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Agenda item 9

Adoption of the report of the Committee on its forty-seventh session

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation

(Item 4 (c))

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

1. At its 2nd and 3rd meetings on 11 and 12 June 2007, the Committee considered the reports of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the in-depth evaluation of political affairs: summary report (E/AC.51/2007/2); electoral assistance (E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.1); Security Council affairs (E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.2); decolonization and question of Palestine (E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.3 and Corr.1); and special political missions (E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.4); and the note by the Secretary-General transmitting his comments on the latter report (E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.5).

2. The Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services introduced the reports, and representatives of OIOS responded to questions raised during the Committee's consideration of the reports.

Discussion

3. Several delegations expressed appreciation for the reports of OIOS and commended their quality and noted the importance of the work undertaken by the Department of Political Affairs. Delegations also expressed their satisfaction with the general conclusion that the Department was fulfilling its core functions and that its clients were mainly satisfied. Questions were raised regarding the methodology used for the evaluations, and some concern was expressed with regard to the low



response rates for several of the surveys. OIOS responded that it had utilized a general analytical framework for all of its evaluations that incorporated not just client satisfaction feedback, but also surveys of partners and staff, as well as objective assessments of work processes, outputs and outcomes. Questions were raised about the need for additional resources in the Department and, in response, OIOS clarified that more resources were needed for those parts of the Department's work programme in which mandates had expanded but that were being implemented with only existing resource allocations. In particular, the regional divisions were identified as having immediate resource needs at the outset to support the urgently required change management and strategic review exercise, to better organize and allocate existing resources and to more clearly identify additional resource requirements to support work in conflict prevention, control and resolution.

4. General support was expressed for the cross-cutting findings relating to the lack of knowledge-management systems and guidelines in the Department. In response to a question about the resource requirements associated with knowledge management, the representative of OIOS stated that systems were needed to ensure that the Department's knowledge assets were captured and sustained and that some initial steps, such as the development of a strategy and mentoring programme and the fostering of a knowledge-sharing culture, need not require additional resources or additional bureaucratic procedures. The representative also stated that the need for additional guidelines pertained to internal divisional work processes and were aimed at ensuring greater consistency and transparency in the Department's work.

5. Several delegations enquired about the Department's reaction to the findings and recommendations of OIOS. A representative of the Department responded that OIOS had engaged in a consultative process with the Department while conducting the evaluations and that the general findings and conclusions in the OIOS reports were supported by the Department, especially the recognition of the need for additional resources for the regional divisions. The representative also discussed recent steps taken to implement the recommendations Department-wide. The view was expressed that the Department should assist the General Assembly in organizing topical debates on issues of interest to Member States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

6. During the discussions on the summary report (E/AC.51/2007/2), several delegations expressed support for recommendations addressing gender imbalance in the Department, unclear responsibilities and division of work among executive management and the need to improve communication systems. Several delegations also expressed concern about the uneven performance of the regional divisions in implementing subprogramme 1, prevention, control and resolution of conflicts, of programme 2 of the biennial programme plan for the period 2008-2009. OIOS clarified that the findings on the mixed performance of the regional divisions had already been presented to the Committee at its forty-sixth session. All 10 recommendations were approved by the Committee and subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 61/235. With regard to recommendations to improve efficiency in the Department, questions were raised regarding the proposed mobility and flexibility of staff of the Department. OIOS responded that that should not detract from the main work programme of the individual divisions but that mobility and flexibility were options for enhancing overall efficiency within the Department and making better use of existing resources. The point was also made

that a Department-wide strategy would need to be both flexible and communicated in a single document to the staff.

7. During the discussion of the report on electoral assistance (E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.1), it was noted that the Electoral Assistance Division drew from experts to provide specialized support in electoral matters. Several delegations raised concerns that the majority of electoral experts came from two regions, and that the group of experts should be more geographically diverse. Similarly, concerns were raised regarding the gender imbalance of the Division's electoral expert roster. The representative of the Department clarified the criteria used in selecting electoral experts. A further concern was expressed that the non-governmental organizations that partnered with the Division were also not geographically diverse. The point was made that when guidelines for delivering electoral assistance were developed, they should be done with Member States to ensure impartiality on the part of the Secretariat. A question was also raised concerning the incorporation of a human rights perspective in the electoral assistance process. However, some delegations raised concerns about the lack of a formal policy, criteria or long-term strategy in the Division to carry out electoral assistance and the use of an individual approach by the staff when reviewing electoral assistance requests, putting in doubt the transparency and consistency of the Division's work processes. Reservations were expressed on the adoption of recommendation 3 (c) on the inclusion of human rights issues, as described in paragraph 34 of the report, in the context of electoral assistance. It was noted in this regard that the recommendation went beyond the mandate of OIOS in the area of evaluation and that any decision that amplified the mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the area of electoral assistance should be approved by Member States. Several delegations raised concerns that 69.5 per cent of the electoral experts came from two regions. In that context, it was pointed out that the General Assembly recognized that there was no single political system or universal model for electoral processes equally suited to all nations and their peoples and that political systems and electoral processes were subject to historical, political, cultural and religious factors.

8. With respect to the report on Security Council affairs (E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.2), several delegations underlined the report's findings that Council members rated their satisfaction as high, conveying their positive experiences with the Security Council Affairs Division and emphasizing its staff members' role as invaluable repositories of institutional memory. Several delegations added that the Division had continued to perform well even with the growing demand on its resources prompted by the large increase in Council activity.

9. Some delegations raised questions regarding the OIOS recommendation for a Deputy Director for Management, and OIOS clarified that this was based on the finding that the Division's Director had less time for operational and management issues when he also had to attend Security Council and sanctions committee sessions and liaise with Council members and other key stakeholders. Overall accountability for the Division, however, would reside with the Director. Support was also expressed for the need for stronger support for and oversight of expert groups.

10. Regarding the report on decolonization and the question of Palestine (E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.3 and Corr.1), several delegations stated that they did not

support the suggestion of OIOS that the working papers on the 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories be combined, since each Territory was unique. The representative of OIOS clarified that it was recommending that the Department work together with the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples to improve the working papers in order to facilitate the work of the Committee; combining the working papers was just one option for consideration. Concerns were also raised by a few delegations about the recommendation to better integrate the Decolonization Unit with the rest of the Department. OIOS responded that that should not detract from the primary work of the Unit but could improve overall efficiencies in the Department and facilitate greater knowledge-sharing. Support was expressed for the need to improve the decolonization website and the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) and to maintain a central registry for those participating in international meetings and conferences on the question of Palestine.

11. With regard to the report on special political missions (E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.4), the view was expressed that the knowledge systems developed to capture and disseminate expert group and envoy knowledge and to promote learning and best practices should be available to the Secretariat and to Member States.

Conclusions and recommendations

12. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly:**

(a) **Endorse recommendations 1 to 9 contained in the summary report (E/AC.51/2007/2), taking into account paragraph 13 below;**

(b) **Endorse recommendations 1 to 6 contained in the report on electoral assistance (E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.1), taking into account paragraphs 14 and 15 below;**

(c) **Endorse recommendations 1 to 5 and 7 contained in the report on Security Council affairs (E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.2);**

(d) **Endorse recommendations 1, 2, 4 to 10 contained in the report on decolonization and question of Palestine (E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.3 and Corr.1), taking into account paragraph 17 below;**

(e) **Endorse recommendations 1 to 7 contained in the report on special political missions (E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.4).**

13. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to ensure that no new bureaucratic structures be created as a result of the knowledge-management system in the Department of Political Affairs.**

14. **The Committee recommended to the General Assembly that recommendation 3 contained in the report on electoral assistance (E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.1) be replaced by the following:**

The Division should strengthen coordination with its United Nations partners, including the United Nations Development Programme, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, according to their

respective mandates, to further enhance information-sharing and make the delivery of electoral assistance more effective.

15. The Committee expressed concern about inequitable geographical representation and gender imbalance in the roster of electoral assistance experts. In that regard, the Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to address the issue and request OIOS to report on it in the context of the triennial review of the in-depth evaluation of the political affairs programme.

16. The Committee recommended to the General Assembly that recommendation 3 contained in the report on decolonization and question of Palestine be replaced by the following:

In consultation with the Special Committee, the Decolonization Unit should continue its efforts to improve the quality and scope of the 16 working papers.

17. The Committee considers it necessary to point out that the implementation of recommendations 9 and 10 of the report on decolonization and question of Palestine should not affect the basic functions of the personnel assigned to the Division for Palestinian Rights.
