



# **INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION**

## **REPORT 2023/031**

---

### **Audit of international staff recruitment in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan**

**UNMISS needed to strengthen the  
international staff recruitment process,  
reduce the cancellation of job openings and  
address delays in recruitment**

**23 August 2023  
Assignment No. AP2023-633-01**

# **Audit of international staff recruitment in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of international staff recruitment in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS). The objective of the audit was to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the recruitment process for international staff in UNMISS. The audit covered the period from July 2020 to December 2022 and included a review of the recruitment process and human resources strategies.

The Mission had developed a recruitment tracker database, a human resources dashboard and quarterly human resources factsheet to monitor vacancy rates and follow up monthly with hiring managers on staffing incumbency. It had also initiated measures to improve the data analytics skills of its workforce. However, UNMISS still needed to improve the recruitment process, reduce the cancellation of job openings and address recruitment delays.

OIOS made three recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, UNMISS needed to strengthen the:

- monitoring of the recruitment process for timely completion;
- selection procedures for temporary job openings; and
- procedures to reduce and justify the cancellation of job openings.

UNMISS accepted all recommendations and has initiated actions to implement them.

# CONTENTS

I. BACKGROUND	1-2
II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	2
III. AUDIT RESULTS	3-9
A. Efficiency and effectiveness of the recruitment process	3-5
B. Human resources strategies	5-9
IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	9
ANNEX I	Status of audit recommendations
APPENDIX I	Management response

# Audit of international staff recruitment in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

## I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of international staff recruitment in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS).
2. The recruitment process for international staff is governed by the rules, regulations and procedures for staff selection set out in the administrative instruction ST/AI/2010/3/Rev.1, updated in July 2022. In January 2019, the Secretary-General delegated to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) of UNMISS the authority to recruit international staff up to the D-1 level in compliance with applicable administrative instructions. The SRSG sub-delegated this authority to the Director of Mission Support (DMS).
3. UNMISS utilized three types of recruitment processes for international staff, namely position-specific job openings (PSJOs), recruit-from-rosters (RfRs) and temporary job openings (TJOs). All job openings (JOs) were processed in the talent management module in the Human Resources System (Inspira). The Mission's recruitment activities for international staff from 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2022 are shown in table 1.

**Table 1-Recruitment activities for international staff (July 2020 to December 2022)**

Recruitment activity	PSJOs	RfRs	TJOs	Total
JOs cancelled	8	24	16	48
Ongoing recruitment	19	23	10	52
Recruitment completed	35	141	75	251
<b>Total JOs advertised</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>351</b>

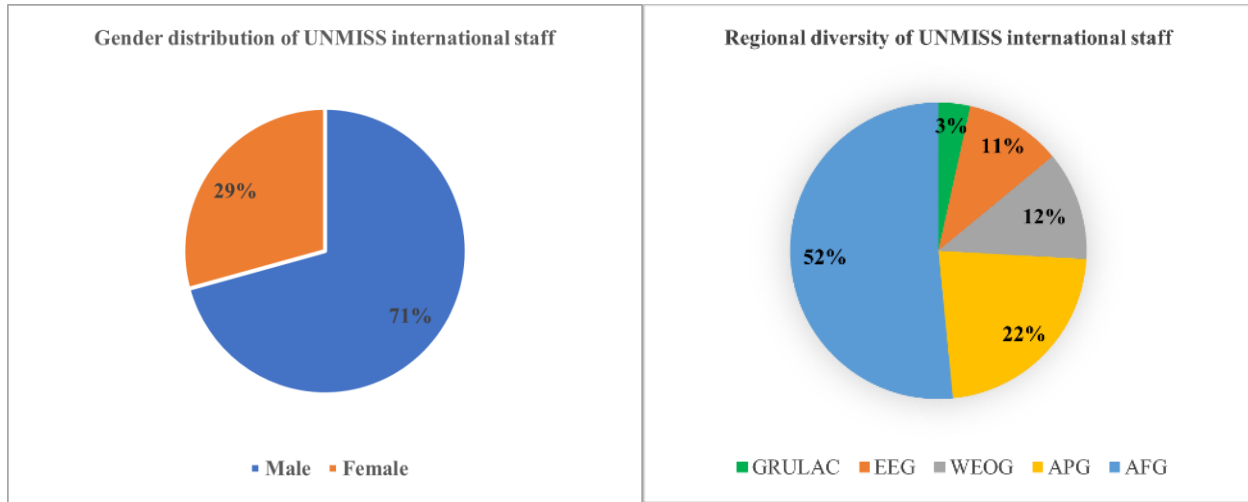
Source: HRMS Recruitment Tracker database

4. The Recruitment Unit of the Human Resources Management Section (HRMS) in UNMISS oversees the recruitment process, including monitoring vacancies and providing support and guidance to hiring managers on the staff selection process. HRMS is headed by a Chief at the P-5 level who reports to the DMS through the Chief Operations and Resources Management Service. The Section has 45 authorized and encumbered posts comprising 19 international and 26 national staff.
5. As of 31 December 2022, UNMISS had 931 authorized international posts, of which 858 were encumbered. The Mission's international staff was composed of nationals from 116 countries within the five main regional groups<sup>1</sup>, namely, African (AFG), Western European and other (WEOG), Asia-Pacific (APG), Eastern European (EEG) and Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC). The Mission's gender and regional group diversity distribution for its international staff are shown in figure 1.

---

<sup>1</sup> Annex III of the Secretary-General's report 73/372 entitled "Global human resources strategy 2019-2021: building a more effective, transparent and accountable United Nations"

**Figure 1- Gender and regional group diversity distribution among UNMISS international staff as of 31 December 2022**



Source: UNMISS staffing table and HRMS Recruitment Tracker database

6. The approved budget for international staff in UNMISS was \$212.3 million in 2020/21 and \$207.0 million in 2021/22, and expenditures for the same periods were \$202.4 million and \$183.5 million, respectively.

7. Comments provided by UNMISS are incorporated in italics.

## II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

8. The objective of the audit was to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the recruitment process for international staff in UNMISS.

9. This audit was included in the 2023 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the operational and reputational risks associated with recruitment activities.

10. OIOS conducted this audit from February to March 2023. The audit covered the period from July 2020 to December 2022. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risk areas in recruitment activities, including the efficiency and effectiveness of the recruitment process and human resources strategies.

11. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews of key personnel involved in the recruitment process, (b) a review of relevant documentation, (c) an analytical review of recruitment data from Inspira and the HRMS Recruitment Tracker database, and (d) a review of comparative analysis reports of all completed recruitment exercises during the audit period.

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

### **III. AUDIT RESULTS**

#### **A. Efficiency and effectiveness of the recruitment process**

##### The Mission could improve the review process for the selection of candidates

13. UNMISS constituted appropriate assessment panels that properly represented subject matter experts and female staff. In addition, the members had completed the competency-based interviewing training and held fixed-term, permanent or continuing appointments as required. However, the selection decisions were not always based on candidates' performance during the written tests and competency-based interviews. For example, in 20 (or 57 per cent) of the 35 PSJOs, the comparative analysis reports showed that there were recommended candidates that had performed better than the selected candidates in both written tests and competency-based interviews, and these selections were not made based on gender or geographical considerations.

14. In addition to candidates' qualifications, experience, and results of assessments, the hiring managers considered additional factors in determining the most suitable candidates to fill vacant positions. However, this was not properly articulated in the comparative analysis reports or the selection memoranda. For example, in one of the 20 cases, the main justification provided by the hiring manager to select a specific candidate was to promote the candidate to create an opening for another staff member who was nearing termination due to post-reclassification.

15. The Mission advised that for PSJO recruitments, candidates are vetted and pre-approved for selection by the Field Central Review Bodies. Moreover, the administrative instruction on the staff selection system (ST/AI/2010/3Rev.1) did not require hiring managers to provide additional justification for not selecting the best-ranked candidates. Therefore, OIOS did not make a recommendation but encourages UNMISS to strengthen the review process for the selection of candidates.

##### Need to address delays in the recruitment process

16. The General Assembly resolution on human resources management reform (A/RES/71/263) of December 2016 requires UNMISS to fill PSJOs within 120 days of initiating the recruitment process. The Mission had also established a target of 65 days to complete RfR recruitments.

17. None of the 35 completed PSJO recruitments were finalized within 120 days, but on average in 254 days, with actual recruitment timelines ranging from 132 to 495 days. The process took on average: (a) 75 days to complete the screening of applicants; (b) 87 days to complete assessments and recommend candidates; and (c) 59 days to select candidates from the recommended list. Also, RfR recruitments were not always completed within the stipulated timeframe as 49 (or 35 per cent) of 141 RfR recruitments took on average 101 days to complete. Furthermore, on average, 28 (or 37 per cent) of the 75 TJO recruitments took 117 days to complete. While UNMISS had not established a timeline for the completion of TJO recruitments, their completion within a reasonable timeline would enable the Mission to meet its short-term staffing requirements.

18. HRMS did not have a consistent approach to tracking recruitment progress, and when occasional follow-ups were conducted, hiring managers did not take prompt action to complete the recruitment process. UNMISS had not strengthened its monitoring mechanisms to ensure that recruitment actions were completed within established timelines. Delays in filling posts increased the risk of low productivity and the need for recurrent extensions of temporary appointments.

**(1) UNMISS should strengthen the monitoring of the recruitment process to ensure timely completion.**

*UNMISS accepted recommendation 1 and acknowledged recruitment delays. It stated that the primary responsibility for adhering to these timelines falls on hiring managers who often face competing priorities without dedicated resources for these exercises. Nonetheless, the Human Resources Management Section would implement additional measures, including constant reminders to the hiring managers through their principals to ensure that established timelines are met.*

Need to strengthen the review process for temporary appointments

19. Temporary appointments are used to fill posts for specific short-term requirements pending finalization of the regular selection process and in cases of reassignment or prolonged leave of absence of an incumbent. Temporary appointments may exceptionally be extended beyond 364 days and up to a maximum of 729 days.

20. UNMISS used TJOs to fill vacancies in 75 (30 per cent) of the 251 completed recruitment cases. However, the Mission had used TJOs to fill staffing needs expected to last longer than one year. For example, the Mission utilized TJOs to fill 13 vacant posts expected to last more than one year.

21. Furthermore, while the Mission mostly used desk reviews or informal interviews to evaluate TJO applicants, the comparative analysis reports showed that the selection process was not always competitive, as noted below:

- In 20 cases, the justifications for selection decisions were not clear because all recommended candidates had identical or similar overall comments in the comparative analysis reports. Given their similar candidate ratings, it was unclear how the candidates were selected.
- In two cases, only one candidate was evaluated even though the other listed candidates had requisite qualifications and work experiences.
- In two other cases, the comparative analysis reports for the selected candidates included overall comments that explained the reasoning behind their selection; however, no comments were provided regarding the assessment of the remaining five recommended candidates.
- The segregation of duties principle was not followed in a particular instance. The Officer-in-Charge of the Mission Support Division approved a selection he had recommended in his capacity as the hiring manager.

22. The above occurred because UNMISS did not implement a robust review process to evaluate TJO applicants due to the temporary nature of these appointments and other prioritized tasks of the reviewers. Since TJOs were used to fill 30 per cent of the posts during the audit period, the lack of a competitive selection process may impact productivity if the most suitable candidates are not selected.

**(2) UNMISS should strengthen the review process to evaluate and recruit candidates for temporary job openings.**

*UNMISS accepted recommendation 2 and stated that it would strengthen documented evidence for the selection of candidates for temporary job openings.*

### Need to reduce and justify the cancellation of job openings

23. OIOS review of the HRMS Recruitment Tracker database showed that UNMISS had cancelled 48 (or 14 per cent) of the 351 JOs. However, the status of 20 (or 42 per cent) out of 48 JOs were still reflected as open in Inspira because the Mission did not timely update the system. As of 31 January 2023, the cancellation of these 20 JOs in Inspira had been pending for an average of 539 days. As a result, applicants were not informed of the cancellation of the JOs and the filling of vacant posts was delayed significantly.

24. For the 28 JOs that had been cancelled in Inspira, relevant supporting documentation on the justification and approval of the cancellations was not uploaded in the system. In 16 of these cases, cancellation could have been avoided had the Mission: (a) properly assessed the job requirements and ensured the availability of funding for vacant positions; (b) correctly adhered to the procedure for posting the JOs, as some had been erroneously posted; and (c) completed the recruitment process in a timely manner. Three JOs were cancelled because the hiring managers decided not to continue the recruitment process without providing any justification.

25. The cancellation of JOs resulted in UNMISS staff raising concerns about the transparency and fairness of the recruitment process. For example, in one recruitment case, the Mission sought the approval of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG) for selecting a male candidate on the recommended list, as required by the Secretary-General's gender parity strategy. While the EOSG did not endorse the selection due to gender considerations, the Mission cancelled the JO rather than selecting one of the recommended female candidates. No justification was provided for such cancellation.

26. Furthermore, the Mission cancelled two RfR recruitment exercises conducted to fill one vacant post. Although the hiring manager cited the lack of a suitable candidate as justification for the cancellation of the JOs, OIOS review showed that there were at least two rostered candidates with the required qualification and experience. This vacant post was subsequently filled through a PSJO recruitment exercise.

27. Systemic cancellation of JOs by UNMISS may increase inefficiency, administrative costs and perception of bias in the recruitment process.

**(3) UNMISS should: (a) strengthen its procedures to initiate and manage job openings to reduce their cancellation rate; and (b) adequately justify the cancellation of job openings and timely update their status in Inspira.**

*UNMISS accepted recommendation 3 and stated that all future requests for cancellation of job openings would be supported by inter-office memoranda from hiring managers with appropriate justification and candidates' assessments. These memoranda will also be attached to the relevant job openings in Inspira.*

## **B. Human resources strategies**

### The Mission was taking measures to address gender parity gaps

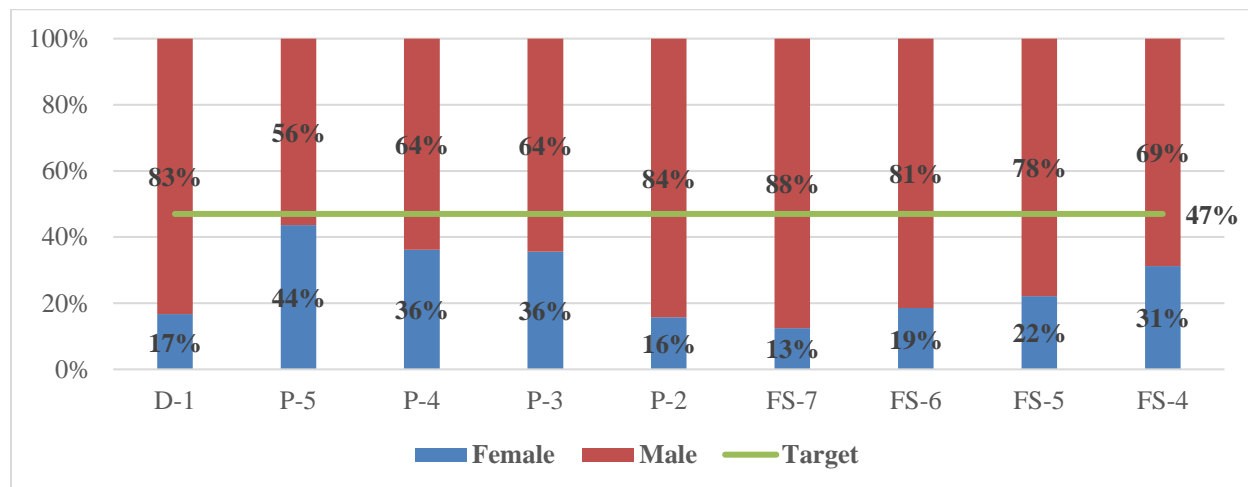
28. Administrative instruction (ST/AI/2020/5) of August 2020 sets out temporary special measures that entities can implement in selecting and appointing candidates to achieve the Organization's gender parity goals. Temporary special measures are implemented to address the gender imbalance in accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/133. These include the selection of recommended female candidates to fill vacancies related to retirements, entry-level positions, male-dominated occupational groups and TJOs.



29. UNMISS had a gender parity strategy and had established a Gender Parity Task Force to oversee its implementation. In its 2021-2022 biennial gender parity report of December 2022, the Mission reported progress in the four key strategic interventions aimed at implementing the strategy, namely: (a) setting targets and monitoring progress; (b) demonstrating leadership and establishing accountability; (c) undertaking recruitment, mobility and talent management; and (d) creating an enabling environment.

30. However, UNMISS had made modest progress towards achieving its gender parity goals. It had increased its female representation in the international workforce from 26 per cent in May 2018 to 29 per cent as of December 2022. The Mission’s staffing table showed that as of December 2022, the Mission had not achieved gender parity in any of its international staffing categories, as shown in figure 2.

**Figure 2 - UNMISS gender representation of its international staffing category as of December 2022**



Source: UNMISS Staffing table

31. OIOS review of recruitment data in Inspira showed that UNMISS had made significant efforts towards achieving gender parity. For example, 47 per cent of the 141 candidates recruited from rosters were female despite the roster memberships being predominantly male (86 per cent). Similarly, the Mission used PJSO recruitment to increase the likelihood of selecting more female candidates. As a result, out of 35 completed PSJOs, 63 per cent of the selected candidates were female.

32. However, the Mission’s predominant use of the United Nations careers portal as the only medium to publish its JOs may have limited the number of female applicants. Of 7,168 applicants that applied for the 35 PSJOs, only 25 per cent were female. To attract more female applicants, UNMISS needs to consider targeted outreach to external audiences through the United Nations Country Team, United Nations Women, other women organizations and social media platforms.

33. In addition, UNMISS did not always use temporary special measures to achieve gender parity. For example:

- UNMISS did not effectively use staff retirement-related vacancies to enhance gender parity. Out of 16 retirement-related vacancies, only 7 (or 44 per cent) posts were filled by female candidates, although for 4 other vacancies, there were also female candidates on the recommended list.
- The Mission’s gender parity strategy envisions recruiting female candidates for male-dominated jobs such as engineering, logistics, security and transport. However, female candidates were

selected in only 18 (31 per cent) of the 59 recruitment cases for male-dominated occupational categories.

- Selection of women internal candidates for TJO positions provides an opportunity for their career development. However, the Mission needed to adequately broaden career development opportunities for women as only 34 (or 45 per cent) of the 75 TJO recruitments were female selections.
- Only 7 (or 41 per cent) of the 17 candidates selected for the P-2 entry-level positions were female. In the other 10 recruitment cases in which male candidates were selected, 6 had female candidates on the recommended list. This was contrary to the Secretary-General's gender parity strategy that encourages recruiting more female staff at the entry-level.

34. The Mission advised that it had faced challenges in improving gender parity due to low vacancy rates and staff turnover. Nonetheless, to the extent possible, the Mission had used PSJO recruitment to increase outreach to qualified female candidates and intended to continue to invest efforts to promote gender parity. Therefore, OIOS did not make a recommendation.

#### The Mission was taking action to fill vacant posts

35. UNMISS did not achieve its target vacancy rate of 5.4 per cent for international staff for 2021/22, with the actual vacancy rate at 7.8 per cent as of June 2022. OIOS review of post-management records indicated that as of 20 January 2023, the Mission had 57 vacant posts, of which 29 (or 51 per cent) had been vacant for periods ranging from 137 to 778 days. These included key senior positions such as Chief of Political Affairs Service and Chiefs of Procurement and Centralized Warehousing Sections. Furthermore, vacant positions were not filled for an average of 103 days after relevant staff had retired.

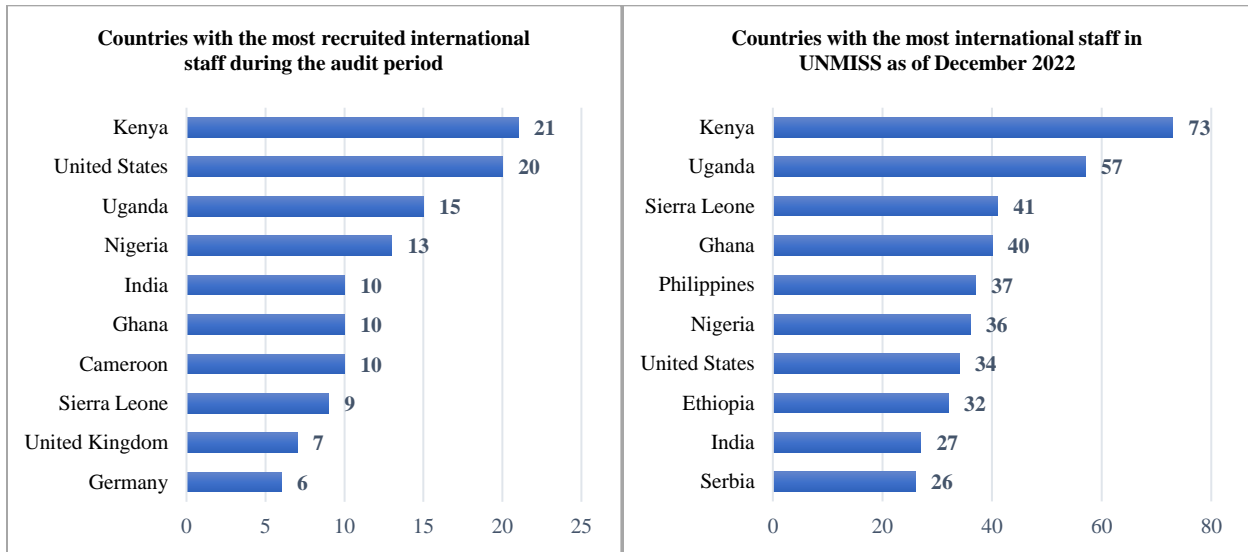
36. The Mission was taking measures to fill vacant posts and projected a vacancy rate of 5.5 per cent by June 2023. Out of the 57 vacant posts, the Mission had completed the selection process for 27 and initiated the recruitment process for 18 posts at the end of March 2023. In addition, the Mission planned to develop a human resources dashboard to monitor vacancy rates and follow up monthly with hiring managers on staffing incumbency. Based on the ongoing actions by the Mission, OIOS did not make a recommendation.

#### Measures were underway to strengthen geographical diversity within the workforce

37. Equitable geographical representation and greater regional group diversity help to develop a diverse and geographically balanced workforce in the Mission. Achieving equitable geographical representation requires the Mission to increase staff representation of from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States.

38. The geographical distribution of the Mission's workforce was not adequately considered during the recruitment and selection procedures. For 59 of the 251 completed recruitments during the audit period, the Mission selected candidates from five of the Organization's overrepresented Member States, even though there were opportunities for selecting 18 other candidates from underrepresented Member States based on the recommended list. OIOS also noted that countries with the most selected candidates were also the most represented in the Mission, as shown in figure 3.

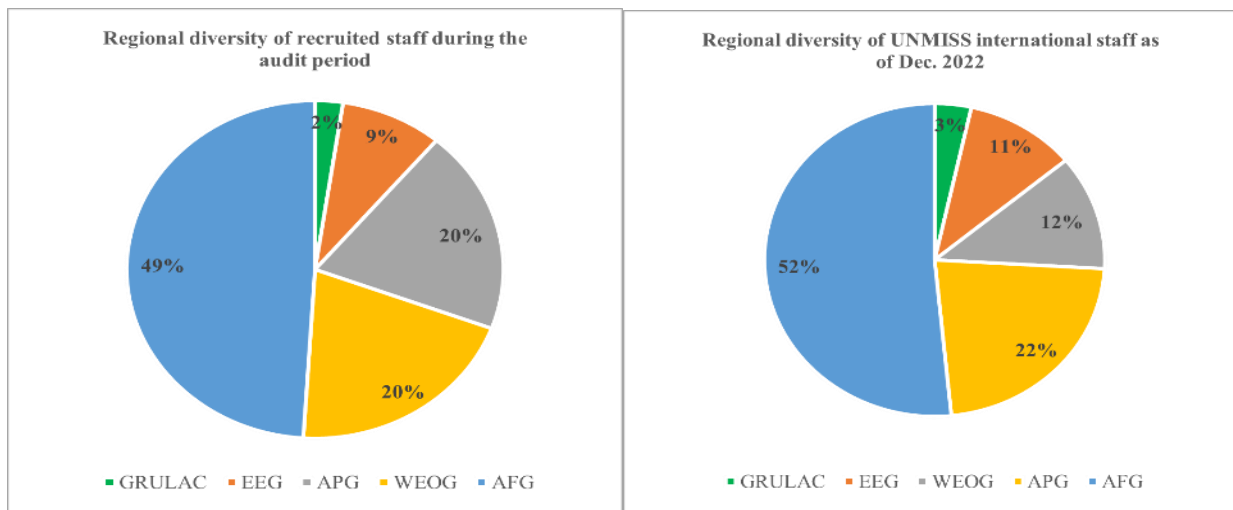
**Figure 3 - Top 10 countries with the most recruited staff in UNMISS as of 31 December 2022**



Source: UNMISS staffing table and HRMS Recruitment Tracker database

39. Also, the Mission had not achieved greater regional group diversity both in its recruitment process and current staffing structure, with significantly more staff from the African group and less from Eastern European, and Latin American and Caribbean groups (as shown in figure 4). OIOS observed a similar pattern in selecting the Mission’s professional staff at the management level.

**Figure 4 - UNMISS regional group diversity among recruited and existing international staff**



Source: UNMISS staffing table and HRMS Recruitment Tracker database

40. Mission management advised that the posts in the Mission were not classified as geographical, and there was a lack of a regulatory framework to implement the geographical diversity strategy. Nonetheless, UNMISS could create baseline data, set targets and take measures to make progress toward achieving a diverse and geographically balanced workforce. In response to the preliminary results of the audit, UNMISS took note of these best practices and was taking steps to implement them to achieve greater geographical diversity in the Mission. Therefore, OIOS did not make a recommendation.

The Mission had initiated measures to strengthen the data analytics capabilities of its workforce

41. The Secretary-General's Data Strategy launched in June 2020 outlines a vision for a United Nations-wide digital ecosystem that allows for improved use of data for better decisions. In line with the data strategy, a joint memorandum of February 2021 from the Office of Human Resources in the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and EOSG set a target of at least 10 per cent of the Secretariat staff to work in data-specialized roles<sup>2</sup> over the next five years.

42. In December 2019, UNMISS established a Business Analytics and Compliance Section (BACS) to provide dedicated specialist data and analytics capacity for Mission support. In addition, the Mission embedded self-sustaining data and analytics capacity in sections/units within its substantive and Mission Support Division components. Despite this, as of December 2022, the Mission had less than 4 per cent of its staff in data-specialized roles, and only 22 per cent of JOs posted incorporated data-focused language. However, in February 2023, UNMISS piloted a data literacy survey to identify skills gaps within BACS and intended to incorporate lessons learned when rolling out the surveys to the entire Mission staff in the near future. Based on the action taken by UNMISS, OIOS did not make a recommendation.

#### **IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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

Internal Audit Division  
Office of Internal Oversight Services

---

<sup>2</sup> Data-specialized roles are dedicated roles, separate from IT, that generate value from data as a core function. These include data engineers, data analysts and data scientists.

## STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

## Audit of international staff recruitment in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical <sup>3</sup> / Important <sup>4</sup>	C/ O <sup>5</sup>	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date <sup>6</sup>
1	UNMISS should strengthen the monitoring of the recruitment process to ensure timely completion.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that monitoring of recruitment procedures was strengthened for timely completion.	15 July 2024
2	UNMISS should strengthen the review process to evaluate and recruit candidates for temporary job openings.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that selection procedures for temporary job openings are strengthened.	15 July 2024
3	UNMISS should: (a) strengthen its procedures to initiate and manage job openings to reduce their cancellation rate; and (b) adequately justify the cancellation of job openings and timely update their status in Inspira.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of actions taken to reduce and justify the cancellation of job openings.	15 July 2024

<sup>3</sup> Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

<sup>4</sup> Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

<sup>5</sup> Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

<sup>6</sup> Date provided by UNMISS in response to recommendations.

# **APPENDIX I**

## **Management Response**



Date: 11 August 2023  
Ref: DMS-2023-095

To: Mr. Kemal Karaseki  
Acting Chief, Peacekeeping Audit Service  
Internal Audit Division, OIOS

From: Victoria Browning  
Director of Mission Support  
United Nations Mission in South Sudan

Subject: **Management Response to the draft report of the Audit of International Staff Recruitment in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (Assignment No. AP2023-633-01)**

1. On behalf of the SRSG, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, we acknowledge receipt of the draft report from OIOS on the Audit of International Staff Recruitment dated 1 August 2023.
2. Please find attached the Management Response to the recommendations as indicated in Appendix I.
3. Thank you for your consideration and support.

cc: Mr. Nicholas Haysom, UNMISS  
Mr. Aggrey Kedogo, UNMISS  
Ms. Biljana Nonkovic, UNMISS  
Ms. Daniela Wuerz, UNMISS  
Mr. Jeffrey Lin, OIOS

## Management Response

## Audit of recruitment of international staff in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical/ <sup>1</sup> / Important <sup>2</sup>	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	UNMISS should strengthen the monitoring of the recruitment process to ensure timely completion.	Important	Yes	CHRO	15 July 2024	UNMISS recognizes that there are recruitment delays and that recruitment timelines set by the GA for the PSJOs are not achieved. The Mission notes that the primary responsibility for the completion of the selection process within the set timelines mainly lies with hiring managers, who often face competing priorities without dedicated resources for these exercises, which make it difficult to comply with the set deadlines. The HRMS Recruitment Team will continue doing frequent follow-ups in addition to the Inspira system generated automatic reminders. The Mission will implement additional measures that include constant reminders to the hiring managers through their principals to ensure that established timelines are met.
2	UNMISS should strengthen the review process to evaluate and recruit candidates and follow competitive selection procedures for temporary job openings.	Important	Yes	CHRO	15 July 2024	UNMISS is already following competitive selection procedures for temporary job openings in accordance with applicable administrative instructions. The Mission however agrees to strengthen documented evidence for selection of candidates for temporary job openings.
3	UNMISS should: (a) strengthen its procedures to initiate and manage job openings to reduce their cancellation rate; and (b) adequately justify the cancellation of job openings and timely update their status in Inspira.	Important	Yes	CHRO	15 July 2024	The Mission will ensure all future requests for cancellation will be supported by inter-office memoranda from the hiring managers with appropriate justification and candidates' assessments. These memoranda will also be included among the attachments at Inspira.

<sup>1</sup> Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

<sup>2</sup> Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.