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Annual report of the Administrator

Reports of the Joint Inspection Unit

1.   In 1997, UNDP contributed to the production of six reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). Final reports were submitted for comments from UNDP for onward transmission through the Administrative Committee on Coordination. In several cases, the JIU requested UNDP to bring reports to the attention of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board. Copies of JIU reports referred to in the present document are available from the Executive Board secretariat upon request.

2.   The present report summarizes the general scope of the JIU reports and highlights recommendations of particular interest to UNDP, noting the comments made by UNDP in reaction to the final reports.

Strengthening field representation of the
United Nations system (JIU/REP/97/1)

3.   The report analyses the significant expansion in the number of field offices of the United Nations system, in particular the recent surge in emergency field representation and the resultant rise in the number of representatives and staff and expenditures. The thesis of the report is that more work is required to improve field representation and its stated objective is to promote a more unified, and not necessarily a unitary, United Nations force in support of programme countries in their efforts at capacity-building, using available resources effectively and economically. The review focuses on operational activities and hence is of primary interest to UNDP. It should be noted that the report was sent to all Executive Heads of JIU participating organizations on 12 March 1997, just prior to the announcement of the Track One reforms by the Secretary-General.

4.   UNDP supported recommendations on unifying representation and harmonizing geographical representation, strengthening thematic groups headed by a lead

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agency at country level, and accelerating the establishment or enhancement of
common premises. A recommendation for the Secretary-General to designate a
single high official at the United Nations Secretariat to be in charge of the
resident coordinator system and on other structural aspects of the United
Nations Secretariat has been superseded by the recommendations contained in the
Secretary-General's Track Two reforms. A recommendation that coordination at
the country level be more institutionalized, especially between the United
Nations system and the multi-bi community, has been acted upon by UNDP in its
capacity-development activities for aid coordination and management.

<u>United Nations publications: enhancing cost-effectiveness
in implementing legislative mandates (JIU/REP/97/2)</u>

5.   The report covers all United Nations publishing activities, with the aim of
producing recommendations that will help to enhance the role of United Nations
publications in implementing the mandates of intergovernmental bodies and that
will improve the cost-effectiveness of those publishing activities. UNDP
contributed data to the table contained in the report. While many of the
recommendations are directed to publications issued by the United Nations
Secretariat, one recommendation is that all United Nations substantive
legislative bodies include a review of publications. Executive Board decision
97/17 on UNDP communication and information policy should be noted in this
context. The Board also has before it at the current session the report of the
Administrator on the UNDP communication, advocacy and information policy
(DP/1998/23).

<u>Execution of humanitarian assistance programmes
through implementing partners (JIU/REP/97/3)</u>

6.   The report, addressed to UNDP for action, examines the use of voluntary
funds earmarked for activities connected with humanitarian assistance,
especially regarding proper reporting to Member States on the use of funds for
those activities and accountability of implementing partners. UNDP commented
that the report took into consideration neither the proposed changes in the UNDP
national execution procedures nor the direct execution arrangements approved on
a case-by-case basis. Recommendations concerning UNDP include the need for a
well-thought-out mechanism with regard to choosing implementing partners which
guarantees project delivery as agreed in the project document and ensures the
accountability of implementing partners. UNDP, when commenting on the initial
draft, expressed some reluctance to limit the number of implementing partners,
as suggested in the report, as such limitation could reduce incentives to excel
in performance or could evoke a negative reaction from donors and/or the private
sector.

<u>Coordination at headquarters and field level between
United Nations agencies involved in peace-building</u>:
<u>an assessment of possibilities (JIU/REP/97/4)</u>

7.   The report addresses the need for a serious effort to coordinate peace-
building activities between United Nations system organizations and the Bretton
Woods institutions. Its thesis is that there must be improved coordination for
post-conflict peace-building at the policy, headquarters and system-wide levels.

8.   While UNDP is in general agreement with the findings of the JIU report, it
was noted that no mention was made of the pilot strategic framework exercise
undertaken in Afghanistan under the auspices of the Department of Political
Affairs. Many of the UNDP comments on the final report take account of the
coordination challenges and the evolving experience in the Afghan context.
Moreover, a number of other initiatives besides the strategic framework
exercise, that of the support of the resident coordinator, target for resource
assignment from the core (TRAC) 1.1.3 resources, and institutional arrangements
in UNDP (Operations Support Group and Emergency Response Division) are not
considered in the report. The report correctly states that, while United
Nations system organizations individually have articulated support for improved
coordination, in practice there are no effective mechanisms for coordinating at
policy, headquarters and system-wide levels. In an increasingly competitive
world, United Nations systems organizations and Bretton Woods institutions, each
working in an independent and uncoordinated manner, run the risk of failing to
put limited multilateral resources to optimal use and may ultimately expend
greater resources in humanitarian, peacekeeping and reconstruction operations in
post-conflict situations. While the report covers most of the United Nations
entities and mentions the role of bilateral organizations, it does not assign a
role to Governments in the coordination of peace-building. UNDP experience in
playing an active and often lead role in coordinating peace-building at the
country level very clearly demonstrates that government involvement is crucial.

9.   With regard to the specific recommendations contained in the report, UNDP
agrees that the coordination framework for post-conflict peace-building must be
overarching and coherent while also taking note of the unique aspects of each
post-conflict situation. UNDP agrees that the framework for coordination must
be established during the initial reconstruction planning phases. While
agreeing with the recommendation that the Administrative Committee on
Coordination (ACC) prepare a statement on the coordination of peace-building
activities for the approval of the General Assembly and various legislative
bodies, UNDP noted that the complexities of coordination should also be reviewed
within the context of the specific mandates given to each organization and the
respective policies formulated as a result of the mandates. Coordination among
thematic lines could benefit from a review of action ongoing at country level,
through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and strategic
framework exercises. UNDP agrees that peacekeeping and peace-building
activities should be maintained as distinct and separate operations. In that
regard, peace-building, as a sub-set of development activities, should be
subject to an enhanced coordination role by the Economic and Social Council.
Headquarters level coordination could be improved by regular reviews by the
Secretary-General and his cabinet. At the system-wide level, the role of ACC

should be expanded to coordinate post-conflict peace-building activities on an ongoing basis, as should the strengthening of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. The Bretton Woods institutions should be included from the outset in the planning and reconstruction phases financed by them. Similar agreements with the Bretton Woods institutions to those governing development activities should be expanded to include peace-building activities.

The challenge of outsourcing for the United Nations system (JIU/REP/97/5)

10. The stated objective of the report is to use outsourcing (UNDP uses the term "contracting") to help build into United Nations system organizations continuing incentives for improved effectiveness. Several recommendations contained in the report were directed to the legislative organs of the organizations participating in the JIU, including a request to prepare, for approval at the appropriate level, before their next session, a policy statement committing their organizations to outsourcing as a means for achieving improved cost-effectiveness. The Executive Heads of participating organizations were asked to: (a) prepare administrative rules for implementation of the planned policy on the use of outsourcing; (b) prepare changes in the structure and/or operating procedures of their secretariats to facilitate and encourage the best use of outsourcing; (c) assure that information on the use of outsourcing is comprehensive and transparent in the regular programme budget submissions and performance reports for their organizations; (d) avoid negative impact on staff affected by decisions to outsource specific activities or services, or prepare measures to assure appropriate protection for affected staff members; and (e) submit a report on the implementation of the approved outsourcing policy which would indicate savings and/or benefits achieved, special problems encountered and solutions attempted. The General Assembly was requested to request ACC to develop a system-wide definition of outsourcing; encourage increased sharing among United Nations system organizations of their experiences in outsourcing; and explore possibilities for joint and coordinated actions in regard to the use of outsourcing. UNDP responded to the questionnaire on outsourcing sent at the beginning of the exercise, restricting its response to expenditures from its administrative budget. UNDP commented on the draft of the report, noting that most of the recommendations seemed appropriate in guiding organizations in the use of outsourcing. The risk areas identified in the report were considered valid and of worthwhile consideration by organizations that had already or were considering using outsourcing. It was noted that a number of activities not cited in the report could be considered as outsourcing, such as national execution and execution by non-governmental organizations. Following the issuance of the final version of the report, UNDP would like to note its disagreement with the wording of the conclusion stated in section E, page 7, text which was added after the circulation of the draft. UNDP would also urge the consideration, in future studies of outsourcing of its own example of outsourcing with regard to the internal audit services in three geographical regions, covering 86 UNDP country offices and 45 UNFPA offices.

<u>Training institutions in the United Nations system</u>:
<u>programmes and activities (JIU/REP/97/6)</u>

11. The stated objective of the report is to take stock of the United Nations
system training institutions and, having analysed their mandates and related
aspects, to propose, whenever possible, concrete and practical measures,
including networking, designed to coordinate their activities. The JIU
recommended an effective and flexible division of labour among United Nations
system training and research institutions as well as strengthened cooperation
among those institutions. It also recommended that the General Assembly ask ACC
to submit to the respective legislative organs of JIU participating
organizations an evaluation report on the use and impact of the activities of
the training institutions under their jurisdiction; and that the General
Assembly and other legislative organs of JIU organizations decide to consider
all major training issues under a single item of their respective agendas. UNDP
finds the report an interesting contribution to the thinking on the role of
training institutions within the framework of United Nations reform. However,
the Learning Resources Centre of the UNDP Office of Human Resources has an
approach to the concept of training that is somewhat different to that outlined
in the JIU report. In the approach of UNDP, training events have to be framed
in learning processes that involve several methodologies and an array of
resources to support the systematic development of the knowledge, skills and
attitudes required by an individual to perform adequately a given task.
Training as an isolated event tends to have limited impact on competency
development in the view of UNDP. The concept of a culture of continuous
learning as advocated in the report has, in the view of UNDP, already become
work in progress. UNDP endorses most of the recommendations fully. UNDP
believes that a division of labour among training institutions should be based
on a solid, joint understanding of the role and place of training in the
learning process. Similarly, it is extremely important that in
institutionalizing the United Nations Staff College Project, appropriate
concepts regarding learning and knowledge management are applied, drawing on the
Project's potential to promote continuous learning. UNDP fully endorses the
recommendation regarding careful framing of training as one of the many sources
of learning. In that regard, there is already close cooperation among members
of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy in the area of training and learning
in areas such as resident coordinator competencies, the United Nations
Development Assistance Framework, induction of junior professional officers,
management development and team-building, HIV/AIDS, and sexual harassment. An
evaluation report by ACC on training institutions would be welcomed by UNDP.