![UN Logo] **General Assembly**

Seventieth session
Agenda item 131
**Financial reports and audited financial statements,
and reports of the Board of Auditors**

Implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors contained in its report on progress in the handling of information and communications technology affairs in the Secretariat

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

    The present report provides information in response to the recommendations of the Board of Auditors contained in its report on progress in the handling of information and communications technology (ICT) affairs in the Secretariat (A/70/581), which provides an update on the previous report of the Board of Auditors on this subject (A/67/651). The General Assembly, in paragraph 7 of section B of its resolution 48/216 B, requested the Secretary-General to provide to it, at the same time as the recommendations of the Board of Auditors are submitted to the Assembly, responses and to indicate measures that would be taken to implement those recommendations. Accordingly, the present report responds to the recommendations of the Board made in its report on progress in the handling of ICT affairs in the Secretariat. The Administration recognizes that a number of differences remain between the Department of Management and the Department of Field Support as to the scope and implementation of the ICT strategy. However, there are ongoing and active efforts by both Departments to reach agreement on the areas in question and to move forward with the implementation of the strategy as mandated by the Member States in Assembly resolution 69/262.

    The Administration has accepted all the recommendations (one partially) of the Board of Auditors. The Administration expresses its sincere appreciation to the Board for its comprehensive audit on the handling of ICT affairs in the Secretariat, and in particular the spirit of cooperation with which it conducted the audit.

The Administration notes that this follow-up report on the handling of ICT affairs in the Secretariat coincides with the consideration by the General Assembly of the report of the Secretary-General on the status of implementation of the ICT strategy for the United Nations (A/70/364). The Administration appreciates the efforts made by the Board to advance and accelerate the time frame for the audit with the view to enabling a better synchronization of its report issuance with the consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on the status of implementation of the ICT strategy for the United Nations.

Information on implementation status of the recommendations

1. The Secretary-General provides the following responses to the recommendations contained in the report of the Board of Auditors.

2. **The Board recommended that the Administration clarify the role and authority of the Chief Information Technology Officer in field operations by setting out clearly which activities require strong central control and which activities require or merit operational freedom.**

3. The Administration partially accepts this recommendation and concurs that while the General Assembly endorsed all the elements of the information and communications technology (ICT) strategy, which included a statement that "day-to-day operations for field missions would be undertaken by the appropriate Department", a more detailed articulation of specific functions related to the day-to-day operations should be promulgated. It should be noted, however, that in accordance with Assembly resolution 69/262 as well as the report of the Advisory Committee (A/69/610), the ICT strategy applies to the entire Secretariat and the role and the authority of the Chief Information Technology Officer therefore applies to all Secretariat entities. Thus, in line with the implementation of the strategy, the role of the Chief Information Technology Officer will be further defined through a delegation of authority document for the United Nations as a whole.

4. **The Board recommended that the Administration reassess the realism of the timetable for implementing the strategy and strengthen the project management approach, including the introduction of independent assurance arrangements.**

5. The Administration accepts this recommendation. Specific actions in line with this recommendation have been under way over the last year and will be continued throughout the course of the implementation of the ICT strategy.

6. The timetable for the implementation of the ICT strategy will be reassessed, in recognition of the fact that the 5-year strategy is one year into its implementation. The project management approach will be further strengthened and internal challenge assurance arrangements will be put in place before the next report on the progress of the ICT strategy.

7. **The Board recommended that, as a matter of urgency, the Administration formalize corporate ICT policies and procedures, including governance structures and appropriate delegations of authority, to ensure that the necessary authorities and accountabilities are in place to support the implementation of the ICT strategy.**

8. The Administration accepts this recommendation. Whereas, previously, there had been virtually no enterprise-wide policy framework in place, since the endorsement of the ICT strategy, a comprehensive set of guidelines, policies and technical procedures have been formulated across all domains of ICT. The documentation that establishes ICT governance arrangements is being prepared in accordance with established procedures.

9. **The Board recommended that the Administration establish a robust compliance framework, with the necessary authorities to ensure adherence to Secretariat-wide ICT policies, including those on information security.**

10.   The Administration accepts this recommendation, noting that ICT governance, technical authority and delegation of authority mechanisms are a prerequisite for instituting compliance. In this regard, since progress has been made in establishing standards, architecture and policies formulation, the Administration has developed a framework for implementing compliance in accordance with the recommendation of the Board of Auditors. The Administration further agrees that compliance with information security standards and policies is critically important and will therefore be addressed as a priority across the Secretariat.

11.   **The Board recommended that the Administration further refine and improve the quality of the data underpinning the five-year forecast of ICT expenditure by increasing visibility of actual expenditure and the status of ICT assets across the entire Secretariat, including peacekeeping operations.**

12.   The Administration accepts this recommendation and has started the process of eliciting the additional information required to more comprehensively forecast ICT expenditure and resources across the entire Secretariat, in accordance with paragraph 18 of General Assembly resolution 69/262.

13.   It is anticipated that the Administration, through continuing efforts, will include a refined forecast of ICT expenditure and resources, inclusive of peacekeeping operations and field missions.

14.   **The Board recommended that the Administration develop a statement of the expected costs and benefits of implementing the revised ICT strategy to enable strategic activities to be prioritized and resourced appropriately.**

15.   The Administration accepts this recommendation. Specific actions in line with this recommendation have been initiated. The costs associated with enabling strategic activities have been included in the regular budget submission for the 2016-2017 fiscal period and are consistent with estimates provided in the revised ICT strategy. In accordance with the recommendations of the Board, a statement of the benefits of implementation of the ICT strategy will be developed and submitted as part of subsequent reports on the progress of ICT strategy.

16.   **The Board recommended that senior management play a more visible role in leading the implementation of the ICT strategy to ensure that all departments are committed to implementing the revised strategy, as mandated by the General Assembly, and that any disagreements or impediments to implementing the strategy are addressed and resolved in a timely manner.**

17.   The Administration accepts this recommendation and has taken steps in this regard by having included it in senior managers' compacts. ICT governance bodies, such as the ICT Executive Committee and the Management Committee, provide effective forums for addressing and overcoming impediments to the implementation of the ICT strategy. In addition, significant communications and change management efforts have been undertaken to ensure understanding of the ICT strategy, and such efforts will continue as they are instrumental in senior leadership engagement.