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Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of political affairs: Security Council affairs

Summary

At its forty-fourth session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination requested the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) to undertake an in-depth evaluation of political affairs. The first report on subprogramme 1, Prevention, control and resolution of conflicts, of programme 2, Political affairs of the biennial programme plan, was presented to the Committee at its forty-sixth session in 2006. This evaluation is part of phase two of the in-depth evaluation and covers subprogramme 3, Security Council affairs. It focuses on the structure, activities and products of the Security Council Affairs Division, which is responsible for implementing subprogramme 3.

The expansion of Security Council activity since the 1990s has increased the Division's workload and created a more complex, fast-paced environment in which to fulfil its mandate of providing support to the Security Council and its subsidiary organs. Overall client satisfaction with the Division is high. However, different interpretations of its support role exist, due to a lack of clarity in what constitutes substantive support and inconsistent client expectations.

* E/AC.51/2007/1.



While the Division has generally adapted well to Council members' increased support needs, efficiency-enhancing initiatives would help it to better meet the challenges of an evolving Council. Key areas where efficiencies could be achieved include more equitable task allocation, enhanced work processes, including guidelines and information-sharing systems, strengthened communications and better management practices. Furthermore, vulnerabilities exist with regard to the sustainability of the Division's expertise and knowledge; knowledge-management mechanisms and tools are needed to ensure that this vital Division asset is captured, stored and disseminated. In addition, complementarities, synergies and cohesiveness within the Division have not been fully exploited, nor has a Division-wide vision been developed and fostered. Recent leadership changes offer an opportunity to address some of these concerns.

OIOS makes seven recommendations to the Security Council Affairs Division and to the Department of Political Affairs:

- Establishment of more formal and transparent client communications;
- Creation of a formal and comprehensive knowledge-management system;
- Enhancement of guidelines on key outputs and processes;
- Fostering of greater intra-branch teamwork and inter-branch staff mobility;
- Strengthening of support for and oversight of expert groups;
- Establishment of a post of Deputy Director for Management;
- Expansion of resources to cope with the growing workload associated with increases in sanctions committees and monitoring mechanisms.

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I. Introduction

1. At its forty-fourth session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination requested the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) to undertake an in-depth evaluation of political affairs.¹ The political affairs programme is implemented by the Department of Political Affairs. It is divided into the following five subprogrammes:

- Subprogramme 1, Prevention, control and resolution of conflicts, implemented by four regional divisions (Africa I, Africa II, Americas and Europe, and Asia and the Pacific)
- Subprogramme 2, Electoral assistance, implemented by the Electoral Assistance Division
- Subprogramme 3, Security Council affairs, implemented by the Security Council Affairs Division
- Subprogramme 4, Decolonization, implemented by the Decolonization Unit
- Subprogramme 5, Question of Palestine, implemented by the Division for Palestinian Rights.

2. OIOS presented a report on subprogramme 1 to the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-sixth session in 2006. OIOS is presenting reports on the remaining four subprogrammes, a summary report and a report on special political missions administered and supported by the Department of Political Affairs to the Committee at its forty-seventh session in 2007. The present report covers subprogramme 3, Security Council affairs. It has been reviewed by the Department of Political Affairs, whose comments appear in italics as appropriate.

3. The purpose of this in-depth evaluation is to determine the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the Department in relation to its objectives under subprogramme 3. It focuses on the structure, activities and products of the Security Council Affairs Division, which is responsible for implementing subprogramme 3.

II. Methodology

4. In conducting this evaluation, OIOS utilized a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods, including self-administered surveys, in-person in-depth interviews, programme-data analyses, case studies, and a literature review. The evaluation findings are based on the following 11 data sources: (a) a self-administered survey of all 15 members of the 2006 Security Council and the 5 members whose terms ended in 2005;² (b) 26 interviews with 14 members of the 2006 Security Council and the 5 members whose terms ended in 2005;³ (c) a self-

¹ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 16 (A/59/16)* para. 382, and General Assembly resolution 59/275, para. 22.

² The survey was conducted from August to October 2006. Fourteen of 20 current and prior-year members responded, for a 70 per cent response rate. This is hereinafter referred to as the "member survey".

³ Interviews were held with 19 of 20 current and prior-year members regarding the Security Council Secretariat Branch, and with seven members regarding the Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch.

administered survey of Security Council Affairs Division staff;⁴ (d) 28 interviews with a non-random sample of the Division's staff;⁵ (e) a self-administered survey of the Division's internal United Nations partners;⁶ (f) a self-administered survey of Security Council experts in academic life and civil society;⁷ (g) seven interviews with the Division's internal partners in the Department of Political Affairs; (h) eight interviews with external Security Council experts; (i) two case-study weeks;⁸ (j) programme-data analyses; and (k) a literature review. OIOS also reviewed the findings of the OIOS audit on the recruitment of experts for sanctions panels in the Department of Political Affairs (AP2005/560/03). The methodology is limited by a low partner-survey response rate.

III. Background

Security Council

5. The Charter of the United Nations established the Security Council as a political organ with primary responsibility for international peace and security. Its decisions are binding on all Member States. The Council had 11 members in 1945 and expanded to 15 members in 1965. Of these, five are permanent, with the power of veto over non-procedural matters: China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. The 10 non-permanent members are elected by the General Assembly and serve for two-year terms.

6. The 1990s marked the beginning of an expansion in Council activity. Between 1946 and 1989 it met 2,903 times and adopted 646 resolutions, an average of fewer than 15 a year; in the following decade, it met 1,183 times and adopted 638 resolutions, or about 64 per year. This expansion has seen a wider range of Council activities, including the establishment of international criminal tribunals, the maintenance of complex sanctions regimes and the temporary administration of territory.⁹

7. The Council determines its own rules of procedure. It has a presidency that rotates monthly, and meetings are held in open or closed session. From 1990 on the number of informal consultations increased significantly, and it is here that much of the Council's work is done.

⁴ The survey was conducted from August to October 2006. Thirty-two of 52 staff members responded, for a 62 per cent response rate. This is hereinafter referred to as the "staff survey".

⁵ Interviews were conducted with the former and current Directors and the Military Staff Committee Liaison Officer, and in all three of the Division's branches.

⁶ The survey was conducted from October to November 2006. Thirty-eight of 155 partners responded, for a 25 per cent response rate. This is hereinafter referred to as the "partner survey".

⁷ The survey was conducted from November to December 2006. Twenty-one of 39 experts responded, for a 54 per cent response rate. This is hereinafter referred to as the "expert group survey".

⁸ Security Council case-study weeks were in September and October 2006. Subsidiary organs' case-study weeks were in September and November 2006. OIOS observed Security Council and subsidiary-organ meetings and internal staff meetings, and reviewed work products and internal communications.

⁹ See, for example, David M. Malone, ed. *The UN Security Council: From the Cold War to the 21st Century* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2004).

8. The Charter authorizes the Council to establish “such subsidiary organs as it deems necessary for the performance of its functions”. They have included entities authorized to carry out functions delegated by the Council, as well as committees of the Council to oversee the implementation of Council decisions. The former category includes the international tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda; the latter includes committees established to oversee sanctions regimes established by the Council, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004).

Security Council Affairs Division

9. The Security Council Affairs Division is mandated to facilitate the deliberations of and effective decision-making by the Security Council and its subsidiary organs (A/60/6 (Sect. 3)) through activities entailing both substantive and secretariat support. It has a staff of 52 and is headed by a Director, who reports to the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, through one of the Department’s Assistant Secretaries-General. The Division comprises:

- The Office of the Director, with one director, one Professional and one General Service staff
- The Security Council Secretariat Branch, with 1 chief, 7 Professional staff and 11 General Service staff, responsible for providing support to the Security Council
- The Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch, with 1 chief, 8 Professional staff and 10 General Service staff, responsible for providing support to the Council’s subsidiary organs and substantive guidance and oversight to the panels of experts, groups of experts and monitoring teams established by the Secretary-General, at the request of the Security Council, to monitor sanctions.¹⁰ The Branch also initiates some administrative actions on behalf of expert groups which are implemented by the Executive Office of the Department of Political Affairs and other United Nations entities
- The Security Council Practices and Charter Research Branch, with one chief, five Professional staff and three General Service staff, responsible for generating analytical and research products on past and contemporary Council practice, including the *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council*¹¹
- The Military Staff Committee secretariat, with one Professional and one General Service staff, responsible for providing support to the Council’s Military Staff Committee.

¹⁰ These terms are used interchangeably. The bodies concerned are hereinafter referred to as “expert groups”.

¹¹ Hereinafter referred to as “the *Repertoire*”.

IV. Evaluation findings

A. While there is general consensus on the overall support role of the Division, different interpretations of this role and inconsistent client expectations have detracted from the clarity of its work

Overall support role is largely clear

10. The Division's overall role of providing support to the Security Council and its subsidiary organs is clear to Council members and staff. Changes in the Council and its subsidiary organs over the past 10 to 15 years have steadily increased the scope and scale of these bodies' demand for such support. The Division's mandate is generally viewed as sufficiently broad to ensure the flexibility it needs to adjust to this changing environment; most of its staff believe their Division mandate is clear, relevant and feasible.¹² OIOS has classified the Division's support role into five distinct categories: (a) logistical assistance, such as coordinating and servicing meetings; (b) advisory services, on such matters as rules of procedure and protocol, for the Council and its subsidiary organs; (c) physical outputs, such as procedural briefs, the Security Council's annual report to the General Assembly,¹³ the *Repertoire* and guidelines for sanctions committee work; (d) processing of official Security Council documentation; and (e) substantive support to expert groups, including guidance on the scope of their mandates and awareness of evidentiary standards.¹⁴

11. The staff of the Division say that their primary role is to assist members of the Council and its subsidiary organs, to ensure the efficient functioning of these bodies and to help committee chairpersons. Similarly, in interviews, Council members most commonly say that the Division's role is to be the institutional memory of the Council, to provide substantive and logistical support, including to the Council presidency, and to prepare meetings. Examples of views expressed by members are that the Division "keeps things moving" and "helps the Council work smoothly and without delays", and that "without [the Division] we wouldn't be able to do our work or move forward in improving how our work is done".

12. Both the staff and Council members generally agree on the Division's priority work. For the Security Council Secretariat Branch, most member-survey respondents (67 per cent) rank substantive support and secretariat services to the Council, including advice on rules and procedures, as first or second priority of the Branch; similarly, almost all staff-survey respondents in this Branch (96 per cent) rate this task as first or second priority. Both Council members and staff also rank assistance provided to the Council presidency as a top priority. A majority of staff of the Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch (91 per cent) and members (75 per cent) surveyed rate the provision of substantive support and secretariat services to the sanctions committees as top priorities.

¹² Ninety-three per cent, 100 per cent and 89 per cent of staff-survey respondents, respectively.

¹³ Hereinafter referred to as "the annual report".

¹⁴ It is worth noting that the Division plays an additional role in providing information to the Secretary-General and other United Nations partners on Council proceedings, as discussed in paragraphs 25 and 38 below.

Role is interpreted differently

13. Within this general consensus, different interpretations of the Division's support role exist. One reason is a lack of clarity in what constitutes "substantive" support. According to some staff of the Division, it consists primarily of advice provided on Council precedents and procedures; they argue that any advice requiring political judgement is substantive, since it can have a bearing on Council deliberations. They consider the provision of institutional memory to be a substantive role, particularly in assisting elected members, who may have less institutional memory when they assume the Council presidency or a sanctions committee chairmanship. Other staff, particularly in the Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch, interpret substantive support to comprise topical, content-based knowledge, including sanctions. All Council members agree that the Division provides valuable advice on procedural matters and protocol, but not all agree that this constitutes "substantive" support.

14. OIOS observed different types of advice being offered during Council and subsidiary-organ meetings. At some meetings, Division staff advised the President on speaking order, informed a member on protocol for submitting speakers' credentials to the Secretary-General and advised members under what rules speakers could be invited to address the Council. OIOS also observed occasions where the advice given required political judgement, such as providing political background on upcoming agenda items. Given the Council's expanding role, established protocol might not always be available, rendering the Division's advice less dependent on past precedent than on its own political judgement.

15. Also contributing to variation in how the Division's role is interpreted is the specific role of the Security Council Practices and Charter Research Branch. While its primary function is to produce the *Repertoire*, one quarter of members surveyed rate this a lower priority than other Division functions. Furthermore, most Council members interviewed either are unaware of the *Repertoire* or are aware of it but do not use it, although several mention that legal staff at their missions use it. Some staff and Council members believe this Branch should play a greater role in providing advisory services to the Division and other United Nations colleagues, members and external clients with regard to Council practice. They suggest that this Branch take the lead in conducting research on historical precedent.

16. The Division's support role includes providing substantive guidance and oversight to the expert groups, but this role also entails different interpretations.¹⁵ Staff of the Division acknowledge some responsibility for quality assurance in expert groups' work. Expert-group survey respondents express different understanding of the mandate of the Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch with regard to their work: most see this as consisting primarily of administrative support, while others see it as encompassing more substantive support.¹⁶ Administrative responsibility for the expert groups is shared between the Branch

¹⁵ The growing role of expert groups has taxed not only the Division's resources, but also the capacity of its administrative partner, the Executive Office, to meet the groups' administrative needs.

¹⁶ For example, 71 per cent of expert-group survey respondents say administrative support has been of greatest importance to them during their most recent work, followed by the orientation to their work (24 per cent) and assistance in communicating with individuals and entities during their assignments (24 per cent).

and the Department's Executive Office, which might lead to some confusion about their respective roles. There is no explicit mention of the Branch's function with regard to the expert groups in the Secretary-General's bulletin on the organization of the Department of Political Affairs (ST/SCB/2000/10), nor are staff aware of documents delineating the relationship between the Division and the Executive Office regarding the groups' administration.

Client expectations are inconsistent

17. Another major factor contributing to lack of clarity in the Division's work are inconsistent expectations among its main clients; there are currently few formal forums for communication between the Division and the Council where clear client expectations and support needs can be established. OIOS recognizes that for the Division to significantly change its responsibilities with respect to the Council and its subsidiary organs, consensus from all 15 members is required.¹⁷ Adding to this is constant change in clients, as new Council members are elected every year. Many members state that the Division plays different roles for permanent and elected members, in that elected members have a greater demand for the Division's institutional memory, and might look for more guidance than it currently gives. Furthermore, some members want the Division to be more innovative and proactive, while others do not.¹⁸ About half of the Council members interviewed encourage greater innovation in the Division and state that staff should not simply rely on how things were done in the past. Some members suggest, for example, that a non-analytical memorandum provided before each meeting, summarizing the main issues to be discussed and pulling together past Council actions and documents, would better focus Council deliberations;¹⁹ others suggest the modernization of procedures, working methods and information flow, or the use of enhanced technology to facilitate meetings; still others recommend that, when a sanctions committee ends, the Division should produce a summary report enumerating key issues that might be used as a knowledge source for future committees.

18. Some members believe that the Division should perform better in anticipating information needs. OIOS directly observed a good example of such anticipation at the time of the appointment of the new Secretary-General, when the Division, on its own initiative, provided members with past Council communiqués on Secretary-General appointments; these were welcomed as facilitating the Council's deliberations on appointment protocol. Again, in a sanctions committee meeting, members welcomed a letter, proactively prepared by the Division, from the committee to listed parties regarding an expert group's recommendations.

¹⁷ During the 2006 deliberations of the Security Council Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, proposals for a larger Division role were made but not agreed to by all 15 members.

¹⁸ These differences were comparable among permanent and elected members alike.

¹⁹ OIOS acknowledges that if the Division prepared such a memorandum, it would need to be non-analytical in nature; and, in other cases, memoranda would need to be requested from substantive desk officers.

B. The Division is successfully performing its overall mandate of providing support to the Security Council and its subsidiary organs

Council and subsidiary-organ meetings are held as planned

19. As measured by time spent on its various support activities, the Division's role is largely one of servicing meetings.²⁰ In all three bienniums from 2000 to 2005, "substantive servicing of meetings" is the largest Division output (in 2004-2005, it was 97 per cent of all outputs). Similarly, in 2004-2005, servicing of Council and subsidiary-organ meetings constituted over half (58 per cent) of all regular-budget work months for the biennium.²¹ Meetings of the Council and its subsidiary organs have been successfully planned and executed over the past three bienniums. In four case-study weeks observed by OIOS, Council and subsidiary-organ meetings were timely and met stated objectives as scheduled on the calendar.

Council members' satisfaction is high

20. The member survey reveals high satisfaction with the Division's overall performance; ratings do not generally differ among permanent and elected members. Overall praise for the Division is also evident in interviews with Council members. A total of 12 out of 14 member-survey respondents say that they are satisfied overall with the Division, and high ratings are given for staff responsiveness, timeliness of assistance and quality of work. Members surveyed report that the Division performs its core functions thoroughly and professionally, and the information it provides is helpful and accurate. However, members express some frustration over issues outside the Division's direct control, such as late completion or translation of reports.

21. The Security Council Secretariat Branch is viewed positively, with performance of all its core functions receiving high marks.²² In the two areas given highest priority — providing substantive support and secretariat services and assisting the Council presidency — nearly all survey respondents rate the Branch's performance as good or excellent. Many Council members also see opportunities for strengthening the Branch. Some suggest a change in general approach, with the Division behaving more like a government ministry that anticipates needs rather than waiting for instructions, and generates non-analytical background briefing papers on precedent. Other members suggest, however, that this might test the Division's mandate.

22. The Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch is also rated highly overall, but with some variation as between the committees which the Branch supports. While assessments are generally positive, somewhat lower ratings are given for monitoring developments in the area of sanctions and for drafting reports of the subsidiary organs of the Security Council.²³

²⁰ The Division's servicing role differs from that of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, which includes table set-up and provision of sound and interpretation.

²¹ 281.55 out of a total of 460.86 regular-budget work months.

²² With the exception of one function, where a rating of "poor" is given by one respondent.

²³ No further data on these assessments were available in the member survey. The Branch says that it has participated in major sanctions processes, maintained cooperation with academic institutions and drafted reports related to sanctions committee work.

23. The Security Council Practices and Charter Research Branch receives somewhat lower ratings in the member survey than do the other two branches, although there is less familiarity with its work. It receives some more negative assessments of its work, particularly in preparing the *Repertoire*. Staff of the Division say that they have received positive comments during Sixth Committee meetings and generous contributions to the trust fund for the updating of the *Repertoire*.

24. Council members perceive support to the Military Staff Committee as more marginal to the work of the Division, with only three offering a rating of Military Staff Committee secretariat support (assessed as excellent or good).

United Nations partners rate the Division highly

25. United Nations partners regard Division staff as competent and committed. The partner survey finds that working relationships are excellent or good, with generally good communication and coordination, and most partners believe there is a clear relationship with the Division, in terms both of responsibilities and reporting lines. The Division has also partnered with academic institutions and civil-society organizations, which have rated these interactions positively. The Division might consider how to best expand its cooperative efforts with these bodies.

26. Expert groups offer a generally positive assessment of the Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch with regard to its substantive support, but rank this a lower priority than administrative support. They rate the Branch as good in safeguarding their independence and impartiality and in assisting with their reports, but less positively on recruitment and monitoring and on coordination with other United Nations bodies. Their satisfaction tends to decrease with regard to administrative support and oversight.²⁴

Staff assess their own work positively

27. Division staff generally assess their own work positively. In the staff survey, all respondents regard the Division as either effective (72 per cent) or very effective (28 per cent). Performance of specific functions is rated in a manner comparable to the member survey, but with slightly higher assessments. Staff believe in the work of the Council and its subsidiary organs and consider that their own efforts help these bodies in important ways.

C. Uneven task allocation and underdeveloped work processes, communication systems and management practices have hindered efficiency and effectiveness

28. For the Division, significant growth in the volume and scope of Council and subsidiary-organ work has translated into more meetings to coordinate and attend, more documents to produce, more actors to liaise with, and mounting bodies of precedent and procedure to learn. The increasingly fast-paced nature of developments in the Council and its subsidiary organs requires the Division to provide support in a more timely fashion. The Division has adapted well to Council

²⁴ OIOS notes that this Branch initiates some administrative actions that are implemented by the Executive Office.

members' increased support needs, although individual branch staffing levels have risen only modestly, remained static or declined over this same period. In addition to efficiency-enhancing initiatives already undertaken, such as guidelines for the *Repertoire*, continued improvements in task allocation, work processes, communications systems and management practices will assist the Division to better meet the challenges of an evolving Council.

Task allocation is somewhat uneven

29. Task allocation within the Division is not always efficient. Staff report spending a disproportionate amount of time on activities of lower priority to Council members (e.g., drafting documents) at the expense of activities considered to have higher priority (e.g., providing substantive support).²⁵ In addition, more than one third of staff-survey respondents do not agree that task allocation is equitable (a point also raised during staff interviews); some also state that human resources are not well managed. For example, throughout the Division, some General Service staff appear to have little to do, while others absorb more administrative and substantive responsibilities. Furthermore, delegation of appropriate tasks from senior to junior Professional staff does not always occur. For example, more editorial responsibility for *Repertoire* supplements could be given to junior Professional staff in the Security Council Practices and Charter Research Branch.

30. The Division lacks a comprehensive back-up mechanism for redeploying staff where or when acute needs arise, although individual branches have contingency plans for staff being on call after hours and on weekends, taking vacation during slower Council periods and filling in for colleagues during planned absences. For example, production of the annual report is currently managed by one senior Professional staff member supported by a team of one Professional and two General Service staff. On the other hand, only one staff member, with no back-up, has responsibility for the annual volume *Resolutions and Decisions of the Security Council*. Knowledge handoff in these scenarios is not always sufficient, and back-ups are often too busy with their own workload to familiarize themselves with focal points' work context.

Some work processes are underdeveloped

31. Work processes to reduce redundancies and streamline work have not been consistently developed. Given the fast-paced environment of the Council and its urgent demands, well-established processes are particularly important to facilitate smooth work flow. For example, lack of a clear process of communication between Professional staff and administrative staff on time-sensitive outputs occasionally results in some inefficiencies; OIOS observed this during several meetings, when a number of Professional staff members gave concurrent and sometimes conflicting instructions to administrative staff revising procedural briefs.²⁶ A process whereby just one individual has primary responsibility for communicating with support staff

²⁵ For example, Security Council Secretariat Branch staff report spending an average of 39 per cent of their time annually on "substantive and secretariat support" and 33 per cent on "drafting documents". Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch staff report spending 17 per cent of their time annually on "substantive and secretariat support" and 21 per cent on "drafting documents".

²⁶ OIOS notes that, in some cases, these communication difficulties occur because of rapidly shifting developments and decisions in the Council itself.

would make for less confusion. Other redundancies occur with regard to staff attendance of Council meetings; for example, OIOS observed three note-takers in some meetings, each responsible for a particular section of the internal summaries for the information of the Secretary-General,²⁷ although just one person finalizes them. In the view of OIOS, fewer note-takers would be adequate. Furthermore, the annual report has until now been compiled manually, which is not the most efficient use of staff time.

32. Other redundancies have occurred in the Security Council Practices and Charter Research Branch, as is evident in the six-year time frame needed to complete the eleventh supplement of the *Repertoire*. These include multiple layers of production review of the same text, with no consistency in editing decisions or underlying document objectives. Some text is re-edited several times as new team leaders take over, and in the past there has been no process in place to share cross-cutting information and knowledge on similar chapters in the various supplements. According to the Branch concerned, these issues are currently being addressed, including by the use of a two-track approach for preparation of the *Repertoire*.

33. The Division has recently made strides in the expansion of databases to better manage its work, but more could be done in this respect. The Security Council Secretariat Branch has an “open” Council database and a “confidential” database that stores key decisions and protocols, while the Security Council Practices and Charter Research Branch has a research request database, and the Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch has several interrelated databases, including the Al-Qaida/Taliban Monitoring Group database, an experts’ roster, and databases for scheduling committee meetings and tracking committee communications. However, according to some staff in the Division, the aim of key databases has not always been clearly conceptualized or communicated, nor are databases open to and utilized by all staff.²⁸ An effort is under way to construct and manage a shared Division-wide database to serve this purpose that, if successfully implemented, could improve efficiencies. This Division-wide database would house these different branch databases in one place, thus preventing duplication in data entry.

34. The need for better information-sharing processes extends to the area of inter-branch coordination as well. Each branch’s work often complements the work of the others; for example, the internal summaries of the Security Council Secretariat Branch are viewed as potentially helpful inputs into the *Repertoire* that could streamline the work of the Security Council Practices and Charter Research Branch. But no formal systems integration platform is in place for avoiding redundancies and systematically capturing complementarities. A shared Division-wide database, as described in paragraph 33 above, would help in this regard.

35. Efficiency would be further served by enhancement of guidelines to further establish accepted norms and standards on key outputs. The Division is currently establishing or has recently finalized some operational guidelines. For example, guidelines exist for the preparation of the *Repertoire*, which should address past inefficiencies stemming from multiple and inconsistent editorial decisions, and of procedural briefs and notes verbales. Guidelines for other work products and

²⁷ Hereinafter referred to as “internal summaries”.

²⁸ Other staff explain that this is due to the confidentiality of some of the information stored.

processes, such as the production of the annual report, would also be helpful, as would guidelines establishing the context and objectives of the Division's products.

36. The Division has drawn up a Handbook for expert groups, updated in December 2006, with information on the expert-group recruitment process and personnel matters. OIOS notes that the Handbook, while comprehensive, is somewhat lacking in clarity: for example, it refers in several instances to the "Secretariat" without specifying to which entity this relates. Furthermore, to date, information-management systems for storing and retrieving data on lessons learned, precedent and procedure, shared sanctions targets and substantive issues have not existed, although these are currently being developed with Member State assistance.

Communication systems could be improved

37. The Division can improve internal information flow. One issue is the lack of a physical infrastructure to store and retrieve knowledge related to institutional memory and lessons learned. Staff say the Division has not historically had a culture of information-sharing, or formal forums for doing so, and staff surveyed do not consistently rate internal lines of communication highly, or say that internal communication tools always keep staff well informed. Staff also report a need for improved staff communication with regard to work planning, the overarching Division and branch vision, and a shared understanding of each branch's implementation of its mandate. Within branches, colleagues share relevant information with each other, but often on an informal and individual basis; the Division could benefit from more formalized information-sharing structures.

38. The Division plays an important role in providing information on the Council and its subsidiary organs to the Secretary-General and other United Nations partners. Effective communication with these partners is therefore crucial. The Security Council Secretariat Branch provides regular internal summaries to the Secretary-General on Council proceedings. However, some of the Division's other Secretariat partners state that information on the Council relevant to their own work is not always automatically shared with them.²⁹

39. Communication between the Division and its partners in the Executive Office of the Department of Political Affairs and the Office of Legal Affairs regarding the expert groups could also be improved, particularly with regard to clarifying respective roles and responsibilities. There is a need for greater interpersonal communication linkages across concurrently mandated groups and between prior and current members of the same group. The Division, as the body responsible for substantive support of the groups, is uniquely equipped to facilitate these exchanges, and the information-management systems currently being developed will address these issues. However, the Division notes that the creation of the systems will not necessarily mean they will be effectively used.

²⁹ Division staff state that this is partly due to the established practice whereby information is provided to department heads, who then decide with which of their staff the information will be shared.

Management practices need more attention

40. Branch and Division management has been marked by frequent leadership changes,³⁰ which have hampered effectiveness and efficiency by neglecting to foster a shared Division-wide vision and by failing to develop and sustain a strategy for coping with the Division's challenges.³¹ Moreover, management issues have not always been given the high priority they deserve. For example, senior Professional staff report spending relatively little time on management-related activities, such as mentoring junior Professionals (on average, 15 per cent of staff time per year). Also, the Division Director has historically spent a large proportion of time attending Council meetings, which has left less time for dealing with management issues in the Division.

41. Staff do not report high levels of morale in their branch or in the Division.³² The main reasons suggested for this situation are largely management-related, and include the perceived inequitable distribution of tasks, lack of opportunities for advancement and lack of clear direction for the Division. In addition, at least one third of staff report not being well briefed on their tasks when joining the Division, not being adequately involved in decision-making processes and not being consulted on substantive issues. Morale might be lower were it not for staff commitment to the mission of the Security Council, a sense of collegiality within and across branches, and optimism surrounding recent leadership changes. Current management is recognized by staff as having the skills to make needed management changes. OIOS concludes that performance and results would improve with stronger management practices.

42. With regard to expert-group recruitment and hiring, the recent OIOS audit on this topic found that, while recruitment was generally in compliance with established regulations, rules and procedures, improvements in some areas could achieve better efficiency and effectiveness. In response to this audit, the Division has started to address all concerns raised. Its expert-group roster has improved in size and candidate profile. However, some staff report that a predominant reliance on referrals when submitting candidates for consideration, while generally useful, might limit the ability to enhance the roster in terms of the diversity and quality of candidates, with reference to both technical and interpersonal skills. While recruitment criteria exist, these are not quantified. Also, the Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch evaluates individual expert performance at the end of each assignment, but there is no ongoing monitoring, nor are performance data incorporated into the roster to facilitate future recruitment. *The Department of Political Affairs states that experts are chosen primarily on the basis of their experience and qualifications; written recommendations are sought for each candidate; candidates for the roster are received from multiple sources, including Member States; referrals of candidates enhance the chances of finding experts with the right skills; and performance data are held separately from the roster.*

³⁰ The present Division Director took up his post on 1 August 2006, concurrently with data collection for this evaluation.

³¹ The Division has had three Directors in the past three years.

³² Seventy-two per cent of staff-survey respondents report staff morale as "average" in their branch and 79 per cent report it as "average" in the Division.

Targeted resource increases would be helpful

43. In addition to enhanced work processes and task allocation, additional resources could benefit the Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch, since growth in sanctions committees has not been met by a corresponding increase in Branch resources.³³ At present, each of the five committee secretaries is responsible for approximately five subsidiary organs. When a new sanctions committee is formed, as with the committees established in late 2006 pursuant to resolutions 1718 (2006) and 1737 (2006), all tasks and activities associated with supporting it are absorbed by existing Branch staff.

44. Three additional trends have expanded the scope and scale of work within sanctions committees. First, the policy shift towards targeted sanctions has resulted in a need for greater substantive specialization to effectively monitor sanctions compliance, and an increased caseload of parties subject to ongoing scrutiny for “listing” and “delisting” as sanctions targets. Secondly, the move towards a fair and clear procedure for listing and delisting these parties has led to a proliferation of case material. Thirdly, the growing role of expert groups has increased demand for logistical and secretariat support, as well as technical assistance on procedure and precedent during and after their field work. Stakeholders agree that better administrative support from the Department of Political Affairs to the expert groups would improve their ability to attend to immediate substantive tasks, and hence their effectiveness in fulfilling their established mandate.

D. The Division maintains a high level of expertise and knowledge, but sustainability is a major concern

45. The Division’s clients and partners widely view its staff as embodying the requisite expertise and knowledge to fulfil its mandate effectively. This includes skills associated with coordinating and servicing meetings and drafting documents, knowledge of Council practice, and competencies needed for effective relationship-building with Council members. OIOS observed these skills being demonstrated during meetings, in particular with regard to the Council presidency and committee chairs.

46. Despite the Division’s recognized role as an objective source of institutional memory, there is a risk that this will be lost if individuals’ expertise is not captured, stored and disseminated more widely and systematically. Inadequate arrangements for capturing and storing staff knowledge, which is undocumented, and its concentration in a few individuals, decrease the likelihood that this knowledge will be sustained. This was raised as a particular concern by several Council members in interviews. Further exacerbating the lack of sustainability is the absence of adequate mentoring systems enabling junior Professional staff, who represent the future of the Division, to acquire their senior colleagues’ knowledge and expertise. OIOS observed only a few instances of senior staff briefing junior staff on the context and particularities of Council meetings, and subsequent debriefings occurred only on a

³³ OIOS also notes that additional resources have not been allocated to the Executive Office, which provides primary expert-group administrative support.

sporadic basis.³⁴ Junior Professional staff report that this lack of vertical information flow can detract from their work.

47. The Division would also benefit from a range of professional development resources to help its staff better face the changing demands of their work. These include training in the technological tools to streamline their work, management-skills training, and other core competencies identified as high priorities. Furthermore, by further availing itself of external sources of knowledge and expertise on the Council and its subsidiary organs — for example, academic institutions and think tanks — the Division could boost the knowledge base it offers its clients.

E. Opportunities exist for structural enhancements to strengthen complementarities and cohesiveness within the Division and with the Department

48. Overall Division structure, consisting of three branches and the Military Staff Committee secretariat, each with comparative advantage in its respective area of expertise, represents a rational division of labour for implementing the Division's mandate.³⁵ However, at the branch level, organizational structure merits further consideration. In the Security Council Secretariat Branch, with the exception of a few teams formed around discrete products such as the annual report, tasks and responsibilities are assigned on an individual basis. In the Security Council Practices and Charter Research Branch, teams are currently structured around specific supplements of the *Repertoire*, whereas a reorganization based on thematic topic or supplement chapter might be more efficient.

49. There is a need to seize on complementarities between and among branches. Aside from professional interactions with colleagues, much of the branches' work has occurred in silos. In interviews, staff acknowledge that synergies between the branches have not been fully exploited, and OIOS also noted limited interaction between branches in their daily work.

50. More formalized interactions across branches would help staff capitalize on their complementarities, fostering efficiencies in their work to respond to new challenges. While staff express a desire for more inter-branch linkages, some say that meetings and other work processes should have a clear direction and concrete benefit. The success of enhanced cross-branch linkages hinges on management's ability to signal a new direction by actively encouraging and participating in them. The work of the Security Council Practices and Charter Research Branch represents one example of how complementarities and cohesiveness could be enhanced by stronger branch linkages. Its value has yet to be fully communicated to its colleagues, and it could be better coordinated with the work of other branches; for example, better coordination could be achieved to ensure a rational division of labour with the Security Council Secretariat Branch in regard to queries and other advisory services, and work processes for and information from the *Repertoire* and the Secretariat Branch's internal summaries and the annual report could be better

³⁴ Division staff say these usually occur only when mistakes are made.

³⁵ One exception is the situation of the Military Staff Committee secretariat, discussed in paragraph 51 below.

linked. OIOS notes that, as part of the Division's evaluation plan for the 2006-2007 biennium budget, cross-cutting initiatives are scheduled for June 2007, including inter-branch meetings on field missions, the annual report and the *Repertoire*.

51. A fundamental structural question involves the relationship of the Military Staff Committee secretariat to the rest of the Division. Member States assign low priority to its work compared to that of the rest of the Division, and its client, the Military Staff Committee, meets briefly on a fortnightly basis, leaving a reservoir of secretariat resources throughout the year that could be temporarily redeployed to higher-need branches in order to meet mounting client-support demands. OIOS believes that two full-time staff members might not be needed to perform the tasks of that office. Greater integration of the work and resources of the Military Staff Committee secretariat with that of its colleagues in the Division would help promote efficiencies across the Division.

52. Integration of the branches would be served by a greater level of staff mobility. Retention rates among senior staff are high, and underpin the institutional memory integral to supporting the Division's clients. However, staff also see high retention as contributing to their entrenchment in day-to-day routine and as limiting professional development opportunities. Structures permitting greater opportunities for staff mobility across the branches would create enhanced professional connections and more widespread information-sharing networks. For maximum long-term impact on sustainability, such opportunities would be especially beneficial for junior Professional staff being groomed for senior positions.

53. The Division's location within the Department of Political Affairs is well grounded and achieves maximum effectiveness in the provision of support to the Security Council and its subsidiary organs. Nevertheless, interaction with other parts of the Department is limited: the Division supplies information on developments, procedure and precedent upon request, but often this is not systematic or institutionalized. Staff also report that, while working relations with colleagues in the Department are generally good, lines of communication and reporting between the Division and the Department are not consistently adequate, which might result in Department colleagues not receiving the information they need for their work.

54. Additional challenges exist with regard to the Division's management. These include its size (with 52 staff members, it is the largest Division of the Department of Political Affairs), the inherent time pressures of the Division's work environment, and the lack of a shared location for its three branches. Senior managers' focus on attending Council and committee meetings, and on client relations, detracts from day-to-day management and personnel concerns.

V. Conclusion

55. Despite the challenges it faces, the Division has fulfilled its core mandate effectively. One source of the Division's success lies in the mandate itself, which is broad enough to give the Division the flexibility needed to adapt to challenges over time. This same breadth of mandate, however, has left the Division without a clear, shared barometer for determining how best to implement it. Leadership to unify staff around a shared vision has been lacking, and the Division's branches have failed to capitalize on complementarities that would create greater efficiencies and synergies. In the ever-changing environment that characterizes the Security

Council's work, the Division must be prepared to respond effectively to new and unforeseen issues in a timely manner, anticipating client needs rather than merely reacting to them, and ensuring long-term sustainability of its efforts.

56. OIOS commends the Division's initiatives to address key sources of inefficiency, but points to outstanding gaps in this area. In addition to more equitable task allocation, the Division needs systems that streamline its work. These include guidelines to reduce redundancies in producing physical outputs and promote more seamless back-up systems and better work processes to help the Division manage its primary asset — its knowledge and expertise. Knowledge management also entails a cultural shift, one that encourages information-sharing behaviours and provides more formalized opportunities for staff to share their knowledge with others who could benefit from it. Owing to the far-reaching nature of the Division's needs, structural management adjustments are required to better facilitate change. Efficiency-enhancing measures such as these will enable the Division to not only perform its core mandate more effectively, but also better to achieve clients' higher benchmarks of success.

VI. Recommendations

57. Based on these evaluation findings, OIOS makes seven recommendations, as set out below.

A. Establishment of more formal and transparent client communications

Recommendation 1

58. **The Division should harness the positive relationships and reputation it has cultivated with its clients and establish more formal and open lines of communication with them on critical issues** (see findings A, B and C). Specifically, the Division should:

(a) Engage in open discussion with Council members. Chief concerns include the divergent expectations of various Council members, and in particular how proactive members want the Division to be and in what ways;

(b) Enhance systems for updating key Secretariat clients on developments within the Council, wherever appropriate.

B. Creation of a formal and comprehensive knowledge-management system

Recommendation 2

59. **The Division should expand its information and knowledge-sharing activities to establish a formal and comprehensive knowledge-management system for capturing, storing, retrieving, sharing and integrating knowledge within the Division** (see findings C and D). This system should enhance work efficiency, improve quality and timeliness of knowledge delivery to clients, and ensure sustainability of the Division's knowledge and include:

- (a) A strategy clearly articulating specific knowledge-management objectives within and across branches and mapping knowledge resources and needs;
- (b) Knowledge-sharing tools, including common databases and other platforms such as electronic bulletin boards and discussion networks;
- (c) Mechanisms for communicating the strategy to staff, integrating it into their everyday work processes and earmarking knowledge-management resources;
- (d) A mentoring programme for junior Professionals in the Division, both for greater vertical knowledge transfer and long-term knowledge sustainability;
- (e) Fostering of a culture that values knowledge-sharing, perhaps incorporating it as a performance appraisal criterion.

C. Enhancement of guidelines on key outputs and processes

Recommendation 3

60. **The Division should continue to establish and refine guidelines and similar tools that streamline its work, reduce redundancies and duplication, ensure consistency, and institutionalize staff expertise and experience** (see finding C). OIOS considers the following as warranting greatest attention:

- (a) Development of further editing and formatting conventions, templates and other tools for key physical outputs to minimize redundancies and the need for multiple quality-control levels;
- (b) For key Division documents, guiding principles underlying outputs, thereby placing them within a larger context and helping users make sounder judgement calls when necessary;
- (c) The establishment of a formal monitoring and evaluation function for setting benchmarks and measuring performance.

D. Fostering of greater intra-branch teamwork and inter-branch staff mobility

Recommendation 4

61. **The Division should create an environment that encourages, and creates opportunities for, cross-fertilization of work within and across branches** (see findings C and E). Greater intra-branch teamwork will reinforce staff buy-in into their work and mutual accountability for key outputs. Greater inter-branch mobility will be conducive to achieving a shared Division-wide vision. The following components should be considered:

- (a) At the intra-branch level, comprehensive back-up systems for redeploying staff where or when needs are most acute, and greater team-based collaboration in which tasks are equitably and rationally allocated across all team members;
- (b) At the inter-branch level, greater collaboration on cross-cutting tasks and the identification of projects on which inter-branch collaboration would be warranted;

(c) Also at the inter-branch level, concrete opportunities for redeployment of staff, especially junior Professionals, to branches other than their own.

E. Stronger support for and oversight of expert groups

Recommendation 5

62. **While the headway made by the Division in supporting the expert groups, including steps taken to address the OIOS audit is recognized, the Division needs to further strengthen its support and oversight roles** (see findings A, B and C). OIOS identifies the following areas for consideration:

(a) A more active Division role in facilitating coordination and knowledge-sharing among group members, be it within individual groups, across groups, or between former and current group members;

(b) Greater coordination and communication with partners to better articulate the rules and regulations governing the groups' unique administrative status;³⁶

(c) Work with the Executive Office of the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Management to strengthen vetting of administrative paperwork to ensure compliance with applicable rules and regulations;

(d) More systematic, ongoing monitoring of individual group members' performance;

(e) Greater efforts to further enhance the expert group roster with regard to the quality and diversity of candidates.

F. Establishment of a post of Deputy Director for Management

Recommendation 6

63. **The Department of Political Affairs should establish a post of Deputy Director for Management in the Division** (see findings C and D). The Deputy Director would report to the Division Director and focus primarily on management issues, thus freeing the Director to steer the Division's vision, liaise with Council members and other clients and partners, and keep abreast of overall Council developments. OIOS acknowledges that, in order to successfully perform these managerial duties, the Deputy Director will need to have the necessary managerial skills and to acquire technical skills and experience to understand the Division's work.

³⁶ In this regard, the OIOS audit addressed only the issue of medical insurance for expert groups.

G. Expansion of resources to cope with the growing workload associated with increases in sanctions committees and monitoring mechanisms

Recommendation 7

64. **Given the substantial increase in the number of sanctions committees and monitoring mechanisms, and the corresponding increase in workload, the Department of Political Affairs should allocate additional resources to the Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch (see finding C).**

(Signed) Inga-Britt **Ahlenius**
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