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Committee for Programme and Coordination

Fifty-ninth session

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Agenda item 7

**Adoption of the report of the Committee on its
fifty-ninth session**

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Jun Yamada (Japan)

Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation

(Item 3 (b))

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation of the Office for Legal Affairs

1. At its 11th meeting, on 10 June 2019, the Committee considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the evaluation of the Office of Legal Affairs ([E/AC.51/2019/9](#)).
2. The Assistant Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services introduced the report and, together with the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel, responded to queries raised during its consideration by the Committee.

Discussion

3. Expressing appreciation for the OIOS report, delegations commended the Office of Legal Affairs on its useful advice to the Organization, noting that the report portrayed the relevance of the Office in a positive light and contained the finding that the Office was highly responsive to requests and was achieving significant outcomes. One delegation welcomed the Office's acceptance of all recommendations and indicated that it looked forward to the Office addressing the factors identified in the evaluation as impediments to optimal results, in particular those factors related to the absence of an effective dissemination platform. It was noted that the evaluation had identified gaps in the Office's websites, and details were requested about the steps being taken to remedy the situation.



4. Delegations welcomed the effort by the Office to support the dissemination of international law through the lectures of the United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law and noted that many scholars of international law in developing countries were reading and listening to the lectures available in that library. A delegation extended an invitation to support the Office in recording lectures in Arabic by scholars in the delegation's country.

5. Referring to paragraphs 53 to 58 of the report, a delegation commented on the evaluation finding that the information management methods and information technology of the Office were inefficient. The delegation enquired about the role of the Office of Information and Communications Technology in helping the Office of Legal Affairs to select case management software described as clunky and slow, as well as other factors that might have led the Office of Legal Affairs to rely on inadequate software for a long time.

6. Referring to paragraph 73, on the impact of the United Nations reform agenda on the Office, questions were raised about the challenges posed for the Office by the reform agenda in general and by the introduction of the resident coordinator system to the Secretariat, and about whether a comprehensive assessment had been performed in that regard.

7. With regard to recommendation 1, on the need for the Office to develop and implement a technical cooperation strategy covering relevant areas of international law but with particular emphasis on international trade activities, information was sought as to the reason for that emphasis. Referring to paragraph 66, which indicated that the efforts of the International Trade Law Division in providing technical assistance on adopting model laws and legislative guidelines had been primarily concentrated in Asia, information was requested on the efforts made to provide capacity development support in international trade law to regions beyond Asia.

8. Referring to recommendation 7, on the need to fill vacancies quickly by selecting candidates from rosters and build rosters of attorneys and staff in all thematic areas by identifying qualified candidates, a delegation asked whether geographical representation was considered in hiring decisions by the Office and had been considered in the formulation of the recommendation. Another delegation enquired about possible assistance for underrepresented countries and about ways in which it could assist the Office in remedying such underrepresentation. In that connection, it was suggested that Junior Professional Officer programmes might offer an opportunity for young candidates from those countries. Referring to paragraph 49, a delegation asked about the reasons for the high vacancy rate of 9 per cent in the Office.

9. A delegation expressed appreciation for a chart developed by OIOS that showed the functional areas of the Office and had been included in annex II to the report. The delegation stated that such charts would be useful in the future for helping Committee members to better understand the functions of the departments and offices being evaluated.

Conclusions and recommendations

10. **The Committee expressed appreciation to OIOS for its report on the evaluation of the Office and recommended that the General Assembly take note of the report.**

11. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly endorse the recommendations contained in paragraphs 75 to 78, 80 and 81 of the report of OIOS on the evaluation of the Office and that the Assembly consider the recommendations contained in paragraph 79 thereof.**