



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2019/139

Audit of the recruitment process at the United Nations Environment Programme

**There was need to ensure timeliness in
recruitment and comply with the applicable
regulations and rules**

**23 December 2019
Assignment No. AA2019/220/03**

Audit of the recruitment process at the United Nations Environment Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the recruitment process at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes over the recruitment process at UNEP. The audit covered the period from January 2017 to May 2019 and included a review of: (a) oversight of the recruitment process; (b) recruitment of staff; (c) recruitment of consultants and individual contractors; and (d) reference checks.

The audit showed that there was need to ensure timeliness in recruitment and comply with the applicable regulations and rules. OIOS made nine recommendations. To address the issues identified in the audit, UNEP needed to:

- Strengthen its oversight of recruitment to ensure that hiring managers exercise their delegation of authority in accordance with applicable instructions and procedures;
- Effectively monitor the recruitment process and address the bottlenecks to ensure that vacant posts are filled within the established timelines; utilize the existing rosters to fill vacant posts to the extent possible; and resolve the issue of access to relevant recruitment data in the Inspira system in coordination with Headquarters;
- Liaise with the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) to ensure that the Inspira system is updated in a timely manner with the correct job opening workflow status to ensure the accuracy of recruitment reports;
- Ensure that the supporting information relating to selection decisions against temporary job openings is promptly and consistently recorded in Inspira;
- Strengthen its management of job openings to enhance efficiency and reduce the cancellation rate of job openings;
- Establish a mechanism to ensure that consultants and individual contractors do not duplicate the roles of staff members; and develop a long-term staffing solution to avoid excessive reliance on consultants and individual contractors;
- Ensure that job openings for consultants and individual contractors recruited through UNON are advertised and assessments of applicants are consistently documented in the Inspira system, and recruitment actions implemented through other United Nations entities are properly documented, including the related requests, terms of reference, and job requirements;
- Ensure that hiring managers document the basis for the fees recommended for consultants and individual contractors, and that they are in accordance with applicable policies and ST/AI/2013/4; and the fees recommended by hiring managers are independently reviewed and approved by the Corporate Services Division; and
- Ensure that reference checks are conducted for consultants and individual contractors and properly documented.

UNEP accepted the recommendations and has initiated action to implement them.

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Audit of the recruitment process at the United Nations Environment Programme

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the recruitment process at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
2. Recruitment of staff is governed by ST/AI/2010/3, whereas recruitment of consultants and individual contractors is governed by ST/AI/2013/4. The United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provide recruitment services to UNEP based on the memoranda of understanding signed with UNEP.
3. The Executive Director for UNEP has delegation of authority for recruitment of staff, consultants and individual contractors, which has been sub-delegated to Heads of Offices and Divisional/Regional Directors in accordance with the UNEP Delegation of Authority Policy and Framework of May 2016. For the period from 1 January 2017 to May 2019, 50 UNEP hiring managers in 26 duty stations (including the secretariats of Multilateral Environmental Agreements) had delegation of authority from the Executive Director for recruitment matters. At the time of audit, UNEP had not revised its delegation of authority in accordance with the new framework established by ST/SGB/2019/2. Between 1 January 2017 and 31 May 2019, UNEP recruited 496 staff and 954 consultants and individual contractors.
4. Comments provided by UNEP are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

5. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes over the recruitment process at UNEP.
6. This audit was included in the 2019 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the risk that potential weaknesses in the recruitment process could negatively impact the implementation of UNEP's mandate.
7. OIOS conducted this audit from June to October 2019. The audit covered the period from January 2017 to May 2019. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered risk areas relating to the recruitment process at UNEP which included: (a) oversight of the recruitment process; (b) recruitment of staff; (c) recruitment of consultants and individual contractors; and (d) reference checks.
8. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel; (b) review of relevant documentation; (c) analytical review of data; and (d) sample review of recruitment cases.
9. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Oversight of the recruitment process

Need to strengthen oversight of the recruitment process

10. The Executive Director has sub-delegated recruitment authority to Heads of Offices and the Divisional/Regional Directors in accordance with the UNEP Delegation of Authority Policy and Framework of May 2016. However, UNEP did not have an effective mechanism to monitor the exercise of delegated authority by its hiring managers. In terms of the applicable administrative instructions (ST/AI/2010/3 on staff selection system and ST/AI/2013/4 on consultants and individual contractors), hiring managers are responsible for assessing all applicants on a competitive basis, determining the applicants to be short listed, conducting relevant assessments, and recommending suitable candidates. But there was inadequate oversight and monitoring to ensure that hiring managers exercised their authority in accordance with applicable instructions and procedures.

11. As a result, and as further explained in the present report, there were instances where the administrative instructions as well as the provisions of the recruiter's manual were not fully complied with. UNEP needs to address this situation by establishing an effective oversight mechanism to ensure that the authority delegated to hiring managers is exercised appropriately and effectively to maintain the integrity of the recruitment process and improve efficiency.

(1) UNEP should strengthen its oversight of recruitment to ensure that hiring managers exercise their delegation of authority in accordance with applicable instructions and procedures.

UNEP accepted recommendation 1 and stated that it will implement strengthened oversight mechanisms and monitoring including: (i) training, standardized processes and written guidance for hiring managers; and (ii) improved reporting of recruitment actions and their timing and alignment with corporate targets, rules and regulations. Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt of evidence of action taken by UNEP to strengthen oversight of recruitment including monitoring of authority delegated to hiring managers.

Need to address delays in recruitment

12. UNEP is expected to fill vacant positions within 120 days, which represents the time elapsed from the date of issuance of a job opening (JO) to the date of the selection decision. The recruiter's manual has established indicative targets for each of the twelve steps of the recruitment process.

13. OIOS' review of recruitment data for a sample of 289 out of 496 JOs during the audit period indicated that in most instances, UNEP did not meet the timeline of 120 days. The average time taken was 235 days, which was almost twice the target. Of the 289 JOs reviewed, in 214 cases the target of 120 days was not met, and in 47 cases the time taken to fill the vacancy was more than a year. Out of the twelve steps in the recruitment process, UNEP met the target timeline for only one step (i.e., posting the JO). There were considerable delays in assessment of candidates by hiring managers, review of recommended candidates by the central review bodies (CRB), and final selection by the heads of departments/offices. In at least six instances, the candidates finally selected by UNEP declined the job offer citing the delay in recruitment as the reason, since they had already moved on to other jobs.

14. The delays in recruitment occurred because UNEP was not monitoring the time taken to complete the various steps in the recruitment process and taking prompt action to identify and address the delays at each step. UNEP stated that it was facing problems in obtaining real time data from the Inspira system to enable effective monitoring, but its Corporate Services Division was following up with the Office of Human Resources at Headquarters to address the issue.

15. ST/AI/2010/3 on the staff selection system defines rosters as a pool of assessed candidates reviewed and endorsed by a CRB who are available for selection against a vacant position. Roster candidates may be selected without further referral to a CRB. UNEP was not fully utilizing the existing rosters to fill vacant positions expeditiously. Instead, despite the availability of approved candidates, full-fledged recruitment actions were being initiated. Out of only 75 recruitment cases that were completed in 120 days, in 59 cases, hiring managers selected candidates from the rosters. OIOS is of the view that UNEP was not fully utilizing the opportunities to expedite the filling of vacancies by selecting suitable candidates from the roster.

(2) UNEP should: (a) effectively monitor the recruitment process and address the bottlenecks to ensure that vacant posts are filled within the established timelines; (b) utilize the existing rosters to fill vacant posts to the extent possible; and (c) resolve the issue of access to relevant recruitment data in the Inspira system in coordination with Headquarters.

UNEP accepted recommendation 2 and stated that in collaboration with UNON it has already established a working group in August 2019 to review and identify bottlenecks in the recruitment process and implement actions to enable meeting the recruitment key performance indicators including gender parity, recruitment timelines and geographical representation. The roster system is used and hiring managers are encouraged to recruit from the roster as much as possible. A reminder will be provided to hiring managers on the benefits of this recruitment and cases will be monitored. UNEP is also working with UNON to highlight in the 'release of candidates' message the number of rostered candidates. Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of evidence that UNEP: (a) has addressed the bottlenecks in the recruitment process; (b) is utilizing existing rosters as much as possible to fill vacant posts; and (c) has obtained access to relevant recruitment data in Inspira.

B. Recruitment of staff

Need to update the recruitment status in Inspira in a timely manner

16. The Human Resources Section at UNON is responsible for updating the Inspira system to reflect the latest status of each JO. OIOS' review of reports generated from Inspira indicated that such updates were not occurring in a timely manner. From a sample review of 46 JOs in Inspira, OIOS noted in 15 cases that the system indicated that job offers were still in progress even though job offers were issued and accepted. Six other JOs were shown as open even though job offers had been declined. In 19 other JOs, offers were issued and accepted but the status in Inspira was not updated to reflect that the JOs were closed.

17. Timely updating of the workflow status in the Inspira system is essential to ensure that the reports generated from the system are accurate and relevant.

(3) UNEP should liaise with UNON to ensure that the Inspira system is updated in a timely manner with the correct job opening workflow status to ensure the accuracy of recruitment reports.

UNEP accepted recommendation 3 and stated that it will work with UNON on ensuring that the inputs for Inspira are finalized in a timely manner. UNEP will also work with UNON and the Inspira

technical team to ensure access to the relevant recruitment data as currently it is not available to monitor and maintain oversight of the reports. Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of evidence that the Inspira system is updated in a timely manner with the correct workflow status of JOs to ensure the accuracy of recruitment reports.

UNEP was taking steps to achieve gender parity

18. ST/AI/2010/3 requires hiring managers to consider gender prior to making selection decisions. In January 2018, UNEP established a gender parity implementation plan to address gender parity which is one of the key priorities of the Secretary-General.

19. UNEP's plan aimed to achieve gender parity (50:50) by 2028. The plan required hiring managers to recommend 50 per cent female candidates and 50 per cent male candidates for selection for all types of JOs at all levels, including senior appointments. Where this is not possible, written justification should be submitted. The plan also stated that JOs that fail to yield a minimum of 20 per cent applications from women would require written explanation from the hiring manager, including the measures taken to attract more women applicants. In the absence of an adequate explanation, the deadline for receipt of applications would be extended, or the JO would be reopened.

20. OIOS' review of a sample of 45 JOs indicated that the average number of women candidates was 40 per cent, which was twice the target of 20 per cent indicated in UNEP's gender implementation plan. Overall, as of August 2019, UNEP's staff comprised of 747 women (61 per cent) and 478 men (39 per cent). In the professional category, there were 388 women (52 per cent) and 354 men (48 per cent), whereas in the general service category there were 359 women (74 per cent) and 124 men (26 per cent).

Need to ensure that temporary appointments are supported by a competitive process

21. According to ST/AI/2010/4/Rev.1 on administration of temporary appointments, temporary appointments may be used to effectively and expeditiously manage short-term staffing needs. General Assembly resolution 63/250 states that temporary appointments are to be used to appoint staff for seasonal or peak workloads and specific short-term requirements for less than one year but could be renewed for up to one additional year when warranted by surge requirements and operational needs related to field operations and special projects with finite mandates.

22. ST/AI/2010/4/Rev.1 requires the issuance of temporary job openings (TJOs) in Inspira for temporary vacancies of more than three months but less than one year, or for extension of temporary appointments beyond three months. TJOs shall include a description of the qualifications, skills and competencies required and details such as post functions. On receipt of applications, the hiring manager is required to assess whether the candidates meet the minimum requirements as well as the technical requirements and competencies indicated in the TJO and document their assessment in Inspira. The assessment may also include a competency-based interview and/or other appropriate method.

23. As of September 2019, 160 UNEP staff were on temporary appointments including 105 that were recruited between 1 January 2017 and May 2019. OIOS' review of a sample of 23 out of 105 TJOs indicated that UNON, as the recruiting agent for UNEP, duly advertised seven of the posts in Inspira, conducted relevant assessments and documented the results. However, for the remaining 16 TJOs, documentation was either incomplete or lacking to demonstrate compliance with the provisions of ST/AI/2010/4/Rev.1.

24. Additionally, for six TJOs, UNEP did not maintain evidence to demonstrate that it had conducted the required assessments as the information recorded in Inspira was incomplete. For example, in two cases,

only the evaluation of the selected candidate was recorded in Inspira; there was no comparative analysis report showing the assessment of all applicants. For four other TJOs, there was no evidence to show that the required assessments were conducted.

25. UNEP needs to ensure that the required evidence to demonstrate competitive selection of candidates for temporary assignments is documented in Inspira.

(4) UNEP should ensure that the supporting information relating to selection decisions against temporary job openings is promptly and consistently recorded in Inspira.

UNEP accepted recommendation 4 and stated that it will work with UNON on ensuring that the inputs for Inspira are finalized and recorded in a timely manner by hiring managers. Recommendation 4 remains open pending receipt of evidence that supporting information relating to selection decisions against temporary job openings is promptly and consistently recorded in Inspira.

Need to reduce the number of JO cancellations

26. The recruiter's manual requires that a hiring manager should document the reasons for cancellation of JOs for review and approval by the recruiter. Also, a JO should not be cancelled if the recruitment case is already submitted to the CRB and at least one candidate has been endorsed. According to the manual, a JO may be cancelled: (a) at the request of the hiring manager during the approval process of the JO; (b) if the hiring manager initiates any changes after a JO is published; and (c) if no progress is made 160 days after its initiation. In such cases, the hiring manager is required to create a new JO and restart the process.

27. A total of 104 out of 496 JOs issued by UNEP between 1 January 2017 and May 2019 were cancelled prior to completion of the recruitment process, indicating a cancellation rate of 21 per cent. This implied that one out every five JOs issued by UNEP was cancelled. OIOS' review of 30 out of the 104 cancellations showed that in four cases, UNEP was unable to provide documentation showing that the cancellation had been duly approved. In seven other cases, cancellations could have been avoided if UNEP had properly assessed the job requirements (such as funding requirements) prior to issuance of the JOs. UNEP needs to address the high rate of cancellation of JOs to minimize inefficiency, avoid unnecessary administrative costs, and improve its image vis-à-vis the job applicants.

(5) UNEP should strengthen its management of job openings to enhance efficiency and reduce the cancellation rate of job openings.

UNEP accepted recommendation 5 and stated that it will implement a standardized procedure for job cancellations to ensure they are justified and documented. UNON, who cancels JOs at the request of UNEP hiring managers, will ensure that the documentation is attached in Inspira in line with the administrative instruction. As part of the hiring managers' training, justification and review of cancellation of JOs will be included, bearing in mind the legal implications such actions might have. Recommendation 5 remains open pending receipt of evidence that the cancellation rate of JOs has been significantly reduced.

C. Recruitment of consultants and individual contractors

Need to minimize reliance on consultants and individual contractors

28. ST/AI/2013/4 on consultants and individual contractors provides for recruitment of consultants and individual contractors for: (a) assignments that are of a temporary nature and the outputs are measurable

and task oriented; and (b) services that require specialized knowledge and/or expertise not available from existing staff. Where an individual contractor is temporarily engaged to perform duties and functions like those of a staff member, the Organization is required to develop a clear strategy for a long-term regular staffing solution.

29. During the period January 2017 to May 2019, UNEP hired a total of 954 consultants and individual contractors – 521 through UNON and 433 through a United Nations agency (“Agency A”). OIOS’ review of related recruitment data indicated that UNEP generally hired consultants and individual contractors to perform duties that were not task oriented but rather of a continuing nature, normally performed by regular staff. For example, consultants were engaged as programme analysts, project coordinators, communications officers and finance officers. Similarly, individual contractors were engaged as programme officers, administration officers, finance officers and security officers.

30. Recruitment of such a large number of consultants and individual contractors exposed UNEP to a number of risks, including duplication of roles with those of existing staff members, and potential loss of institutional memory upon their eventual separation. Additionally, consultants could feel that they are not treated fairly and equitably even though they perform the same work as regular staff. UNEP needs to take tangible measures to mitigate these risks.

(6) UNEP should: (a) establish a mechanism to ensure that consultants and individual contractors do not duplicate the roles of staff members; and (b) develop a long-term staffing solution to avoid excessive reliance on consultants and individual contractors.

UNEP accepted recommendation 6 and stated that it will review the deployment of consultants and individual contractors with a view to determine if any tasks/roles are more appropriate for consideration of staffing positions. However, UNEP’s business model includes significant requirements for specialized knowledge and project/short-term requirements that are not suited to long-term staffing roles. Recommendation 6 remains open pending receipt of evidence of review of the deployment of consultants and individual contractors and a long-term staffing solution to avoid excessive reliance on consultants and individual contractors.

Need to ensure that opportunities are advertised, and assessment reports are consistently documented

31. Hiring managers are required to ensure a competitive process while recruiting consultants and individual contractors including by: (a) posting the JO in Inspira for a minimum of seven working days if the services of a consultant or individual contractor are needed for more than six months; (b) making every effort to shortlist a minimum of three candidates from widest possible geographic basis; and (c) preparing and documenting in Inspira a technical evaluation report showing the applicants reviewed and the basis on which the successful candidate was selected.

32. OIOS’ review of reports in Inspira for a sample of 55 consultants and individual contractors indicated that for 37 JOs, UNEP’s hiring managers duly completed a comparative analysis report indicating evaluation of applicants’ academic qualifications, experience and other competencies. However, such comparative analysis reports were not provided for the remaining 18 JOs. Moreover, five JOs were not advertised in Inspira.

33. For the 433 consultants and individual contractors recruited through Agency A, UNEP did not maintain adequate documentation to show the terms of reference, job requirements and copies of requests issued to the Agency. Similarly, UNEP did not provide complete data on consultants/individual contractors hired through another United Nations office. OIOS is of the view that UNEP needs to maintain complete documentation of the requests issued to these entities for specific recruitment actions, as well as the related

terms of reference and other job specification requirements to ensure accountability and transparency. In the absence of such documentation, OIOS could not assure that UNEP achieved best value for these recruitment actions.

(7) UNEP should ensure that: (a) job openings for consultants and individual contractors recruited through UNON are advertised and assessments of applicants are consistently documented in the Inspira system; and (b) recruitment actions implemented through other United Nations entities are properly documented, including the related requests, terms of reference, and job requirements.

UNEP accepted recommendation 7 and stated that it will ensure with UNON that all required documentation is provided for consultant and individual contractors to ensure adherence to the relevant guidance. The recruitment process through the United Nations Agency will be documented and the minimum record-keeping requirements will be set and implemented. Recommendation 7 remains open pending receipt of evidence that JOs for consultants and individual contractors recruited through UNON are advertised, assessments of applicants are consistently documented in the Inspira system, and that recruitment actions implemented through other United Nations entities are properly documented.

Need to document the basis for fees paid to consultants and individual contractors

34. ST/AI/2013/4 on consultants and individual contractors states that fees payable to a consultant or individual contractor be the minimum amount necessary to obtain the services required by the Organization. It also requires that the basis of fees paid be documented and aligned to the detailed policy guidelines and formula provided in Annex III of the same administrative instruction which has established five levels of pay (A to E) depending on the complexity of the proposed assignment. Rates above level D attract a daily rate of \$620 to \$750 and require referral to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management for review and approval.

35. OIOS' review of a sample of 52 consultants and individual contractors indicated that the basis of fees paid was not documented by the hiring managers. In 11 of the 52 cases, OIOS established that the fees were above level D of Annex III of ST/AI/2013 but had not been referred to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management for review and approval. For example, fees in 8 of the 11 cases ranged from \$630 to \$3,750 per day.

36. OIOS' analysis of a worksheet of consultants hired through Agency A indicated that the fees paid to 46 of them differed significantly despite their performing similar jobs at the same duty station.

37. These instances occurred due to inadequate segregation of duties as the hiring managers at UNEP were responsible for selecting the consultants and individual contractors and also negotiating their fees. UNEP's Corporate Services Division which is responsible for human resources management had no oversight role in the recruitment of consultants and individual contractors. Additionally, UNEP was not enforcing the requirements for its hiring managers to document the basis of fees paid, including ensuring that the fees were aligned to the detailed policy guidelines provided in Annex III of ST/AI/2013/4.

(8) UNEP should ensure that: (a) hiring managers document the basis for the fees recommended for consultants and individual contractors and ensure that they are in accordance with applicable policies and ST/AI/2013/4; and (b) the fees recommended by hiring managers are independently reviewed and approved by the Corporate Services Division.

UNEP accepted recommendation 8 and stated that: (a) it will ensure that training and guidelines are provided on the setting of fees payable and the necessary supporting documentation including terms of reference, duration, and qualification/experience, with emphasis on the importance to adhere with ST/AI/2013/4; and (b) the Corporate Services Division will establish monitoring mechanisms to be implemented to ensure that discrepancies and exceptions are reviewed. Recommendation 8 remains open pending receipt of evidence that: (a) the basis for the fees paid to consultants and individual contractors is documented, and that they comply with applicable policies and ST/AI/2013/4; and (b) the Corporate Services Division independently reviews and approves the recommended fees.

Need to ensure that consultants' and individual contractors' service duration limits are not exceeded

38. ST/AI/2013/4 provides that in order to limit the repeated use of the same consultant, either to perform different tasks within the workplan or a series of tasks within the same project, no consultant shall provide services for more than 24 months in a 36-month period, whether continuous or not, and irrespective of the cumulative months of actual work. The services of an individual contractor shall be limited to six or, in special circumstances, nine work-months in any period of 12 consecutive months, irrespective of the cumulative months of actual work, save for individual contractors engaged to perform language functions on a unit-cost basis.

39. OIOS' analysis of data for the period January 2017 to May 2019 indicated that the maximum duration of 9 and 24 months, respectively, were exceeded in 20 cases. For example: (a) 13 out of 58 consultants who served consecutively exceeded the maximum of 24 months; and (b) 7 out of 82 individual contractors hired through Agency A exceeded the maximum of nine months.

40. UNEP explained that the above situation was primarily due to delayed recruitment of regular staff. To avoid delays in implementation of time-bound donor-funded projects, some project managers opted to extend the contracts of consultants and individual contractors. The establishment of a strengthened oversight mechanism as discussed in recommendation 1 above should enable UNEP to track and enforce the term limits for consultants and individual contractors.

D. Reference checks

Reference checks for regular staff recruited through UNON were adequately conducted

41. The Secretariat's guidelines for conducting reference checks require, prior to finalizing offers, the verification of the candidate's highest education qualification and employment record of the recent ten years, or the entire employment record if the total length of work experience is less than ten years.

42. OIOS' review of a sample of 49 regular staff indicated that UNON had duly conducted the reference checks and maintained supporting documentation. From January 2019, UNON started using the Inspira system to conduct reference checks. According to the human resources officers interviewed, the automation of reference checks through Inspira was more reliable and efficient.

Need to perform and document reference checks for consultants and individual contractors

43. ST/AI/2013/4 on consultants and individual contractors requires that prior to the issuance of a contract, appropriate reference checks shall be conducted to verify the academic and professional credentials of the candidate recommended for selection.

44. There was no evidence to show that reference checks were conducted for a sample of 52 of the 521 consultants and individual contractors whose contracts were issued through UNON during the audit period. Hiring managers in UNEP conducted the recruitment process and were responsible for ensuring that reference checks were conducted before requesting UNON to issue the contracts. UNON was also not verifying whether reference checks had been conducted and documented prior to issuing consultancy contracts. Failure to verify consultants' and individual contractors' experience and qualifications prior to their hiring exposed UNEP to the risk of recruiting unqualified candidates.

(9) UNEP should ensure that reference checks are conducted for consultants and individual contractors and properly documented.

UNEP accepted recommendation 9 and stated that it is responsible for the reference checks and should provide the documentation of the satisfactory check in Inspira. Recommendation 9 remains open pending receipt of evidence that reference checks for consultants and individual contractors are duly conducted and properly documented.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

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

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the recruitment process at the United Nations Environment Programme

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	C/ O ³	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁴
1	UNEP should strengthen its oversight of recruitment to ensure that hiring managers exercise their delegation of authority in accordance with applicable instructions and procedures.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of action taken to strengthen oversight of recruitment including monitoring of authority delegated to hiring managers.	30 September 2020
2	UNEP should: (a) effectively monitor the recruitment process and address the bottlenecks to ensure that vacant posts are filled within the established timelines; (b) utilize the existing rosters to fill vacant posts to the extent possible; and (c) resolve the issue of access to relevant recruitment data in the Inspira system in coordination with Headquarters.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that UNEP: (a) has addressed the bottlenecks in the recruitment process; (b) is utilizing existing rosters as much as possible to fill vacant posts; and (c) has obtained access to relevant recruitment data in Inspira.	30 September 2020
3	UNEP should liaise with UNON to ensure that the Inspira system is updated in a timely manner with the correct job opening workflow status to ensure the accuracy of recruitment reports.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that the Inspira system is updated in a timely manner with the correct workflow status of JOs to ensure the accuracy of recruitment reports.	30 June 2020
4	UNEP should ensure that the supporting information relating to selection decisions against temporary job openings is promptly and consistently recorded in Inspira.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that supporting information relating to selection decisions against temporary job openings is promptly and consistently recorded in Inspira.	30 June 2020
5	UNEP should strengthen its management of job openings to enhance efficiency and reduce the cancellation rate of job openings.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that the cancellation rate of JOs has been significantly reduced.	30 September 2020
6	UNEP should: (a) establish a mechanism to ensure that consultants and individual contractors do not duplicate the roles of staff members; and (b) develop	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of review of the deployment of consultants and individual contractors and a long-term staffing solution to avoid excessive	30 September 2020

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 UNEP in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the recruitment process at the United Nations Environment Programme

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	C/ O ³	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁴
	a long-term staffing solution to avoid excessive reliance on consultants and individual contractors.			reliance on consultants and individual contractors.	
7	UNEP should ensure that: (a) job openings for consultants and individual contractors recruited through UNON are advertised and assessments of applicants are consistently documented in the Inspira system; and (b) recruitment actions implemented through other United Nations entities are properly documented, including the related requests, terms of reference, and job requirements.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that job openings for consultants and individual contractors recruited through UNON are advertised and assessments of applicants consistently documented in the Inspira system and that recruitment actions implemented through other United Nations entities are properly documented.	30 June 2020
8	UNEP should ensure that: (a) hiring managers document the basis for the fees recommended for consultants and individual contractors and ensure that they are in accordance with applicable policies and ST/AI/2013/4; and (b) the fees recommended by hiring managers are independently reviewed and approved by the Corporate Services Division.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that: (a) the basis for the fees paid to consultants and individual contractors is documented, and that they comply with applicable policies and ST/AI/2013/4; and (b) the Corporate Services Division independently reviews and approves the recommended fees.	30 September 2020
9	UNEP should ensure that reference checks are conducted for consultants and individual contractors and properly documented.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that reference checks for consultants and individual contractors are duly conducted and properly documented.	30 September 2020

APPENDIX I

Management Response

AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of audit of recruitment process at the United Nations Environment Programme

Rec. no.		Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments ³
1	UNEP should strengthen its oversight of recruitment to ensure that the Hiring Managers exercise their delegation of authority in accordance with applicable regulations and rules.	Important	YES	Director Corporate Services and Chief of Human Resources	On-going implementation by third quarter of 2020	UNEP will implement strengthened oversight mechanisms and monitoring including: (i) training, standardized processes and written guidance for hiring managers who receive recruitment delegation of authority. (ii) improved reporting of the recruitment actions and their timing and alignment with corporate targets and rules and regulations.
2	UNEP should: (a) effectively monitor the recruitment process and address the bottlenecks to ensure that vacant posts are filled within the established timelines; (b) utilize the existing rosters to fill vacant posts to the extent possible; and (c) resolve the issue of access to relevant recruitment data in the Inspira system in coordination with Headquarters.	Important	YES	Director Corporate Services Division and Chief of Human Resources	On-going and implementation by third quarter of 2020	UNEP as part of the oversight in recommendation 1 will implement improved monitoring methods including usage of existing rosters. Already UNEP in collaboration with UNON established a working group in August 2019 to review and identify bottlenecks in the recruitment processes and implement actions to enable meeting the recruitment KPI's including gender parity, recruitment timelines and

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 Please indicate feasibility and realistic timelines for implementation of the recommendation.

AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of audit of recruitment process at the United Nations Environment Programme

Rec. no.		Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments ³
						geographical representation. The roster system is used and hiring managers are encouraged to recruit from the roster as much as possible. A reminder will be provided to hiring managers on the benefits of this recruitment and cases will be monitored. UNEP is also working with UNON to include in the release of candidate message to highlight the rostered number of candidates.
3	UNON should ensure that the Inspira system is updated in a timely manner with the correct job opening workflow status to ensure the accuracy of recruitment reports.	Important	YES	Chief of Human Resources	On-going and implemented by second quarter of 2020	UNEP will work with UNON on ensuring that the inputs for Inspira are finalized in a timely manner. UNEP will also work with UNON and the Inspira technical team to ensure access to the relevant recruitment data as currently it is not available to monitor and maintain oversight of the reports.
4	UNEP and UNON should ensure that the supporting information relating to selection decisions against temporary job openings is promptly and consistently recorded in Inspira.	Important	YES	Chief of Human Resources	On-going and implemented by second quarter of 2020	UNEP will work with UNON on ensuring that the inputs for Inspira are finalized in a timely manner by the hiring managers and recorded in Umoja.
5	UNEP should strengthen its management of temporary positions to enhance efficiency and prevent unnecessary issuance and cancellation of temporary job openings.	Important	YES	Chief of Human Resources	On-going and implemented by third quarter of 2020	UNEP will implement a standardized procedure for job cancellations to ensure they are justified and documented. UNON who cancels job openings at the request of UNEP hiring managers will ensure that the documentation

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						is attached in Inspira in line with the appropriate ST/AI. As part of the hiring managers training, justification and review of cancellation of job opening will be included, bearing in mind the legal implications such actions might have.
6	UNEP should: (a) establish a mechanism to ensure that consultants and individual contractors do not duplicate the roles of staff members; and (b) develop a long-term staffing solution to avoid excessive reliance on consultants and individual contractors.	Important	YES	Director of Corporate Services Division and Chief of Human Resources	Implemented by third quarter of 2020	UNEP will review the deployment of consultants and individual contractors with a view to review if any tasks/roles are more appropriate for consideration of staffing positions. However, UNEP notes that its business model includes significant requirements for specialized knowledge and project/short term requirements that are not suited to long-term staffing roles.
7	UNEP should ensure that: (a) job openings for consultants and individual contractors recruited through UNON are advertised and assessments of applicants are consistently documented in the Inspira system; and (b) recruitment actions implemented through UNOPS and UNDP are properly documented (including the related requests and terms of reference).	Important	YES	Chief of Human Resources	On-going and implementation by second quarter of 2020	UNEP will ensure with UNON that all required documentation is provided for consultant and individual contractors to ensure adherence to the relevant guidance. The recruitment process through the United Nations Agency will be documented and the minimum recording keeping requirements will be set and implemented.
8	UNEP should ensure that: (a) Hiring	Important	YES	Chief of	On-going and	UNEP will ensure that training

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	Managers document the basis for the fees recommended for consultants and individual contractors and ensure that they are in accordance with applicable policies and ST/AI/2013/4; and (b) the fees recommended by Hiring Managers are independently reviewed and approved by the Corporate Services Division.			Human Resources	implemented by third quarter of 2020	and guidelines is provided on the setting of fees payable and the necessary supporting documentation including terms of reference, duration, qualification/experience, with emphasis on the importance to adhere with ST/AI/2013/4. b) CSD will review monitoring mechanisms to be implemented to ensure discrepancies and exceptions are reviewed.
9	UNEP should ensure that reference checks are conducted for consultants and individual contractors and properly documented.	Important	YES	Chief of Human Resources	Implementation by third quarter 2020	UNEP is responsible for the reference check and should provide the documentation of the satisfactory check in Inspira attached to the JO and UNON reviews for completeness of submission.