



Executive Board of the United Nations
Human Settlements Programme
Second session of 2024
Nairobi, 4–6 December 2024
Items 11 and 12 of the provisional agenda*

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services to the
Executive Board

Report of the Ethics Office to the Executive Board

Overviews of the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the report of the Ethics Office and related UN-Habitat activities

Note by the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 7 of its decision 2024/4, the Executive Board of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) decided to include in the provisional agenda for its second session of 2024 an item on the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) to the Executive Board (item 11) and an item on the report of the Ethics Office to the Executive Board (item 12).
2. Pursuant to that decision, the present document contains references to the report of OIOS on its activities for the period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 (A/79/309 (Part I) and A/79/309 (Part I)/Add.1) and the report of the Ethics Office on its activities in 2023 (A/79/76), as well as information about the oversight- and ethics-related activities of UN-Habitat.

II. Activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024

3. In response to a call for a broad strengthening of oversight, the General Assembly, by its resolution 48/218 B of 29 July 1994, established OIOS and decided that it would exercise operational independence under the authority of the Secretary-General in the conduct of its oversight duties. OIOS has the authority to initiate, carry out and report on any action as it considers necessary in order to fulfil its responsibilities with regard to monitoring, internal audit, inspection, evaluation and investigations.
4. Since its establishment in 1994, OIOS has been guided by the mandates entrusted to it and has provided the Secretary-General and the General Assembly with objective oversight information to help manage the risks and challenges faced by the United Nations.

* HSP/EB.2024/14.

5. Pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B (para. 5 (e)), 54/244 (paras. 4 and 5), 59/272 (paras. 1 and 3), 66/236 (II, para. 5) and 74/263 (VIII.A, para. 14), OIOS submitted a report on its activities for the period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 (A/79/309 (Part I) and A/79/309 (Part I)/Add.1). As is indicated in that report, during the reporting period, OIOS issued its midterm evaluation of the UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2020–2025 (IED-24-009), which included six recommendations. OIOS noted in the evaluation that, in an increasingly data-driven world, UN-Habitat should leverage its mandate and expertise in addressing the critical urban data and knowledge gaps, including by strengthening its core data and statistical capabilities and coherence in data practices and applications.

III. Summary of OIOS oversight activities related to UN-Habitat in 2023 and in 2024 to date

6. OIOS conducted the following evaluations relevant to UN-Habitat in 2023 and in 2024 to date:

(a) A thematic evaluation of United Nations Secretariat support for the Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on responsiveness to Member State needs and strengthening their capacity to achieve the Goals (E/AC.51/2023/3);

(b) A thematic evaluation of the youth and peace and security agenda (E/AC.51/2023/7).

7. In addition, OIOS provided strategic evaluation support to United Nations Secretariat entities, including UN-Habitat, on establishing evaluation capacity. It has served as a source of evaluation knowledge for Secretariat entities, producing seven evaluation methodology guidelines, issuing two Secretariat-wide evaluation newsletters and reviewing more than 350 Secretariat evaluation reports prior to making them available.

8. Of the 13 UN-Habitat evaluation reports reviewed by OIOS, 12 were found to meet quality standards. OIOS shared the reports through the evaluation knowledge management platform to serve as a reference for other entities wishing to conduct quality evaluations.

9. OIOS completed its midterm evaluation of the UN-Habitat strategic plan 2020–2025 (IED-24-009) in April 2024, assessing in it the midterm implementation of the plan and covering the relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and coherence of UN-Habitat during the period 2020–2023. In its evaluation, OIOS concluded that the Strategic Plan contained ambitious goals, provided a relevant and coherent vision to guide UN-Habitat work, and served as a valuable programming and advocacy tool. It found the four domains of change of the Strategic Plan highly relevant in responding to the needs and priorities of stakeholders. OIOS also highlighted significant contributions by UN-Habitat to improving the lives of beneficiaries and strengthening the capacities of government counterparts, noting positive changes in behaviour, policies and capacities at the community, local government and national levels.

IV. Activities of the Ethics Office in 2023

10. As part of the United Nations Secretariat, UN-Habitat implements its ethics-related activities with the support of the Ethics Office. The Legal Unit serves as the focal point for all ethics-related activities at UN-Habitat and carries out its functions with the support of the Office of the Executive Director, the Human Resources Liaison Office, and the conduct and discipline focal point, who serves as the UN-Habitat focal point for all conduct- and discipline-related matters.

11. The report of the Ethics Office on its activities in 2023 (A/79/76) was transmitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly pursuant to Assembly resolution 77/278, in which the Assembly approved the recommendation on strengthening the independence of the Ethics Office and decided to include on the agenda of its seventy-eighth session an item entitled “Report on the activities of the Ethics Office”.

12. Following the introduction, in section II of its report, the Ethics Office sets out its background and functions. In section III, it provides general information on its work. In section IV, it details its activities. In section V, it outlines the background and functions of the Ethics Panel of the United Nations and the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations. Lastly, in section VI, it sets out its observations and conclusions and requests the General Assembly to take note of its report.

V. Ethics-related activities related to UN-Habitat in 2023 and in 2024 to date

13. In response to all requests received, UN-Habitat gave the necessary advice and took appropriate action in accordance with the relevant ethical framework and the applicable regulations, rules and administrative instructions of the United Nations. From 1 January to 31 December 2023, UN-Habitat received 19 cases referred to it by OIOS and 25 ethics-related inquiries from UN-Habitat personnel. Of the 19 cases, 14 cases involved possible unsatisfactory conduct, 1 case involved sexual exploitation and abuse, and 4 cases involved damage to United Nations property. The 25 ethics-related inquiries pertained to employment disputes, misconduct in connection with reporting procedures, outside activities, conflicts of interest, the financial disclosure programme, gifts and honours, and protection against retaliation.

14. The ethics-related activities of UN-Habitat are summarized below:

(a) *Advice and guidance.* With the support of the Office of the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, the Legal Unit provides advice and support on ethical issues in collaboration with its conduct and discipline focal point, who also serves as the UN-Habitat focal point for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and the Ethics Office. This ensures proper handling of cases as complainants and subjects of complaints are fully informed of the process and accorded due process, in line with the United Nations system-wide reform on handling ethics-related complaints in accordance with the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations. The Legal Unit also supports the Executive Director in the exercise of her functions and in achieving the ethics-related objectives contained in her compact with the Secretary-General;

(b) *Financial disclosure programme.* The Legal Unit, as the UN-Habitat focal point for the United Nations financial disclosure programme, in coordination with the Ethics Office, provides information on UN-Habitat staff members who are mandated to participate in the financial disclosure programme. For the year 2023, 35 staff members participated in the financial disclosure programme and successfully submitted their financial disclosure statements to the Ethics Office to ensure compliance with their financial disclosure filing obligations;

(c) *Training, education and outreach.* In 2023, 90 per cent of UN-Habitat personnel participated in the Leadership Dialogue developed by the Ethics Office on the topic “Personal use of social media: how is my online behaviour?” Outreach training on civility and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment was undertaken in 2023 at the UN-Habitat offices in Addis Ababa, Mogadishu, Fukuoka (Japan), Cairo and Kinshasa. In the first quarter of 2024, training was conducted in Accra, Dakar and Maputo to raise awareness about the policies and procedures in place to report and address ethics-related matters, sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. The Legal Unit, with the support of the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, is planning to conduct further outreach activities through in-person and virtual training on ethics, civility and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment for senior management and all UN-Habitat personnel in Afghanistan and India during the last quarter of 2024;

(d) *Investigations and fact-finding.* In 2023, one staff member was selected for and successfully completed the training provided by OIOS on investigations into reports of possible prohibited conduct, as defined in the Secretary-General’s bulletin on addressing discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority (ST/SGB/2019/8). This increased to five the number of UN-Habitat staff members trained to conduct such investigations. A list of UN-Habitat nominees to participate in the training in 2023/24 was submitted to OIOS;

(e) *Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.* In the first half of 2024, three in-person training sessions on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment were conducted by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee of the United Nations system for focal points and coordinators for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. The focal points and nominated representatives of UN-Habitat participated in the training sessions held in Brindisi (Italy), Nairobi and Geneva. The training was focused on case studies, testimonies, group discussions, videos and thought-provoking queries to promote dialogue and learning.

VI. Recommendations

15. The Executive Board may wish to consider the need for the following:

- (a) Adequate funding to establish an independent ethics focal point who will serve as a liaison with the Ethics Office and handle all ethics-related requests within UN-Habitat;
- (b) Additional funding to facilitate further outreach and ethics training on civility and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in other offices of UN-Habitat.

ADVANCE