



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2024/015

Audit of the delegation of authority framework at the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

There is need to review and clearly document the sub-delegation structure for procurement and service contractors, and strengthen the monitoring of key performance indicators

08 May 2024

Assignment No. AE2023-360-04

Audit of the delegation of authority framework at the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the delegation of authority framework at the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes in implementing the delegation of authority framework at UNOV/UNODC. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2021 to 30 September 2023 and included a review of risk areas relating to delegation of authority including: (a) the sub-delegation structure; (b) reporting and monitoring mechanisms; and (c) relationship with service providers.

The audit showed that there was a need for UNOV/UNODC to review and clearly document the sub-delegation structure for procurement and service contractors and strengthen monitoring of key performance indicators.

OIOS made four recommendations. To address the issues identified in the audit, UNOV/UNODC needed to:

- Review and clearly document the procurement authority delegated to field offices and establish mechanisms for reviewing and amending the level of delegated authority as appropriate;
- Sensitize Security Liaison Officers (SLOs) and their focal points on their roles and responsibilities and the importance of performing SLO tasks as prescribed, and provide SLOs with access to the information in the delegation of authority portal;
- Establish appropriate mechanisms to ensure that underperforming indicators are effectively monitored, and lessons learned are identified and addressed; and
- Ensure that the role of field office representatives in administering service contractors and approving absences is clearly documented in service level agreements or other formal documents, and establish mechanisms for reporting exceptions to the service contract policy.

UNOV/UNODC accepted the 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 the delegation of authority framework at the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the delegation of authority framework at the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).
2. On 1 January 2019, the Secretary-General introduced a revised framework for delegating increased authority to heads of entities as outlined in ST/SGB/2019/2. The framework is a key pillar of the Secretary-General's management reforms and aims at further decentralizing decision-making, aligning authority with responsibilities, and strengthening accountabilities. The Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance (DMSPC) has the overarching role of monitoring the use of delegated authority through key performance indicators (KPIs), while the Department of Operational Support (DOS) has the role of advising, guiding, training and supporting entities on the implementation of the framework.
3. UNOV is mandated to provide administrative and operational support services to UNODC and other United Nations entities and offices based in Vienna and one entity in Turin, while UNODC is mandated to support Member States in facing threats and impact of drugs and crime. The two entities have one head of office at the Under-Secretary-General level who serves as the Director-General of UNOV and Executive Director of UNODC, as well as a common Division for Management. In 2023, UNOV had a total of 259 posts with a budget of \$39 million, and UNODC had 910 posts with a budget of \$392 million.
4. The Secretary-General delegated to the Director-General of UNOV and Executive Director of UNODC (DG/ED) authority for 79 actions in four functional areas. The DG/ED retained 13 of the delegated actions and distributed the rest to Directors and other officials of UNOV and UNODC along functional and reporting lines as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of delegated actions

Functional area	Retained by the DG/ED	Delegated to other officials	Total
Budget and Finance	2	13	15
Human Resources	11	42	53
Procurement	0	7	7
Property Management	0	4	4
Total	13	66	79

5. Comments provided by UNOV/UNODC are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

6. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes in implementing the delegation of authority framework at UNOV/UNODC.
7. This audit was included in the 2023 risk-based work plan of UNOV and UNODC due to the risk that potential weaknesses in implementing the new delegation of authority framework could affect the achievement of their business objectives.

8. OIOS conducted this audit from December 2023 to January 2024. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2021 to 30 September 2023 and included a review of risk areas relating to delegation of authority including: (a) the sub-delegation structure; (b) reporting and monitoring mechanisms; and (c) relationship with service providers.

9. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel; (b) review of relevant documentation; (c) analytical review of data; (d) sample testing; and (e) surveys.

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

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Sub-delegation structure

Need to update and clearly document the delegation of authority structure for procurement

11. UNOV/UNODC adopted a cascading structure for sub-delegating authority which OIOS considered was appropriate given the size and structure of the two entities. Interviews with UNOV/UNODC directors and UNODC field office representatives showed that they generally found the new delegation of authority framework to have had a positive impact on programme delivery.

12. The overall UNOV/UNODC sub-delegation structure was documented in a matrix (delegation matrix) that outlined, for each of the four functional areas, the titles of officials to whom the authority would be sub-delegated, and whether the authority could be further sub-delegated. In addition, the Human Resources Management Service (HRMS) had a separate document that addressed the delegation structure for human resources actions in more granular details. At the individual staff level, all authority was delegated and accepted in the online delegation of authority portal, as required. Arrangements for delegation to Officers-in-Charge were also in place.

13. For three of the functional areas (human resources, finance and budget, and property management) the sub-delegation structure was clearly documented and understood by staff. However, for procurement, the totality of information in the delegation matrix and the delegator's comments in the delegation of authority portal did not clearly reflect the authority delegated to heads of field offices. The fact that heads of field offices were not authorized to approve procurement actions involving piggybacking on contracts of other United Nations entities and those involving use of previous solicitation exercises was also not clearly reflected in the portal. The matrix attached in the portal was the Secretariat-wide matrix which did not clearly address delegation issues for non-procurement officials.

14. Clearly documenting and communicating the sub-delegation structure and the authority delegated to individual staff is essential for accountability purposes. It would also help field offices to better understand the rationale for the delegation structure and related limitations, and the extent to which they could request for additional authority within the established thresholds and policies. In addition, the results of the OIOS survey of 17 field office representatives, which attracted 14 responses, showed that some field offices considered the level of procurement authority delegated to their offices to be insufficient and not commensurate with the expanding size and budgets of their operations. This showed that there was a need for UNOV/UNODC to regularly review whether the procurement delegation structure remained relevant for its field offices.

(1) UNOV/UNODC should: (a) review and clearly document the procurement authority delegated to field offices; and (b) establish mechanisms for reviewing and amending the level of delegated authority as appropriate.

UNOV/UNODC accepted recommendation 1 and stated that subject to the release of a new matrix by the United Nations Headquarters for entities with special delegations, it will develop guidance notes on its implementation and will provide training through the UNOV/UNODC Procurement Unit, in coordination with relevant Divisions. If the new matrix is not released by 31 December 2025, UNOV/UNODC will proceed to develop its own internal guidance notes based on the current matrix.

Need for guidance on delegation of authority issues for offices with dual reporting lines

15. The Conference Management Service (CMS) and the Safety and Security Service (SSS) of UNOV had dual-reporting lines to the Director-General of UNOV as well as to heads of their respective departments, namely the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) and the Department of Safety and Security (DSS). Interviews with UNOV managers showed that they were clear about their roles and responsibilities in the dual-reporting arrangement. However, there were some inconsistencies in the way the delegation of authority was documented and KPIs reported which needed to be streamlined to avoid blurring accountability. For CMS, the Under Secretary-General of DGACM sub-delegated the authority to the Director-General of UNOV formally in the delegation of authority portal, while DSS communicated the delegation of authority structure in a memo. In the dashboard maintained by the Business Transformation and Accountability Division (BTAD) of DMSPC, the KPI data for SSS was reflected under UNOV while the data for CMS was reflected only under DGACM. In comparison, at the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) except for advance purchase travel data, all other data for the Division of Conference Management was reflected under UNOG. As dual reporting lines is a systemic issue that affects other Offices away from Headquarters, OIOS will assess this matter at Headquarters.

Need to ensure that Security Liaison Officers are sensitized on their roles and responsibilities

16. OIOS' review showed that the responsibilities for managing the delegation of authority portal were appropriately assigned and authority delegated to staff was issued and revoked in a timely manner in the portal. For the delegated actions that were exercised through Umoja, Security Liaison Officers (SLOs) were responsible for facilitating Umoja user access provisioning and ensuring that the staff requesting Umoja roles had accepted the delegated authority in the portal and undertaken the prescribed mandatory training. In total, 41 out of 396 Umoja roles required the role holder to have delegated authority. UNOV/UNODC had appropriately assigned the SLO functions to 7 SLOs and 46 SLO focal points in various Divisions and field offices.

17. OIOS' review of 60 out of 336 cases of Umoja roles assigned in 2021-2023 showed that the SLOs and their focal points were performing the task of verifying compliance with training requirements before granting Umoja roles as expected. However, SLOs and their focal points did not consistently verify that staff requesting roles in Umoja had been granted and had accepted the required authority in the delegation of authority portal. Two SLOs and four SLO focal points who responded to OIOS' survey indicated that they do not normally verify the acceptance of authority in the delegation of authority portal before processing Umoja access requests. In 2023, nine Umoja roles at UNOV were provisioned to staff who had not yet been granted the required delegated authority. Four of these roles were assigned one year before the staff accepted the delegated authority in the portal.

18. In addition, five SLOs and nine focal points never generated the segregation of duties reports periodically as required, despite regular reminders by the Umoja/Enterprise Resource Planning Solution Division. This and the other gaps noted above showed that the SLO and their focal points may not be fully

conversant with their roles and responsibilities. The performance of their tasks may also be affected by the fact that they perform SLO functions alongside their core substantive tasks. There was a need to sensitize the SLOs and their focal points on the importance of their roles. Additionally, only two of the seven SLOs had access to the delegation of authority portal. Granting the SLOs access to the information in the portal would facilitate more efficient verification of whether the staff requesting roles had the required authority.

(2) UNOV/UNODC should: (a) sensitize Security Liaison Officers (SLOs) and their focal points on their roles and responsibilities and the importance of performing SLO tasks as prescribed; and (b) provide SLOs with access to the information in the delegation of authority portal.

UNOV/UNODC accepted recommendation 2 and stated that it will organize a session conducted by the Umoja Training and Umoja User Access Provisioning Focal Point, inviting all SLOs and functional approvers to enhance their understanding and effectiveness in performing their tasks. SLOs already have access which provides comprehensive and up-to-date information on all delegations of authority. The Umoja Training and User Access Provisioning Focal Point will communicate this information to all SLOs and focal points to ensure they are aware of how to access delegation of authority information as needed.

B. Reporting and monitoring mechanisms

Need to strengthen monitoring of underperforming performance indicators

19. Effective monitoring is essential to ensure that delegated authority is properly exercised, and lessons learned are identified and addressed. BTAD monitored delegated authority using 16 KPIs aimed at ensuring that the delegates were complying with the applicable policy framework and internal controls. BTAD had developed a dashboard to provide results of each KPI through charts and graphs, as well as detailed reports on all 16 KPIs. OIOS' review of the BTAD dashboard showed that 7 out of the 16 KPIs generally underperformed in both UNOV and UNODC. These were the KPIs relating to: (i) geographical representation; (ii) recruitment process; (iii) mandatory training; (iv) timely reporting of exceptions; (v) timeliness of payment; (vi) advance travel ticket purchase; and (vii) annual physical verification of property.

20. HRMS actively utilized the KPI reports from the BTAD dashboard to monitor the human resources KPIs which were underperforming (geographical representation, recruitment process, mandatory training, and timely reporting of exceptions). HRMS also sent monthly reports to the Director-General and senior managers that addressed the KPIs, as well as emails to hiring managers to call attention to any delays in the recruitment exercises. However, no lessons learned were systematically identified to help in addressing the underperforming KPIs.

21. In addition, there was no evidence that UNOV/UNODC utilized the data in the BTAD dashboard to monitor the underperforming KPIs in the finance and budget and property management areas. Regarding timeliness of payments, UNOV/UNODC indicated that high priority was placed in monitoring this area through its own analyses by regional office, along with other tools such as the Global Open Items Payment Analysis Report, the Monthly Account Monitoring Dashboard, and the quarterly Strategic Plan Monitoring Application. UNOV/UNODC acknowledged that it did not utilize the BTAD dashboard data, although it recognized the value after observing that there was possibility to download the data into Excel for further analysis.

22. The information in the BTAD dashboard is complementary to the information monitored at the operational level and could help UNOV/UNODC analyse reasons for variances and trends in

underperforming KPIs, and identify lessons learned. It would therefore be beneficial for UNOV/UNODC to review the data in the BTAD dashboard as part of its monitoring framework, at an appropriate frequency for each KPI (quarterly, semi-annually, or annually). Further, only one field office (the Regional Office for East Africa) had staff with access to the BTAD dashboard for all KPIs. It would be useful for field office representatives with delegated authority to have access to the BTAD dashboard or reports for areas under their control for information and monitoring purposes.

(3) UNOV/UNODC should establish appropriate mechanisms to ensure that underperforming indicators are effectively monitored, and lessons learned are identified and addressed.

UNOV/UNODC accepted recommendation 3 and stated that: (i) HRMS will work closely with stakeholders in order to meet the four-day period for reporting of exceptions, and will continue recording the reasons for delays in the specific remarks field for reporting in the portal; (ii) the Financial Resource Management Service will review and analyze the KPI on timeliness of payment periodically to facilitate decision-making; and (iii) the General Support Section will continue to provide detailed quarterly compliance reports to the Division for Operations, highlighting the areas where compliance rates are an issue for them to further analyze and determine actions to rectify.

C. Relationship with service providers

Arrangements for service provision to clients were satisfactory

23. UNOV provided administrative services to other entities such as the United Nations Register of Damage, the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Research Institute. Interviews with managers of these entities and UNOV staff established that the division of roles and responsibilities between UNOV and the entities was well understood. The managers interviewed expressed satisfaction with the established arrangements and the quality of services rendered by UNOV.

Need to clarify roles and responsibilities for administering service contractors

24. As of 2023, UNODC had over 1,300 service contractors in its work force who were administered under the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) policy framework. The authority for administering service contractors was not addressed in the delegation of authority portal. A 2008 email from the Division for Operations had delegated the authority to recruit or engage service contractors to field office representatives.

25. In practice, field office representatives made decisions beyond recruitment, including approving service contractors' sick leave, maternity/paternity leave, and administrative leave without pay pending investigations. However, the field office representatives' authority in these areas was not addressed in the 2008 email or in the UNDP service contract policy. Service level agreements were also not consistently established for all field locations and, where they were established, they did not address the division of roles and responsibilities in the administration of service contractors. UNODC needed to develop a service level agreement checklist to guide field offices on key information that should be incorporated in service level agreements with local service providers.

26. Further, some field office representatives indicated that they signed letters of appointment which, under the service contract policy, was a function delegated to UNDP heads of offices in the field. Such

exceptions to the policy were not reported to UNOV/UNODC headquarters in the annual oversight reports prepared by field offices, or other mechanisms.

(4) UNOV/UNODC should: (a) ensure that the role of field office representatives in administering service contractors and approving absences is clearly documented in service level agreements or other formal documents; and (b) establish mechanisms for reporting exceptions to the service contract policy.

UNOV/UNODC accepted recommendation 4 and stated that the UNODC Division for Operations will work with HRMS to document the role of field office representatives in administering service contractors' absences. With regard to part (b) of the recommendation, the Division for Operations has already set up a mechanism for reporting exceptions to the service contract policy.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

27. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNOV/UNODC 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 the delegation of authority framework at the United Nations
Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime**

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical¹/ Important²	C/ O³	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date⁴
1	UNOV/UNODC should: (a) review and clearly document the procurement authority delegated to field offices; and (b) establish mechanisms for reviewing and amending the level of delegated authority as appropriate.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of: (a) action taken to review and clearly document the procurement authority delegated to field offices; and (b) details of mechanisms established for reviewing and amending the level of authority delegated, as appropriate.	31 December 2025
2	UNOV/UNODC should sensitize Security Liaison Officers (SLOs) and their focal points on their roles and responsibilities and the importance of performing SLO tasks as prescribed; and (b) provide SLOs with access to the information in the delegation of authority portal.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that: (a) SLOs and their focal points have been sensitized on their roles and responsibilities; and (b) informed on how to access information in the delegation of authority portal.	31 December 2024
3	UNOV/UNODC should establish appropriate mechanisms to ensure that underperforming indicators are effectively monitored, and lessons learned are identified and addressed.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that UNOV/UNODC has established mechanisms to ensure that underperforming indicators are effectively monitored, and lessons learned are identified and addressed.	31 December 2024
4	UNOV/UNODC should: (a) ensure that the role of field office representatives in administering service contractors and approving absences is clearly documented in service level agreements or other formal documents; and (b) establish mechanisms for reporting exceptions to the service contract policy.	Important	O	Receipt of: (a) evidence that the role of field office representatives in administering service contracts and approving absences has been clarified; and (b) details of the mechanism set up for reporting exceptions to the service contract policy.	31 December 2024

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.

³ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁴ Date provided by UNOV/UNODC in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Management Response

Interoffice Memorandum

To:	Mr. Byung-kun Min Director Internal Audit Division, OIOS	Date: 25 April 2024
From:	Dennis Thatchaichawalit Deputy Director-General, UNOV and Director, Division for Management UNOV/UNODC	Ref: OIOS-2024-00680
Subject:	Detailed results of an audit of the delegation of authority framework at the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (Assignment No. AE2023-360-04)	

1. Please find attached UNOV/UNODC Management response on the recommendations with the target dates and titles of the responsible staff for implementation.
2. Kindly note that all four recommendations have been accepted and we would like to provide you with our responses to the detailed audit results in the attached form:

Annex 1: Audit recommendations – Audit of the delegation of authority framework at the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

3. Thank you for your continued cooperation.

cc: Mr. John Brandolino, UNODC
Mr. Bo Mathiasen, UNODC
Mr. Jean-Luc Lemahieu, UNODC
Ms. Monica Hemmerde, UNOV/UNODC
Ms. Nargiza Abdullaeva, UNOV/UNODC
Mr. Martin Nikolov, UNOV/UNODC
Mr. David Nyskohus, OIOS
Mr. Gurpur Kumar, OIOS
Ms. Anna Nyaoro, OIOS
Mr. Stanley Kenani, OIOS
Ms. Xin Zhou, OIOS

AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

**Audit of the delegation of authority framework at the United Nations Office at Vienna
and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime**

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical/ ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	UNOV/UNODC should: (a) review and clearly document the procurement authority delegated to field offices; and (b) establish mechanisms for reviewing and amending the level of delegated authority as appropriate.	Important	Yes	Chief Procurement Officer of UNOV/UNODC Procurement Unit: Mr. Sokhodom Pheng	31 December 2025	<p>UNOV/UNODC accepts the recommendation subject to the release of the new matrix by UNHQ for Entities with Special Delegation; with the understanding that the Delegation of Procurement Authority matrix will provide a comprehensive description of the procurement approval and signatory authority. If the new matrix by UNHQ is not released by 31 December 2025, UNOV/UNODC will proceed to develop our own internal guidance notes based on the current matrix.</p> <p>Each entity can define a lower sub-delegation threshold, within the maximum thresholds defined by the Matrix, considering the procurement capacity, structure and internal controls.</p> <p>Subject to the release of the new matrix by UNHQ for Entities with Special Delegations (e.g. UNODC), UNOV/UNODC will develop guidance notes on the implementation and will provide training through UNOV/UNODC Procurement Unit, in coordination with relevant Divisions.</p>
2	UNOV/UNODC should: (a) sensitize Security Liaison Officers (SLOs) and their focal points on their roles and responsibilities and the importance of performing SLO tasks as prescribed;	Important	Yes (partially)	Umoja Training and UAP Focal Point, IT, DM	31 December 2024	<p>UNOV/UNODC partially accepts the recommendation. (a) UNOV/UNODC will organize a session conducted by the Umoja Training and UAP Focal Point, inviting all SLOs, ASLOs and functional approvers to enhance their understanding and effectiveness in performing their tasks.</p>

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	and (b) provide SLOs with access to the delegation of authority portal.					(b) As all SLOs already have access to davi (un.org) which provides comprehensive and up-to-date information on all Delegations of Authority (DoAs), access to the DoA portal is unnecessary for them to fulfill their SLO functions. Umoja Training and UAP Focal Point will communicate this information to all SLOs and focal points to ensure they are aware of how to access davi (un.org) to check DoA information as needed.
3	UNOV/UNODC should establish appropriate mechanisms to ensure that underperforming indicators are effectively monitored, and lessons learned are identified and addressed.	Important	Yes	DM: HRMS – Chief of Unit, focal point: Gerhard Tripp; FRMS – Chief of Section, Accounts: Ruiwei Zhao; GSS – Chief of Unit: Mercy Mayebo	31 December 2024	UNOV/UNODC accepts the recommendation. KPIs for HRMS action: i) Geographical representation (SDOS and OED); ii) recruitment process (SDOS); iii) mandatory training (TDT); iv) timely reporting of exceptions. The KPI on timely reporting of HR exceptions requires a four-day period for reporting of exceptions granted by the entities and 100% compliance rate. Some of the late reporting, where the authority to decide rests with OHR, is outside UNOV/UNODC control. While HRMS will not be in a position to effectively monitor this area, we will include a kind plea to ensure timely reporting in our requests for exceptions to UNHQ. As regards the decisions locally made, HRMS will work closely with stakeholders in ensuring that granted exceptions are communicated to LPT/OASU as soon as possible to meet the four-day period for reporting of exceptions. LPT/OASU has already commenced and will continue recording the reasons for delays in the specific remarks field for reporting in the portal, which in addition to the foregoing may also include delays attributable to

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						<p>consultation with UNHQ, or to absence of a catalogue of exceptions in the portal at the United Nations Secretariat level.</p> <p>FRMS will review and analyse the KPI on the timeliness of payment periodically to facilitate decision-making.</p> <p>GSS will continue to provide detailed quarterly compliance reports to DO, highlighting the areas where compliance rates are an issue for them to further analyse and determine actions to rectify.</p>
4	UNOV/UNODC should: (a) ensure that the role of field office representatives in administering service contractors and approving absences is clearly documented in service level agreements or other formal documents; and (b) establish mechanisms for reporting exceptions to the service contract policy.	Important	Yes	Programme Management Officer/DO: Andrea Mancini	31 December 2024	(a) DO will work with HRMS to document the role of field office representatives in administering service contractors' absences. Regarding (b) DO has already set up a mechanism for reporting exceptions to the service contract policy.