



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2024/082

Audit of the implementation of fire safety measures by the United Nations Support Office in Somalia

UNSOS needed to strengthen controls over fire hazard management, maintain firefighting systems regularly, and improve coordination among fire safety stakeholders

23 December 2024

Assignment No. AP2024-639-01

Audit of the implementation of fire safety measures by the United Nations Support Office in Somalia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the implementation of fire safety measures by the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS). The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of fire safety measures by UNSOS. The audit covered the period from July 2021 to June 2024 and included: (a) management of fire safety activities; (b) control of fire hazards; (c) fire protection equipment and systems; and (d) fire emergency and evacuation plans.

UNSOS developed a fire safety plan, conducted fire safety inspections and risk assessments at 18 sites in Aden Abdule International Airport (AAIA) in Mogadishu and 7 regional offices in Somalia, and made recommendations to mitigate identified risks. However, OIOS noted some important control weaknesses such as the lack of mission-specific fire safety Standard Operating Procedure and its enforcement, absence of designated fire safety focal point, poor maintenance of fire protection equipment and systems, and ineffective mechanisms to track implementation of fire safety recommendations. Additionally, inadequate oversight of contractor performance has resulted in repair delays, inadequate fire detection and alarm systems, and weak controls over fire hazards.

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

- Within the available resources, take additional measures to mitigate the staffing shortage and ensure appropriate capacity to respond to fire outbreaks effectively.
- Improve coordination mechanisms among fire-safety stakeholders by designating a fire safety focal point, clearly defining roles and responsibilities, holding regular meetings to address safety issues, and tracking the implementation status of fire safety recommendations.
- Strengthen contractor performance oversight by enforcing maintenance schedules for electric installations per contracts and holding them accountable for maintenance-related responsibilities.
- Strengthen measures to control fire hazards by: (a) improving infrastructure planning and resource allocation for safe cooking facilities and grounding system; and (b) implementing administrative actions for breaches and a periodic inspection process to ensure enforcement of the non-smoking policy.
- Establish effective and efficient fire engine maintenance arrangements and ensure that fire engines are regularly maintained to improve the reliability of fire emergency response.
- Reassess the installation of suitable fire detection and alarm systems on all Mission premises and ensure that the facility maintenance contractor regularly maintains fire alarm installations and replaces malfunctioning items as per the agreement.

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

CONTENTS

I. BACKGROUND	1-2
II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	2-3
III. AUDIT RESULTS	3-10
A. Management of fire safety activities	3-5
B. Control of fire hazards	5-7
C. Fire protection equipment and systems	7-9
D. Fire emergency and evacuation plans	10
IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	10
ANNEX I	Status of audit recommendations
APPENDIX I	Management response

Audit of the implementation of fire safety measures by the United Nations Support Office in Somalia

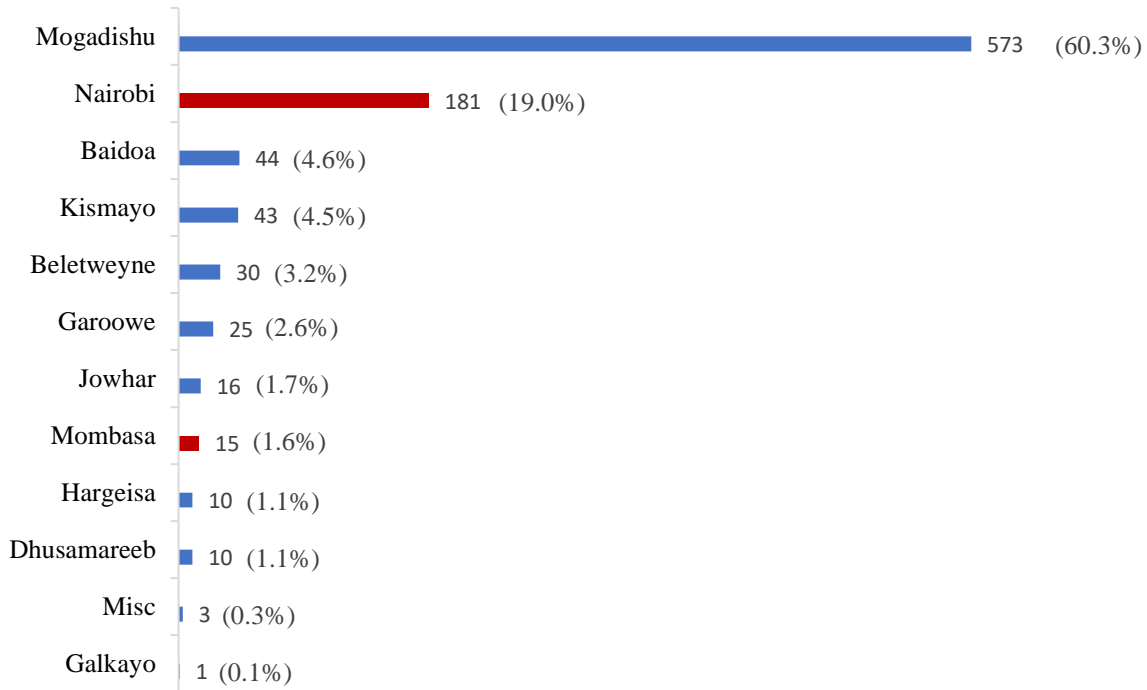
I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the implementation of fire safety measures by the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS). UNSOS is mandated to provide logistical and administrative support, including the implementation of fire safety measures for the United Nations Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNTMIS¹). The areas of operations for UNTMIS and UNSOS are collectively referred to as the “Mission.”
2. The implementation of fire safety measures is guided by the Security Policy Manual, Security Risk Management Manual and Fire Safety Guidelines in the Security Management Operations Manual (the Guidelines). As per the Guidelines, fire prevention is the primary strategy for ensuring safety. Nevertheless, mitigation measures must also be established for rapid detection, alarm activation, containment, suppression and the rapid evacuation of personnel and visitors.
3. The Fire Safety Unit (FSU), operating within the Integrated Security Workforce in Somalia², based in Mogadishu, leads responses to fire incidents and visits Mission locations outside Mogadishu to support compliance with fire safety requirements. In accordance with the Security Policy and the Guidelines, the Fire Safety Focal Point, as appointed by the Head of UNSOS, is responsible for coordinating the implementation of fire safety measures in Somalia.
4. FSU is headed by a unit head at the FS-5 level, reporting to the Deputy Chief Security Officer in UNSOS. For 2023/24 and 2024/25, the Unit had six posts comprising four international and two United Nations Volunteers.
5. UNSOS leveraged UNDSS Safety and Security Information Management systems developed and maintained by the Safety and Security Information Management Section of the Office of Information and Communications Technology to manage security data and documents. These systems included the Safety and Security Incident Recording for logging safety and security incidents and the Country Security Documents for storing core security documents like reports, plans, and Security Management Team meeting minutes.
6. As per figure 1, 755 of the 951 posts (79 per cent) were in Somalia, with 573 (60 per cent) in Mogadishu. The remaining 196 posts (21 per cent) were in Kenya but under different security risk management processes.

¹ Formerly the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).

² The Integrated Security Workforce comprises UNTMIS, UNSOS, and DSS security staff.

Figure 1- Number of personnel and their locations in the Mission areas in Somalia and Kenya



Source: Staffing table in Umoja as of June 2024

7. As per table 1, of the \$393 million of inventories in store and assets in use in Somalia, \$249 million (63 per cent) are in Mogadishu, \$132 million (34 per cent) in other locations, and only \$12 million (3 per cent) are in Kenya.

Table 1- Locations and value of inventories in store and assets in use (in million \$)

Location	Inventories in store (\$)	Assets in use (\$)	Total (\$)	Percentage (%)
Kenya	4	9	12	3
Somalia				
-Mogadishu	107	142	249	63
-Other locations	12	119	132	34
Total	123	270	393	100

Source: Umoja as of June 2024

8. As of November 2024, UNSOS also provided accommodation for around 800 contractors' personnel providing support services to the Mission at various locations in Somalia.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

9. The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of fire safety measures by UNSOS.

10. This audit was included in the 2024 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the fire risk to Mission personnel, property and delivery of mandated activities.

11. OIOS conducted this audit from February to August 2024. The audit covered the period from July 2021 to June 2024. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risk areas in the implementation of fire safety measures, which included: (a) management of fire safety activities; (b) control of fire hazards; (c) fire protection equipment and systems; and (d) fire emergency and evacuation plans.

12. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel; (b) review of relevant documentation, such as budget reports, fire incident reports, and fire safety inspection and fire safety risk assessment reports; (c) analytical review of data extracted from Umoja and Safety and Security Incident Recording System for logging security and fire incidents; (d) sample testing of relevant fire safety related activities, such as the review of maintenance records for all 13 fire engines, 12 weekly attendance records from randomly selected operational reports for FSU staff; and (e) physical observations at 28 sites selected from high-risk locations across Somalia (including powerhouses and fuel storages/dispensing facilities), particularly Mogadishu, Kismayo, Baidoa and Beletwayne.

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

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Management of fire safety activities

Need to mitigate the staffing shortage within the available resources

14. UNSOS is required to make adequate provisions within its budget to meet fire safety requirements, including ensuring sufficient personnel with the necessary skills to respond to fire incidents. However, the current staffing levels and arrangements were insufficient to maintain 24/7 fire coverage or to respond effectively to fire outbreaks, as below:

- FSU required a minimum of five people to respond effectively to fire incidents. These included a fire engine driver, a fire engine pump operator, at least two people trained in using firefighting equipment such as self-contained breathing apparatus, and a fire incident commander. While three United Nations Guard Unit (UNGU) personnel were assigned to assist FSU in Mogadishu, their availability was reduced due to the time required for training new members and annual personnel rotations, making them unavailable for at least 3 months every year. For example, no UNGU personnel were assigned to FSU from February to July 2024.
- Moreover, FSU had no fire staff at all seven regional offices and sector headquarters outside Mogadishu, where 178 Mission staff members (20 per cent of the total staff) were based. Private security staff, supported by ATMIS personnel, were relied upon to address fire safety staffing needs. However, contracts with private security companies did not cover fire safety. ATMIS assets within Somalia can perform limited supportive functions but are not mandated to provide fire cover for Mission premises.
- OIOS visits to three regional offices also noted that ATMIS personnel supporting fire safety efforts were primarily dedicated to the airport and lacked the required numbers and training to effectively respond to fire incidents. For example, at the regional office airport in Beledweyne, only one ATMIS soldier was operating the fire engine, serving as both driver and firefighter without adequate training. In addition, the Host Government's capability to respond to fire outbreaks was inadequate.

15. The fire safety risk assessments conducted at 25 premises in 2021, 2022 and 2023 recommended additional staffing as a high priority, but there were no mitigation measures included in the UNSOS risk registers to reduce the risks. UNSOS stated that it had entered a phase of transition and right-sizing due to its reconfiguration, making a staffing increase unlikely.

(1) UNSOS should, within the available resources, take additional measures to mitigate the staffing shortage and ensure appropriate capacity to respond to fire outbreaks effectively.

UNSOS accepted recommendation 1 and stated that Management would explore ways to utilize resources to address the staffing shortage and ensure fire safety measures are included in the UNSOS risk register.

Need to strengthen coordination mechanisms among fire safety stakeholders to implement fire safety measures timely

16. To address fire safety issues effectively, UNSOS is required to implement effective coordination among various fire safety stakeholders. These stakeholders include fire services, occupational health and safety, facilities management and engineering, and multiple contractors.

17. Interviews with responsible personnel from facilities management, occupational health and safety, FSU, and spot checks at 28 premises in Somalia noted weaknesses in coordination among the various fire safety stakeholders, as evidenced below:

- In February 2023, the fire response to a living accommodation in the main UNSOS compound in AAIA, Mogadishu, was delayed due to HESCO³ barriers around the accommodation. Additionally, after a mortar attack hit the UNGU compound, a fire caused by the mortar attack rapidly spread due to the lack of fire-resistant compartments, destroying 20 modules in 20 minutes. In a fire, access to high-density living accommodations and offices is restricted by physical barriers. These incidents indicate that the design, construction process, and improvement of buildings were not coordinated with the fire safety specialists.
- Further, the fire safety plan for the main UNSOS compound in AAIA states that smoke detectors should be inspected weekly by the facilities management. The Facilities Management Unit staff indicated that they expected FSU to conduct the inspections. However, OIOS noted that the facilities maintenance contractor is responsible for carrying out weekly inspections and maintaining all alarm installations as necessary under the supervision of the Facilities Management Unit.
- FSU, after conducting fire safety inspections and risk assessments for 25 premises (18 premises in AAIA, Mogadishu, and 7 at regional offices), identified fire safety risks and made recommendations to mitigate them. The fire safety risks identified at each premise included 3 to 4 high-rated risks and 5 to 6 medium-rated risks. Identified risks and related recommendations covered areas such as installation of fire detection and alarm systems, provision of fire protection equipment and systems, timely maintenance of fire engines, and staffing. These recommendations were made in September 2021, but none were implemented as of August 2024, attributed to a lack of coordination among the responsible entities.

18. The above occurred because there were no defined and effective coordination structures and procedures among the various stakeholders to implement fire safety measures. In particular there was no

³ HESCO barriers are a type of defensive barrier made of a collapsible wire mesh container that can be filled with soil, sand, or gravel.

evidence that UNSOS appointed a Fire Safety Focal Point to coordinate fire safety issues and facilities management as required by the Fire Safety Policy and Guidelines requirements.

- (2) UNSOS should improve coordination mechanisms among fire-safety stakeholders by designating a fire safety focal point, clearly defining roles and responsibilities, holding regular meetings to address safety issues, and tracking the implementation status of fire safety recommendations.**

UNSOS accepted recommendation 2 and stated that Management would identify the relevant stakeholders with defined roles and responsibilities and develop action plans, engage with stakeholders, discuss safety issues, and monitor and implement fire safety recommendations.

B. Control of fire hazards

Need to strengthen controls over fire hazards and housekeeping procedures

19. The Fire Safety Guidelines require UNSOS to identify and control fire hazards through administrative procedures, physical controls, routine maintenance, regular inspection and monitoring. These guidelines addressed fire hazards related to electrical, lightning, smoking, and cooking in living accommodations. However, as outlined below, significant gaps were noted in UNSOS's planning, oversight and fire safety operations.

- (a) Need to strengthen the implementation of fire safety measures for electrical installations

20. In line with the Fire Safety Guidelines, UNSOS is required to implement adequate controls to prevent electrical fire hazards, which are leading causes of workplace and living accommodation fire accidents. To protect premises from fires caused by lightning, UNSOS is also required to ensure that lightning protection systems are installed, regularly inspected, tested and maintained by licensed personnel.

21. UNSOS contracted service providers to maintain and ensure that all electrical installations are functioning safely and repaired where needed. However, a review of fire safety inspections and risk assessment conducted by the FSU for 10 premises and OIOS additional spot checks for 28 sites in Somalia noted measures to control electrical fire hazards needed to be strengthened as follows:

- (i) The electrical distribution boards and panels at 18 of the 28 sites (64 per cent), including high-fire risk areas such as kitchens, powerhouses, workshops and warehouses storing combustible materials were not regularly maintained. The open electrical panels were not protected from tampering by unauthorized persons, a severe fire safety violation. The contractor developed a checklist for electrical distribution panels, but quarterly maintenance per the contract was not conducted. In October 2022, a fire incident at the Level II hospital in AAIA was caused by a circuit breaker failure.
- (ii) Electric water heaters in all offices and living accommodations were not periodically inspected and maintained, exposing the Mission to increased fire risks like the February 2023 fire caused by a malfunctioning refrigerator at the main UNSOS compound. The fire incident report recommended that fire safety for building construction be reviewed and electrical equipment be regularly inspected, but the recommendation has not been implemented.
- (iii) At all 28 sites checked, extension cords ran over the floor without protective ramps, increasing the risk of igniting sparks due to damaged cords.

(iv) Staff in containerized living accommodations used unauthorized electrical appliances to cook in their rooms, even though 766 of the 1,046 (73 per cent) of the accommodation units in Mogadishu are of this type and are not equipped for cooking.

(v) UNSOS contracted a service provider to check and test the grounding system quarterly. However, there was no evidence that these inspections were conducted and tested as required. Spot checks at 3 communication towers, 4 watch towers and 13 premises confirmed missing lightning and earthing rods. These rods are laid in the ground to protect staff and properties against electric shocks. It is crucial to ensure proper grounding connections to prevent electrical currents from lightning strikes or exposed live wires, which could ignite fires.

(b) Need to strengthen measures to prevent and mitigate the risk of fires caused by cooking in living accommodations

22. The Fire Safety Plan for UNSOS compounds prohibited cooking in all Mission premises, including living accommodations, except in designated kitchen facilities and authorized hard-wall units. However, this measure was not effectively enforced. Staff living in hard-wall units are provided with electric cookers, but there was no evidence that these appliances were regularly inspected or that ventilation systems were cleaned of grease and dust per the Guidelines. In addition, although unauthorized, staff in containerized accommodations continued to cook in their rooms, often using unapproved electrical appliances. Interviews with 30 staff members based in Mogadishu, including Fire Unit staff, confirmed that cooking in living accommodations was common, regardless of authorization. This was due to inadequate and poorly maintained common cooking facilities.

23. Spot checks at five common kitchens (i.e., two in Mogadishu and three at regional offices) noted dirty hoods and ducts, insufficient cleaning supplies, and limited cleaning services. Rotten foods were in fridges, and at least one or two of the cookers at all five kitchens required immediate repairs. Fans, exhausts and ventilation systems were coated with flammable grease and dust, including two main kitchens at the Mission compound in Mogadishu, which serve over 1,000 staff and contractors, further exacerbating the fire risk.

(c) Need to enforce a non-smoking policy

24. Smoking is prohibited in all Mission buildings as a significant fire hazard. However, spot checks at 28 sites in Somalia revealed that 14 sites (50 per cent) lacked properly designated smoking areas or had not installed 'no smoking' signs in prohibited areas. These included high-risk areas such as living accommodations, powerhouses, fuel storages, workshops, and kitchen facilities in Mogadishu, Kismayo, Beletwayne and Baidoa. Also, authorized smoking areas were not regularly inspected to ensure safety measures were not breached. UNSOS needed to implement administrative actions for breaches and a periodic inspection process to ensure enforcement of the non-smoking policy.

(d) Need to improve housekeeping procedures

25. UNSOS is required to promptly address fire hazards through effective housekeeping efforts. However, OIOS spot checks at eight powerhouses and four fuel storages/dispensing facilities noted increased fire risks due to poor housekeeping, including consistent spillage of liquid fuel and used oil, excessive vegetation that could ignite sparks, and improper disposal of smoking materials and combustible trash.

- (3) UNSOS should strengthen contractor performance oversight by enforcing maintenance schedules for electric installations per contracts and holding contractors accountable for maintenance-related responsibilities.**

UNSOS accepted recommendation 3 and stated that Management would ensure that the current contractor conducts scheduled maintenance as per the contract agreement. The Engineering Section would continue to monitor the contractor's performance and maintenance requirements through tickets/task orders for the contractor to perform the required maintenance.

- (4) UNSOS should strengthen measures to control fire hazards by: (a) improving infrastructure planning and resource allocation for safe cooking facilities and grounding system; and (b) implementing administrative actions for breaches and a periodic inspection process to ensure enforcement of the non-smoking policy.**

UNSOS accepted recommendation 4 and stated that Management would develop mission-specific fire safety guidelines to identify and control electrical fire hazards through procedures with clear roles and responsibilities; assess the current infrastructure; use signage and communications to reinforce the nonsmoking policy and would develop a plan to identify areas that need improvement for fire safety and timely maintenance to mitigate the risk of electrical fires.

C. Fire protection equipment and systems

Need to strengthen fire protection equipment and systems

26. Installation and maintenance of fire protection equipment and systems are essential to ensure early detection if a fire occurs and minimize the impact in the event of a fire. OIOS noted weaknesses in fire protection equipment and systems, including timely repairs and maintenance of fire engines, adequate fire detection and alarm systems, installation and upkeep of hydrant systems, suitable fire extinguishers, and regular maintenance of fire evacuation equipment, as further outlined below:

Need to repair and maintain fire engines promptly

27. FSU, based in Mogadishu, had two fire engines, each with 4,000 litres of water capacity to support 18 main premises in AAIA. Ineffective fire engine maintenance hindered fire response.

28. FSU recommended servicing the water pumps at least every six months or more frequently due to harsh environmental conditions in Somalia. However, a review of the fire engine maintenance records from July 2021 to June 2024 showed delays of over two years in providing the required maintenance services and spare parts for the fire engines. The vehicle maintenance contractor did not have specialist technicians in Somalia, so UNSOS brought the service of external technicians to inspect the fire engines, identify needed parts and return them later for repairs. For example, fire engine specialists inspected the two engines in July 2022 and recommended a complete overhaul. Required spare parts were ordered after 10 months in May 2023, and repairs for one engine were completed in May 2024. The second engine remained out of service due to a lack of additional spare parts for the water pumps as of August 2024. The fire engines were acquired in 2014 and were at the end of their useful life, increasing the risk of breakdowns and higher maintenance costs.

29. In addition, FSU had no fire engines at regional offices outside Mogadishu, but relied on Airport Rescue Services, operated by the Aviation Section at regional offices airports. However, a review of the maintenance records for the 11 fire engines assigned to the Aviation Section noted that none were fully

operational. For example, the fire engine at the regional office in Beletwayne needed urgent repairs as it had a leaking water tank and a faulty water cannon.

30. Although the Transport Section requested an amendment to the current vehicle maintenance contracts in January 2020 to include regular and timely fire engine maintenance, this was not established as of August 2024. Delayed maintenance compromises the ability to respond effectively to fire outbreaks, posing a significant safety risk to Mission staff and assets. Given the age of the engines, UNSOS could benefit by conducting a cost analysis to determine if continued repair is more economical than replacing the fire engines with reliable fire engines.

(5) UNSOS should establish effective and efficient fire engine maintenance arrangements and ensure that fire engines are regularly maintained to improve the reliability of fire emergency response.

UNSOS accepted recommendation 5 and stated that Management would ensure that the fire engines are regularly maintained to improve the reliability of fire emergency response.

Need for installation of suitable fire detection and alarm systems

31. To monitor potential fires and send alerts to the fire response team, security personnel and occupants, UNSOS is required to ensure that all Mission premises, such as offices, sleeping accommodations and other facilities are equipped with adequate fire detection and alarm systems.

32. UNSOS installed domestic smoke alarms that produce a locally sounding alarm in all its premises. UNSOS stated that the current use of independent smoke detectors in offices and accommodations effectively detected fires at the ignition stage. However, due to the extensive layout of Mission premises across large areas, especially in Mogadishu, current domestic alarms cannot provide alerts beyond their immediate surroundings. The Fire Safety Unit (FSU), following multiple fire safety risk assessments conducted on at least 18 Mission premises since September 2021, has recommended the installation of fire detection and alarm systems as a high priority. This is necessary as, for example, 5 of the 18 main Mission premises in AAIA are at least 2-4 kilometres away from the FSU station. These premises include a logistics base where the central warehouse is located. Several other essential facilities, such as powerhouses, fuel stations, training centre and medical clinics are also spread over the 10-kilometre square area in AAIA.

33. Furthermore, OIOS spot checks noted that 19 of the 28 (68 per cent) sites inspected had faulty smoke alarms due to bad batteries or lack of maintenance. In addition, the alarms could not alert beyond the physical area they are in. Further, there was no process in place to prevent interference with smoke alarms, such as by staff or occupants cooking or smoking in their accommodations and no enforcement capability to deter them from doing so.

34. UNSOS also did not implement adequate procedures to ensure that the contractor for the provision of facility maintenance maintained all fire alarm installations and replaced malfunctioning parts and/or items as per the agreement. Inadequate fire detection and alarm systems on the premises may fail to alert occupants and fire services timely, putting both staff and assets at risk.

(6) UNSOS should: (a) reassess the installation of suitable fire detection and alarm systems on all Mission premises; and (b) ensure that the facility maintenance contractor regularly maintains fire alarm installations and replaces malfunctioning items as per the agreement.

UNSOS accepted recommendation 6 and stated that Management would ensure: (a) to evaluate the current fire detection and alarm systems on all Mission premises; and (b) that the contractor

maintains the fire detection and alarm systems and replaces malfunctioning items as per the contract agreement in all mission premises.

The installation of fire hydrant systems was being proposed

35. In line with the Fire Safety Guidelines, a reliable and sufficient water source for firefighting purposes must be available to protect Mission premises in the event of a fire. Reserve water with clear signage specifically for firefighting purposes is also required.

36. Currently, fire hydrant systems are installed at two premises in 1 of the 7 regional offices outside Mogadishu and maintained under the supervision of Engineering. The hydrant systems were connected to two 5,000-litre water tanks. However, during a field visit in July 2024, the audit team noted that one of the two hydrant systems was out of service, but due to a lack of accurate records, the duration of the outage could not be determined.

37. UNSOS developed a proposal during the audit in June-July 2024 to install hydrant systems at 12 of the 18 (67 per cent) main UNSOS premises in AAIA, Mogadishu. The proposal also included five water stations consisting of two water tanks of 10,000-litres each with accessories, including water pumps. The estimated project costs for the hydrant systems were \$377,000; work was expected to be completed by December 2024. However, the task order proposal did not cover six main premises in Mogadishu and six regional offices/sector Headquarters. The task order also did not include maintenance of the systems by licensed engineers as required. UNSOS could benefit by reassessing the proposed fire hydrant system, installing it on all Mission premises, and arranging maintenance at established intervals.

Fire extinguishers at suitable locations could improve the chances of controlling fires in their initial stages

38. As per the Fire Safety Guideline, UNSOS must equip all premises with portable fire extinguishers and implement a system for their regular inspection and testing.

39. FSU identified the need for fire extinguishers, which were then budgeted and acquired by the General Supplies Section. UNSOS opted for fire extinguishers that require servicing once every ten years as the most cost-effective choice.

40. OIOS spot checks at 28 sites in Somalia noted that fire extinguishers at 23 of the 28 sites (82 per cent) were not in suitable locations, such as along typical travel paths, escape routes or near exits. Furthermore, compliance signage visible to occupants was not displayed. The sites inspected included areas prone to fire risks, such as workshops, living accommodations, powerhouses and warehouses storing combustible items. Also, there were no class K⁴ fire extinguishers at any of the nine kitchens and three workshops the audit team visited. UNSOS explained that continuous security enhancements and maintenance work at all Mission premises in Somalia would address the proper placement of fire extinguishers at suitable locations.

⁴ Class K fire extinguishers are designed for kitchen and garage fires, making them more effective in such environments

D. Fire emergency and evacuation plans

UNSOS could improve evacuation readiness

41. UNSOS is required to develop and implement specific fire evacuation plans for each premise to ensure staff preparedness for an orderly evacuation to designated assembly areas. It must also provide and maintain functional fire evacuation equipment, which should be regularly inspected to meet safety standards. Effective drills should help identify obsolete or faulty equipment, ensuring reliable evacuation measures.

42. A comprehensive fire safety plan was created for all 18 main premises in the AAIA area of Mogadishu. However, this plan lacked specific details tailored to each location, such as designated emergency exits, evacuation routes, safe rooms, fire extinguishers, and assembly areas. Additionally, there was no indication that all staff were familiar with the evacuation plan and emergency contact numbers. Interviews with FSU staff indicated that training had been limited to the Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environment programme, which did not include site-specific evacuation details. UNSOS has since January 2024 broadcasted 14 fire safety advisories to raise awareness on fire safety matters such as electrical safety, safe use of extinguishers, smoke alarm maintenance, and fire prevention.

43. UNSOS conducted regular fire drills and security exercises. However, a review of 10 fire safety inspections and spot checks at 28 sites in Somalia between June and July 2024 noted that fire evacuation equipment were often missing or inadequately maintained, contributing to ongoing issues with evacuation readiness despite regular drills. Issues identified included:

- Outdated or missing building-specific floor plans showing fire exits, evacuation routes, safe rooms, and locations of extinguishers;
- Emergency lightnings not regularly maintained as required;
- Exit doors frequently obstructed, locked or not opening outwards, and missing exit signs; and
- Absence of accessible escape routes or reasonably safe rooms for individuals with limited mobility, particularly at two-storey living and office accommodations if circumstances warrant.

44. UNSOS could benefit by ensuring that equipment checks are integrated during the fire drills to identify and address obsolete or faulty items promptly. This approach will align evacuation procedures, equipment, and staff readiness for safe and timely evacuation in case of fire.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

45. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNSOS 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 implementation of fire safety measures by the United Nations Support Office in Somalia

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁵ / Important ⁶	C/ O ⁷	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁸
1	UNSOS should, within the available resources, take additional measures to mitigate the staffing shortage and ensure appropriate capacity to respond to fire outbreaks effectively	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that measures to mitigate staffing shortages has been taken to respond to fire outbreaks effectively.	31 December 2025
2	UNSOS should improve coordination mechanisms among fire-safety stakeholders by designating a fire safety focal point, clearly defining roles and responsibilities, holding regular meetings to address safety issues, and tracking the implementation status of fire safety recommendations.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that a functioning coordination mechanism among fire-safety stakeholders has been established and the implementation of fire safety recommendations is tracked.	31 December 2025
3	UNSOS should strengthen contractor performance oversight by enforcing maintenance schedules for electric installations per contracts and holding contractors accountable for maintenance-related responsibilities.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that maintenance schedules for electrical installations per the contract has been enforced and contractor held accountable maintenance-related responsibilities.	31 December 2025
4	UNSOS should strengthen measures to control fire hazards by: (a) improving infrastructure planning and resource allocation for safe cooking facilities and grounding system; and (b) implementing administrative actions for breaches and a periodic inspection process to ensure enforcement of the non-smoking policy.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that effective measures to mitigate the risk of fire hazards were implemented.	31 December 2025

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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.

⁷ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁸ Date provided by UNSOS in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the implementation of fire safety measures by the United Nations Support Office in Somalia

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁵ / Important ⁶	C/ O ⁷	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁸
5	UNSOS should establish effective and efficient fire engine maintenance arrangements and ensure that fire engines are regularly maintained to improve the reliability of fire emergency response.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that effective and efficient vehicle maintenance arrangements have been established.	30 November 2025
6	UNSOS should: (a) reassess the installation of suitable fire detection and alarm systems on all Mission premises; and (b) ensure that the facility maintenance contractor regularly maintains fire alarm installations and replaces malfunctioning items as per the agreement.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that fire detection and alarm systems were reassessed, and the contractors maintained and repaired existing fire alarm systems as per the contacts.	31 January 2026

APPENDIX I

Management Response



United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS)

Interoffice Memorandum

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

Ref: UNSOS/012/M.

Date: 17 December 2024

Ms. Fatoumata Ndiaye, Under-Secretary-General
For Internal Oversight Services

From: Aisa Kirabo Kacyira For
ASG, Head of UNSOS *A. Kirabo*

Subject: **Response to draft report on an audit of the implementation of fire safety measures by the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (Assignment No. AP2024-639-01)**

1. Further to your memorandum reference no. OIOS-2024-02310 of 10 December 2024, please find attached the UNSOS response to the subject audit.
2. We thank you for your continued support to the work of UNSOS.

cc: Ms. Qurat-ul-Ain Sadozai, Director UNSOS
Ms. Judith Gotz, Chief of Staff, UNTMIS
Mr. Joseph Katuramu, UNDSS
Mr. Juan Manuel Lopez-Palafox, UNSOS
Mr. Muhammad Farooq Sabir, UNSOS
Mr. Marco Gardella, UNDSS
Mr. Roger Lewis, UNSOS
Ms. Katarina Lockyer, UNSOS
Ms. Helen Tsegay, UNSOS
Mr. Michael Ndaka, UNSOS

Management Response

Draft report on an audit of the implementation of fire safety measures by the United Nations Support Office in Somalia

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	UNSOS should, within the available resources, take additional measures to mitigate the staffing shortage and ensure appropriate capacity to respond to fire outbreaks effectively.	Important	Yes	Fire Safety	December 2025	Management will explore ways of utilizing resources to address the staffing shortage and will ensure fire safety measures are included into the UNSOS risk register.
2	UNSOS should improve coordination mechanisms among fire-safety stakeholders by designating a fire safety focal point, clearly defining roles and responsibilities, holding regular meetings to address safety issues, and tracking the implementation status of fire safety recommendations.	Important	Yes	Fire Safety	December 2025	Management will identify the relevant stakeholders with defined roles and responsibilities and will ensure to develop action plans, engage with stakeholders, discuss safety issues, monitoring and implementation of fire safety recommendations.
3	UNSOS should strengthen contractor performance oversight by enforcing maintenance schedules for electric installations per contracts and holding them accountable for maintenance-related responsibilities.	Important	Yes	EFMS	December 2025	Management will ensure that the current contractor conducts scheduled maintenance as per the contract agreement. engineering section will continue to monitor the contractor's performance and maintenance requirements through tickets/task orders for the contractor to perform the required maintenance.

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.

Management Response

Draft report on an audit of the implementation of fire safety measures by the United Nations Support Office in Somalia

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
4	UNSOS should strengthen measures to control fire hazards by: (a) improving infrastructure planning and resource allocation for safe cooking facilities and grounding system; and (b) implementing administrative actions for breaches and a periodic inspection process to ensure enforcement of the non-smoking policy.	Important	Yes	EFMS	December 2025	Management will develop mission specific fire safety guidelines to identify and control electrical fire hazards through procedures with clear roles and responsibilities; assess the current infrastructure; use signage and communications to reinforce the non-smoking policy and will develop a plan to identify areas that need improvement for fire safety and timely maintenance to mitigate the risk of electrical fires
5	UNSOS should establish effective and efficient fire engine maintenance arrangements and ensure that fire engines are regularly maintained to improve the reliability of fire emergency response.	Important	Yes	Transport	November 2025	Management will ensure that the fire engines are regularly maintained to improve the reliability of fire emergency response.
6	UNSOS should: (a) reassess the installation of suitable fire detection and alarm systems on all Mission premises; and (b) ensure that the facility maintenance contractor regularly maintains fire alarm installations and replaces malfunctioning items as per the agreement.	Important	Yes	EFMS	January 2026	Management will ensure: (a) to evaluate the current fire detection and alarm systems on all Mission premises. (b) that the contractor maintains the fire detection and alarm systems and replaces malfunction items as per the contract agreement in all mission premises.