



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2022/048

Audit of the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon

The Office needed to improve tracking, recording and communication of its programme activities and achievements

30 September 2022

Assignment No. AP2021-673-01

Audit of the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL). The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of management practices in UNSCOL to manage operations and resources to deliver on its mandate in accordance with Security Council resolutions and United Nations regulations and rules. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2019 to 30 June 2022 and included programme management, governance and management of staff and other resources.

UNSCOL applied a systematic approach to programme planning and implementation, ensuring that strategic objectives were linked to activities in the annual work plan and programme of work. The Office also successfully participated in Secretariat corporate initiatives such as Umoja implementation, enterprise risk management and achieving gender parity in recruitment. However, UNSCOL did not fully record its programmatic achievements in the Strategic Management Application (SMA) module of Umoja, resulting in inability to track the Mission's progress in implementing the annual programme of work. In addition, although the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)-UNSCOL strategic forum had been established as a formal mechanism for information sharing and coordination between the two entities, its terms of reference had not been developed. While UNSCOL communicated its activities through various means, it did not monitor and analyze the impact of its outreach.

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

- Ensure SMA reports duly reflect the work done by the Mission to achieve its objectives, track implementation of the annual work plan and perform periodic self-evaluation;
- Improve reporting on the indicators of the new Cooperation Framework as co-lead of the political, peace, security and governance pillar of the United Nations country team;
- Develop terms of reference for the operations of the UNIFIL-UNSCOL strategic forum to define its purpose, composition and responsibilities in coordination with UNIFIL;
- Develop a strategy to improve communication on its activities, analyze the reach/impact of its information dissemination platforms and implement strategies for improvement;
- Hold all staff accountable for completing mandatory training and coordinate with UNIFIL to implement a training plan that meets staff training needs and organizational requirements; and
- Ensure that staff residence surveys are conducted systematically and regularly notify supervisors of non-compliance by their staff with mandatory security measures for follow-up.

In addition, the Special Coordinator needed to establish a compact with the Deputy Special Coordinator and re-establish the practice of the Deputy Special Coordinator working partly each week from UNSCOL premises to improve coordination.

UNSCOL accepted the recommendations and has initiated actions to implement them. Actions required to close the recommendations are indicated in Annex I.

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Audit of the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL).
2. UNSCOL was established in February 2007 as a political office to coordinate the work of the United Nations in Lebanon. The Special Coordinator for Lebanon is the senior official responsible for the implementation of Security Council resolution (SCR) 1701 (2006) and is the Secretary-General's representative to the Lebanese Government, all political parties and the diplomatic community in Lebanon.
3. The mandate of the Special Coordinator is derived from the terms of reference documented in a letter from the Secretary-General to the Lebanese Prime Minister dated 8 February 2007. The main tasks of the Special Coordinator include: (a) coordinating all aspects of the work of the United Nations in Lebanon and maintaining responsibility for the implementation of SCR 1701 (2006); (b) coordinating the activities of the United Nations country team (UNCT), donors and international financial institutions in accordance with the overall objectives of the United Nations in Lebanon; (c) supporting the efforts of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process in Lebanon and other parts of the region; and (d) serving as the primary source of United Nations political reporting from Lebanon and providing overall political guidance to the United Nations system in Lebanon, including the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).
4. UNSCOL structures its engagement based on three strategic pillars of intervention: (a) peace and security, (b) stability, and (c) stabilization and development assistance. The Mission's conflict management efforts are carried out by promoting confidence-building measures, defusing tensions through back-channels and shuttle diplomacy and addressing violations of SCR 1701 (2006) before they escalate into conflict. It is expected that these measures will result in the parties (Israel and Lebanon) honouring their commitments to cease hostilities and create a conducive environment for dialogue on outstanding obligations under the resolution.
5. On behalf of the Secretary-General, the Special Coordinator and the Under-Secretary-General for the Department of Peace Operations brief the Security Council three times a year on progress in implementing SCR 1701. UNSCOL seeks input from members of UNCT for these reports. More than 15 years after the passing of SCR 1701, both parties to the conflict have yet to fulfil their obligations and minimal progress has been made towards a permanent ceasefire. This poses a threat to the stability of Lebanon and the region. Tensions between the parties escalate from time to time, requiring UNSCOL's conflict prevention efforts in close coordination with UNIFIL to mitigate and contain them.
6. UNSCOL is a key member of the UNCT and co-leads the peace and security pillar (now the political, peace, security and governance pillar (PPSG) with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Mission contributes to the planning and implementation of the United Nations Strategic Framework through participation in the common country assessment process as well as working group activities. The Special Coordinator provides political guidance to the UNCT.
7. The Mission has 82 approved posts, 6 of which were vacant as of 30 June 2022. In 2021, the post of Associate Political Affairs Officer in the Political Affairs Section was converted from the P-2 level to that of National Professional Officer to take advantage of the expertise and knowledge available in the field. The post was vacant at the time of conversion. The Mission's staffing levels are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
UNSCOL staff complement

Staff category	Authorized posts	Staff on board	Vacant posts	Vacancy rate	Cases under recruitment
International staff	19	17	2	10.5%	0
National-General	58	54	4	6.9%	4
National-Professional	5	5	0	0.0%	0
Total	82	76	6	7.3%	4

Source: UNSCOL Human Resources Section

8. The budgets for the years 2019 to 2022 were as follows:

Table 2
UNSCOL budgets (US Dollars)

Cost category	2019	2020	2021	2022
Staff cost	7,413,000	7,438,300	8,275,300	8,216,700
Operational costs	1,017,900	1,515,300	1,515,300	1,369,900
Total budget	8,430,900	8,953,600	9,790,600	9,586,600

Source: UNSCOL approved budgets

9. Comments provided by UNSCOL are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

10. The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of management practices in UNSCOL to manage operations and resources to deliver on its mandate in accordance with Security Council resolutions and United Nations regulations and rules.

11. This audit was included in the 2021 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the risk that potential weaknesses in programme management, governance and resources management in UNSCOL could adversely impact implementation of the mandate of the Mission.

12. OIOS conducted this audit from November 2021 to June 2022. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2019 to 30 June 2022. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risk areas in the operations of UNSCOL, which included: programme management, governance, and management of staff and other resources.

13. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews and discussions with key mission personnel, (b) review of relevant documentation, and (c) analytical review of key processes.

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

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Programme management

Programme planning, implementation and monitoring activities need to be enhanced

15. UNSCOL operates in an integrated manner with other members of the UNCT, and its activities involved implementing its programme budget as well as contributing to implementation of the United Nations Strategic Framework for Lebanon, developed by the UNCT.

(a) Programme budgets and work plans

16. UNSCOL strategic objectives and annual programmes of work were included in the proposed programme budgets for special political missions and approved by the General Assembly. UNSCOL substantive units developed joint work plans to improve the operationalization of the strategic objectives and programme of work. Over the audit period, UNSCOL remained a strategic partner to the Government of Lebanon and political parties in the implementation of SCR 1701. During periods of increasing tension along the Blue Line, the Mission, in coordination with UNIFIL, mediated to restore calm and advocated to prevent escalation of tensions. UNSCOL also partnered with members of UNCT and members of the diplomatic community to support the Government of Lebanon in the 2022 parliamentary elections.

17. In 2020, the Mission started tracking the implementation of its programme of work through the Strategic Management Application (SMA) in Umoja. This was done annually for 2020 and 2021 and quarterly thereafter, in line with new guidance from the Business Transformation and Accountability Division (BTAD) of the Department of Management, Strategy, Policy and Compliance. The SMA reports listed the deliverables and their targets based on the approved annual programme of work. UNSCOL was required to report and comment on the actual results achieved; however, the comments on progress towards the objectives did not provide much information on the work done by the Mission to achieve the objectives set. In many cases, the Mission simply repeated the wording used in the description of the objectives as set out in the budget document. In addition, while three Secretary-General reports on SCR 1701 and three accompanying briefings to the Security Council were planned for 2022, only one had been completed by the end of the first quarter. UNSCOL, however, in its SMA report for the same quarter, stated to have achieved 50 per cent of both targets. This occurred because the SMA reports were written by a Political Affairs Officer but were not reviewed. UNSCOL has subsequently assigned the Chief of Staff as reviewer.

18. The Mission derived its objectives and key action points for its 2022 work plan from the Special Coordinator's compact and identified lead actors and expected outcomes to each action. Planned actions for the year included support to mediation efforts led by the United States to delineate the maritime boundary between Lebanon and Israel, advocacy for political leaders' compliance with the electoral calendar, convening of the Elections Forum, and mobilization of international support to the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces. UNSCOL had, however, not established a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the work plan.

(b) Programme evaluation

19. UNSCOL was involved in evaluations conducted by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA). The Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS also conducted periodic reviews of programmes, including special political missions and DPPA. Following the May 2022 parliamentary elections in Lebanon, UNSCOL initiated a self-evaluation of its support to the elections. However, there was a need for UNSCOL to develop an evaluation policy as required by ST/AI/2021/3 on evaluation in the

United Nations Secretariat and to conduct periodic self-evaluation in accordance with the regulations and rules governing programme planning and implementation (ST/SGB/2018/3). These require programme managers to conduct periodic self-evaluation of all sub-programmes under their responsibility.

(c) UNSCOL contribution to implementation of the United Nations Strategic Framework for Lebanon

20. UNCT, led by the Deputy Special Coordinator for Lebanon/Resident Coordinator (DSCL/RC), developed the United Nations Strategic Framework for Lebanon for the period 2017 to 2020, with a subsequent extension to 2022. The strategy aimed to promote a Lebanon-wide approach in three priority areas: (a) all the people of Lebanon have peace and security, (b) Lebanon enjoys domestic stability and practices effective governance, and (c) Lebanon reduces poverty and promotes sustainable development while addressing immediate needs in a human rights/gender sensitive manner. UNCT formed three working groups to guide the management of each priority area. The peace and security group was led by UNSCOL, the governance and political stability group by UNDP, and the socio-economic development pillar by the Office of the Resident Coordinator (RCO). These were subsequently revised to four pillars: economic, social, environmental and PPSG (political, peace, security and governance). UNSCOL and UNDP led the PPSG pillar. A results matrix was developed to guide and track the implementation of the strategy.

21. The RCO produced annual reports outlining the results of the United Nations' work in Lebanon, including the implementation of the Strategic Framework. The results matrix showed mixed results for the period 2017 to 2020, with some targets achieved and others not met. Results for some indicators were not available, making it impossible to assess target achievement. For example, two out of eight indicators under the peace and security pillar were not consistently reported. These were the percentage change in internal security incidents and the number of administrative procedures established and implemented by national authorities at border crossings to identify persons in need of international protection and access to the territory. Consequently, a final review of the Strategic Framework conducted by a consultant in 2022 could not confirm the collective achievements of the United Nations for peace and security at the national level. The review also identified gaps in results monitoring, including the unavailability of data for some indicators, multiple data sources and limited disaggregation of available data. A new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework has been developed to guide United Nations activities in Lebanon for the period 2023-2025.

(1) UNSCOL should take steps to: (a) ensure that the Strategic Management Application reports in Umoja duly reflect the work done by the Mission to achieve its objectives; (b) track implementation of the annual work plan; and (c) establish an evaluation policy and conduct periodic self-evaluations in accordance with relevant administrative issuances.

UNSCOL accepted recommendation 1 and stated that the Office would enhance the scope and content of its SMA reporting from the next budget cycle; conduct a mid-point review of the April 2022 to March 2023 work plan to track its implementation and make adjustments as necessary; and establish a Mission evaluation policy to provide a framework for periodic self-evaluations.

(2) UNSCOL should, as co-lead of the political, peace, security and governance pillar of the United Nations country team in Lebanon, take steps to improve reporting on the indicators of the new Cooperation Framework.

UNSCOL accepted recommendation 2 and stated that the Office would, with the start of the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in January 2023, coordinate with the pillar co-lead, UNDP, to enhance reporting on indicators.

Coordination with UNIFIL needed to be formalized

22. In resolution 2485 (2019), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to consider whether UNIFIL's resources remained relevant, considering the troop ceiling and the civilian component of UNIFIL, and the opportunities that exist to improve efficiency and effectiveness between UNIFIL and UNSCOL. In response, the Secretary-General highlighted in report S/2020/473 that UNIFIL had optimized its services and administrative support to UNSCOL. The two missions had established a service delivery mechanism whereby UNIFIL provided UNSCOL with a range of administrative support and security services. The review did not result in any changes to the existing memorandum of understanding on UNIFIL's support to UNSCOL, which was signed in 2018.

23. At the substantive level, the UNIFIL-UNSCOL strategic forum was established as a formal mechanism for information sharing and coordination between the two Heads of Missions and their respective political sections. According to UNSCOL, the forum convened twice a month. A review of the available forum minutes showed that there were active discussions and information-sharing on local and regional developments and their implications for the missions, but the frequency of meetings could not be confirmed as discussion points and follow-ups were not documented regularly. This was because UNIFIL and UNSCOL had not developed and documented terms of reference for the forum's activities, nor had they assigned roles for documenting and disseminating minutes and following up on action points.

24. The UNCT in Lebanon comprised 26 United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, and was led by the RC. The country team held approximately two meetings each month, during which the Special Coordinator briefed members on the political situation in the country and UNSCOL's related activities, including discussions with key political leaders and influencers.

25. In delivering its mandate, UNSCOL also coordinates with other stakeholders including the diplomatic community in Lebanon and the International Support Group¹ for Lebanon (ISG). The ISG was inaugurated in September 2013 to help mobilize support and assistance for Lebanon's stability, sovereignty and state institutions, and specifically to encourage assistance for the Lebanese Army, Syrian refugees in Lebanon and host communities, and government programmes and public services impacted by the Syrian crisis. The Group has since supported Lebanon through advocacy and resource mobilization. The Special Coordinator participates in activities of the ISG on behalf of the United Nations

(3) UNSCOL should, in coordination with UNIFIL, formalize the operations of the UNIFIL-UNSCOL strategic forum by developing terms of reference that define its purpose, composition and responsibilities.

UNSCOL accepted recommendation 3 and stated that the Office would seek an agreement with the leadership of UNIFIL to institute formal terms of reference for the UNIFIL-UNSCOL strategic forum.

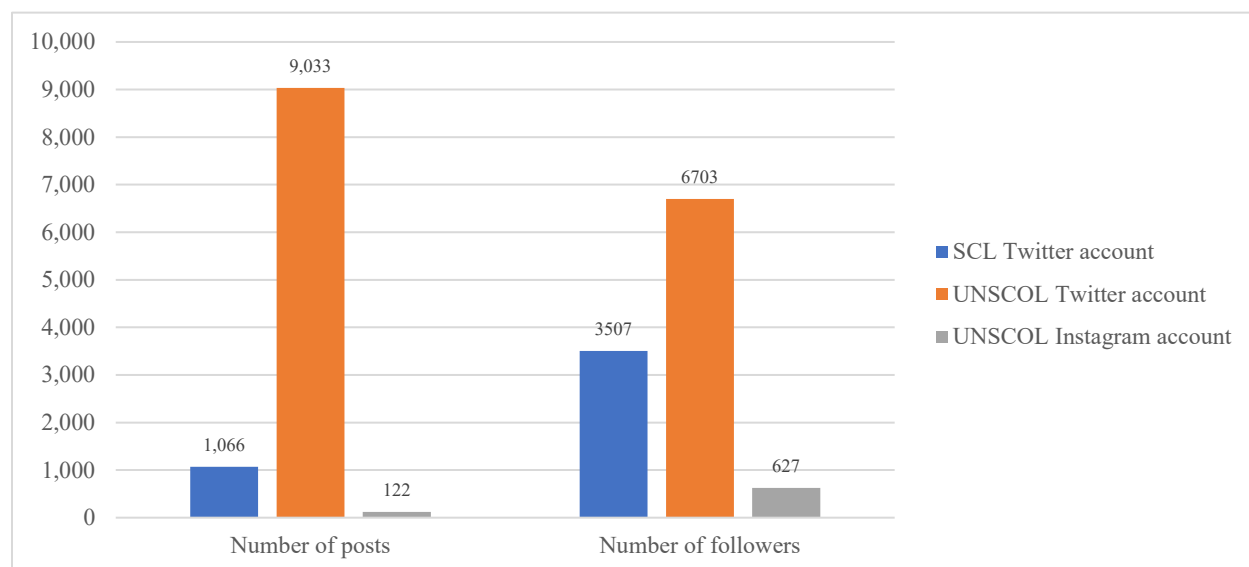
Public information activities in UNSCOL needed to be improved

26. The Mission's public information activities comprised external outreach and internal substantive support. The Public Information Unit focused on producing daily press reviews, analyzing the media landscape and liaising with media groups, transcribing and translating political statements and drafting public statements and documents. These were used to support the work of the Mission leadership and substantive units as well as DPPA.

¹ Membership includes the United Nations, governments of China, France, Germany, Italy, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States, the European Union, and the Arab League. ISG was launched by the United Nations Secretary-General and Lebanese President.

27. UNSCOL communicated its activities mainly through press releases, direct contacts through interviews and meetings and through the internet and social media. The Public Information Unit distributed press releases by email to a wide distribution list that included local media houses, government agencies, the diplomatic community, civil society organizations and academic institutions, and also posted them on the Mission's website. The Mission was most active on Twitter, where it announced its activities through multilingual posts (English and Arabic) on the Mission's official account and the personal account of the Special Coordinator. The Mission's Twitter account was established in August 2014 and the current Special Coordinator's account was established in June 2021, shortly after her appointment. UNSCOL also set up an Instagram account in January 2017, but it was not operated regularly. The chart below shows the number of followers and posting statistics of the social media accounts.

Figure I
UNSCOL social media followers and posting statistics



Source: UNSCOL social media pages as of 30 June 2022

28. UNSCOL published on its website press statements from the Security Council, Secretary-General, Special Coordinator, ISG for Lebanon and other actors. The website was also used to provide information on UNSCOL's activities related to its good offices and women, peace and security, human rights, political and institutional stability and prevention of violent extremism activities. Relevant resources such as Security Council resolutions and reports by the Secretary-General on the implementation of SCR 1701 are also available on the website. However, while the news section was regularly updated with press releases and statements, some aspects of the activities section was not regularly updated. The most recent updates to the activities section were on the following dates:

Table 3
Update of UNSCOL activities on Mission website

Activity type	Date of last update
Good offices	11 November 2020
Political and institutional stability	24 June 2022
Women, peace and security	8 March 2022
Human rights	1 May 2020
Preventing violent extremism	4 February 2019

29. The schedule of key Mission activities on the website has also not been continuously updated. The last update was in August 2019, when the UNIFIL mandate was extended until 31 August 2020 by SCR 2485. Subsequent key activities such as the appointment of the current Special Coordinator and the Secretary-General's visit to Lebanon were missing.

30. UNSCOL had also not established a practice to monitor and analyze its web and social media reach. Therefore, the effectiveness of information dissemination could not be assessed. This was because the Public Information Unit was not adequately staffed. UNSCOL had one post in the Unit that was filled by a Public Information Officer in the National Professional Officer staff category. Occasionally, the Unit received support from interns and staff from other units as required. The addition of digital technologies to traditional public information activities resulted in an increased need for staff to keep up with the changing demands and UNSCOL proposed the creation of a second post in the 2023 budget submission. The new Public Information Assistant, if approved, would support the Mission's public information activities, particularly in relation to its web and social media presence. In the meantime, the search for an individual contractor who can provide the needed support was ongoing. In addition, while the Public Information Unit developed quarterly plans to guide its activities, it did not have an overall communication strategy for the Mission.

31. The UNCT engaged a consultant to conduct a public perception survey of the United Nations in Lebanon in 2018. The objective was to obtain reliable and representative information on perceptions of the United Nations, perceived weaknesses and strengths and areas and methods of communication on which to focus attention and resources. Prior to the 2018 perception survey, the last survey was conducted in 2009. The results of the 2018 survey of 1,500 participating residents across the country were as follows:

- Only 7 per cent of respondents followed a United Nations account on social media.
- UNSCOL was not among the top-10 best-known United Nations organizations.
- Thirty-eight per cent of respondents thought that the United Nations in Lebanon was not impartial, while 30 per cent thought the United Nations was impartial. The remaining 32 per cent did not know.
- Seventy per cent of respondents thought that the United Nations was improving peace and security in Lebanon at least a little.

32. UNSCOL stated that it would explore with UNCT the feasibility of undertaking a public perception survey, taking into consideration resource constraints for such an initiative.

(4) UNSCOL should: (a) develop a strategy to improve communication on its activities; and (b) analyze the reach/impact of its information dissemination platforms and implement strategies for improvement.

UNSCOL accepted recommendation 4 and stated that subject to budgetary approval for an additional post in the Public Information Unit requested in the 2023 budget submission, the Office would take steps to enhance public visibility of its activities and develop/implement strategies to expand the reach of its information dissemination platforms.

Implementation of the Secretary-General's reform strategy was in progress

33. Senior managers have continued to include implementation of the Secretary-General's reforms in their annual compacts. The current compact (2022) focused on delegation of authority, enterprise risk management (ERM), data strategy and knowledge sharing and coordination.

(a) Delegation of authority

34. The Special Coordinator sub-delegated authority for finance, human resources and property management to authorized staff. UNSCOL staff did not require sub-delegated authority for procurement as procurement activities were carried out on the Mission's behalf by UNIFIL under a memorandum of understanding. Four key Mission staff had access to the management dashboard, which contained a range of information on key performance indicators using the interactive accountability indicator monitoring tool.

35. Between January 2019 and June 2022, the Special Coordinator granted 41 sub-delegations of authority to staff members, 9 of which were still active as of 30 June 2022. While the Special Coordinator had granted several sub-delegations of authority in the areas of finance and human resources and staff were able to act seamlessly for each other in case of absences, there was only one sub-delegation for property management. When the incumbent left the Mission on 30 June 2022, UNSCOL was left without a staff member with sub-delegated authority for property management, as there was no alternate for this function. Although property management is not a critical area within the Mission, there is a risk of disruption to service delivery when there is a need to process a transaction. UNSCOL stated that it had since initiated the process to grant the said sub-delegation and would endeavour to avoid such gaps going forward.

36. During the audit period, UNSCOL exercised delegated authority to make two exceptions to the administrative instructions to: (a) reduce the duration of the mandatory induction service for a temporary staff member; and (b) reimburse a staff member for the cost of conducting tests during the COVID-19 pandemic while on official travel. UNSCOL provided justifications for both cases and reported them to BTAD as required within one working day of the exception occurring.

(b) Enterprise risk management

37. BTAD disseminated guidance and best practices on risk and internal control management principles and developed communication and training programmes to improve the culture of risk management in the Secretariat. One of the key elements of ERM was the development of an organization-wide risk register.

38. UNSCOL began developing its ERM process in February 2022 by appointing a Political Affairs Officer and the Budget Officer as focal points. The focal points attended an ERM workshop (ERM Implementation in Field Missions) organized by BTAD in March 2022 and began coordinating the development of the Mission's risk register with the various heads of unit. OIOS did not make a recommendation on the ERM process as the progress made at the time of the audit was satisfactory.

(c) Data strategy

39. UNSCOL began incorporating a data-driven approach in implementation of its activities, in line with the Special Coordinator's objective to ensure operationalization of the data strategy. In line with this, the Mission was implementing the following:

- Working with the United Nations Office for Project Services to establish a data-driven mechanism to facilitate emergency assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces.
- Leading joint efforts by relevant United Nations entities ahead of the 2022 parliamentary elections, to use data to monitor tensions, identify 'hot spots' and detect hate speech that portends electoral risks, to help design efficient prevention strategies.
- Enhancing reporting by incorporating factual information obtained through analysis of relevant data.

40. OIOS did not make a recommendation on the implementation of the data strategy as the progress made at the time of the audit was satisfactory.

B. Governance

Need for increased coordination between the Office of the Special Coordinator and the Deputy Special Coordinator

41. The DSCL/RC has a third role, serving also as the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) in the country. Responsibilities as DSCL included serving as UNSCOL Officer-in-Charge in the absence of the Special Coordinator, acting as Deputy Designated Official in the area north of the Litani River, working with the Special Coordinator to achieve effective strategic partnership with the UNCT in Lebanon, and advising the Special Coordinator on humanitarian, recovery and development issues and activities.

42. The DCSL/RC/HC had separate reporting lines for each of the three roles, including a reporting line to the Special Coordinator with respect to the DSCL role. While the DSCL/RC/HC signed separate compacts with the Assistant Secretary-General for Development Coordination and the Emergency Relief Coordinator for the RC and HC roles, respectively, there was no compact with the Special Coordinator for the DSCL role although the post was partly funded by the regular budget.

43. The DSCL maintained office space in UNSCOL premises and the RCO at the United Nations House in Beirut. However, in 2021, the DSCL began to operate exclusively from the RCO in Beirut. This reduced contact between the DSCL and UNSCOL and had a negative impact on the level of coordination between the two offices. The move also contradicted the terms of reference for the DSCL post, which states that the DSCL/RC/HC shall be physically located in both the Office of the Special Coordinator and the RCO as determined jointly by the Special Coordinator and DSCL. It also further strained working relationships between the two senior officials, hindering the close working relationship prescribed by the terms of reference. Weekly half-hour meetings to discuss planned and ongoing activities were not enough to bridge the gap in coordination. As a result, the exchange of information between the two offices was not optimal. During the audit, both the Special Coordinator and the DSCL reported insufficient communication and coordination by each other.

(5) Pursuant to the terms of reference for the Deputy Special Coordinator, the Special Coordinator should: (a) establish a compact with the Deputy Special Coordinator in line with stipulated responsibilities as a member of the UNSCOL Senior Leadership Team and hold the Deputy accountable for delivering on the responsibilities; and (b) re-establish the practice of the Deputy Special Coordinator working partly each week from offices in UNSCOL to improve coordination

UNSCOL accepted recommendation 5 and stated that the Mission would establish a compact and arrangements for the new DSCL to work from UNSCOL offices once an incumbent is appointed.

C. Management of staff and other resources

Human resources management

a) Staff recruitment

44. During the audit period, the Mission conducted 30 recruitment exercises for 20 international and 10 local posts, of which 24 were completed by 31 March 2022. The recruitment exercises covered 10

position-specific job openings, 17 temporary job openings and 3 recruit-from-roster job openings, and resulted in the recruitment of 19 staff, 9 of whom were women. One recruitment failed to find a suitable candidate, while four vacancies were cancelled in the middle of the procedure for various reasons.

45. A review of the 24 completed recruitment exercises found that recruitment was largely carried out in line with the respective staff selection systems for local and international staff. In addition, the recruitments resulted in maintaining gender parity among international staff throughout the audit period. The Mission took an average of 86 days to complete recruitments (49 days for recruit-from-roster, 119 days for standard recruitments and 87 days for temporary recruitments). Except for two cases, the Mission completed all recruitments within the prescribed 120 days.

46. Fourteen of the 24 completed recruitment exercises (58 per cent) were for 10 temporary positions within the Mission. Four of the 14 were repeat recruitments for positions that were previously filled on a temporary basis. Positions were encumbered on a temporary basis for long periods of time (9 to 30 months) including senior positions at the P-4 and P-5 levels such as, senior coordination officer, senior political affairs officer, coordination officer, political affairs officer and administrative officer. Together, they formed a major part of the core of the Mission's management structure and constituted the Mission's critical personnel. Temporary vacancies arose variously through staff taking up other temporary assignments within and outside the Mission and special unpaid leave. As the Special Coordinator was working to address the issue, OIOS did not make a recommendation.

47. In addition, OIOS noted that evaluation criteria were established in accordance with the vacancy announcements and interviews were competency-based, except for the three positions that were recruited from the roster. In each case, at least three candidates were interviewed, and the recommended candidates met the evaluation criteria and the requirements of the post. One vacancy had a desirable education criterion for a specific certification in project management (Prince2 Foundation), and this desirable criterion was used during the recruitment process. The Mission did not justify why the particular certification was preferred to other project management certifications. OIOS did not make a recommendation as this was an isolated case. Also, the selections were done in consultation with the Head of Mission.

b) Staff training

48. As at 30 June 2022, 86 per cent of UNSCOL staff had completed all nine mandatory learning courses listed in ST/SGB/2018/4². The highest completion rates for mandatory learning were for field staff (100 per cent) and general service staff (90 per cent), with the lowest in the professional and above category (62 per cent). Completion rates for additional mandatory courses for senior staff were generally very low, averaging 50 per cent or less. While UNSCOL had sent out general reminders to staff, it must also hold senior staff accountable for completing mandatory training.

49. The United Nations Learning and Development Policy (ST/SGB/2009/9) established a minimum target of five days of professional development per year to maintain the technical and managerial competence of staff. Accordingly, administrative instruction ST/AI/2010/10 requires departments and offices to identify training needs and set priorities for achieving strategic goals and developing human resources. Supervisors are required to discuss and agree learning and development plans with individual staff members as part of ongoing performance management and to allocate time for learning and development activities.

50. Staff training budget and expenditure for the period were as shown in the chart below:

² Effective 1 August 2022, two courses were removed from the list of mandatory learning courses and one new mandatory course was introduced. This reduced the total number of mandatory courses from nine to eight.

Figure II
UNSCOL training budget and expenditure



Data source: UNSCOL, Umoja system

51. Training budgets for 2020 and 2021 were significantly underspent largely due to travel restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Training records for 2019, 2020 and 2021 showed that Mission staff had not achieved the minimum target of five training days per year. This was because UNSCOL had only developed training plans for its Security Section and had not followed up to ensure staff compliance with the minimum training requirements. Also, UNSCOL had not adequately explored ways to coordinate with UNIFIL on staff training. As a result of the gaps in meeting training requirements, the Mission was not assured of staff developing and maintaining their skills to carry out their substantive work and adjust to new mandates.

(6) UNSCOL should: (a) take action to hold all staff accountable for completing mandatory training and achieving the minimum professional development target of five training days per year; and (b) engage with UNIFIL to explore ways to coordinate and implement a training plan that meets staff training needs and organizational requirements

UNSCOL accepted recommendation 6 and stated that the Mission would continue to monitor staff compliance with mandatory training and issue reminders to staff and their supervisors on the same, including that non-compliance would be reflected in the ePerformance of the concerned staff. The Mission would also coordinate with UNIFIL for in-house trainings and optimize the use of external training opportunities.

Security management needed some improvements

(a) Weapons control procedures were adequate

52. UNSCOL adequately documented and managed the custody and issuance of weapons and ammunition in accordance with the Department of Safety and Security (DSS) manual of instruction on use of force equipment and firearms.

(b) Emergency preparedness plans were developed and updated

53. UNSCOL's fire evacuation plan requires the Mission to update and test its evacuation procedures at least twice a year. During the reporting period, UNSCOL tested its evacuation plan once in 2019, twice

in 2021 and once in the first half of 2022. No testing was conducted in 2020, mainly due to COVID-19 safety protocols and alternative working arrangements. The wider United Nations Area Security Plan prepared by DSS was last updated in March 2022 by DSS and approved by the Security Management Team.

(c) Residential security measures and radio checks needed to be improved

54. UNSCOL established security communication trees led by unit heads. The Security Section maintained registers in which relevant information such as staff addresses, residential global positioning system coordinates and telephone numbers were recorded. However, UNSCOL had not consistently conducted the required residential security surveys for new staff or staff who had changed residences. In 2021, residential surveys were not conducted for any of the 15 newly recruited staff. UNSCOL indicated that measures had been taken to improve the surveys in 2022, and five had been conducted in the six months to June 2022. Despite this improvement, UNSCOL needed to ensure that the surveys were conducted systematically.

55. The Mission conducted monthly radio checks for all staff. The statistics for 19 radio checks from January 2020 to November 2021 showed that UNSCOL reported an average compliance rate of 49 per cent. This rate did not consider those who did not call due to technical or other valid reasons, other than being out of Mission. If all these factors were considered, the compliance rate would be 41 per cent.

Table 4
Average non-compliance statistics for radio checks

Personnel	Reported compliance Rate by UNSCOL	Average number of staff who called	Non-compliance statistics			
			Average number of personnel	Average number of staff who did not call	Instances relating to technical reasons	Average number of staff not in Mission
Staff	49	27	74	32	7	8

Source: OIOS analysis of Security Section statistics and data on non-compliance

56. The Mission attempted to improve compliance by sending text message reminders before radio checks and following up with staff who did not respond to determine the reasons for non-compliance. Forty-three per cent of staff (an average of 32 out of 74 staff) did not give valid reasons for non-compliance with the radio checks, which indicated that they did not understand the importance of the exercise. This situation persisted because supervisors were not regularly informed about non-participating staff to remind them and hold them accountable if they did not comply. As a result, it could be difficult for the Mission to reach its staff in the event of a crisis, which could jeopardize staff safety

(7) UNSCOL should: (a) take steps to ensure that staff residence surveys are conducted systematically in accordance with residence security measures; and (b) regularly notify supervisors of non-compliance by their staff with mandatory security measures and ensure that supervisors hold their staff accountable

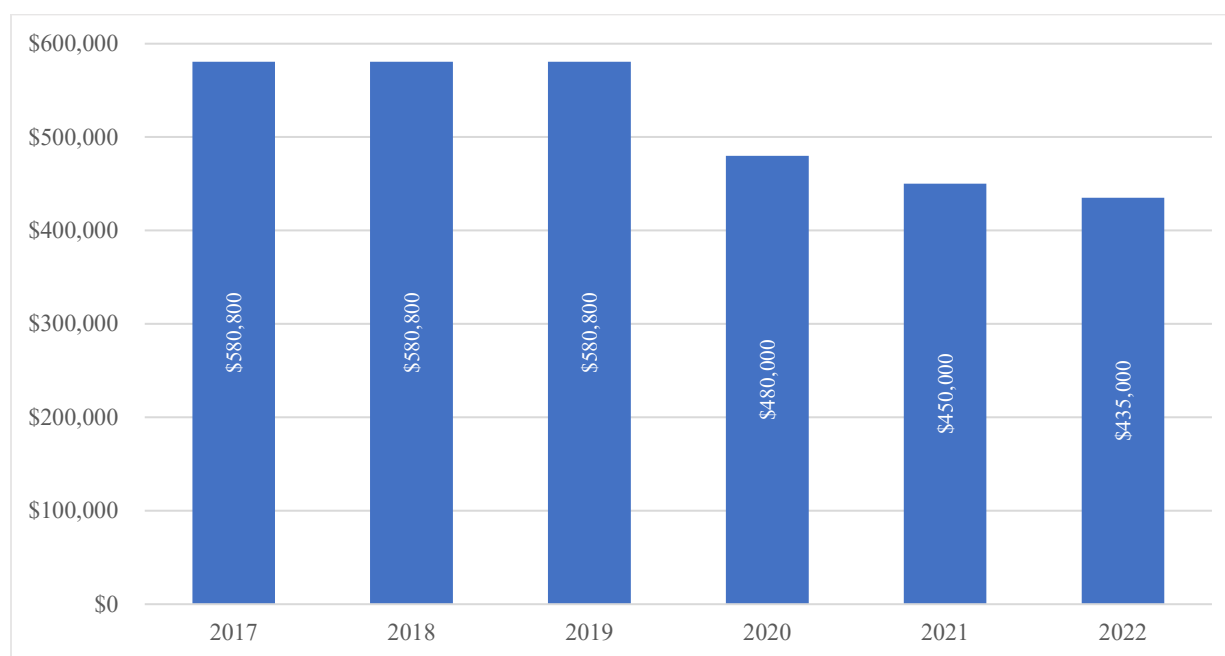
UNSCOL accepted recommendation 7 and stated that the Mission had completed pending residence surveys and would systematically conduct the same for incoming staff members. UNSCOL would also notify supervisors monthly, of non-compliance by their staff with mandatory security measures for appropriate follow-up.

Contract and property management was adequate

57. UNSCOL had a Supply Chain Management Unit that was responsible for the supply chain needs of the Mission, with support from UNIFIL. UNSCOL received support from UNIFIL for all procurement activities, except for low-value purchases. The Mission had successfully used the Supply Chain Planning Tool under Umoja Extension 2.

58. UNSCOL operated in a rented building in a high security area that also housed DSS and the Security Information and Operations Centre. UNSCOL rented the building in 2009 when a decision was made to relocate the Mission from the United Nations House in Beirut. Over the past three years, UNSCOL has managed to negotiate lower rates for the lease.

Figure III
UNSCOL office rent costs



Data source: Umoja system

59. UNSCOL continued to maintain office space in the United Nations House for occasional use by the Special Coordinator and other officials, as needed. Through regular reviews of the need for the office space, UNSCOL reduced its allocated area from 265 square metres in 2015 to 162 square metres in 2022. A service level agreement between UNSCOL and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia governed the terms and conditions for the use of the space. Under this agreement, UNSCOL was charged maintenance and utility costs based on the allocated office space. Annual costs incurred ranged from \$14,364 in 2017 to \$30,618³ in 2022. The increase was largely due to increased cost of maintaining the premises. In 2021, UNSCOL paid an additional \$106,208 as its portion of rehabilitation costs following damages caused by the explosion at the Beirut Port in August 2020.

³ In 2021 and 2022, maintenance costs for office space in the United Nations House were computed based on fixed rates per square metre. The rate for 2022 was \$15.75.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

60. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNSCOL 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 Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁴ / Important ⁵	C/ O ⁶	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁷
1	UNSCOL should take steps to: (a) ensure that the Strategic Management Application reports in Umoja duly reflect the work done by the Mission to achieve its objectives; (b) track implementation of the annual work plan; and (c) establish an evaluation policy and conduct periodic self-evaluations in accordance with relevant administrative issuances	Important	O	Notification of the measures undertaken to enhance SMA reporting and track implementation of the work plan and receipt of the Mission's evaluation policy and first self-evaluation report.	31 January 2023
2	UNSCOL should, as co-lead of the political, peace, security and governance pillar of the United Nations country team in Lebanon, take steps to improve reporting on the indicators of the new Cooperation Framework.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of enhanced reporting on the indicators of the new Cooperation Framework.	31 January 2023
3	UNSCOL should, in coordination with UNIFIL, formalize the operations of the UNIFIL-UNSCOL strategic forum by developing terms of reference that define its purpose, composition and responsibilities.	Important	O	Receipt of the terms of reference of the UNIFIL-UNSCOL strategic forum.	31 December 2022
4	UNSCOL should: (a) develop a strategy to improve communication on its activities; and (b) analyze the reach/impact of its information dissemination platforms and implement strategies for improvement.	Important	O	Receipt of the Mission's communication strategy and evidence of actions taken to improve reach/impact.	30 April 2023
5	Pursuant to the terms of reference for the Deputy Special Coordinator, the Special Coordinator should (a) establish a compact with the Deputy Special Coordinator in line with stipulated responsibilities as a member of the UNSCOL Senior Leadership Team	Important	O	Establishment of a compact and working arrangements with the new Deputy Special Coordinator.	31 December 2022

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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.

⁶ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁷ Date provided by UNSCOL in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁴ / Important ⁵	C/ O ⁶	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁷
	and hold the Deputy accountable for delivering on the responsibilities; and (b) re-establish the practice of the Deputy Special Coordinator working partly each week from offices in UNSCOL to improve coordination.				
6	UNSCOL should: (a) take action to hold all staff accountable for completing mandatory training and achieving the minimum professional development target of five training days per year; and (b) engage with UNIFIL to explore ways to coordinate and implement a training plan that meets staff training needs and organizational requirements.	Important	O	Implementation of the training plan and documentary evidence of staff compliance with mandatory training.	31 March 2023
7	UNSCOL should: (a) take steps to ensure that staff residence surveys are conducted systematically in accordance with residence security measures; and (b) regularly notify supervisors of non-compliance by their staff with mandatory security measures and ensure that supervisors hold their staff accountable.	Important	O	Receipt of the residence surveys and evidence of the first set of actions taken by supervisors to ensure staff compliance with mandatory security measures.	31 December 2022

APPENDIX I

Management Response

Management Response

Audit of the office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	UNSCOL should take steps to: (a) ensure that the Strategic Management Application reports in Umoja duly reflect the work done by the Mission to achieve its objectives; (b) track implementation of the annual work plan; and (c) establish an evaluation policy and conduct periodic self-evaluations in accordance with relevant administrative issuances.	Important	Yes	COS	January 2023 December 2022 December 2022	(a) UNSCOL will review both the scope and content of SMA reporting for enhancement from the next budgetary cycle. (b) Work Plan covers the period April 2022 – March 2023. Mid-point review planned for October-November 2022 to track implementation and effect adjustments as required. (c) UNSCOL will establish a Mission Evaluation Policy to provide a framework for periodic self-evaluation.
2	UNSCOL should, as co-lead of the political, peace, security and governance pillar of the United Nations country team in Lebanon, take steps to improve reporting on the indicators of the new Cooperation Framework.	Important	Yes	Chief, Coordination Unit	January 2023	With the start of the implementation of the UNSDCF from January 2023, UNSCOL in coordination with the pillar co-lead UNDP will enhance reporting on the indicators.
3	UNSCOL should, in coordination with UNIFIL, formalize the operations of the UNIFIL-UNSCOL strategic forum by developing terms of reference that define its purpose, composition and responsibilities.	Important	Yes	COS	December 2022	UNSCOL will seek agreement of the UNIFIL leadership to institute formal terms of reference for the UNIFIL-UNSCOL strategic forum.

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

Audit of the office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
4	UNSCOL should: (a) develop a strategy to improve communication on its activities; and (b) analyze the reach/impact of its information dissemination platforms and implement strategies for improvement.	Important	Yes	PIO	April 2023	Subject to budgetary approval for an additional post in PIO, as requested in the 2023 budget submission, UNSCOL will take steps to enhance public visibility of its activities and develop/implement strategies to expand the reach of its information dissemination platforms.
5	Pursuant to the terms of reference for the Deputy Special Coordinator, the Special Coordinator should: (a) establish a compact with the Deputy Special Coordinator in line with stipulated responsibilities as a member of the UNSCOL Senior Leadership Team and hold the Deputy accountable for delivering on the responsibilities; and (b) re-establish the practice of the Deputy Special Coordinator working partly each week from the office in UNSCOL to improve coordination.	Important	Yes	SCL/DSCL	December 2022	As the appointment of a new Deputy Special Coordinator is currently in process, this recommendation will be followed up with the arrival of the new Deputy in order to establish a compact and working arrangements from UNSCOL offices.
6	UNSCOL should: (a) take action to hold all staff accountable for completing mandatory training and achieving the minimum professional development target of five training days per year; and (b) engage with UNIFIL to explore ways to coordinate and implement a training plan that meets staff training needs and organizational requirements.	Important	Yes	Human Resources Officer	January 2023 <i>[For completion of mandatory training by all staff.]</i>	(a) Training Unit will continue to monitor and send monthly emails to staff members to complete the mandatory training. This will be followed by email reminders to individual staff members and their supervisors advising that non-compliance be reflected in the ePerformance of concerned staff. Managers will be reminded of the five days target per year.

Management Response

Audit of the office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
					March 2023	(b) Training Unit is coordinating with counterparts in UNIFIL to explore in-house trainings that could be provided by the latter while optimising the use of external training opportunities.
7	UNSCOL should: (a) take steps to ensure that staff residence surveys are conducted systematically in accordance with residence security measures; and (b) regularly notify supervisors of non-compliance by their staff with mandatory security measures and ensure that supervisors hold their staff accountable.	Important	Yes	Chief Security Officer	Completed Ongoing	(a) Pending residence surveys have since been completed and will be pursued systematically for any new incoming staff member. (b) Supervisors to be notified on monthly basis of non-compliance by their staff and advised to undertake appropriate follow up with concerned staff.