



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2026/011

Audit of strategic communications and public information in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

UNAMA needed to address important control gaps in governance, monitoring, and analysis to enhance the effectiveness of its strategic communications and public information activities

18 June 2026

Assignment No. AP2025-630-02

Audit of strategic communications and public information in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of strategic communications and public information in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness and adequacy of strategic communications and public information in UNAMA. The audit covered the period from January 2024 to December 2025 and included: (a) governance and strategic planning; (b) implementation of strategic communications and public information activities; and (c) monitoring and evaluation.

UNAMA made progress in implementing strategic communications and public information activities, including maintaining regular media engagement, supporting inter-agency coordination through the United Nations Communications Group, and sustaining field-level outreach despite operational constraints. However, the effectiveness of these activities was limited due to the absence of a mission-wide strategic communications strategy, weak work planning, and uncoordinated media-monitoring practices. In addition, the lack of systematic performance measurement and consistent analytical approaches constrained the Mission's ability to assess the impact of its strategic communications and public information activities.

OIOS made seven recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, UNAMA needed to:

- Establish a mission-wide strategic communications strategy that sets out priorities, governance arrangements, roles and responsibilities, risk management, and monitoring and evaluation arrangements.
- Revise the Strategic Communications Section (SCS) work plan to include a defined timeline for activities, measurable outputs, and the prioritization of activities aligned with available resources.
- Enhance the integration of field communications by clarifying reporting lines and functional authority of SCS over field communication planning and outputs.
- Enhance media monitoring and reporting by strengthening information-sharing arrangements and establishing appropriate procedures and tools to identify, track, and report misinformation, disinformation, malinformation, and hate speech.
- Establish a clear and sustainable approach to archiving digital media materials, including appropriate storage and coordination with the United Nations Archives and Records Management Section.
- Enhance its measurement of strategic communications performance through structured evaluation practices.
- Strengthen social media performance by applying consistent metrics for reach, engagement, sentiment, audience response, and thematic coverage across communication platforms.

UNAMA accepted all recommendations and has initiated action to implement them. Actions required to close the recommendations are indicated in Annex I.

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Audit of strategic communications and public information in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of strategic communications and public information in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

2. UNAMA was established as a special political mission on 28 March 2002 by Security Council resolution 1401. It is mandated to support the people of Afghanistan through humanitarian coordination, promotion of inclusive governance, human rights monitoring, and facilitation of dialogue among Afghan stakeholders. The mandate has evolved in response to changing political, security, and humanitarian conditions. On 16 March 2026, the Security Council adopted resolution 2818 (2026), extending UNAMA's mandate for three months, retaining its core functions, including humanitarian support, human rights monitoring, and good offices, while allowing time for a broader review of international engagement with the relevant authorities in Afghanistan. The Mission collaborates with 24 United Nations agencies, funds, and programmes (AFPs).

3. Strategic communications and public information are critical to UNAMA's mandate implementation. The Mission must communicate effectively with national and international stakeholders, counter misinformation, maintain credibility, and support the delivery of its mandate. Strategic communications in peace operations are governed by the United Nations policy on strategic communications in peace operations (strategic communications policy), the United Nations global communications strategy, and the Department of Global Communications' guidance on misinformation, disinformation, malinformation, and hate speech (MDMH).

4. The United Nations Communications Group (UNCG) is responsible for coordinating inter-agency communication, promoting a unified United Nations image, and enhancing the visibility of United Nations activities in the media. The UNCG, composed of heads or designated AFP representatives, meets monthly to discuss common communication issues, develop coordinated messaging, and undertake joint communication initiatives.

5. The UNAMA Strategic Communications Section (SCS) manages the Mission's strategic communications and public information activities. The Section is responsible for media relations and engagement, community outreach, media support, media archiving, monitoring of the media environment, and advising senior leadership on communication risks and opportunities. Media monitoring is also conducted across multiple mission components to meet distinct analytical and operational needs, including the Joint Analysis and Reporting Section (JARS), the UNAMA Security Section, and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS). However, SCS produces the primary structured media monitoring products.

6. The SCS is headed by a Chief at the P-5 level who reports to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and serves as a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and principal advisor on strategic communications and public information. The Section comprises the Office of the Chief (who also serves as Mission spokesperson), the Digital/Outreach Unit, the Audio-Visual Unit, and the Media Relations Unit. Additionally, seven public information officers (PIOs) located in field offices are national professional officers who report to their Heads of Field Offices (HOFs). However, SCS operated with an average vacancy rate of approximately 25 per cent during the audit period.

7. For social media monitoring and analysis, UNAMA implemented Brandwatch in October 2025 as a complementary tool to support perception analysis and potential detection of MDMH. However, its functionality, particularly for local languages, remained under evaluation. Additionally, SharePoint was one of several platforms used for storing media materials, alongside online platforms and offline storage, reflecting the absence of a centralized digital asset management system.

8. Comments provided by UNAMA are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

9. The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness and adequacy of strategic communications and public information in UNAMA.

10. This audit was included in the 2026 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to operational, political, and reputational risks associated with strategic communications and public information.

11. OIOS conducted this audit from November 2025 to March 2026. The audit covered the period from January 2024 to December 2025 and included: (a) governance and strategic planning; (b) implementation of strategic communications and public information activities; and (c) monitoring and evaluation.

12. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel; (b) review of relevant documentation, including meeting minutes, daily situation reports (DSRs), and media monitoring reports; and (c) analytical review of social media data.

13. To assess the reliability of data pertaining to the management of strategic communications and public information, OIOS reviewed data in Brandwatch and consulted with relevant UNAMA personnel. Based on the review, OIOS determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purpose of the audit despite limitations noted in this report.

14. The audit was conducted in accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Governance and strategic planning

UNAMA did not have a mission-wide strategic communications strategy

15. The strategic communications policy requires missions to establish a mission-wide communications strategy aligned with the Mission's mandate and priorities and to implement strategic communications as a senior leadership responsibility through a whole-of-mission approach. The policy further requires the mission-wide communications strategy to define objectives, risks, audiences, messages, responsibilities, resource requirements, and evaluation arrangements, and to translate mission priorities into communications-specific objectives supported by measurable indicators and milestones.

16. UNAMA lacked such a mission-wide strategic communications strategy. A review of strategic mission documents and 18 SLT minutes for the period July to December 2025 indicated that, although strategic communications was identified as a cross-cutting priority and UNAMA stated that strategic communications were discussed through regular formal and informal engagements with senior leadership, no formal governance mechanism existed to define communications priorities or oversee their implementation.

17. Although SCS developed a strategic communications strategy for 2025–2026 and a corresponding 2025 work plan, these documents were primarily intended as section-level planning tools and were not formally adopted as a mission-wide framework defining roles, responsibilities, priorities, and coordination arrangements across pillars, field offices, and support components. A review of the strategy showed that it identified key communications risks, including misinformation, reputational exposure, shrinking media space, and sensitivities related to engagement with the relevant authorities. However, it did not define mitigation measures, assign responsibilities, or establish mechanisms for monitoring the effectiveness of risk-management actions. Intended impacts, such as increased awareness, understanding, or trust, were described in general terms, and the strategy did not define clear evaluation arrangements or identify alternative methods when surveys were not feasible in the operating environment.

18. Interviews with SCS, senior management, and mission components confirmed that communications direction was often derived from issue-specific discussions, forecasts, or informal consultations, which are integral to the Mission’s day-to-day operations in a dynamic environment. Strategic communications remained largely reliant on section-level planning and informal coordination, as there was no approved mission-wide strategy or governance framework. As a result, there was a risk that communications may not consistently align with the Mission’s mandate priorities and may lack a coherent narrative.

(1) UNAMA should establish a mission-wide strategic communications strategy that sets out priorities, governance arrangements, roles and responsibilities, risk management, and monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

UNAMA accepted recommendation 1 and stated that, after the renewal of the Mission’s mandate on 17 June 2026, SCS would commence mission-wide technical-level consultations. The Mission further stated that, once finalized, the draft strategy would be submitted to the SLT for endorsement and subsequently to the Head of Mission/Officer-in-Charge for approval.

The Strategic Communications Section's work plan was inadequate

19. Strategic communications plans and work plans are required to align activities and expected results with available resources and, where constraints exist, explicitly prioritize activities and assess trade-offs to safeguard critical communications objectives.

20. The SCS work plan did not link activities to measurable results and lacked defined milestones. Timeframes were often broadly defined as “throughout the reporting period.” It also included indicators of contextual or political developments outside SCS’s control, such as consultations with relevant authorities, governance processes, and humanitarian outcomes, which limited their usefulness in assessing communication performance. While UNAMA indicated that results beyond output-level reporting could not be objectively measured due to challenges in assessing public sentiment and audience reach in the operating environment, OIOS noted that the absence of defined, measurable outputs and intermediate indicators reduced the Mission’s ability to assess the progress and effectiveness of its communications activities.

21. Furthermore, communications activities were not prioritized in line with available resources. In 2025, SCS operated under significant budget constraints, with the planned operating budget reduced from \$313,000 to approximately \$35,000. UNAMA stated that outreach activities were supported through pooled funding arrangements with the Office of the Chief of Staff. This resulted in reduced outreach activities, deferred maintenance of audiovisual equipment, and the postponement of planned initiatives, such as

UniteWave¹. These constraints were not explicitly reflected in the strategy or work plan through prioritization or documented trade-offs. As a result, there was no clear basis for systematically allocating limited resources or determining which activities should be maintained, reduced, or deferred.

(2) UNAMA should revise the Strategic Communications Section work plan to include a defined timeline for activities, measurable outputs, and the prioritization of activities aligned with available resources.

UNAMA accepted recommendation 2 and stated that the 2026 work plan had been revised to align with the approved Mission work plan. It further indicated that the work plan would be reviewed and, if necessary, revised to reflect any changes arising from the Mission's new mandate.

Inter-agency coordination was effective, but internal coordination could be improved

22. The strategic communications policy requires missions to implement communications through a coordinated, whole-of-mission approach integrated into planning, decision-making, crisis management, and collaboration. It also requires engagement in inter-agency mechanisms, including UNCG, and alignment of communication planning across mission components, field offices, and partners, supported by clear priorities, guidance, and shared work plans.

23. OIOS identified several strengths in UNAMA's coordination of strategic communications, particularly in inter-agency and crisis-management settings. A review of six UNCG monthly meeting minutes for March-September 2025 indicated that SCS supported inter-agency coordination by preparing resource-mobilization messages and advising AFPs to coordinate with UNAMA before responding to media inquiries. Messaging on sensitive issues, such as restrictions affecting female staff, was coordinated through joint discussions, and major events, including UN Day, were aligned through joint task forces. AFPs with limited communications capacity also received support from SCS through strategic guidance, message development, and dissemination support. During crises, such as the October 2025 internet blackout, SCS played a central role in developing messages and drafting communications for the United Nations system in Afghanistan, including advising on content, tone, and release modalities, while coordinating closely with AFPs. However, coordination with AFPs was influenced by operational considerations, including differing priorities, capacities, and communication requirements, which at times limited the consistency and timeliness of "One United Nations" messaging.

24. On the other hand, a review of UNAMA's internal coordination arrangements showed that strategic communications were not addressed in a structured manner. Of 18 SLT meetings reviewed, communications were discussed in only three, mainly in response to specific issues. Concerns included imbalanced messaging, slow clearance, and limited use of field input. SCS attributed this partly to message sensitivity and unclear guidance on communication-ready content. Additionally, weekly forecast meetings covered planned activities across components. While UNAMA indicated that SCS provided communication inputs, a review of 12 forecasts showed no documented communication inputs or meeting records, limiting assurance that communication priorities were systematically captured and coordinated mission-wide.

25. These gaps occurred because of the absence of a mission-wide communications strategy and corresponding procedures to integrate communications priorities in key coordination forums systematically, which can be addressed with the implementation of recommendation 1 above.

¹ UniteWave analyzes FM (frequency modulation) radio broadcasts in local languages to help peacekeeping missions anticipate, understand, and respond to information-related risks by detecting misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech early, thereby enhancing situational awareness, strengthening resilience, and reducing the risk of escalation into real-world harm.

Field communications functions were not effectively integrated into the mission-wide communications functions

26. United Nations communications guidance requires communication activities to be integrated across headquarters and field locations under the authority of the strategic communications function and aligned with mission-wide priorities.

27. OIOS noted that field offices played a central role in UNAMA's engagement with Afghan communities, local media, and the local authorities. They conducted outreach activities, as discussed later in this report; monitored local narratives; supported stakeholder dialogue; and reported local perceptions to UNAMA Kabul headquarters, which was particularly important in the restricted media environment.

28. However, field communications were not effectively integrated into the mission-wide communications structure. Field PIOs reported primarily to HOFOs, with limited functional supervision from SCS, thereby reducing SCS's ability to direct planning, prioritization, and communication outputs. UNAMA indicated that guidance from headquarters is provided through regular mechanisms, including bi-monthly meetings with field PIOs and the sharing of key messages and outreach planning. Nevertheless, interviews with field office staff indicated that guidance was not consistently structured or formalized, and several field communication posts had been downgraded or remained vacant. Consequently, field offices often planned communication activities based on local feasibility rather than mission-wide priorities. This resulted in variation in communication activities across locations, reducing message consistency and limiting the Mission's ability to engage target audiences effectively.

(3) UNAMA should enhance the integration of field communications by clarifying reporting lines and the Strategic Communications Section's functional authority over field communication planning and outputs.

UNAMA accepted recommendation 3 and stated that, in collaboration with the Chief of Staff, SCS had met with the HOFOs to discuss communications and explore ways to better integrate the work of the field offices into the Mission's communication planning and activities. The Mission further noted that SCS would hold monthly coordination meetings with HOFOs and public information assistants, who would contribute to developing the Mission's communications strategy and the SCS work plan. It also indicated that SCS and the field offices would jointly develop a communication outreach plan for the remainder of 2026.

B. Implementation of strategic communications and public information activities

UNAMA conducted media engagement and provided support to media stakeholders

29. The strategic communications policy requires missions to maintain regular media engagement through press briefings, interviews, press releases, and responses to media inquiries, and to support staff development and, where possible, promote a free and independent media environment through outreach and capacity-building activities.

30. A review of 12 SCS monthly output reports showed that UNAMA conducted regular media engagement activities during 2025. National and international media conducted seven radio and television interviews with senior mission leadership, including the SRSG and DSRSGs, mainly during field visits. The Mission issued 31 press releases, including Pashto and Dari versions, distributed through media mailing lists, while field PIOs issued an additional 21 press releases to regional media outlets. SCS also regularly

responded to media inquiries from national and international outlets. Press conferences were not held during the period due to security constraints.

31. Additionally, SCS and field offices maintained regular contact with local media representatives and local authorities' spokespersons despite the challenging media environment, including 51 visits to media organizations and journalists, to discuss the media environment and media events. Furthermore, SCS and the Chief of the Human Rights Service visited national television stations on five occasions to discuss media-related issues. They held four additional meetings with media outlets to discuss challenges affecting the media environment.

32. A review of SCS training records further showed that the Mission provided support to media stakeholders during the audit period. These included media monitoring and analysis training for 35 national field office staff in June 2024, training for field PIOs on misinformation and disinformation in May 2025, and the organization of a United Nations Afghan media conference in October 2024, attended by 95 Afghan journalists, which included discussions on the media environment and the possible role of the United Nations in supporting it.

Field offices conducted outreach activities with local communities

33. Strategic communications guidance requires missions to conduct outreach activities to engage local communities, build trust, and communicate mandate priorities. Effective outreach requires sustained interaction with communities and the ability to adapt messaging to local contexts.

34. Field PIOs coordinated outreach activities at the field level, although both internal and external factors constrained implementation. These included restrictions imposed by the authorities on outreach activities and budget limitations affecting events that required funding, such as public gatherings, catering, or paid radio broadcasts. Despite these constraints, outreach continued within available resources during the audit period.

35. A review of 12 monthly output reports for 2025 showed that the seven field locations (Bamyan, Gardez, Herat, Kandahar, Jalalabad, Kunduz, and Mazar-i-Sharif) participated in 35 outreach visits organized by mission components, including HOFs and field substantive sections. These visits involved meetings with women's groups, religious leaders, youth representatives, and local business communities, and addressed topics such as UNAMA's mandate, women's rights, local governance, security issues, youth engagement, education, and climate change. Additionally, 26 outreach activities were held with community groups and radio stations to discuss social, economic, professional, and security issues, including the feasibility and acceptable content of radio broadcasts.

36. Collaboration with Afghan funding partners resulted in 14 joint field outreach events, including International Women's Day activities, visits to media outlets, and thematic events with other United Nations agencies to promote United Nations-supported projects, private sector development, and refugee issues. The field offices also held meetings with local representatives, including provincial governors and departmental officials, to discuss local governance, media restrictions, and socio-economic developments.

Media monitoring and reporting activities were inadequate and not efficiently consolidated

37. The UN80 initiative on structural changes and realigning programmes requires United Nations entities to enhance efficiency and effectiveness by clarifying roles and responsibilities, avoiding duplication of functions, and consolidating outputs to prevent parallel processes and inefficient use of resources. Additionally, United Nations guidance, including the Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, requires missions to identify, track, and report MDMH to support timely responses to reputational risks.

a) Monitoring and reporting activities were partly duplicative across mission components

38. OIOS noted that several UNAMA components conducted monitoring and reporting on the same developments using similar information sources but produced separate outputs without a coordinated arrangement. SCS produced twice-daily media monitoring reports covering national and international media based on more than 40 sources, including news articles, statements, interviews, and social media. At the same time, JARS produced DSRs covering political, security, humanitarian, and economic developments, drawing on field office inputs and open-source information. In parallel, the Security Section and UNDSS issued security advisories and incident reports covering armed clashes, terrorism, crime, civil unrest, and other security-related developments. While these outputs serve distinct purposes, the absence of a coordinated framework for information sharing and consolidation may limit efficiency and the development of a coherent, mission-wide understanding of the information environment.

39. A review of 30 reports issued by these entities showed that the same events, such as cross-border clashes, air strikes, protests, and enforcement actions, were monitored and reported separately by multiple components. In several cases, JARS reports incorporated media monitoring outputs, while security-related entities reported the same incidents through separate products. Duplication was most evident in reporting on security incidents, cross-border clashes, protests, and enforcement actions, which were independently documented by multiple components. Additionally, interviews with mission officials confirmed that monitoring and reporting were conducted in silos, with limited coordination and overlapping reporting lines.

40. These overlaps occurred because of the absence of coordination mechanisms for monitoring and reporting. As a result, monitoring efforts were duplicative, leading to inefficient use of resources and fragmented situational awareness, which limited coherent, mission-wide analysis.

b) Monitoring and reporting of misinformation, disinformation, malinformation, and hate speech were inadequate

41. The Mission explained that media monitoring staff and field PIOs have been trained in MDMH risk identification, that monitoring extends beyond media content to include formal and informal information channels, and that related risks are captured in the Mission's risk management matrix, including in coordination with the Human Rights Service. However, although MDMH was recognized as a risk, the Mission had not established specific procedures to systematically identify and analyze MDMH trends, narratives, or associated reputational risks.

42. OIOS analysis using Brandwatch identified instances of hostile or abusive online content directed at the Mission during periods of heightened tension. However, such content was not consistently tracked, categorized, or reported at the mission level. In addition, existing reports did not consistently highlight emerging misinformation trends or provide actionable information to support senior management's awareness and response.

(4) UNAMA should enhance media monitoring and reporting by strengthening information-sharing arrangements and establishing appropriate procedures and tools to identify, track, and report misinformation, disinformation, malinformation, and hate speech.

UNAMA accepted recommendation 4 and stated that SCS had begun piloting the use of Large Language Models and Brandwatch to produce analytical reports and planned to expand the initiative through further testing in June 2026. It also indicated that a standard operating procedure for tracking, reporting, and addressing misinformation, disinformation, malinformation, and hate speech was under

development, and that SCS and JARS were participating in a pilot initiative led by the Department of Peace Operations to test artificial intelligence tools designed to enhance information environment analysis, monitoring of misinformation-related risks, and reporting through the Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE) system.

Mission media archiving arrangements were not clearly defined

43. United Nations guidance requires missions to preserve and provide access to materials documenting the history of peace operations. The strategic communications policy assigns responsibility to the strategic communications component to ensure that media products are routinely archived and requires missions to provide adequate human, financial, and technical resources for this purpose.

44. OIOS review of SCS archiving practices showed that SharePoint was used as the primary storage environment for media materials, supplemented by external hard drives, the Mission's website, and iSeek pages. While UNAMA explained that it coordinated with the Field Technology Section to enhance storage capacity, including redundant solutions, these arrangements do not constitute a formal, sustainable digital archiving system. The Mission also highlighted that the absence of a Secretariat-wide enterprise digital asset management system, together with the high cost of subscription-based solutions, limits the feasibility of implementing a comprehensive solution at the mission level. Although the policy requires press and media materials to be transferred to the United Nations Archives and Records Management Section, it does not provide detailed guidance for managing large volumes of digital media content, and no standardized system-wide solution is currently available.

45. In the absence of a clearly defined and sustainable archiving approach, media materials were stored across multiple platforms. This increased the risk that media products would not be systematically preserved or remain accessible over time, potentially affecting institutional memory and the United Nations' ability to document the Mission's historical record.

(5) UNAMA should establish a clear and sustainable approach to archiving digital media materials, including appropriate storage and coordination with the United Nations Archives and Records Management Section.

UNAMA accepted recommendation 5 and stated that a draft standard operating procedure had been finalized on 4 June 2026 and was being shared with relevant Mission components and the United Nations Headquarters for review prior to its finalization.

C. Monitoring and evaluation

The performance of strategic communications was not measured systematically

46. The strategic communications policy requires missions to evaluate the effectiveness of communication activities using defined indicators, analytical tools, and feedback mechanisms to measure the reach and impact of key messages and support informed decision-making.

47. Although UNAMA conducted media monitoring and outreach activities through SCS and field offices, the Mission lacked a systematic approach to measuring the performance and impact of its strategic communications. The SCS work plan outlined broad mission objectives but did not define communications-specific performance indicators for measuring reach, engagement, audience response, or impact. Additionally, interviews with SCS, senior management, and mission components indicated that

communication effectiveness was often assessed through anecdotal feedback, stakeholder reactions, or the visibility of outputs rather than through structured analysis.

48. UNAMA highlighted significant constraints in measuring public sentiment and audience impact, including limited survey capacity and difficulties linking communication activities to outcomes. However, in a complex operating environment with limited media space and competing narratives, the lack of measurable indicators hindered the Mission's ability to determine which messages, platforms, and audience segments were most effective.

(6) UNAMA should enhance its measurement of strategic communications performance through structured evaluation practices.

UNAMA accepted recommendation 6 and stated that it was collaborating with the UNCG and the Inter-agency Communications and Accountability Center to design and implement telephone-based surveys to measure the reach and impact of its communications activities. It also noted that the development of its communications strategy would be informed by survey results, focus groups, and sentiment analysis to strengthen evidence-based communication planning and performance measurement.

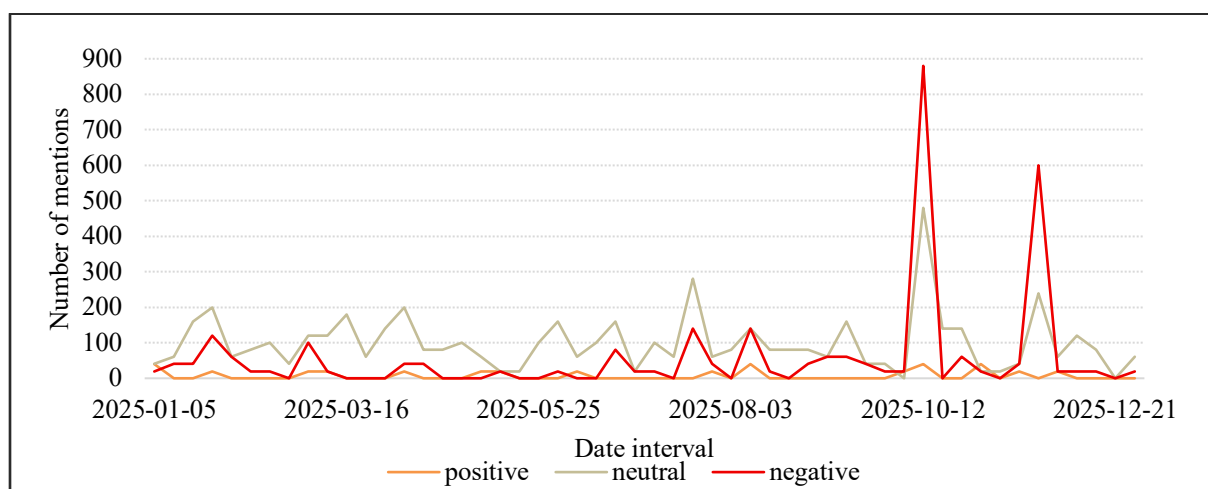
Social media performance analysis was limited and did not provide sufficient insight into messaging effectiveness

49. The strategic communications policy requires missions to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of communication platforms and channels using appropriate analytical tools to measure the reach and impact of key messages. The United Nations Afghanistan key messages and the SCS strategy also identify priority thematic areas, including human rights, gender, basic human needs, climate change, and forced displacement, to guide strategic communications and ensure messaging aligned with mandate objectives.

50. A review of 12 monthly output reports for 2025 showed that analysis of social media performance was limited and inconsistent across platforms. UNAMA used different metrics to measure engagement, without a standard methodology. For Facebook, performance was measured mainly by the number of likes, while for X (Twitter), engagement was measured by the number of impressions. Sentiment analysis was conducted only for selected Facebook posts and was not performed for X (Twitter). For example, during the week of 17 April to 8 May 2025, the top five Facebook posts generated 33,896 likes, while comments reflected mixed sentiment (27 positive, 22 neutral, and 27 negative). However, no sentiment analysis was recorded for X (Twitter). For YouTube, Flickr, and Instagram, engagement was measured mainly through likes and comments, although activity on these platforms was limited. As a result, performance data were not comparable across platforms and did not provide a consistent basis for assessing messaging effectiveness.

51. OIOS analysis using Brandwatch for 2025 showed that overall sentiment on X (Twitter) was predominantly neutral (60 per cent), while negative sentiment accounted for 35 per cent and positive sentiment for only 5 per cent. Peaks in negative sentiment in the last quarter of 2025, as shown in Figure 1, were associated with regional events, including incidents involving civilian casualties from air strikes. Although the negative reactions were mainly directed at the events rather than at the Mission, these posts generated high reach and engagement, indicating the need to distinguish between sentiment toward the Mission and sentiment toward external developments. OIOS also noted that engagement data was not segmented by audience, making it difficult to determine whether communication activities were reaching intended stakeholders.

Figure 1: Sentiment analysis X (Twitter) January-December 2025 (sum of mentions by week)



Source: OIOS analysis of Brandwatch data

52. Additionally, the Mission did not systematically analyze performance by thematic priority. OIOS analysis showed that engagement was concentrated on a limited number of topics, mainly human rights (9.7 per cent) and, to a lesser extent, gender (3.3 per cent), while other priority themes such as humanitarian issues, climate change, forced displacement, and promotion of the Mission's work generated comparatively lower engagement. As the thematic areas were not systematically analyzed, the Mission had limited visibility into the messaging balance and effectiveness.

53. These limitations were due to the absence of an analytical methodology and limited analytical capacity and tools appropriate for different platforms, audiences, and thematic priorities. SCS also noted that Brandwatch was introduced late in the audit period and did not fully support local languages such as Pashto and Dari, limiting its usefulness. As a result, the Mission had limited insight into the effectiveness of its messaging across platforms, audiences, and thematic priorities.

(7) UNAMA should strengthen social media performance by applying consistent metrics for reach, engagement, sentiment, audience response, and thematic coverage across communication platforms.

UNAMA accepted recommendation 7 and stated that regular analytical reporting, including sentiment, reach, and response, would enable the Mission to establish and apply consistent performance metrics. It further noted that the approval of its communications strategy would promote coherence and consistency in thematic coverage across platforms.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of strategic communications and public information in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ² / Important ³	C/O ⁴	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁵
1	UNAMA should establish a mission-wide strategic communications strategy that sets out priorities, governance arrangements, roles and responsibilities, risk management, and monitoring and evaluation arrangements.	Important	O	Pending receipt of evidence that UNAMA has established and implemented a mission-wide strategic communications strategy with clear governance, roles, risks, and monitoring arrangements.	31 August 2026
2	UNAMA should revise the Strategic Communications Section work plan to include a defined timeline for activities, measurable outputs, and the prioritization of activities aligned with available resources.	Important	O	Pending receipt of evidence that UNAMA has revised the Strategic Communications Section work plan to include timelines, measurable outputs, and prioritized activities aligned with available resources.	30 June 2026
3	UNAMA should enhance the integration of field communications by clarifying reporting lines and the Strategic Communications Section's functional authority over field communication planning and outputs.	Important	O	Pending receipt of evidence that UNAMA has clarified reporting lines and strengthened the Strategic Communications Section's functional authority over field communication planning and outputs.	30 June 2026
4	UNAMA should enhance media monitoring and reporting by strengthening information-sharing arrangements and establishing appropriate procedures and tools to identify, track, and report misinformation, disinformation, malinformation, and hate speech.	Important	O	Pending receipt of evidence that UNAMA has strengthened media monitoring through improved information-sharing and tools to track and report misinformation, disinformation, malinformation, and hate speech.	31 July 2026
5	UNAMA should establish a clear and sustainable approach to archiving digital media materials, including appropriate storage and coordination with the United Nations Archives and Records Management Section.	Important	O	Pending receipt of evidence that UNAMA has established a sustainable approach for archiving digital media materials.	30 June 2026

² 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.

³ 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.

⁴ Please note that the value C denotes closed recommendations, whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁵ Date provided by UNAMA in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of strategic communications and public information in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ² / Important ³	C/ O ⁴	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁵
6	UNAMA should enhance its measurement of strategic communications performance through structured evaluation practices.	Important	O	Pending receipt of evidence that UNAMA has strengthened the measurement of strategic communications performance.	31 July 2026
7	UNAMA should strengthen social media performance by applying consistent metrics for reach, engagement, sentiment, audience response, and thematic coverage across communication platforms.	Important	O	Pending receipt of evidence that UNAMA has strengthened social media performance through consistent metrics for reach, engagement, sentiment, audience response, and thematic coverage.	31 July 2026

APPENDIX I

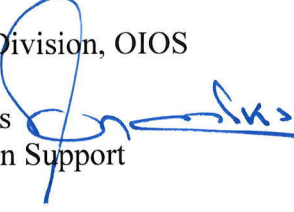
Management Response

UNITED NATIONS ASSISTANCE MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN
UNAMA

Office of the Chief of Mission Support

15 June 2026

To : Mr. Byung-Kun Min
Director,
Internal Audit Division, OIOS

From : Jorge Goncalves 
Chief of Mission Support

Subject: **Draft report on an audit of strategic communications and public information in United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (Assignment No. AP2025-630-02)**

1. Reference is made to your memorandum dated 26 May 2026, ref. OIOS-2026-01054 on the above subject.
2. As requested, please find attached Appendix I which contain UNAMA's response on the audit recommendations.

Kind regards.

cc: Ms. Denise Wilman, Chief of Staff, UNAMA
Mr. Stefan Smith, UNAMA
Ms. Saidu Adam Samura, OIOS
Mr. Adityavikram Pachisia, Audit Focal Point, UNAMA

Management Response

Audit of strategic communications and public information in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted ? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	UNAMA should establish a mission-wide strategic communications strategy that sets out priorities, governance arrangements, roles and responsibilities, risk management, and monitoring and evaluation arrangements.	Important	Yes	Head SCS	31 August 2026	After the mandate renewal on 17 June 2026, the Strategic Communications Section (SCS) will start mission-wide consultations at the technical level. Once finalized the draft strategy will be submitted to the Senior Leadership Team for endorsement, and then to the Head of the Mission/Officer-in-Charge for approval.
2	UNAMA should revise the Strategic Communications Section work plan to include a defined timeline for activities, measurable outputs, and the prioritization of activities aligned with available resources.	Important	Yes	Head SCS	30 June 2026	The 2026 workplan has been revised in line with the approved Mission Workplan. However, it will need to be reviewed and revised, if necessary, in line with the new mandate.
3	UNAMA should enhance integration of field communications by clarifying reporting lines and functional authority of the Strategic Communications Section over field communication planning and outputs.	Important	Yes	Head SCS and PIO	30 June 2026	In cooperation with the Chief of Staff, SCS had a meeting with Heads of Field Offices (HOFOs) on communication and on how the work of the Field Offices (FOs) could be best integrated into the Mission's communication plan and activities. SCS will start holding a monthly meeting with HOFO and Public Information Assistants (PIAs). They will also participate in the elaboration of UNAMA's Communications

¹ 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.

² 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.

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						Strategy and the SCS workplan. SCS and FOs will also jointly design the Communication Outreach plan for the remainder of 2026.
4	UNAMA should enhance media monitoring and reporting by strengthening information-sharing arrangements and establishing appropriate procedures and tools to identify, track, and report misinformation, disinformation, malinformation, and hate speech.	Important	Yes	Head SCS and PIO	31 July 2026	In April SCS started piloting the production of analytical reports using Large Language Models and Brandwatch. A second test will be rolled out in June 2026. The final product for dissemination to be circulated on 2 July. The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for tracking, reporting and addressing misinformation, disinformation, malinformation and hate speech (MDMH) is under development. SCS and the Joint Analysis and Reporting Section are joining a pilot initiative of the Information Integrity Unit, a dedicated entity operating within the UN Department of Peace Operations, on new award-winning Artificial Intelligence tools to support online information analysis, the Monitoring and Analysis of the Information Environment tool and its chatbot assistant. This tool allows for easy analysis of the information environment, tracking MDMH and recording on SAGE.
5	UNAMA should establish a clear and sustainable approach to archiving digital	Important	Yes	Head SCS and PIO	30 June 2026	A draft SOP was finalized on 4 June 2026 and is being shared with

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	media materials, including appropriate storage and coordination with the United Nations Archives and Records Management Section.					relevant UNAMA components and UN Headquarters before finalization.
6	UNAMA should enhance its measurement of strategic communications performance through structured evaluation practices.	Important	Yes	Head SCS	31 July 2026	UNAMA and the United Nations Communications Group in Afghanistan have reached out to the UN-operated Inter-agency Communications and Accountability Centre managed by the United Nations Office for Project Services, which will help design and implement micro telephone surveys. At the same time, contacts with telephone providers for a country-wide survey have been initiated, which will allow for the collection of some quantitative data on the impact of UNAMA communications efforts, such as radio programmes. The design of UNAMA's communications strategy will be preceded by some micro surveys and focus groups to inform findings on sentiment analysis.
7	UNAMA should strengthen social media performance by applying consistent metrics for reach, engagement, sentiment, audience response, and thematic coverage across communication platforms.	Important	Yes	Head SCS	31 July 2026	Regular analytical reports, including sentiment, reach and response, will allow UNAMA to set and apply consistent metrics. The approval of UNAMA's communication strategy will also ensure consistency in the thematic coverage across platforms.