



CHARTER OF THE OFFICE OF AUDIT AND INVESTIGATIONS

I. Introduction

1. The UNDP Financial Regulation 4.01 stipulates that the Office of Audit and Investigations shall be responsible for the internal audit of UNDP. "It shall conduct independent, objective assurance and advisory activities in conformity with the Global Internal Audit Standards. It shall evaluate and contribute to the improvement of governance, risk management and control processes, and report thereon. The Office of Audit and Investigations shall exercise operational independence in the performance of its duties."
2. The UNDP Financial Regulation 4.02 states that the Office of Audit and Investigations shall be responsible for assessing and investigating allegations of fraud and corruption committed by UNDP personnel or committed by others to the detriment of UNDP.
3. Financial Regulation 4.03, as well as the Global Internal Audit Standards, GIAS, stipulate that the internal audit function's purpose (mission), authority and responsibility shall be further defined in the Charter. This Charter also recognizes the mandatory elements of The Institute of Internal Auditors' International Professional Practices Framework, which are the Global Internal Audit Standards and Topical Requirements.

II. Mission of OAI

4. The mission of OAI is to provide UNDP with an effective system of risk-based, independent and objective internal oversight that is designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of UNDP's operations in achieving its developmental goals and objectives through the provision of (i) internal audit and advisory services, and (ii) investigation services.
5. The internal oversight services cover all UNDP programmes, projects, operations and activities undertaken by all business units including providing assurance on governance processes, ethics, and integrity, and ensuring alignment with governance frameworks. OAI is committed to leveraging technology, such as automated audit tools and data analytics, to improve audit efficiency and effectiveness.
6. The services also cover UNDP's coordination function, interagency activities in which UNDP is involved, as well as the activities of UNDP's affiliated entities, which include the United Nations Capital Development Fund, United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, and United Nations Volunteers. However, the investigation function in respect to United Nations Volunteers is restricted to volunteers working for UNDP.

III. Internal Audit

7. Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance and advisory services designed to add value and improve the operations of UNDP, and may inter alia include financial audits, compliance audits and performance audits.
8. OAI shall undertake its internal audits in accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards, GIAS; established by the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA).
9. OAI will support improvement of the operations of UNDP by auditing:
 - (a) achievement of the organization's strategic objectives;
 - (b) reliability and integrity of financial and operational information;
 - (c) effectiveness and efficiency of operations;

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- (d) safeguarding of assets; and
- (e) compliance with agreements, legislative mandates, regulations and rules, policies and procedures.

OAI shall assess and make appropriate recommendations to improve the governance, risk management, and controls in the organization. Internal auditors shall adhere to confidentiality and data protection principles, safeguarding sensitive information obtained during the audit process. All audit work is subject to applicable UNDP regulations, policies, and confidentiality requirements.

10. In order to provide the audit services efficiently and effectively, the Director shall prepare and submit for the review of the Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee and approval of the Executive Board through the Administrator:
 - (a) Every four years: An internal audit and investigation strategy covering a four-year period and aligned with the period of coverage by the UNDP Strategic Plan; and
 - (b) Annually: A risk-based annual work plan that is consistent with the Organization's goals and flexible and adaptable to emerging needs and issues.
11. The approval requirement of the above plans does not prevent OAI from auditing any other area within the purview of its mandate, which OAI deems necessary.
12. In preparing the annual work plan, OAI shall apply a risk-based methodology, including risks and concerns identified by management and aligned with the UNDP ERM policy and its Risk Appetite Statement. OAI shall also prioritize engagements to be undertaken during the year with the aim to cover all auditable entities, including UNDP country offices on a cycle ranging from two to six years, depending on financial exposure and other risks.
13. In cooperation with the Internal Audit Services of other United Nations system organizations, OAI shall initiate and participate in joint audits of inter-agency activities.
14. OAI shall submit its audit reports to the Administrator, the Head of the Bureau concerned and the Head of the audited unit. OAI aims at submitting its final audit reports within three months after the completion of audit field work.
15. In accordance with decision 2012/18 of the UNDP Executive Board, OAI shall make publicly available all internal audit reports. In exceptional cases, reports may be redacted, or withheld in their entirety, at the discretion of the Director of OAI. Criteria for the decision may include any information deemed to be sensitive and which could potentially compromise or endanger the safety and security of UNDP personnel.
16. In accordance with decision 2016/13 of the UNDP Executive Board, OAI shall in its annual reports issue an overall opinion, based on the scope of the work undertaken, on the adequacy and effectiveness of the organization's framework of governance, risk management and controls.
17. OAI shall periodically inform the Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee and the Administrator of:
 - (a) Progress made in the implementation of the annual plan, changes made thereto and other issues related to the implementation of the plan;
 - (b) Summaries of significant and systemic audit findings; and

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- (c) Action taken by management on the implementation of audit recommendations.
18. OAI shall review and assess audit reports prepared by third party auditors on audits of nationally implemented projects and projects implemented by Non-Governmental Organizations (“NGO/NIM audits”) and on audits of implementing partners in the context of the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (“HACT audits”). OAI may review and assess any other third-party audit reports related to UNDP funded activities.
19. In addition to its assurance function, OAI provides advisory services to all levels of UNDP and are generally performed at the specific request of an engagement client. The nature and scope of the advisory service engagements are subject to agreement with the engagement clients. When performing advisory services, the internal auditor should maintain objectivity and not assume management responsibility.

IV. Investigations

20. OAI shall assess and conduct investigations into allegations of misconduct, such as fraud, theft and embezzlement, corruption, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse, discrimination, workplace harassment and abuse of authority, retaliation against whistleblowers, abuse of privileges and immunities or other acts or omissions in conflict with the general obligations of staff members that involve UNDP staff and other personnel.
21. OAI may assess and conduct investigations into allegations of fraud and other financial irregularities committed by vendors, implementing partners and other third parties, deemed to be detrimental to UNDP.
22. In addition, OAI may undertake proactive investigations in high-risk areas that are susceptible to fraud, corruption and other wrongdoings.
23. OAI shall have sole responsibility for the conduct of all investigations within UNDP.
24. OAI shall conduct investigations in accordance with the Uniform Principles and Guidelines for Investigations endorsed by the 10th Conference of International Investigators, the UNDP Legal Framework for Addressing Non-Compliance with UN Standards of Conduct, the OAI Investigation Guidelines and any other applicable administrative guidance.
25. OAI reviews UNDP’s social and environmental policies and procedures through a reporting mechanism to determine if investigations regarding alleged non-compliance are required.
26. The reporting, assessment, and investigation of alleged non-compliance with UNDP’s social and environmental policies and procedures will be conducted in accordance with the Investigation Guidelines of OAI’s Social and Environmental Compliance Unit.
27. OAI shall maintain reporting facilities (telephone hotline, web-based reporting facility, email, postal address and other means as appropriate) that function around the clock to facilitate staff, management and others to report any instances of fraud, corruption or other wrongdoings. OAI will operate separate mechanisms for the reporting of alleged non-compliance with UNDP’s social and environmental policies and procedures.



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28. OAI shall maintain an effective system for the recording and management of all cases.
29. OAI shall submit its investigation reports concerning UNDP staff members to the Legal Office for consideration of disciplinary or administrative action, as appropriate.
30. In cases involving personnel, OAI shall submit its investigation reports to the Head of Office concerned for administrative or other action, as appropriate.
31. For United Nations Volunteers, OAI shall submit its investigation report to the United Nations Volunteer Advisory Panel on Disciplinary Matters for consideration of disciplinary or other action.
32. In cases where a vendor is found to have engaged in 'proscribed practices' (corrupt practice, fraudulent practice, coercive practice, collusive practice, unethical practice or obstruction), OAI shall submit its investigation report to the UNDP Vendor Review Committee for consideration of appropriate action. In cases involving governmental implementing partners, OAI shall submit its investigation report to the relevant Regional Bureau.
33. OAI shall submit its investigation reports as soon as possible, based on the priority of the case and available resources.
34. Should the investigation result in credible allegations of criminal conduct, OAI shall prepare a recommendation for referral to national law enforcement authorities, as appropriate, for criminal investigation and prosecution.
35. OAI shall also submit management letters to senior management on weaknesses in controls, processes, deficiencies in regulations and guidance that are identified in the course of investigations with recommendations for addressing these weaknesses and further strengthening the accountability framework in the organization.
36. Credible allegations of misconduct against UNDP senior management at the level of USG, OAI staff members and other OAI personnel will not be investigated by OAI. Any such allegations requiring an investigation will be reviewed by the Oversight Office of another UN agency or international organization appointed by the Director, OAI.

V. Responsibility and Authority

37. The Director of OAI is accountable to the Administrator for the provision of internal audit and investigation services in accordance with the provisions of the Financial Regulations and Rules and this Charter.
38. The Director of OAI shall report to the Administrator via the Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee, AEAC on the performance of OAI against agreed key performance indicators.
39. OAI shall independently prepare and submit to the Executive Board, after review by the Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee, an annual report for each completed calendar year on its internal audit and investigations activity. This annual report shall also include updated information on, resources, disclosure of audit reports, significant audit findings, systemic weaknesses identified in audits, action taken by management to implement audit recommendations, investigations cases and their status and such other matters as may be requested by the Executive Board.



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40. The Director of OAI shall maintain a quality assurance and improvement program that covers all aspects of the internal audit and investigations activity.
41. The Director of OAI shall be responsible for selecting and maintaining a cadre of audit and investigation staff with sufficient knowledge, skills, experience, and professional certifications in order to provide the independent and objective internal oversight services envisaged in this Charter. Staff shall be required to engage in continuous professional development to stay current with best practices and emerging trends. In addition to staff, the Director may engage consultants and experts as necessary for the performance of the functions under this Charter.
42. The Director of OAI shall engage and manage all staff and apply resources allocated to OAI in accordance with the relevant regulations, rules, policies and procedures established by UNDP.
43. OAI shall have:
 - (a) Free access to the organization's records, personnel and premises, as necessary, in its opinion, for the performance of its duties; internal auditors are aware of their responsibilities for protecting information and demonstrate respect for the confidentiality, privacy, and ownership of information acquired when performing internal audit services or as the result of professional relationships and
 - (b) The assistance and cooperation of all UNDP personnel deemed necessary for the discharge of responsibilities under this Charter. This includes communicating directly with all levels of staff and management as well as requesting any staff member to furnish all information and explanation that are deemed necessary for the completion of any audit or investigation.
44. Management and staff shall have the responsibility to provide a written response to all OAI audit and investigation reports within a reasonable period of time.
45. The Director and staff of OAI are not authorized to:
 - (a) Perform any operational, managerial or supervisory duties for UNDP or its affiliates;
 - (b) Initiate or approve accounting transactions external to OAI; and
 - (c) Direct the activities of any UNDP personnel not employed by OAI, except to the extent that such personnel have been appropriately assigned to OAI teams or to otherwise assist OAI.

VI. Independence

46. OAI shall conduct audit and investigations independently from any interference from UNDP senior management or any outside party. It shall be free from interference in determining the priority level of its audit and investigations, the scope of its audit and investigations, performing the field work and communicating results.
47. OAI shall annually confirm to the Executive Board the organizational independence of its internal audit and investigations activity.
48. The Director of OAI shall be appointed for a term of five years, with the possibility of renewal once for a maximum of five years, and shall be barred from re-entry into UNDP after the expiry of his/her term. The Administrator shall consult with the Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee on the appointment, performance evaluation, extension and dismissal of the Director of OAI.
49. The Director OAI shall have free and unrestricted access to the Executive Board and the Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee and to the Board of Auditors.



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50. The Director and staff of OAI shall abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct as well as the IIA's Global Internal Audit Standards to which they are subject to and shall at all times maintain and safeguard their independence, objectivity and professionalism in fulfilling the responsibilities assigned under this Charter.
51. The Director and staff of OAI must refrain from auditing specific operations for which they were previously responsible. Functions for which the Director and staff of OAI have responsibility shall not be audited by OAI. The Director may allow OAI staff to provide advisory services for operations they were previously responsible for.
52. The Director and staff of OAI must avoid being placed in situations which might create any conflict of interest that may impair their judgment on audit and investigation matters. The Director or staff concerned shall declare any conflict of interests or impairment that may affect their participation in an audit or investigation engagement and accordingly discharge themselves from such participation.
53. The Director of OAI shall bring to the attention of the Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee any impairment to independence, objectivity or professionalism.

VII. Other issues

Resources

54. OAI shall be provided with the necessary resources, including appropriately trained and experienced professionals, in order to fulfil its responsibilities under this Charter. The budget of OAI shall be approved by the Administrator on the basis of the request submitted by the Director of OAI in accordance with the strategy and the annual work plan, after review and advice by the Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee.
55. The Director of OAI shall keep the Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee apprised on the funding and staffing of OAI.

Cost Reimbursable Services

56. OAI may provide internal audit and investigation services to other organizations of the United Nations system on a cost reimbursement basis. The cost of supervising and/or conducting specific audits of UNDP projects may be charged to those projects.

Coordination with the United Nations Board of Auditors and UNDP's Independent Evaluation Office, IEO

In planning its audits, OAI shall interact regularly with the Board of Auditors in order to optimize audit coverage and avoid duplication of assurance work. OAI shall share with the Board of Auditors



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information on issues of mutual interest. OAI is also coordinating its work with UNDP's Independent Evaluation Office, IEO.

Approval and revision of the Charter

57. This revised version of the Charter was reviewed and endorsed by the Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee and has been approved by the Administrator.
58. The Charter shall be reviewed on a periodical basis or when there is a change in the Director of Audit, or more often, if required. Any revision shall be approved by the Administrator after consultation with the Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee and shall be brought to the attention of the Executive Board.

Approved: Achim Steiner,
Administrator

Date: December 2024