Office of Internal Oversight Services

INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2026/022

Audit of records and information management practices at the Economic Commission for Europe

ECE made some progress in establishing key information management initiatives; however, fragmented governance, inconsistent standards, and limited oversight undermined effective records and information management and increased operational, compliance, and business continuity risks

18 August 2026
Assignment No. AN2025-720-01

Audit of records and information management practices at the Economic Commission for Europe

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of records and information management (RIM) practices at the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of ECE's RIM practices and systems in ensuring adequate records are maintained, secured, properly preserved, and retrievable to support accountability, evidence-based decision-making and business continuity, and to safeguard institutional memory. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2025 and included a review of: (a) policy, roles and responsibilities for records management; (b) digital platforms, repositories and tools; (c) records lifecycle management; (d) operational and documentation efficiency; and (e) business continuity.

ECE initiated measures to improve records management practices, including issuing a metadata directive and photo attribution guidelines, and implemented various practices and digital tools to support the creation, management, and dissemination of information. However, the audit highlighted systemic weaknesses stemming from the absence of a coherent records and information management governance framework. This led to fragmented practices, weak records lifecycle controls, and non-compliance with key requirements. Other gaps included inadequate oversight of locally developed tools, weaknesses in digital repositories, inefficient SharePoint Online practices, and poor physical storage and inventory controls.

OIOS made six recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, ECE needed to:

- Strengthen its records management framework by clarifying roles and responsibilities, enhancing training and oversight, and improving engagement with the Archives and Records Management Section.
- Adopt an official enterprise records repository and configure it to support standardized records classification, naming conventions, access controls, and retention requirements.
- Strengthen its records and information management practices by implementing end to end lifecycle controls for digital and physical records.
- Strengthen centralized monitoring and reporting mechanisms to assess compliance with records management requirements and support timely corrective action.
- Develop a proposal for the Commission to review and rationalize subsidiary body servicing arrangements to align records generation requirements with mandates and available resources.
- Conduct a risk assessment to identify and prioritize vital records and implement measures to protect, preserve and ensure access to in the event of disruptions.

ECE accepted the recommendations and initiated action to implement them. Actions required to close the recommendations are indicated in Annex 1.

CONTENTS

Audit of records and information management practices at the Economic Commission for Europe

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of records and information management (RIM) practices at the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

2. ECE was established on 28 March 1947 pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 36 (IV). It comprises 56 Member States and is supported by a secretariat. The Commission meets biennially to set the strategic direction, approve the programme of work, and provide a forum for high-level policy dialogue on regional economic cooperation and sustainable development. Between sessions, it is supported by the Executive Committee, sectoral committees, and a wide network of subsidiary bodies, including working parties, task forces, and expert groups, which carry out the bulk of technical and normative work. Under the leadership of the Executive Secretary, the secretariat provides substantive, technical, and administrative support to these processes, including organizing meetings, preparing documentation, facilitating policy dialogue, and assisting Member States in developing and implementing norms, standards, and conventions. This governance and support structure generates a continuous, cyclical flow of diverse documentation with varying sizes and complexities across subprogrammes.

3. The Secretary-General's bulletin on record-keeping and the management of United Nations archives (ST/SGB/2007/5) defines records as any information created, received, and maintained as evidence of official United Nations activities, regardless of format or medium. United Nations entities and staff members are responsible for creating, receiving, retaining, and disposing of documents and records in accordance with policy, standards and procedures issued by the Archives and Records Management Section (ARMS) in the Department of Operational Support. ECE also receives guidance on records management and archiving from the United Nations Library and Archives in the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG).

4. ECE's core records include parliamentary documents, publications, and technical materials,[1] together with the associated electronic data and records that evidence its decisions, operations, and mandates. These records are stored across multiple platforms, including websites, Microsoft 365 tools such as SharePoint Online (SPO) and Teams, in-house databases, and other subprogramme-specific systems and collaborative platforms. Enterprise platforms such as Umoja and Inspira provide platforms for administrative and human resources management functions and records.

5. ECE's Executive Secretary is at the Under-Secretary-General level and is supported by a Deputy Executive Secretary at the D-2 level. It has six programmatic divisions, each led by a director at the D-1 level, overseeing eight subprogrammes, with some divisions responsible for more than one subprogramme. The Administrative Division is responsible for programme planning and core administrative functions and serves as liaison with the United Nations Headquarters and UNOG, the designated service provider for ECE.

6. The approved regular budget for ECE in 2025 was $40.9 million, of which 96 per cent was allocated to staff costs, and 4 per cent for non-staff costs, including expenditures related to RIM, such as website management, cloud storage, cybersecurity, information and communication technology (ICT) upgrades,

[1] Comprising documents, data, and analytical outputs that ECE produces to develop and support its standards, methodologies, and technical work.

and adoption of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) tools. Extrabudgetary resources estimates were $23.3 million, $28.0 million, and $27.9 million for 2023, 2024, and 2025, respectively.

7. Comments provided by ECE are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

8. The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of ECE's RIM practices and systems in ensuring adequate records are maintained and are secure, properly preserved, and retrievable to support accountability, evidence-based decision-making and business continuity, and to safeguard institutional memory.

9. This audit was included in the 2025 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the risk that deficiencies in ECE's records management practices could compromise the integrity, security and retention of records.

10. OIOS conducted this audit from January to April 2026. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2025 and included a review of: (a) policy, roles and responsibilities for records management; (b) digital platforms, repositories and tools; (c) records lifecycle management; (d) operational and documentation efficiency; and (e) business continuity. Records and information systems such as official documents and correspondence, websites, databases, SharePoint, and physical records in four divisions: Transport, Environment, Statistics, and Administrative, as well as in the Chef de Cabinet's Office, were selected for detailed review. The audit did not assess the substantive accuracy or quality of the information in the records, nor did it include Secretariat-wide systems outside ECE's control or social media management.

11. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with senior management, RIM focal points and other relevant ECE personnel, a representative of the Bureau of the Commission, and key service providers, including UNOG and its Division of Conference Management (DCM), and ARMS; (b) review of relevant programme and administrative documentation and official correspondence; (c) review of general controls of selected records management systems and tools; (d) analytical review of data; (e) sample testing of electronic and paper records, including correspondence, meeting documentation, and policy records; and (f) physical observation of records storage and handling practices.

12. To assess the reliability of RIM data in ECE, OIOS conducted walkthroughs of key platforms and repositories (including SPO, websites, and in-house tracking tools that support various processes); validated data through sample testing of records, metadata,[2] and version controls; and corroborated system outputs with underlying records and user practices. OIOS concluded that ECE's digital RIM systems were fragmented, inconsistently configured, and insufficiently monitored, posing risks to data integrity, retention, accessibility, and compliance with United Nations standards. Further details are provided in sections B and C of this report.

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

[2] Metadata is the structured information that describes, explains, or locates other data, making it easier to organize, find, and manage raw information. Without metadata, digital files and databases would be chaotic and unsearchable.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Policy, roles and responsibilities for records management

<u>Fragmented records management practices due to a lack of a governance framework</u>

14. ST/SGB/2007/5 requires entities to establish clear governance, roles, and accountability for RIM to preserve records for their administrative, fiscal, legal, historical, or informational value.

15. ECE had not established comprehensive internal procedures and guidelines to comply with the Organizational policies, standards and guidelines on records management, although there was specific guidance in some areas. Further, no organizational unit had been clearly designated as being responsible for ensuring the implementation of appropriate RIM practices. These gaps contributed to inconsistencies across ECE divisions in how records were created, described, digitized, stored, retained, and archived. For example, one division had digitized its meeting participants' records, while another had not. Similarly, some divisions applied metadata schema requirements, whereas others did not. Certain divisions also established specific archiving practices for storing and organizing records in SharePoint or physical filing systems, while others had not.

16. Further, ECE had limited engagement with ARMS and UNOG on guidance regarding records management. ECE indicated that it was of the view that UNOG, as the service provider, was responsible for establishing and monitoring the records management function; however, this assumption was not supported by established roles and responsibilities. While the price list in the service level agreement with UNOG included records management services under Library and Archives services, it did not clarify each party's respective obligations, contrary to relevant guidance. The absence of such provisions created ambiguity regarding the respective responsibilities of the parties.

17. In addition, while divisional RIM focal points had participated in training led by the ECE Records Management Unit in October 2019, they had not undertaken the more comprehensive, role-based training provided by ARMS to enable them to execute their functions effectively.

18. Collectively, the above gaps increased the risk that records of administrative, substantive, legal, or historical value may not be systematically captured, maintained, and preserved.

(1) ECE should enhance its records management framework, including: (a) developing comprehensive internal procedures and guidelines, clearly assigning roles and providing appropriate training and oversight; (b) delineating responsibilities for records management between ECE and UNOG; and (c) strengthening engagement with the Archives and Records Management Section.

ECE accepted recommendation 1 and stated that a new internal directive would be prepared by a dedicated ECE records management task force, comprising focal points from all divisions and chaired by the Chef de Cabinet, with advice from ARMS.

B. Digital platforms, repositories and tools

Lack of an enterprise digital repository

19. Secretary-General's bulletins ST/SGB/2007/5 and ST/SGB/2007/6[3] require that official records be maintained in approved systems to ensure authenticity, integrity, reliability, and usability. RIM best practices require controlled repositories with standardized metadata, classification, retention, and auditability.

20. ECE had not implemented an enterprise digital repository to centrally manage, store, and provide controlled access to its records, resulting in fragmented storage platforms limiting the ability to consistently manage, search, retrieve, and retain information in accordance with business and legislative requirements. In contrast, other United Nations regional economic commissions had implemented structured digital repositories that enabled them to centrally manage records, improve retrieval, and ensure consistent classification and access control.

21. ECE held approximately eight terabytes of data across multiple platforms. However, storage practices varied across divisions: some maintained meeting documentation and working papers on the UNECE wiki (Confluence) with limited metadata and informal naming conventions, while others maintained similar records in SharePoint organized by calendar year, function, or activity. In addition, programme-specific datasets and technical materials were often stored in separate databases or local tools (e.g., the Executive Office intranet), without appropriate sensitivity labeling, increasing the risk of inappropriate access, sharing, or handling and making it difficult to locate and identify complete and authoritative (official) records. Retention and disposition controls were not systematically applied, resulting in indefinite retention or undocumented deletion of records.

22. In 2020, the Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT) implemented the Unite Workspace project, introducing Microsoft 365 (SPO and Teams) as the standard platform for file sharing and collaboration across the Secretariat. Leveraging existing Microsoft 365 platforms such as SPO for enterprise content management could help ECE to strengthen digital information and records management capabilities, enhance governance, improve efficiency, and achieve cost-effective records management.

(2) ECE should adopt a digital platform as its official enterprise records repository and configure it to support standardized naming and classification of documents, access controls, and retention policies for consistent and compliant records management.

ECE accepted recommendation 2 and stated that the Information Systems Unit (ISU) would define the technical modalities for designating and configuring an official enterprise records repository, which would be incorporated into the directive envisaged under recommendation 1.

Action was being taken to enhance oversight of locally developed digital tools

23. ICT governance frameworks require that system development and digital tools be centrally governed to ensure standardization, data integrity, cybersecurity, interoperability, and alignment with enterprise architecture, including integration with corporate systems such as Umoja and Inspira.

[3] On information sensitivity, classification and handling

24. A staff member in ECE's Executive Office developed and maintained 12 standalone applications and tools without the involvement or oversight of ISU. This practice created a critical dependency on this staff member. In addition, several of these systems duplicated information already maintained in enterprise platforms, were not subject to reconciliation or monitoring controls to ensure completeness and consistency and were developed outside established information technology governance frameworks. This limited data consistency and oversight while increasing risks related to security, data integrity, duplication, and business continuity.

25. In 2025, ECE started to take corrective actions, including migrating some of the applications to corporate platforms such as PowerApps and Power BI, and documenting the remaining applications' technology, dependencies, access needs, costs, and usage to identify risks, gaps, and actions required. ECE also stated that a data inventory and compliance review against the information sensitivity, classification, and handling policy and the data protection and privacy policy were in progress. Since ECE has initiated action on this issue, OIOS did not make a recommendation.

C. Records lifecycle management

Weaknesses in records lifecycle management

26. ST/SGB/2007/5 requires offices to manage records throughout their lifecycle, including their creation, classification, storage, retention, archiving, and disposal, and to implement ARMS-approved retention schedules. Administrative instruction ST/AI/2022/2 on the use and management of ICT resources and data, and the 2024 ECE Website Directive, further require compliance with metadata standards and copyright and attribution requirements.

27. OIOS observed the following weaknesses in records lifecycle management:

(a) Records creation and classification

i. Non-compliance with metadata schema requirements

28. ECE established a metadata directive requiring standardized metadata (e.g., document type, author, date, subject classification, and retention category) and unique identifiers for digital content, including documents, multimedia products, statistical databases, and webpages. However, this was not consistently applied. Required metadata elements were not embedded in document-creation or publication workflows, and website documents were created without mandatory metadata fields. The Web Working Group (WWG), composed of representatives from ECE sub-programmes and units, including the Chiefs of the Information Unit and ISU, and web experts, was responsible for providing oversight and advice on ECE's web presence. While the WWG Chair was required to monitor and report to the Executive Secretary on the implementation of the directive on metadata tagging, there was no evidence that this was done. ECE explained that ISU had not made the required monitoring functionality available by the end of 2025, preventing the WWG from monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the directive. As a result, divisions continued to create and maintain records without consistently applying classification standards or metadata tagging, thereby limiting the records' discoverability and usability by staff and other eligible users.

ii. Non-compliance with copyright and intellectual property requirements

29. ECE did not consistently apply copyright and intellectual property controls when publishing content. Between 2020 and 2025, ECE received 13 copyright infringement claims totaling $9,282, relating

to 17 images used on its website and in presentations. Of these, 10 claims were settled for $6,766, while 3 claims estimated at $2,516 remained under review. Most claims were related to legacy content migrated from the old Typo3 content management system[4] that remained publicly accessible on the current website. Divisions applied inconsistent criteria for identifying and removing outdated content, and some unpublished documents remained accessible through direct links. While the monetary amounts of the claims were not material, the handling of these claims required additional resources, including staff time for review and, where applicable, legal advice and administrative follow-up.

30. ECE also lacked consistent attribution practices, particularly for AI-generated or AI-altered images and had no effective tools to detect copyrighted images in documents. In 2025, ECE issued photo attribution guidelines that established a baseline for proper crediting of images and graphics, including AI-generated materials. While these guidelines supported improved consistency, they did not address legacy content and the use of third-party content.

(b) Records use and maintenance

31. Records should be maintained to ensure their integrity, accessibility, reliability, and usability throughout their lifecycle, supporting operational, legal, and accountability requirements.

32. Some systems used to maintain records did not meet minimum ICT requirements, including the absence of data encryption and regular security updates. Critical systems, such as UN/LOCODE[5] were operating on outdated architectures with known vulnerabilities, thereby increasing the risk of system failure, cyberattacks, unauthorized access, and data integrity issues. These weaknesses could potentially disrupt the availability of essential services and data relied upon by Member States and other stakeholders. In addition, OIOS observed that some documents published on the ECE website contained edits in tracked changes, exposing embedded comments and potentially sensitive information, indicating insufficient controls over the review and finalization of records prior to dissemination. Resource constraints limited ECE's ability to modernize and sustain its digital infrastructure.

(c) Storage, retention and disposal

i. Inefficient storage practices

33. Entities are expected to ensure the timely transfer of inactive content to appropriate archival systems and promote the efficient and cost-effective use of resources, including information technology storage solutions.

34. ECE used SPO to store large volumes of records for both active and inactive records and did not implement existing SPO file management guidelines governing the cleanup and deletion of redundant files and the transfer of data into appropriate storage locations. This led to the accumulation of outdated and redundant files and OIOS observed several versions of documents in storage, indicating the lack of version control. OICT periodically sent SPO storage utilization rates to RIM focal points, who in return requested that staff delete unnecessary files; however, this was sometimes done without proper assessment. ECE did not have effective tools or mechanisms to identify and eliminate duplicate and redundant records.

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[4] The legacy open-source content management system previously used by ECE to manage website content, from which historical material was migrated to the current platform.

[5] Standardized coding system for identifying trade and transport locations worldwide

35. SPO storage was allocated based on licensed users (10 gigabytes (GB) per account). Despite the availability of more cost-effective archiving options (e.g., Unite Archive and ROMA[6]), ECE continued to expand its primary SPO storage at a cost of $0.13 per GB per month, without assessing cost efficiency, resulting in higher storage costs. The comparative costs of alternative storage solutions were:

- Unite Archive: $0.05 per GB/month
- ROMA: $0.04 per GB/month (plus optional backup)

36. The lack of standardized retention criteria and archiving procedures limited the systematic identification and transfer of inactive content to appropriate archival solutions. In both 2024 and 2025, ECE purchased an additional 4 terabytes of SPO storage to accommodate content growth. This reliance on premium SPO storage, rather than lower-cost archival alternatives, resulted in avoidable additional costs estimated at $1,966 per year compared to ROMA and $3,932 per year compared to Unite Archive.

ii. Inadequate physical storage facilities and inventory-control procedures

37. In 2020, as part of the Strategic Heritage Plan, ECE undertook an entity-wide records management initiative during its temporary relocation, including the review, archiving, and disposal of paper records. OIOS inspected four facilities where ECE publications were stored. Although the two archival facilities managed by the UNOG Institutional Memory Section had appropriate controls, the ECE-managed storage rooms lacked essential safeguards, including environmental monitoring, restricted access, proper labeling, and inventory and tracking systems. Records were sometimes stored improperly, including on the floor or on unlabeled shelves, and storage areas were also used for unrelated ICT equipment. ECE also did not have adequate controls over its publications inventory, as evidenced by the absence of a centralized register, unique identification system, stock reconciliation, and systematic reprinting checks and distribution tracking. As a result, ECE faced increased risks of loss, damage, or unauthorized access to physical records and publications. Weak controls over the publication inventory also increased the likelihood of unnecessary reprinting and inefficient use of resources.

38. The UNOG Institutional Memory Section stated that blanket retention schedules were used for physical records transferred to the archival facilities. However, ECE acknowledged that retention schedules may not have been applied consistently in all cases. This, together with ambiguity regarding the respective responsibilities of UNOG and ECE in records management, led ECE to assume that UNOG was responsible for retention-related procedures, thereby limiting ECE's ability to ensure compliance with retention requirements.

39. The issues identified indicate weaknesses in ECE's oversight and monitoring of records management requirements. Although ECE had established certain records management policies and directives, key guidance was incomplete in some areas, including retention requirements and archival procedures. In addition, there was limited evidence of effective processes for verifying implementation, monitoring compliance, and ensuring consistent application of records management requirements across divisions.

(3) ECE should strengthen its records and information management practices by implementing end-to-end lifecycle controls for digital and physical records, including: (a) establishing key guidelines such as retention schedules, archiving procedures, and copyright attribution

[6] ROMA (Read-Only Migrated Applications) is an internal digital archiving solution used for internal preservation of legacy operational records

guidelines for third-party and legacy content; and (b) establishing procedures for the systematic transfer of inactive records to cost-efficient storage solutions.

ECE accepted recommendation 3 and stated that each division director would be responsible to implement strengthened records management practices in accordance with the ECE-wide guidance to be established under recommendation 1. The Programme Management and Support Services Division will support the establishment of key guidelines and procedures.

(4) ECE should strengthen centralized monitoring and reporting on records management practices, including: (a) conducting periodic compliance reviews; and (b) requiring regular reporting by the Web Working Group, and taking remedial action as necessary.

ECE accepted recommendation 4 and stated that centralized monitoring and reporting would be addressed through the new directive to be developed under recommendations 1. The Chef de Cabinet will monitor periodic compliance, while the Information Unit will monitor the reporting requirements.

D. Operational and documentation efficiency

Inefficient planning and rationalization of documentation outputs and servicing arrangements

40. ECE generated large volumes of parliamentary and other official documentation to serve its governing and subsidiary bodies and committees, as indicated in paragraph 2. The increasing volume of documentation coincided with declining conference servicing resources and Secretariat-wide efforts to rationalize output under the UN 80 Initiative. In 2025, DCM instructed ECE to reduce documentation volumes and word counts by 10 per cent using 2024 actual outputs as the baseline. While the aggregate documentation targets were met, ECE did not sufficiently differentiate documentation and servicing practices across its subsidiary bodies based on governance requirements or business needs. Outputs (including technical reports, draft standards, policy recommendations, and analytical studies) produced by expert groups and subsidiary bodies (such as working parties and task forces) were often comparable in scope and complexity to those of formal intergovernmental bodies, without a clear rationale. This further contributed to the large volume and potential duplication of records.

41. Additionally, ECE did not systematically consider and use alternative, less resource-intensive formats (e.g., digital or informal outputs) where formal parliamentary documentation was not required. As a result, ECE faced avoidable inefficiencies, sustained pressure on translation capacity, and reduced flexibility to allocate resources strategically, contrary to the efficiency objectives of the UN80 Initiative.

42. ECE had launched the "Right-Sizing, Right-Servicing" initiative in 2024 to streamline mandates, modernize working methods, and improve efficiency. Measures introduced included streamlining meetings and parliamentary documentation and strengthening internal coordination through an ECE-wide community of practice to improve consistency, reduce the volume and length of documents, and enhance engagement with DCM. However, the results of the initiative were yet to be fully realized. As of 20 April 2026, ECE's 2026 translation quota was almost fully consumed by parliamentary documents (approximately 6.5 million of 6.7 million words), leaving only 197,496 words, far short of the approximately 2.2 million words required for the 34 planned publications. This shortfall may constrain ECE's ability to produce and disseminate its critical analytical outputs.

43. In addition, coordination with DCM was strained as a previously established task force that facilitated discussions on document outputs and harmonized approaches between ECE and DCM was no

longer active. ECE stated that the task force would be reactivated and that periodic meetings would resume under the direction of the Chef de Cabinet.

(5) ECE should, as part of its "Right-Sizing, Right-Servicing" initiative, develop a proposal for the Commission to review and rationalize the servicing of subsidiary bodies to align the volume, format and frequency of records with mandates and available resources.

ECE accepted recommendation 5 and stated that, under the leadership of the Chef de Cabinet, a proposal to review and rationalize the servicing arrangements for subsidiary bodies would be developed and reflected in a draft decision for consideration by the seventy-second Commission.

E. Business continuity

There was a need to develop an entity-specific business continuity plan

44. United Nations business continuity requirements call for each entity to maintain plans identifying essential functions, recovery priorities, responsible staff, critical ICT systems, and vital records (critical information needed to continue operations and meet obligations following a disruption), and periodically test these arrangements. While UNOG provides site-wide coordination, ECE was required to prepare its own entity-level business continuity plan, defining its own continuity requirements.

45. ECE maintained a predominantly digital records environment, with approximately 99 per cent of records in electronic form. Most of these records were covered by the integrated business continuity and crisis management plan for UNOG, prepared by the Geneva-based United Nations Crisis Management Team, last updated in May 2025. Although the plan covered Geneva-based staff, assets and operations and defined ECE's reporting role, it did not address ECE-specific business continuity requirements, including the identification of vital records and systems.

46. ECE also had not established a formal business continuity planning process to document its own actions in the event of disruption. A 2022 assessment by OICT indicated limited prioritization of business continuity within substantive divisions, heightening the risk of unpreparedness, service delays, and failure to meet mandated obligations. The report recommended that ECE add business continuity risks to its risk register. Although ECE included business continuity considerations in its 2025–2026 risk register, mitigation actions remained focused on ICT infrastructure (e.g., system availability, data backup, and cybersecurity) rather than on broader operational and records continuity requirements such as ensuring the continuity of key intergovernmental processes and documentation flows in the event of disruption, maintaining access to official records, and preserving institutional memory.

47. As a result, ECE could not ensure timely recovery of essential services, increasing the risk of operational disruptions, delays in servicing intergovernmental processes, non-compliance with mandates, and potential loss of institutional memory.

(6) ECE should conduct a risk assessment to identify and prioritize vital records and ensure appropriate measures are in place to protect, access and preserve them in the event of disruptions.

ECE accepted recommendation 6 and stated that the Programme Management and Support Services Division would conduct a risk assessment and the results will be reflected in relevant operational documents, including the risk register and risk treatment plans.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

ANNEX I

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of records and information management practices at the Economic Commission for Europe

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[7]/ Important[8]	C/ O[9]	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date[10]
1	ECE should enhance its records management framework, including: (a) developing comprehensive internal procedures and guidelines, clearly assigning roles and providing appropriate training and oversight; (b) delineating responsibilities for records management between ECE and UNOG; and (c) strengthening engagement with the Archives and Records Management Section.	Important	O	Receipt of approved ECE records management directive and evidence of implementation.	31 December 2027
2	ECE should adopt a digital platform as its official enterprise records repository and configure it to support standardized naming and classification of documents, access controls, and retention policies for consistent and compliant records management.	Important	O	Receipt of ECE designation and configuration of an official enterprise records repository and evidence of implementation of the required records management controls.	31 December 2027
3	ECE should strengthen its records and information management practices by implementing end-to-end lifecycle controls for digital and physical records, including: (a) establishing key guidelines such as retention schedules, archiving procedures, and copyright attribution guidelines for third-party and legacy content; and (b) establishing procedures for the systematic transfer of inactive records to cost-efficient storage solutions.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of implementation of lifecycle controls for digital and physical records.	31 December 2027

[7] 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.
[8] 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.
[9] Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.
[10] Date provided by ECE in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of records and information management practices at the Economic Commission for Europe

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[7]/ Important[8]	C/ O[9]	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date[10]
4	ECE should strengthen centralized monitoring and reporting on records management practices, including: (a) conducting periodic compliance reviews; and (b) requiring regular reporting by the Web Working Group, and taking remedial action as necessary.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of centralized monitoring and reporting on records management practices.	31 December 2028
5	ECE should, as part of its "Right-Sizing, Right-Servicing" initiative, develop a proposal for the Commission to review and rationalize the servicing of subsidiary bodies to align the volume, format and frequency of records with mandates and available resources.	Important	O	Receipt of the draft proposal to the Commission to review and rationalize servicing arrangements for subsidiary bodies.	31 December 2027
6	ECE should conduct a risk assessment to identify and prioritize vital records and ensure appropriate measures are in place to protect, access, and preserve them in the event of disruptions.	Important	O	Receipt of operational documents reflecting risk assessments and prioritization of vital records.	31 December 2027

APPENDIX I

Management Response

UNECE

Executive Secretary
Under-Secretary-General

MEMORANDUM

To:	Ms. Fatoumata Ndiaye, Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services	Ref.: 2026/OES/164 Date: 11 August 2026
From:	Tatiana Molcean Executive Secretary	cc: Byung-Kun Min, Director, Internal Audit Division, OIOS

Subject: **Draft report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the Audit of records and information management practices at the Economic Commission for Europe (AN2025-720-01)**

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1. I refer to your memorandum dated 28 July 2026, transmitting the formal draft report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the Audit of records and information management practices at the Economic Commission for Europe (AN2025-720-01).

2. UNECE appreciates the continuous efforts of OIOS to make recommendations on how the secretariat can improve its operations and better support ECE member States, included through strengthened practices and approaches to programme delivery.

3. UNECE notes with satisfaction the report's findings that it "made some progress in establishing key information management initiatives".

4. UNECE accepts the 6 recommendations in the report and remains committed to continuing addressing the shortcomings pertaining to taking steps to address the shortcomings pertaining to "fragmented governance, inconsistent standards, and limited oversight [which] undermine effective records and information management and increase operational, compliance, and business continuity risks" through the actions identified in the annexed Management Response (refer to Annex I).

5. I take this opportunity to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Report and to commend the professionalism of the OIOS team.

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
Email: executive.secretary@un.org

APPENDIX I

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Audit of records and information management practices at the Economic Commission for Europe

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[11]/ Important[12]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	ECE should enhance its records management framework, including: (a) developing comprehensive internal procedures and guidelines, clearly assigning roles and providing appropriate training and oversight; (b) delineating responsibilities for records management between ECE and UNOG; and (c) strengthening engagement with the Archives and Records Management Section.	Important	Yes	Chef de Cabinet, Office of the Executive Secretary Division Directors for implementation	31 December 2027	ECE accepts the recommendation. Steps (a) to (c) will be formalized in a new internal UNECE Directive, to be prepared by a dedicated UNECE records management Task Force comprising Focal Points from all Divisions, and chaired by the Chef de Cabinet, drawing on the advice of the Archives and Records Management Section of the Department of Operational Support. Implementation will be under the responsibility of each Division Director.
2	ECE should adopt a digital platform as its official enterprise records repository and configure it to support standardized naming and classification of documents, access controls, and retention policies for consistent and compliant records management.	Important	Yes	Chief, Information Systems Unit, Executive Office Division Directors for implementation	31 December 2027	ECE accepts the recommendation. The technical modalities will be defined by the Information Systems Unit (ISU) and included in the Directive foreseen in Rec #1. Implementation will be under the responsibility of each Division Director.
3	ECE should strengthen its records and information management practices by implementing end-to-end lifecycle	Important	Yes	Director, Programme Management	31 December 2027	ECE accepts the recommendation.

[11] 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.
[12] 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.

APPENDIX I

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Audit of records and information management practices at the Economic Commission for Europe

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[11]/ Important[12]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
	controls for digital and physical records, including: (a) establishing key guidelines such as retention schedules, archiving procedures, and copyright attribution guidelines for third-party and legacy content; and (b) establishing procedures for the systematic transfer of inactive records to cost-efficient storage solutions.			and Support Services Division		Implementation of stronger records and management practices will be the responsibility of each Division Director, in line with the overarching UNECE-wide guidance (see Rec #1); The Programme Management and Support Services Division (PMSSD) will support the guidance for points (a) and (b).
4	ECE should strengthen centralized monitoring and reporting on records management practices, including: (a) conducting periodic compliance reviews; and (b) requiring regular reporting by the Web Working Group, and taking remedial action as necessary.	Important	Yes	Chef de Cabinet, Office of the Executive Secretary (Part (a)) Chief, Information Unit (Part (b))	31 December 2028	ECE accepts the recommendation. Parts (a) and (b) will be addressed in the new Directive as per recommendations 1-3, with responsibility for implementation under each Division Director. Part (a) will be monitored by the Chef de Cabinet, and part (b) by the Information Unit (IU).
5	ECE should, as part of its “Right-Sizing, Right-Servicing” initiative, develop a proposal for the Commission to review and rationalize the servicing of subsidiary bodies to align the volume, format and frequency of records with mandates and available resources.	Important	Yes	Chef de Cabinet, Office of the Executive Secretary	31 December 2027	ECE accepts the recommendation. Under the lead of the Chef de Cabinet, a proposal will be reflected in a draft decision for consideration by the 72nd Commission.
6	ECE should conduct a risk assessment to identify and prioritize vital records and ensure appropriate measures are in place to protect, access, and preserve them, thereby ensuring continuity of operations	Important	Yes	Director, Programme Management and Support	31 December 2027	ECE accepts the recommendation. A risk assessment will be conducted by PMSSD and reflected in appropriate operational documents

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Audit of records and information management practices at the Economic Commission for Europe

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[11]/ Important[12]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
	and fulfillment of mandated responsibilities in the event of disruptions			Services Division		(Risk Register, Risk Treatment Plans).