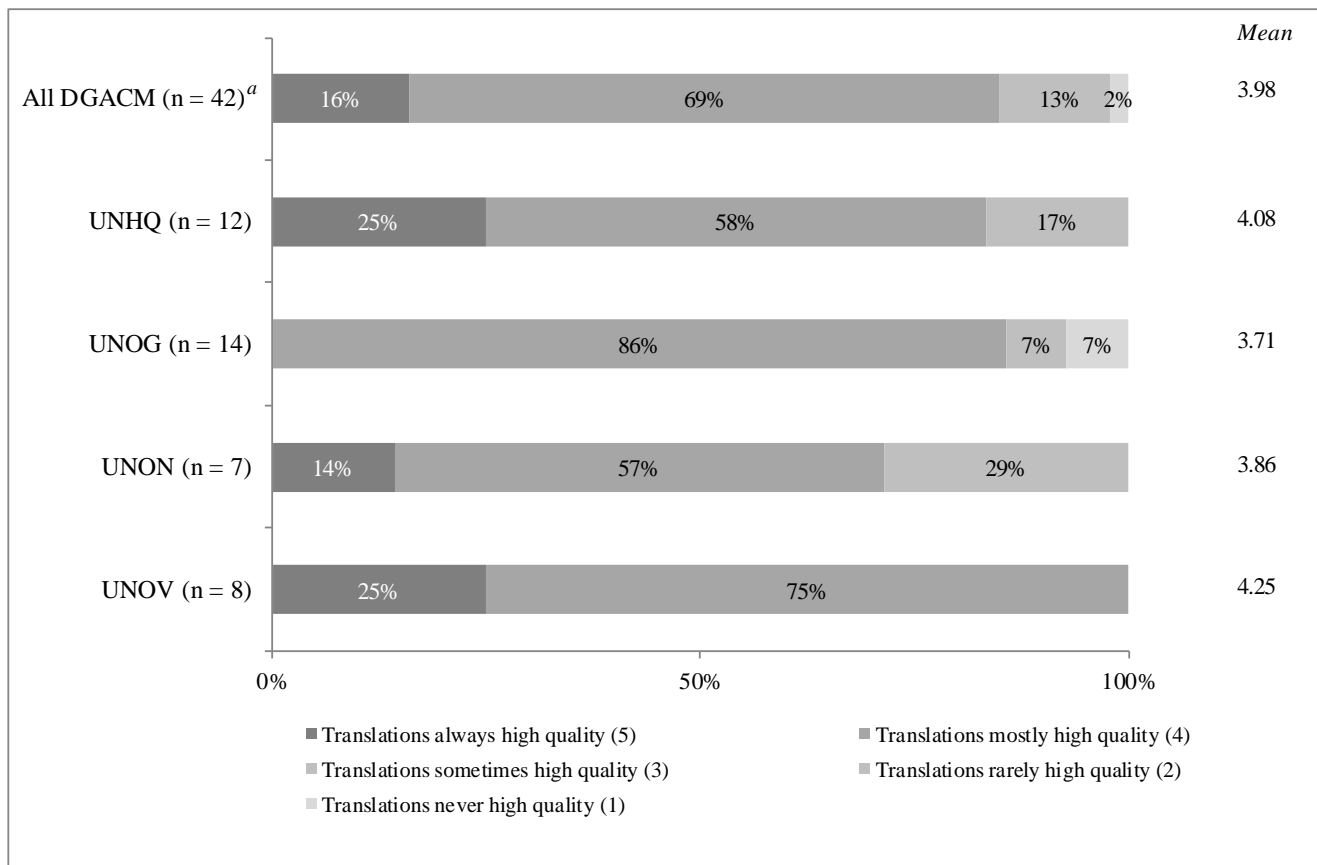
Source: OIOS survey of the Department's clients.

Abbreviations: DGACM, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management; UNOG, United Nations Office at Geneva; UNON, United Nations Office at Nairobi; UNOV, United Nations Office at Vienna.

^a "All DGACM" weighted by proportion of meetings held in each duty station; disaggregated data presented unweighted. "No basis for judgment" excluded.

39. The quality of document-processing services, including translations, was mostly high, with some exceptions. Department-wide document reissues and corrigenda represented a small fraction of documents processed (1.15 and 3.70 per cent, respectively, in 2014–2017). Moreover, formal feedback was positive: from 2014 to 2017, 15 of the 17 letters to the Department about translation quality were complimentary. As figure XII illustrates, surveyed clients corroborated that largely positive feedback, notwithstanding some variation among duty stations (with the United Nations Office at Vienna, for example, receiving the most positive assessments).

Figure XII
Client perceptions of document translation quality



Source: OIOS survey of the Department's clients.

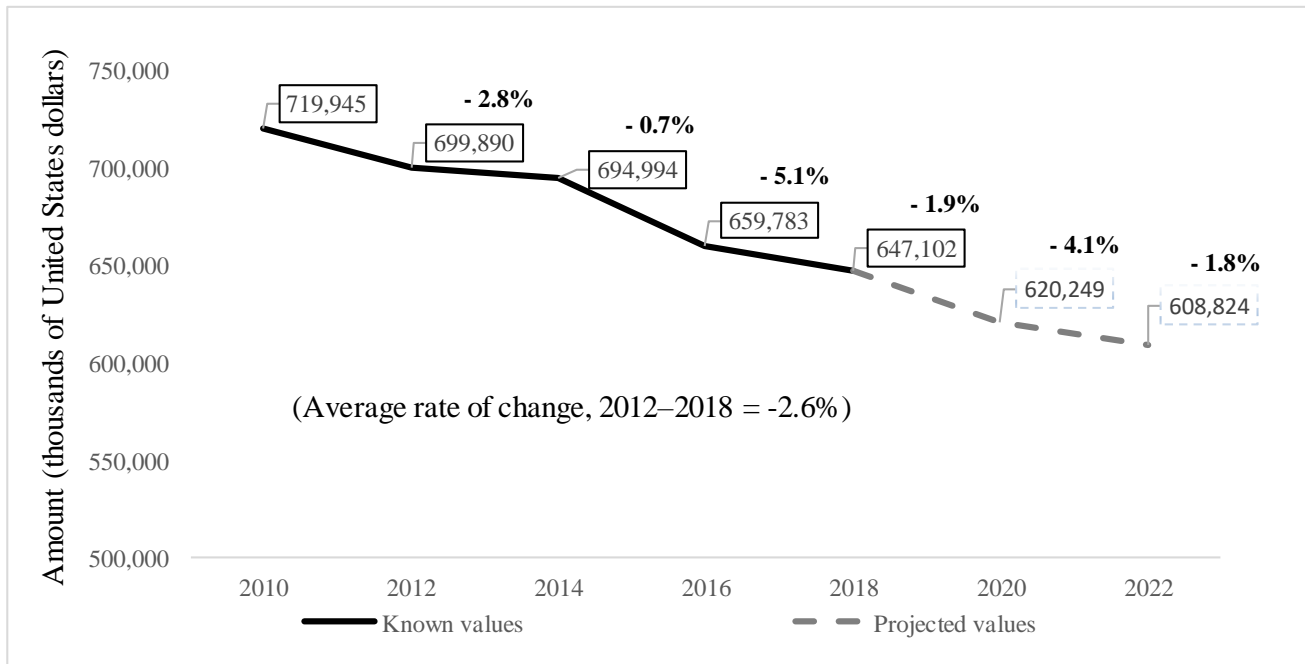
Abbreviations: DGACM, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management; UNOG, United Nations Office at Geneva; UNON, United Nations Office at Nairobi; UNOV, United Nations Office at Vienna.

^a "All DGACM" weighted by proportion of meetings held in each duty station; disaggregated data presented unweighted. "No basis for judgment" excluded.

40. The Department not only absorbed growing demand within its declining resources; it did so without a drop-off in quality. That said, if budget and workload projections continue in line with historical trends,³⁸ this trend will likely pose a service delivery risk in the next two bienniums. Figure XIII illustrates the projected trend if the current average budget decrease (2.6 per cent annually since 2010–2011) persists.

³⁸ Projections were calculated using the patterns of change observed in historical trends in budgeted resources (from 2010–2011 to 2018–2019) and workload (from 2011 to 2017). The model assumes that past trends are indicative rather than predictive of the future.

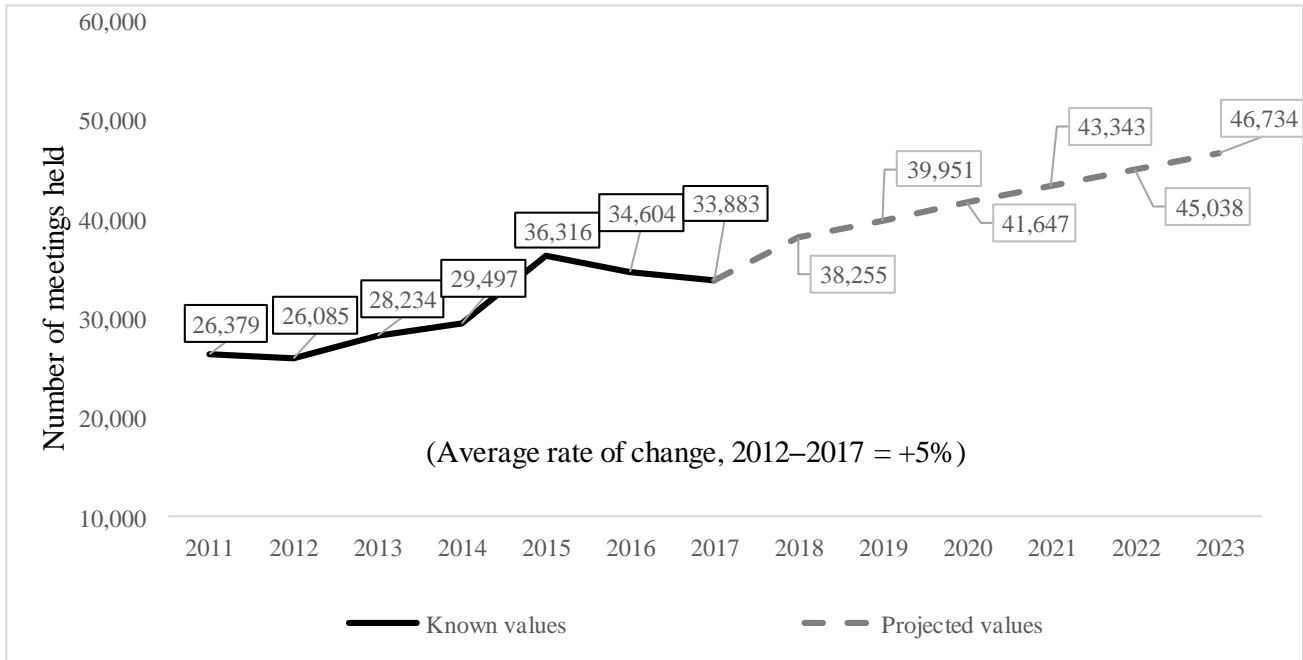
Figure XIII
Regular budget and extrabudgetary resources of the Department, projected to 2022–2023



Source: OIOS compilation of Department data.

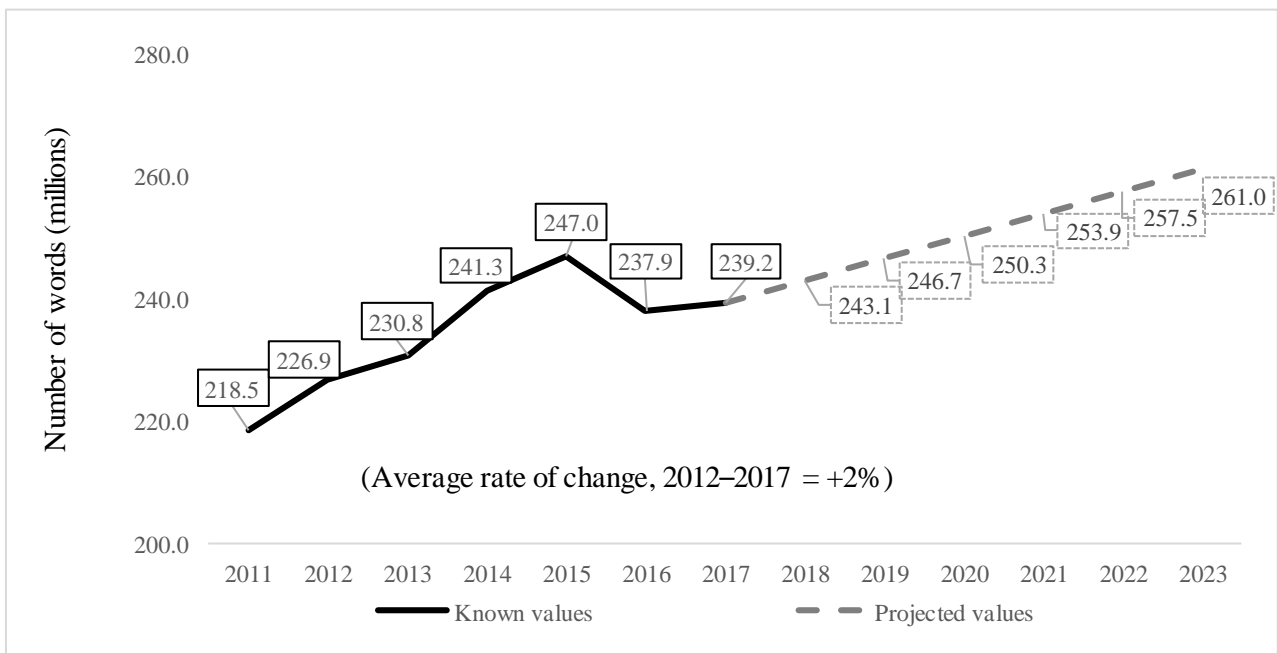
41. Meanwhile, over the same period, the total number of meetings increased at an average rate of 6.0 per cent a year (see figure XIV), and the translation workload increased at an average rate of 2.4 per cent a year (see figure XV). Projecting those trends forward to the next two bienniums illustrates the widening gap between the Department's resources and the services delivered.

Figure XIV
Total meetings held (including with interpretation), projected to 2022–2023



Source: OIOS Evaluation Division compilation of Department data.

Figure XV
Words received for translation, projected to 2022–2023



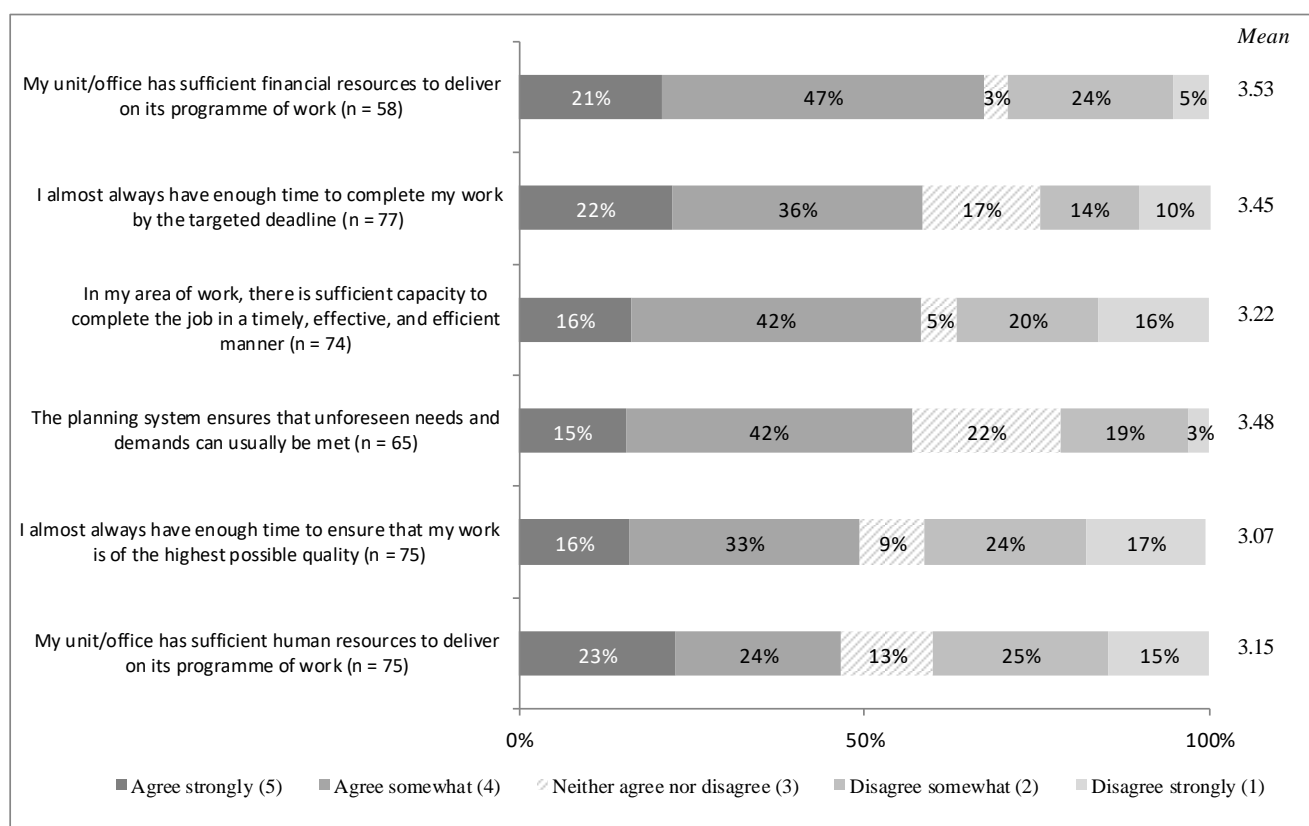
Source: OIOS/Inspection and Evaluation Division compilation from Department data.

42. Client survey and interview feedback attested to the growing toll of that strain on service delivery. Almost all interviewed clients and survey respondents across duty stations (98 per cent) viewed staff as client service-oriented, but clients in each duty

station saw signs that staff were stretched to deliver, noting a growing inflexibility on the part of the Department in providing conference services, such as documents being refused for small deficiencies, rigidity in interpreter scheduling, concerns that “if available” times were less and less available and fewer available meeting spaces and meeting services assistants, especially at the United Nations Office at Geneva and at Headquarters. In addition, 51 per cent of surveyed clients reported unmet needs. That said, clients were generally sympathetic to the constraints that the Department faced.

43. Department staff likewise reported strains on their own ability to deliver. As figure XVI indicates, while a (weak) majority of surveyed Department staff were confident in their ability to deliver their workload, a significant proportion (22–41 per cent) indicated concern about their ability to deliver on commitments at present resource levels. Moreover, interviewed staff felt the increased burden, with some reporting increased stress and need for sick leave.

Figure XVI
Staff perceptions on ability to deliver on workload



Source: OIOS survey of Department staff.

Note: Data weighted to duty station populations for 2016–2017; “not applicable/no basis for judgment” excluded.

D. While the Department put measures in place to ensure timely and efficient service, external factors influenced its effectiveness, and its ability to mitigate them was limited

44. All data gathered during the evaluation confirmed that, since the adoption of the General Assembly resolution regarding integrated global management³⁹ and the 2009

³⁹ Resolution 57/283 B.

OIOS evaluation, the Department had been working in a more integrated manner, efficiently producing outputs. It worked to address factors, both internal and external, that challenged its effectiveness, with greater success managing internal factors, over which it exercised greater direct control. Planning was a key tool for addressing its internal and external challenges, not least of all through the leveraging of information technology for timely and efficient output delivery (see figure III). Information technology applications contributed best to efficiency and effectiveness when used by all duty stations and resulted in a common global platform for a departmental overview, allowing for a common reference point for the work and the ability to plan capacity and to meet demands and any contingencies. For example, eMeets provided a common platform for managing meeting requests and services globally. Meanwhile, gText provided a common platform of language tools, with eLUNa and UNTERM helping to save time and enhancing accuracy, consistency and quality of translated text. Those efficiency gains are currently factored into workload capacity planning.

45. Conversely, where common information technology applications were not yet available, evidence showed less efficient and effective overall planning. The biggest gap in the Department was the absence of a common information technology application for global documentation management: gDoc was used at Headquarters and the United Nations Office at Geneva, while the United Nations Offices at Vienna and Nairobi used DCPMS. Given the Department's large volume of documentation, the ability to plan globally to maximize the use of resources was crucial. The Department acknowledged that gap and was working towards a common application for documentation, gDoc 2.0, under development, with an implementation goal of 2018.

46. In addition to the trend of growing demand amid declining resources, other external factors influenced the Department's effectiveness. As with its approach to managing internal factors through, inter alia, strong planning systems, the Department took numerous steps to manage external factors during the period under evaluation. Its ability to mitigate them was limited, however. Those factors, and the Department's efforts to manage them, fell largely into the following areas:

(a) **Growing demand for unplanned and non-mandated conference services, with no commensurate resources.** Results A and C detailed the overall growing demand and the reduced budget resources of the Department. The Department made efforts to manage the unplanned and non-mandated demands for meetings and documentation. For example, the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management sent a note verbale dated 20 February 2017 on the use of United Nations premises, set forth in administrative instruction [ST/AI/416](#), to permanent missions in New York and shared it for use at other duty stations. Despite that effort, there was no reduction in demand for non-mandated meetings. Moreover, the instruction was issued when demands on the use of United Nations premises for conference services were lower than they are today. To manage the increase in unplanned documents, the Department prioritized mandated documents and refused to accept unplanned documents without reviewing the corresponding mandate;

(b) **Clients' non-adherence to conference services commitments.** As a service provider, the Department relied on clients to provide all necessary inputs according to time frames and to use the conference resources according to plans, so that workload forecasts remained accurate and resources could be allocated efficiently. As noted in result A, however, meeting cancellations continued to rise, despite the Department working closely with the secretariats of calendar bodies to meet their conference service commitments, for example by discussing with clients

refinements to their programmes of work, so as to minimize cancellations.⁴⁰ Similarly, the Department sought to manage deadline non-compliance. Twice each year, for planning purposes, the Department sent a memorandum to author entities, stressing that it was mandated to implement the rules and regulations related to the submission, issuance and length of documents. In addition, the documentation management sections at each duty station were in ongoing contact with clients in advance of slot dates. The Department also reported annually to the Committee on Conferences, as a motivator and an accountability measure, on the rates of author department compliance with submission deadlines for slotted documents, which remained low during the evaluation period, at 70 per cent in 2016, 73 per cent in 2015 and 70 per cent in 2014.⁴¹ Compliance rates were also included in the compacts of Under-Secretaries-General. Finally, the Department actively limited the granting of waivers for deadline extensions or word limits of documents issued. The United Nations Office at Geneva no longer grants waivers; Headquarters tightened its control over the process, directing requests to the Assistant Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management in 2017; and the United Nations Offices at Vienna and Nairobi did not need to take action, owing to lower document volumes.

E. The Department developed and was implementing a strong gender policy and was supporting the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in both direct and indirect ways, but it had not yet systematically identified its departmental approach to the Goals or how it would measure its contribution to them

47. Although not directly linked to the day-to-day operational aspects of planning discussed elsewhere in the present report, cross-cutting issues were a focus of the evaluation, as they too entail a planning dimension, to ensure that major policy initiatives of the Organization are implemented in a forward-looking, responsive manner. In that vein, the Department addressed the cross-cutting issue of gender through its action plan on gender equality and the empowerment of women and related efforts. The plan set out objectives, activities to achieve them, their expected impact and a time frame for implementation with ongoing monitoring and attention to the plan from the Under-Secretary-General and other senior managers. Indeed, 88 per cent of surveyed staff agreed that the Department takes gender-related concerns seriously in their duty station.

48. With respect to the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, the Department indirectly supported all of the Goals addressed by various intergovernmental bodies and other clients during the period under evaluation, by virtue of its successful delivery of conference management services to those clients' meetings, many of which explicitly addressed the Goals. The gender-related actions described in the previous paragraph are also consistent with Goal 5, Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The Department had also taken measures consistent with Goal 12, Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, through such initiatives as PaperSmart⁴² and ePublishing. Although positive, those measures had not been taken specifically with a view to the achievement of the Goals, and the Department had not systematically reviewed its programme of work to determine ways in which it would address the Goals in explicit ways. Moreover, as

⁴⁰ A/72/116, para. 12.

⁴¹ Supplementary information to documents A/71/116, sect. VI, table (2014 and 2015), and A/72/116, sect. II.B.1, table 2 (2016).

⁴² See <https://papersmart.unmeetings.org/en/>.

the Goals and the 2030 Agenda require departments not only to identify their proposed contributions to individual Goals but also to measure their contributions, there was no evidence of a deliberate plan by the Department to monitor and evaluate its contributions (see para. 34).

V. Conclusion

49. In the face of rising demand and declining resources, planning constituted a vital tool for ensuring the effective and efficient delivery of the Department's programme of work. Planning will take on added urgency if these trends continue. Although the Department took significant steps to manage the internal and external challenges to its programme of work since the previous evaluation by the Inspection and Evaluation Division in 2009, there remained opportunities for further harmonization of key aspects of its planning systems and for continued management of external factors despite its limited control over them.

VI. Recommendations

50. The Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS made four important recommendations to the Department, all of which it accepted.

Recommendation 1 (results B, D)

51. In order to plan and manage its work in an effective, globally integrated manner, the Department should ensure that existing information technology applications and resources, any enhancements to those applications and any future applications are informed by:

- (a) A consultative, transparent, client-focused and needs-based feedback mechanism that ensures that the applications maintain their enterprise systems-based approach (and thus facilitate the collection and analysis of data against standardized key performance indicators at a global level), while also accommodating services that are provided only in a particular duty station (see recommendation 2);
- (b) The results of any reviews and corresponding agreements to harmonize workflows across duty stations;
- (c) Functional linkages to ensure the necessary programmatic and/or technical synergies across applications and interfaces (e.g. linking eMeets with gDoc 2.0);
- (d) A clear and systematic roll-out plan that includes an iterative beta-testing and revision process, as well as training of and support to users.

Indicators: Feedback mechanism and roll-out plans established and implemented; results of harmonization reviews and agreements incorporated.

Recommendation 2 (results A–C)

52. The Department should strengthen its monitoring and evaluation function through the revision and implementation of its policy, in tandem with the implementation of the Secretary-General's reforms contained in paragraph 61 of document [A/72/492](#) as they evolve. Such a revision should, at the minimum:

- (a) Detail the frequency, approach and assigned roles and responsibilities for developing strategic monitoring and evaluation plans, and the governance arrangements for reviewing and finalizing these plans at the level of senior management;

(b) Identify the overall approach to determining the level of evaluative effort required for various duty stations, work streams and specific policies and initiatives (e.g. lesson-learning sessions, after-action reviews, assessments, surveys, management reviews or evaluations);

(c) Articulate specific focal point responsibilities within each duty station to ensure sufficient monitoring and evaluation coverage in all four locations, in consultation with the respective Directors-General;

(d) Stipulate the governance arrangements for ensuring a sufficient degree of independence of the self-evaluation function, adequate resourcing of evaluation and incorporation of evaluation results in programmatic decision-making;

(e) Articulate the ways in which monitoring data will be systematically used to inform programme planning and decision-making globally and within individual duty stations.

Indicators: Policy containing these elements revised and implemented.

Recommendation 3 (results A–D)

53. The Department should strengthen its ability to plan for capacity, quality and contingencies by presenting to the Committee on Conferences, for its consideration, the factors identified in the present evaluation with corresponding proposed solutions.

Indicators: Presentation made to the Committee on Conferences.

Recommendation 4 (result E)

54. The Department, through and internal and external consultations that it deems necessary, should formulate a plan indicating how its business operations might explicitly support any relevant Sustainable Development Goals. The plan should contain, at the minimum:

(a) The specific Sustainable Development Goals that it intends to support for a set strategic planning period, for example Goal 12, Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, and any other Goals, through its business practices;

(b) The concrete ways in which it intends to contribute to those Goals through existing and additional actions or initiatives;

(c) How it will monitor its contributions (see recommendation 2);

(d) How it will roll out the plan internally to ensure maximum departmental awareness of the overarching plan and the specific roles and responsibilities assigned, and thus ensure the plan's ultimate success.

Indicators: Consultations undertaken; Sustainable Development Goals plan developed and implemented.

(Signed) Heidi **Mendoza**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services
March 2019

Annex*

Comments received from the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management

1. This is in reference to your memo of 1 March 2018 (IED-18-00016) addressed to Under-Secretary-General Catherine Pollard. In your memo, you transmitted the draft report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the evaluation of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) for our review and formal comments.
2. We reviewed the report, and after some bilateral discussions with Mr. Robert McCouch, Chief of Section, and Ms. Emily Hampton-Manley, including on the recommendations and some discrepancy with data, we are pleased to inform you that we agree with the report and have accepted the recommendations. For recommendation 4, we have specified that this will only apply to SDG 12, which we communicated to the OIOS-IED team. Attached is the Recommendation Action Plan Template with DGACM's response to the recommendations.**
3. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. McCouch and the rest of the team – Ms. Hampton-Manley, Mr. Nicholas Kowbel, and Ms. Maria Singer. Their professionalism and teamwork are highly commendable. We are also appreciative that they took the time to try to reflect the varying perspectives, to wade through all the data, and to interact with us to share their conclusions.
4. We look forward to seeing the final report.

* In the present annex, the Office of Internal Oversight Services presents the full text of comments received from the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management on the report on the evaluation of the Department. The practice has been instituted in line with General Assembly resolution [64/263](#), following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee. The comments have been reproduced as received.

** On file with the Office of Internal Oversight Services.